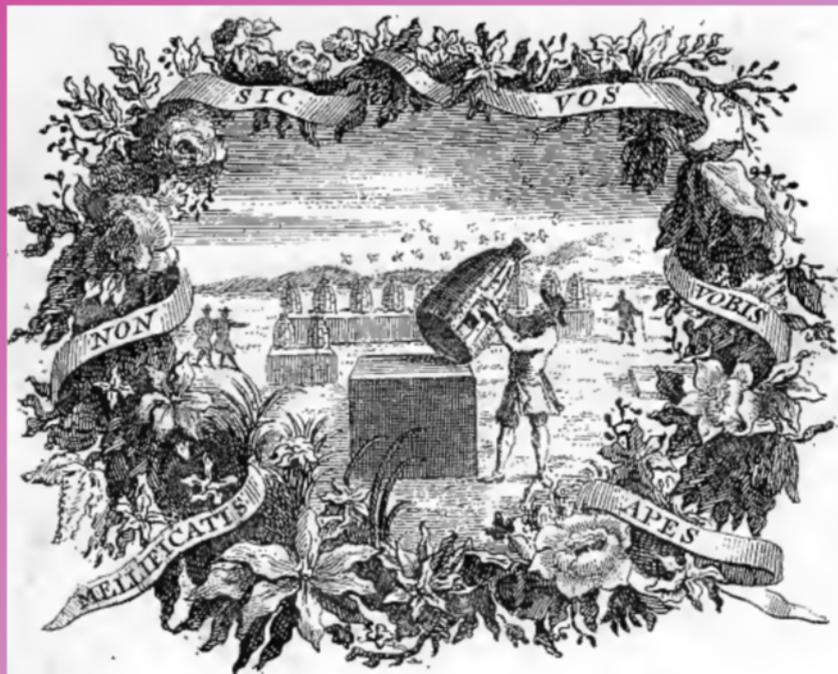


Rapin's History of England



Book Four

Concerning the origin of the
Danes and their incursions into
England

**The History
of
England
Written in French
By
Mr. Rapin de Thoyras**

Translated from French

By

N. Tyndal M. A. Vicar

Of

Great Waltham

Essex

VOLUME I

Published by J & J Cundee

Ivy Lane

Paternosta Row

London

1733



CONTENTS

Plate: King Egbert Page 5
Plate: King Alfred Page 6
Plate: Map - Saxon England 900 AD - Page 7
Plate: Map of Britannia at the death of High King Arthur - Page 7
Origin of The Danes - Page 8
Egbert First King of England - Page 10
Ethelwulph - Page 12
Ethelwulph in Wessex—Athelstan in Kent - Page 13
Ethelwulph Alone - Page 14
Ethelwulph in Kent - Ethelbald in Wessex - Page 16
Ethelbald In Wessex - Ethelbert In Kent - Page 17
Ethelbert Alone - Page 18
Plate - Ethelbert and Archbishop of Canterbury - Page 19
Ethelred I - Page 20
Alfred The Great - Page 24
Edward The Elder - Page 39
Athelstan - Page 44
Edmund I - Page 49
Edred - Page 52
Edwy - Page 55
Edgar The Peaceable - Page 58
Edward II - The Martyr - Page 66
The State of The Church of England, From The Union of The Seven Kingdoms, to
The End of The Reign of Edward The Martyr - Page 67



Book Four

The Origin of The Danes



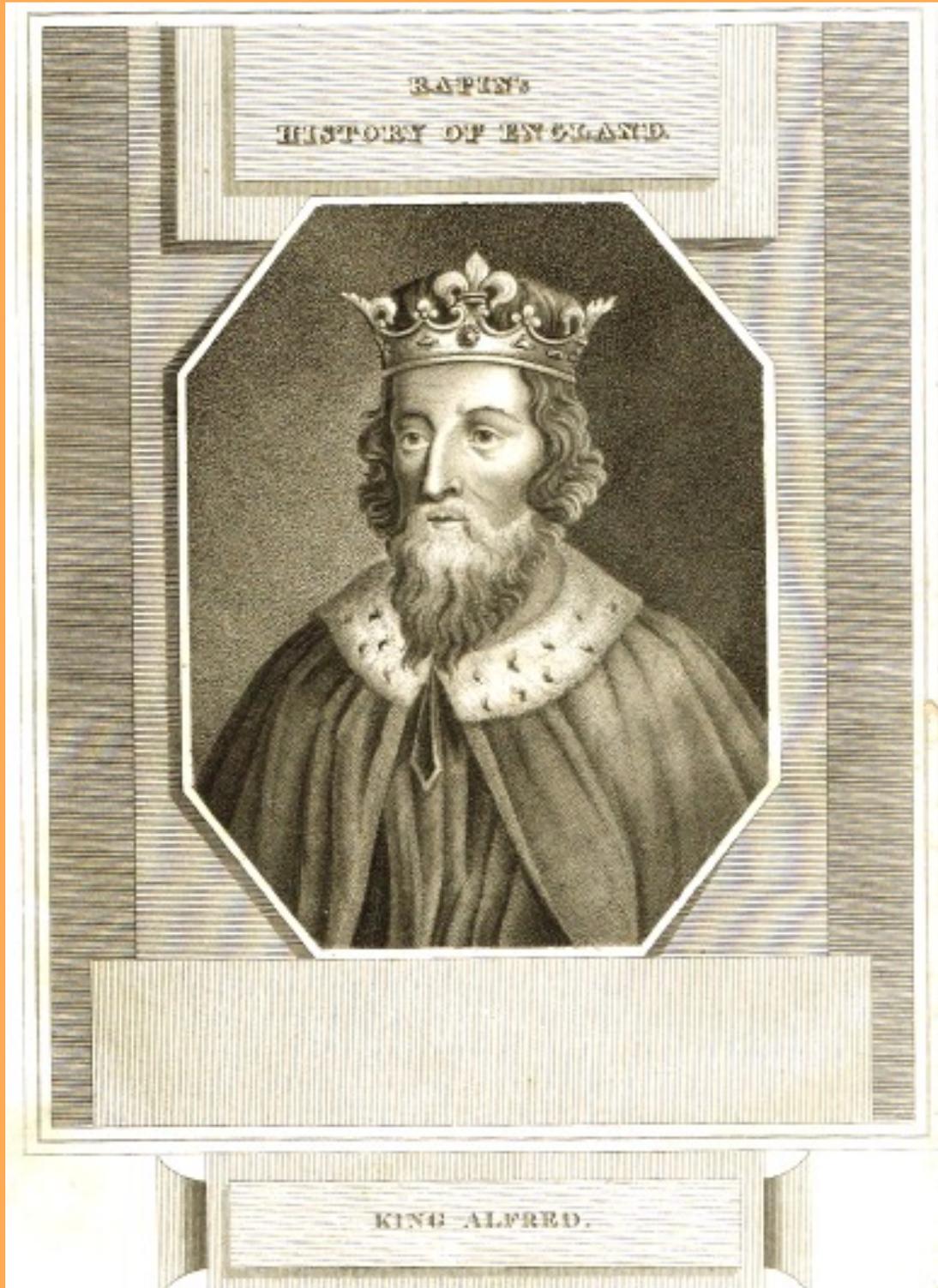
Their continual
irruptions from the
reign of Egbert to
Edward The Martyr





King Egbert





King Alfred The Great



BOOK IV

ORIGIN OF THE DANES.—THEIR CONTINUAL IRRUPTIONS, FROM THE REIGN OF EGBERT TO EDWARD THE MARTYR. —ACCOUNT OF THE LAWS AND CUSTOMS INTRODUCED BY ALFRED THE GREAT, WHICH ARE THE BASIS OF THE PRESENT LAWS OF ENGLAND—STATE OF THE CHURCH AND RELIGION, FROM EGBERT TO EDWARD THE MARTYR INCLUSIVE.

Origin of The Danes



ENGLAND, now grown more powerful by the union of the seven kingdoms, seemed to be better secured than ever from foreign invasions. Yet, shortly after this union it was, that the Danes commenced their descents with fury, equal to that wherewith the English themselves had formerly attacked the Britons. For above two hundred years these new enemies were so obstinately bent upon the ruin of the island, that it cannot be conceived either how their country could supply them with troops sufficient for so long and bloody a war, or how the English could hold out against so many reiterated attacks. Before we enter upon particulars, however, it will be necessary to premise some account of these Danes, who in the IXth century became so formidable to all Europe, and especially to England.

Scandia, or Scandinavia[1] situated in the north of Europe, contains a tract of land in length from north to south about four hundred leagues, and in breadth from east to west about one hundred and fifty. According to tradition, this country was peopled soon after the flood, by two nations, or rather two branches of the same nation, the Goths and Swedes, who founded two large kingdoms in this part of the world. From these two nations, who were sometimes united and sometimes divided, sprang, as they say, all those colonies, which after the decline of the Roman empire, over ran the rest of Europe.

In the reign of Eric the sixth king of the Goths[2], Gothland had become so exceedingly populous, that the country was unable to maintain its inhabitants. To remedy this inconvenience, which daily increased, Eric was compelled to send away part of his subjects to seek their fortune in the neighbouring isles. These colonies at length not only peopled the island, but also Jutland on the Continent, formerly known by the name of Cimbrica Chersonesus. The people thus spread over the isles and the Chersonese, acknowledged above seven hundred years the kings of Gothland for their sovereigns. Humel, the sixteenth king of the Goths, first made them independent, by letting them have for their king Dan[3] his son, from whom Denmark received its name. Norway also very probably was peopled by Gothic colonies, since it remained a long while under the dominion of the kings of Gothland. In process of time, and after many revolutions, Norway was governed by judges independent of Gothland, till about the end of the IXth century, when it became subject to a king.

The Danes and Norwegians thus separated from their ancestors the Goths and Swedes, became so powerful as to be in condition to make head against them both in several wars. The situation of their country, and the great plenty of all things necessary for building and equipping a fleet, soon made them superior at sea to all their neighbours. In time, they employed all their naval forces in plundering of ships, and ravaging the coasts of Europe. France, England, and the Low-Countries, were most exposed to their robberies. For above one hundred and fifty years the sea was covered with Danish pirates.

They were grown so powerful, that Charles the Great could never subdue the Saxons, whilst assisted by the Danes. History observes, that this emperor having sent his son Pepin to war upon the Saxons, this prince was prevented in his designs by Gothric king of Denmark's sending a reinforcement of Danes on board three hundred vessels. A northern historian affirms, that Charles the Great was never better pleased than at the news of Gothric's death, having despaired of accomplishing his ends, as long as that prince was alive.

Their natural inclination to a sea-faring life made these colonies readily abandon their country, as it gave them greater liberty of roving, and playing the pirate, on pretence of seeking new habitations. This was chiefly the rise of those piracies committed by the Danes and Norwegians, in the IXth century, in France, England, the Low-Countries, and Germany. The great booty which the first adventurers brought off; tempted the richest and most powerful of their countrymen to try their fortune in the same manner.

They entered into associations, and fitted out large fleets to go and ravage foreign countries. In short, they were so accustomed to this gainful way of trading, that very considerable fleets were put to sea. They had the authority of their kings for what they did, who, always sharing in the spoils, provided them with admirals and generals; and, when a considerable booty was in view, made no scruple even to command them in person. They were called in France Normans, that is to say, men of the north; but in England they were generally stiled Danes or Goths. There is no doubt but the Swedes and Goths very often joined with the Danes in order to go shares in the booty. It even appears that the Frieslanders were concerned with the Danes in ravaging the coasts of France and England. This doubtless is the reason the English historians call them indifferently, Getes, Goths, Jutes, Norwegians, Dacians, Danes, Swedes, Vandals, Frieslanders, their armies being composed of these several nations.

It is obvious that the intent of the Danes, when first they invaded the coasts of England, was only to plunder. And therefore they made war, not like regular troops, with some fixed and settled design, but like pirates sacking and destroying what they could not carry away. As they were divided into several independent bands, it frequently happened that no sooner was one gone, but another came; by which means the inhabitants had scarcely any respite from their incursions. This way of making war was very inconvenient. for the English, it obliging them to be upon their guard at all times and in all places, as the island was liable to be attacked on every side. On the other hand, their enemies, whose numbers were continually increasing, being headed by leaders who had no authority over each other, there was no entering into. treaty with them, one band not looking upon itself bound by what another did. Thus the English having nothing to gain, but much to lose, were at a loss what measures to take against these enemies, who carried desolation wherever they came.

The English and Danish historians, however, give very contradictory accounts of these wars. Each endeavours to magnify the advantages of his own nation, and lessen those of the opposite party. But it is too apparent that the Danes could not have got such footing in England, had not victory generally inclined to their side. We shall now therefore return to the reign of Egbert, which was left unfinished in the preceding book, where he appeared only as king of Wessex. He is now to make his appearance as king of all England, and as real monarch of the seven kingdoms of the Heptarchy.

Notes to Origin of The Danes 4

1. It contained Norway, with as much of Sweden as lay west of the Gulf of Bothnia. It was also called Baltia, whence the Baltic sea.
2. They pretend he was contemporary with Terah, Abraham's father.
3. Dan, according to northern historians, was contemporary with Gideon.



EGBERT FIRST KING OF ENGLAND



EGBERT, who began his reign over the West-Saxons in 800, finished not his conquests till 827 or 828, from which time his title of king of England is to be dated. It must be remembered, that the kingdom, which this prince was in actual possession of, consisted of the ancient kingdoms of Wessex, Sussex, Kent, and Essex, that were peopled by Saxons and Jutes. As for the other three kingdoms, whose inhabitants were Angles, he was contented with reserving the sovereignty over them, permitting them to be governed by kings who were his vassals and tributaries.

It has been seen how this prince, before he turned his arms against his countrymen, attacked and subdued the Britons of Cornwall and Wales. Though his power after that was exceedingly increased, the Welsh by their proceedings plainly shewed they designed to shake off his yoke. Egbert, informed of their intent, gave them no time to put it in execution. He marched into their country with so numerous an army, that they were forced to submit, without offering to come to a battle.

Whilst Egbert was enjoying the fruits of his victories, the Danes, who had before made two descents on England^[1] arrived in Charmouth, in Dorsetshire,^[2] with thirty five vessels; Egbert, upon the first news of this descent, marched against them with what troops he could hastily draw together, believing that at his approach they would repair to their ships. But he soon found that he had to deal with much more formidable enemies than he imagined.

After a long and bloody battle, he had the vexation to see them victorious, and his own army entirely routed. He even found himself so hardly pressed that he was forced to follow his flying troops; being indebted to the darkness of the night for his life. This mortification caused him to take other measures for his defence against the invaders. In the meantime the Danes, having no design to make conquests, were satisfied with plundering the country, and returned to their ships.

Two years after,^[3] another band of Danish pirates, having been informed by their spies that the Cornish, Britons were extremely desirous of throwing off the yoke of the English, went and landed in their territories, where they were received with joy.

Being reinforced with some British troops, they began their march in order to give the English monarch battle. They were in hopes to surprise him, but were themselves astonished to hear, that he was marching directly towards them with the same intent. His former misfortune having made him more cautious, he had kept his army in readiness to march upon the first notice of their arrival. Accordingly being informed that they had landed in the west, he hastened thither with all his forces. He engaged them near Hengisdun, in Cornwall, and obtained a signal victory, which quite effaced the dishonour of his former defeat.

After this fortunate blow, which delivered the English for a short space from the Danish invasions, we find nothing remarkable in Egbert's reign. He died in 838, after he had reigned thirty seven years, twenty years as king of Wessex only, seven years with the dignity of monarch, and ten years as real sovereign of all England. Redburg his spouse had never assumed the title and the part of a queen, because of the law made in Wessex, on account of the death of Brithric. She is said to have persuaded the king to forbid the Welsh, on pain of death, to come beyond Offa's dike, the boundary of Mercia and Wales.

Egbert left but one son, named Ethelwulph, who succeeded him both as king of Wessex, Essex, Kent, and Sussex, and as sovereign of the other three kingdoms

Notes to Egbert First King of England

1. Viz. in 789, at Portland; and in 832, in the isle of Sheppey, which they laid waste.

2. A. D. 833.

3. A. D. 835.





ETHELWULPH



ETHELWULPH was hardly warm in his throne, when a Danish fleet of thirty-three sail appeared near Southampton. After they had roved up and down for some time, they landed and ravaged the flat country. Ethelwulph, a lover of peace and ease, sent Wulferd his general against them, who beat them back to their ships. But the king had not reason long to rejoice at this victory. Before his army returned, news was brought him that more Danish forces had landed at Portland, Though he had no reason to be displeas'd with Wulferd[1], he sent Earl Ethelhelm to command the army, who was killed, and his army shamefully beaten and put to flight. Herbert, the succeeding general, was also vanquish'd, and lost his life in the battle. These two victories gave the Danes opportunity to overrun several counties, particularly Kent and Middlesex. Canterbury, Rochester, and London, were great sufferers on this occasion, the enemy committing unheard of cruelties before they returned to their ships.

AD 840] The next year **Ethelwulph** resolv'd to go in person against a body of Danes that were arriv'd in thirty-five ships, and landed on the coast of Wessex. The two armies engaging at Charmouth, the English were worsted, and thought themselves happy that their enemies after their victory, were contented with carrying off their booty, the only end of these Danish expeditions. This year (or the year before) was very remarkable for the entire destruction of the Picts. After a long war with the Scots, their neighbours, they lost two successive battles, which disabled them from making any farther resistance, Keneth II. king of Scotland, exasperated against them for having slain his father, and inhumanly mangled his corpse, told the Scots they ought not to lose the present opportunity of rooting out a nation that had been their perpetual enemies.

His advice was approv'd, and execut'd with such barbarous fury, that from that time nothing remains but the bare memory of that miserable nation, which had so long flourish'd in Britain. It is chiefly owing to his extirpating the Picts, that Keneth II was look'd upon by the Scots as an illustrious prince, and one of the founders of their monarchy.

The Danes continuing their incursions, Ethelwulph, who was naturally slothful, thought himself unable to govern alone all his dominions, expos'd as they were to the perpetual insults of foreigners. This consideration, and perhaps his tender affection for Athelstan his natural son, was the principal reason which made him come to the resolution of resigning to him the kingdoms of Kent, Essex, and Sussex, with the title of king of Kent, reserving to himself the sovereignty of all England, with the kingdom of Wessex.



ETHELWULPH IN WESSEX—ATHELSTAN IN KENT



ANDRED king of Northumberland died in 841, and was succeeded by Ethelred his son.

Roderic, surnamed Mawr, (i.e.) the Great, was then king of Wales. This prince, to whom the British historians give the highest commendation, attacked Berthulph king of Mercia with great success. As little inclined to war as Ethelwulph was, he was obliged to march in person into Mercia, to stop the progress of the Welsh prince. He easily saw the dangerous consequence of suffering the Welsh to recover any part of the country taken from them by the English.

And therefore, without staying to be solicited, he went and joined forces with the king of Mercia. Whilst Roderic had to deal with Berthulph alone, he imagined he was powerful enough to dispossess him, if not of the whole, at least of good part of his kingdom. But when he found Ethelwulph engaged in the quarrel, he desisted from his enterprise and sued for peace, which he obtained without any difficulty, both the sovereign and his vassal desiring only to live in peace and quiet. Roderic left three sons, among whom he shared his dominions, which by that means were divided into the three kingdoms of Venedotia, Demetia, and Powis.

Ethelred, who ascended the throne of Northumberland in 841, was driven out of the country three years after by one of the factions that for a long time prevailed by turns in that kingdom, and Redowald put in his place. The new king being slain shortly after by the Danes, in a descent made on Northumberland, Ethelred was recalled by his party, who were now become powerful enough to support him on the throne.

The Danes never failed to visit England once a year, merely for the sake of plunder. In 845 the earls Enulph and Osric, with bishop Alstan, gave them battle near the river Parret, in Somersetshire, and obtained a signal victory, which probably was the reason the English remained unmolested for some years.

The king of Northumberland reigned but three years after his restoration.[2] The opposite party having put him to death, a lord, named Osbert, was placed on the throne. The troubles and divisions in that kingdom gave the Danes opportunity of making frequent incursions. Whenever they came, they were sure of being welcome to the weakest party; neither of the factions scrupling to join with the Danes in order to get uppermost.

Whilst the Danes were thus employed in the north, the southern provinces enjoyed some tranquillity. But at length, in 851, they landed on the coast of Wessex, where they committed unspeakable cruelties. After ravaging the country, they were met as they were turning to their ships with their booty, by earl Ceorle, Ethelwulph's general, who waited for them at Wenbury, in Devonshire; being encumbered with their spoils, they fought in such disorder, that they were entirely routed. Some time after, king Athelstan going on board his fleet, fought the Danes near Sandwich, and took nine of their ships. He could not, however, prevent another band from wintering in the island of Shepey.

AD 852] The ill success which the Danes met with did not in the least discourage them. The next spring they came up the Thames with three hundred sail; and, nothing being able to oppose them, landed near London, where they began their usual ravages. The two kings, not expecting this sudden invasion, did not dare to take the field, till they had an army capable of withstanding them.

Whilst the two princes were making preparations, the Danes, not content with ravaging the country, attacked the towns, which, for the most part, not being in condition to stand a siege, were forced to open their gates to their merciless enemies. Having pillaged London and Canterbury, they marched into Mercia, and overthrew an army led against them by Berthulph, in defence of his country.

Nothing more opposing their progress, they would have overrun all England, if the news that Ethelwulph and Athelstan designed to intercept them in their return had not made them halt. They re-passed the Thames, with design to give the two kings battle, now encamped at Okely in Surrey, They committed in their march the most shocking barbarities. They engaged the two kings in the very place where they had encamped in expectation of the enemy.

A bloody battle was fought, wherein the English at length were victorious, and made so terrible a slaughter of the Danes, that very few escaped. Berthulph king of Mercia died this year, and was succeeded by Buthred, with the consent of Ethelwulph, whose daughter he had married.

After the battle of Okely we hear no more of Athelstan, and therefore presume he did not long survive that great victory.

Although Ethelwulph had several sons born in wedlock that were old enough to assist him in the administration of affairs, he would not give Ethelbald his eldest Athelstan's kingdom. Besides his having no great affection for him, he dreaded his restless and turbulent spirit. The young prince, who thought himself no less worthy of a crown than Athelstan his bastard brother, was much disgusted at this pretended injustice.



ETHELWULPH ALONE



ETHELWUPH was much attached to religion, both by temper, and education. He had two favourites who equally shared his affection and confidence. The first named Swithin, bishop of Winchester, was continually entertaining the king upon the vanity of all worldly glory, and the joys of Heaven. The second, called Alstan, bishop of Sherborn, was not at all pleased with the king's giving himself up wholly to his devotions. He could have wished he would have exerted himself more vigorously in repulsing the Danes, and employed his time in making preparations against their next return. To that end he never ceased animating him, by laying before him the glorious deeds of his ancestors, particularly those of his father Egbert. He was not satisfied with stirring him up by lively exhortations, but furnished him also with money to hasten his warlike preparations.

These two prelates bore an absolute sway over the king. The one had the ascendant in peace, the other in war. Alstan kept his ground a long while, by reason of the frequent invasions of the Danes, which robbed the king of great part of the time he would have employed in his devotions. But as soon as he found he was likely to enjoy some quiet, he was entirely guided by the bishop of Winchester. This prelate, taking advantage of the king's religious disposition, so engrossed him to himself, that Alstan, whose advice was not so conformable to the king's inclination, found his credit diminish. Swithin confirmed him more and more in his natural bias to a religious life. Above all he instilled into him an extreme affection for the church and clergy. By his advice it was, that this prince, as it is pretended, granted to the church the tithes of all his dominions.

Hitherto the revenues of the church were not very considerable; but by this new grant they were increased to that degree, that Ethelwulph's successors had frequent occasion to wish he had left the clergy in their former state.[3]

To this zeal for religion it was owing also that he sent to Rome his youngest son Alfred, then about five years of age. He was very fond of this child, and he imagined that the Pope's blessing would be ratified in heaven, and procure him great happiness. Leo IV, it is said, did not only bless the young prince, but gave him also the ceremony of the royal unction. This same year (853) earl Alcher, with the inhabitants of Kent, and earl Huda, with those of Surrey, fought with an army of Danes, in the Isle of Thanet. At first the English obtained some advantage; but great numbers were killed and drowned on both sides; and, in the end, the two English generals lost their lives. The next year, the Danes wintered, for the first time, in the Isle of Shepey.

Ethelwulph's great zeal for religion would not let him rest, without paying a visit to the Pope in person, and receiving his benediction. As England was then in profound peace, he resolved upon going to Rome, and accordingly did so in 855. At his arrival, Leo gave him an honourable reception, and in return met with all the respect and submission that could be expected from so devout a prince. During his stay at Rome, he diligently visited the churches, chapels, holy relics, and every thing capable of feeding his devotion.

The English college, founded by Ina and enlarged by Offa, having been burnt down the year preceding, he caused it to be rebuilt in a more magnificent manner than before; and, desiring to endow the college with greater revenues than his predecessors had done, extended the tax of Peter Pence all over his dominions, which till then had been levied only in Wessex and Mercia.

He obliged himself moreover to send to Rome yearly the sum of three hundred mancuses[4], two hundred whereof were to be expended in wax tapers for the churches of St. Peter and St. Paul, and the remaining one hundred for the Pope's private use. These are the liberalities, which gave occasion to certain historians to assert that Ethelwulph made his kingdom tributary to the holy see.

Ethelwulph, after a twelve months stay at Rome, returned home through France, where he married Judith, the daughter of Charles the bald, a young princess of twelve years of age. This unsuitable as well as unseasonable match, he having already several children, was made another pretence for the conspiracy forming against him in England.

Alstan bishop of Sherborn, formerly his favourite, took advantage of his absence to seduce Ethel bald his eldest son. This young prince, being of an evil disposition, was already very angry with his father, for not investing him with the kingdom of Kent after Athelstan's death; and therefore readily closed with Alstan's pernicious counsels. The news of Ethelwulph's marriage coming just at that very time, put the finishing stroke to the matter. He thought he had reason to fear that if there should be any children by this second marriage, they would be able to dispute with him the succession to the crown, by help of the king of France.

These considerations moved him to cabal with the nobles how to prevent the king's return. Alstan did all that lay in his power to gain the nobles and people to the prince's interest, and it was not long before he formed a powerful party in his favour. Ethelwulph, informed of these proceedings, immediately left France, and arrived in England before his son had taken all necessary measures to hinder his landing. However, Ethelbald pursued his design, and openly declared his intent to dethrone his father.

As Ethelwulph had dignified his new wife with the title of queen, in consideration of her illustrious birth, Ethelbald made use of that pretence to give some colour to his revolt. He alleged that, by the express terms of the law made upon the account of Brithric's murder, the West-Saxons were absolved from their oath of allegiance to the king. All things now tended to a civil war

which could not but prove fatal to England, as, besides other mischiefs, it would undoubtedly bring on fresh invasions from the Danes. But some of the wisest of the nobility parties, foreseeing the calamities that might ensue, by their mediation endeavoured to bring matters to an accommodation.

Though right and justice were entirely on the king's side, he consented to peaceable measures. But as he was old and easy natured, and his son highly threatened his opposers, the balance very much inclined to Ethelbald's side. By the treaty, which was managed by the umpires, Ethelwulph was obliged to resign to his son the ancient kingdom of Wessex, and to sit down contented with that of Kent for himself, under which were comprised also Essex and Sussex. Some of his courtiers advised him not to sign so partial and unequal a treaty; but he would not hearken to them. He told them, he did not set so high a value on the dominions allotted to his son, as to purchase them at the price of a civil war; and though it might be in his power to recover them, his death would soon put his son in possession again.



ETHELWULPH IN KENT - ETHELBALD IN WESSEX



ETHELWULPH outlived this partition but two years, which he spent in a manner worthy of a Christian prince, in doing acts of charity, administering justice to his subjects, and endeavouring, by the force of his example, to induce them to lead lives conformable to the precepts of the Gospel. Ethelbald on the contrary, depending upon many years to come, thought only of spending his days in licentiousness and debauchery. The Saxon annals tell us, that about this time, Edmund, a youth of fifteen years of age, was crowned king of East-Anglia. He was son to Alemund, a prince of the royal blood, who fled into Germany, when Offa seized upon East-Anglia.

It is not said whether this was done with the consent of Ethelwulph and Ethelbald, or whether, taking advantage of the dissension between the father and son, the East-Angles resolved to have a king of their own. Edmund was guided, during his youth, by the advice of bishop Humbert, who took care to form him to a virtuous life, and to instil into him sentiments of justice and equity.



of Kent.

Ethelwulph (left), finding death approaching, made his will, wherein he disposed of his dominions to Ethelbert his second son, and after his decease to Ethelred his third son, and after him to Alfred his youngest. He also ordered his heirs to maintain one poor person for every tithing in his hereditary lands. He died soon after, in 857, having reigned twenty years, leaving four sons and one daughter, who was married to Buthred king of Mercia, and died at Pavia in 888. Ethelbald, eldest son of Ethelwulph, being already in possession of the kingdom of Wessex, Ethelbert his brother had only for his share Kent, Essex, Surrey, and Sussex, comprised under the name of the kingdom



ETHELBALD IN WESSEX - ETHELBERT IN KENT



EXCEPTING that, by marrying Judith, his mother Ethelbert was in no respect remarkable. Moved, however, by the remonstrances of Swithern, bishop of Winchester, he gave great offence to the people, he was at last prevailed on to divorce her.

He died in eight hundred and sixty, and was succeeded by his brother Ethelbert, as king of all England.

Notes to Ethelwuph & Ethelbald

1. Wulfherd was probably then dead.
2. A. D. 848.
3. A. D. 853
4. A mancus was about the weight of our present half crown.



King Ethelbald





ETHELBERT ALONE



HE Danes, having left England for some years unmolested, immediately after Ethelbert's coronation renewed their invasions. As they had not been heard of for some time, they were almost forgotten, and consequently no preparations were made to repulse their attacks. This neglect gave them great advantages, and helped them to penetrate as far as Winchester, the metropolis of Wessex, which they reduced to ashes. They would have proceeded to much greater mischiefs, had not Osric and Ethelwulph, two West-Saxon earls, with some troops drawn together in haste, beaten them back to their ships.

Another time they came in autumn, and landed in the Isle of Thanet, where they wintered in order to begin their incursions in the spring. Ethelbert, very uneasy at their being so near him, offered them a sum of money to go off quietly. They accepted of his offer; but, after obtaining the money, they rushed into Kent and destroyed all the eastern part with fire and sword. However having learnt by this treachery, that nothing but force could free him from his enemies, he set about levying an army, to intercept them in their retreat, and prevent them from carrying off their booty. The dread of these preparations made them embark with their plunder so hastily, that it was not possible to hinder them.

Ethelbert's reign, which lasted but six years, affords little matter for history. He died in 866, leaving two sons, Adhelm and Ethelward, who did not succeed him, his younger brother Ethelred ascending the throne by virtue of Ethelwulph's will.



See next Page - Ethelburt King of Wessex and Kent

Ethelbert, King of Wessex and Kent; St Augustine; St Lucius; Elvanus;
Medvinus; St Alban

by John Sturt, after Bernard Lens (II), line engraving, early 18th century

Given by the daughter of compiler William Fleming MD, Mary Elizabeth
Stopford, 1931



EXPLANATION of the FRONTISPIECE. On the Fore-ground: S^t Augustine the 1st Arch-Bishop of Canterbury, converting Ethelbert the 1st K. of Kent. On the second-ground, King Lucius sending Elvanus and Medminus to Rome, where they are Baptiz'd and Ordain'd; the 1st made a B^p the other a Teacher. In a distance S^t Alban the 1st Christian Martyr. In the Far-Sceit, The Cathedral Church of Canterbury



ETHELRED I



HE reign of Ethelred was short and troublesome. From his coronation to his death, he had one continued conflict with the Danes. They began with attacking Northumberland, which at length they became masters of. They proceeded next to East-Anglia, which they also subdued; and, after extorting money from the Mercians, they entered Wessex. Notwithstanding the valour of Ethelred, and the many battles he fought, he had the vexation at his death to leave them in the heart of his kingdom, and in condition of soon completing the conquest of the whole.

The authority reserved by Egbert over the kingdoms of Mercia, East-Anglia, and Northumberland, and enjoyed also by his son Ethelwulph, was now much weakened, by reason of the frequent invasions of the Danes. Whilst the kings of Wessex were employed in the defence of their own dominions, it was hardly possible for them to think of improving their sovereignty over the three kingdoms of the Angles, to whom Egbert was willing to leave a shadow of liberty; and therefore, by degrees, the Northumbrians, as most remote from Wessex, had freed themselves from servitude. The factions that had long reigned among them, were grown cooler, and so far agreed at last, as with unanimous consent to place Osbert on the throne. This happy union would have restored Northumberland to its ancient splendour, if an unexpected accident had not revived their dissensions, and plunged the country into a gulph of remediless misery.

Osbert, who kept his court at York, returning one day from hunting, had a mind to refresh himself at the house of an earl named Bruern-Bocard, guardian of the coasts against the irruptions of the Danes. The earl happening to be from home, his lady, to whose beauty was joined the most engaging behaviour, entertained her sovereign with the respect due to his quality. Osbert, transported at the sight of so much beauty, became in an instant desperately enamoured, and resolved, let the consequence be what it would, to gratify his passion. Accordingly on pretence of having some matters of importance to communicate to her, in the absence of the earl, he led her insensibly into a private room, where, after several unsuccessful attempts to subdue her virtue, he effected his savage purpose by force. Entreaties; tears, cries, reproaches, were all ineffectual. After the commission of this infamous deed, he left the countess in that extreme distress, that it was not possible for her to hide the cause from her husband.

Though Osbert was king, and earl Bruern his subject, he resented so highly this injury that he resolved not to stop at any means to be revenged. he had a great interest with the Northumbrians, and the base action of Osbert was naturally apt to alienate the minds of his subjects from him. Accordingly, by the management of the earl, the Bernicians in a little time revolted; and, looking upon Osbert as unworthy to govern them, elected another king named Ella, whom they placed on the throne, with a resolution to support him in it. Thus the old divisions, which seemed to be quite extinguished, were kindled afresh, and Northumberland once more divided between two kings and two factions, who, continually aiming at each others destruction, were but too successful in their endeavours[1]

The two kings frequently strove to decide their quarrel by arms, but the equality of their forces preventing the scale from inclining to either side, they both maintained themselves in the throne.

The injured earl's revenge seemed to him incomplete, whilst he saw Osbert on the throne of Deira. Meanwhile, deeming it very difficult to carry it any farther without a foreign aid, he fatally resolved to procure the assistance of the Danes.

As soon as the earl arrived in Denmark, he applied to king Ivar, (or Hinguar) and giving him a particular account of the distracted state of Northumberland, intimated to him that if he would improve the present juncture, he might with ease become master of the kingdom. Ivar very readily came into an enterprise, to which he was prompted by the desire of revenge, as well as ambition. Regnerus's father having been taken prisoner in England, was thrown into a ditch full of serpents, where he miserably perished.

So barbarous a treatment having inspired Ivar with a furious hatred against the English, he embraced, without hesitation, the present opportunity of being revenged. With this view he concerted with earl Bruern all necessary measures to put their design in execution. In the spring he entered the Humber with a numerous fleet, which spread a terror over all England. He was conducted by Bruern, and attended by his brother Hubba, the most valiant person of his time. As the Northumbrians had received no intelligence of this invasion, they were in no readiness to dispute his landing. So Ivar without any difficulty became master of the northern side of the Humber,[2] whence he marched directly to York, where Osbert. was preparing an army to oppose him.

In this extremity Osbert applied to Ella, conscious of his cruel treatment of Ivar's father; and, dreading the son's revenge, willingly agreed to suspend their private quarrel, and join their forces against the common enemy. Accordingly, he proceeded with all possible expedition to bring him a powerful reinforcement. If Osbert could have resolved to stay in York till Ella's arrival, who was upon the march, he would doubtless have embarrassed the king of Denmark, who by that means would have been forced to oppose the enemy in two places at once. But his courage would not suffer him to take so good a resolution.

He sallied out of York, and attacked the Danes so vigorously, that they could hardly stand the shock, and were very near being put in disorder. But their obstinate resistance having at length cooled the ardour of their enemies, they pressed them in their turn, and compelled them at last to retire in confusion into the town. Osbert, enraged to see a certain victory, as he thought, snatched out of his hands, used the utmost endeavours to rally his troops, but was slain in the retreat with numbers of his men.

This victory having opened the gates of York to the Danes, they entered the town to refresh themselves, whilst Ella was advancing in hopes to repair the loss occasioned by Osbert's precipitation. Ivar having just triumphed over one of the kings, and not believing the other to be more formidable, proceeded to meet him. This battle was no less bloody than the first, nor less fatal to the English. Ella lost his life, and his army was entirely routed. Some say, this prince was not slain in the battle; but being taken prisoner, Ivar ordered him to be flayed alive, in revenge for his father's death. The field of battle was called Ellescrost, that is, Ella's overthrow.

After those two signal victories Ivar, without any difficulty, took possession of all Northumberland. But this not satisfying his ambition, he marched into Mercia, plundering and ravaging, without mercy, whatever came in his way. Buthred king of Mercia, having had time to prepare, he called to his assistance Ethelred his brother-in-law, who had come to join him with all the forces of Wessex. Ivar was now advanced as far as Nottingham, in expectation to surprise the king of Mercia; but when he was informed Ethelred had joined him, he stopped short, surprised himself to find his forces inferior to those of the English princes. The two armies stood near each other for some time, expecting every moment to engage.

At last, however, they parted without fighting. Buthred chose rather to bribe the enemy to retire, than to hazard a battle, the success whereof was doubtful. Besides, he was sensible there was

nothing to be got by the Danes though fortune favoured him, whereas his all was at stake in case of a defeat[3].

Ivar, from the time he arrived in England, had cruelly ravaged all the places wherever he came, particularly the monasteries, where the English endeavoured to conceal the most valuable effects. It may easily be conceived, that the idolatrous Danes had no great regard for the nuns; and that multitudes of them were exposed to their brutal lust.

We have a remarkable story upon this subject: the abbess of Coldingham, (a nunnery in the county of March, in Scotland,) upon the approach of the Danish army, prevailed with her nuns, to cut off their noses, and upper-lips, in order to screen themselves-from the outrages they were threatened with. This expedient preserved their honour, but cost them their lives. The soldiers beholding, contrary to their expectations, such monstrous visages, set fire to the monastery, causing them in the flames to complete the sacrifice of their persons, which they had already begun offering to God.

AD 870] Ivar, not having all the success he expected in Mercia, turned his arms another way, where in all likelihood he should meet with less opposition. He left Hubba his brother in Northumberland; and, embarking with the flower of his troops, made a descent on East-Anglia[4], where Edmund was king. This young prince, more used to acts of devotion than to the exercise of arms, having given the Danes battle, was easily overthrown, and compelled to save himself by flight. He thought of concealing himself in a church; but, being discovered, was brought before Ivar at Hegilsdon[5].

The conqueror offered to leave him in possession of his kingdom, provided he would acknowledge him for sovereign, and pay him tribute. Edmund refusing these terms, Ivar ordered him to be tied to a tree, and shot at with arrows, and then to have his head cut off. Humbert, bishop of the East-Angles, was also put to death by Ivar's order. Edmund's head being found some time after, was interred with his body at St. Edmund's-Bury, so called from him. Whilst the Roman Catholic religion flourished in England, great numbers of miracles were pretended to be wrought at his tomb.

Ivar being thus master of East-Anglia, appointed a Danish captain, one Godrim or Gothurn, governor of it. Afterwards, having recalled his brother Hubba from Northumberland, to be near his person, he made Egbert, by birth an Englishman, but entirely at his devotion, king of that kingdom.

The good success which the Danes had met with, during this war,[6] inspired them with hopes of becoming masters of all England, and they began to form new projects. Ivar, having perfect information of the state of the island, found he must begin with Wessex, in order to accomplish his designs. He was in hopes, could he once subdue that kingdom, the rest would follow of course. On the other hand, he was sensible that all his conquests elsewhere would be insecure, as long as the king of Wessex should be in condition to assist his neighbours.

These considerations having determined him to attack Ethelred, he embarked his troops and sailed for the coast of Wessex, where, landing his army, he advanced as far as Reading. Ethelred, who had foreseen his design, marched his army towards that quarter, accompanied by Alfred his brother. Within the compass of one year, Ethelred fought nine pitched battles, and upon all occasions gave signal of proofs of his courage and conduct, though fortune did not always prove favourable[7].

In the last battle, which was fought near Whittingham, he received a mortal wound, whereof he died in 872, after a reign of five years. Though Ethelred was noted for his great bravery, his piety is said to have surpassed even his valour. An historian tells us, that being at prayers on a day of

battle, he resolved not to move till the service was over, though the fight was begun, and the Danes had some advantage. He adds, God rewarded his piety with a signal victory that day.

Ethelred left several children, of whom Alfred, the great grandfather of Ethelwerd the historian, was one. Some say also he had a daughter called Thyra, married to Trotho VI. king of Denmark. Ethelred's sons were deprived of the crown for the same reasons the sons of his elder brother Ethelbert were set aside, Ethelwulph's will. After his death, Alfred his brother was placed on the throne without any one's questioning his title;

Notes to Ethelred I

1. Though Rapin, as the most probable opinion, makes Osbert's ravishing earl Bruern's lady the occasion of the Danes coming to Northumberland, there is also another reason given of that and the Barbarous murder of Edmund. The story goes, that Lodebroch king of Denmark going a hawking in a boat, was driven out to sea by a storm and cast upon the English coast near Yarmouth. He was seized and brought to Edmund's court, then king of East-Anglia, who, finding him a great sportsman, was pleased with his company. Bern, the king's falconer, perceiving himself outdone in his business by this stranger, drew him into a wood, on pretence of shewing him game, and barbarously murdered him. Lodebroch's dog, almost starved, came to the palace, and being fed, went away again. The dog doing this several times, made the king's servants follow him, and thus they were brought to a sight of the corpse. Bern was tried for the murder; and, being found guilty, was condemned to be put into Lodebroch's boat, and committed to the mercy of the sea, without tackling or provision. He was carried to the Danish shore. The boat being known, Bern was apprehended and examined about Lodebroch. He told them, that, being cast on the coast of East-Anglia, he had been put to death by king Edmund's order. Upon which, Ivar and Hubba, Lodebroch's sons, sailed for East-Anglia, with a numerous army, but were forced by bad weather into Northumberland.

2. A. D. 867.

3. After the conclusion of the peace, the Danes went back to York, where they remained one year.

4. In the spring of the year 869 the Danish army, putting to sea, landed at Humberstan, and destroyed the whole country, and Bardney monastery in particular, killing every one of the monks. Then, about Michaelmas, they passed into Kesteven, and there destroyed every thing in their way. About a year after, Earl Algar, and some others, assembled an army, and coming to an engagement with the Danes, defeated them, and slew three of their kings or chiefs, but Algar himself was soon after slain. Whereupon the Danes continued their ravages, and plundered and burnt the monasteries of Croyland, Petersburg and Ely; killing every person they met there. From thence passing into East-Anglia, they cut off, with all his forces, earl Ulfketull, who was come out against them; and so, taking possession of that kingdom, wintered there.

5. Now called Hoxon in Suffolk.

6. A. D. 871.

7. The first battle in these parts between the English and Danes, (three days after the coming of the Danes,) was fought at Inglefield in Berkshire; in which the English got the victory. Four days after, there was another fight at Reading, in which Ethelred and Alfred were overcome. But, four days after that they defeated the Danes at Aston, near Wallingford; and Easrege, the two Sidrocs, and several thousands of Danes, were then slain. A fortnight after, the English were beaten at Basing in Hampshire and again, two months after, at Marden in Wiltshire, in which last battle Ethelred received his death's wound. After the battle of Basing, there came a fresh army of Danes from beyond sea, and joined those that were already in England.



ALFRED THE GREAT



ALFRED was no less infested with the Danes than his predecessor. This prince, as well as his brother Ethelred, had frequent occasion of exercising his valour, firmness, and all the other virtues heaven had adorned him with. Their fortune however, was different; as Ethelred was never reduced to so deplorable a condition as Alfred, so on the other hand, he was never raised to that height of glory.

Ethelred had left the affairs of his kingdom in a deplorable condition. The Danes, already masters of Northumberland and East-Anglia, were in the very heart of the kingdom of Wessex. Notwithstanding the many battles Ethelred had given them, they were in possession of several towns; and not only kept their footing in the country, but had reason to hope they should soon go through with the conquest of it. Alfred had scarcely been a month on the throne, when he found himself obliged to take the field against these formidable enemies, who were advanced as far as Wilton.

Thither it was that he marched to attack them the first time, after his brother's death. He flattered himself for sometime that victory would incline to his side; but the scene changing suddenly in favour of the Danes, he was forced at length to leave them masters of the field of battle. However, his loss was not so considerable, as to make him despair of being revenged. As the Danes had also lost abundance of men, he incessantly to put his army in condition to give them battle again, before they should be reinforced.

They were astonished at his expedition; and, though victorious, sued for peace; offering to march out of his dominions, on condition he would molest them in no other part of England. He gladly accepted their offer, looking upon it as very advantageous, in his present circumstances. This treaty gave him time to prepare against afresh invasion, which he had every reason to expect.

AD 872] The Danes quitting Wessex retired to London, which they had taken during the late war. Ivar was gone back to Denmark, having left the command of the army to his brother Hubba, who, tied up from attacking Wessex, turned his arms against Mercia. Buthred knowing he was unable to resist, since Alfred was bound not to send him any succours, thought it his wisest course to buy off the Danes with a sum of money, and save his country from their depredations.

Upon the receipt of the money, they marched towards Northumberland,[1] designing to take up their quarters with their countrymen. But provisions running short, by reason of the devastations themselves had made there, they were under a sort of necessity to return into Mercia. Before they left Northumberland, they deposed Egbert whom they had placed on the throne, and put Ricsige, a Danish earl, in his room. Buthred, finding they were come again into his dominions, complained of their breach of faith; but, without minding his complaints, they obliged him to give them another considerable sum to save his country from the destruction it was threatened with. But no sooner was the money paid, than they fell to plundering and ravaging, and let Buthred know that even his own person was in danger.

The fear of falling into their hands obliged him to abandon his kingdom, and retire to Rome, where he spent the residue of his days in the English college. Mercia being thus left without a king, and Alfred under an obligation to send no assistance, the Danes without difficulty became

masters of that spacious kingdom. However, not to alarm the Mercians too much, they set over them for king Ceoluph, one of Buthred's domestics. Though the new king was an Englishman, yet holding the kingdom in trust only, till his master should otherwise dispose of it, he resolved to make use of his time to fill his coffers; so that the Mercians suffered as much by the continual rapines and extortion of their countryman, as they would perhaps have done by the hands of a foreigner.

Though the Danes were masters of Mercia, East-Anglia, and Northumberland, they were not contented. They could not forbear looking upon Wessex, which contained the other four kingdoms, with a greedy eye. But as they had always met there with princes that disputed every inch of ground with them, they were fain to make an alliance with Alfred till a favourable opportunity presented itself of executing their designs upon that kingdom.

Meanwhile, they fell to manuring their lands, and began to consider the country, which they had so often and so terribly laid waste, as their own; England being thus divided between the English and Danes, peace and tranquillity seemed on the eve of being restored. The Danes appeared satisfied with their lot, and Alfred thought himself happy in the preservation of his paternal dominions.

Whilst Alfred, however, flattered himself with the enjoyment of some quiet, new troubles were preparing for him in Denmark.[2] Halfden, a Danish general, had fitted out a fleet, with which he came and made a descent on East-Anglia. The season being far advanced, he lay still all the winter, expecting the spring, in order to invade Wessex. The arrival of Halfden with fresh Danish troops, ought to have put Alfred upon his guard, since it was but too plain they were designed against him. However, trusting to the treaty he had lately made with the Danes, he remained unconcerned, of which Halfden did not fail take the advantage.

In the beginning of the spring, he put to sea, and went and took by surprise Warham Castle, the strongest placed in all Wessex. The English hitherto seemed not to know what sort of enemies they had to deal with. They considered the Danish irruptions as a regular war, wherein the whole nation was concerned. Accordingly, they imagined that a treaty concluded. with one band or party was obligatory to all the rest.

But the Danes entered, with the consent of their kings into private associations to man out fleets and go shares in what booty they could get in England and other countries. For this reason, the several bands were independent of each other, each thinking themselves bound by no other treaty but what they entered into themselves. Alfred had made an agreement with Hubba; but Halfden did not look upon himself as included in it. However, the English considering the surprise of Warham as a real treachery, called heaven and earth to witness the violation of the treaty.

But Halfden, regardless of their complaints, was about to penetrate farther into Wessex, had not Alfred prevented him by entering into a particular treaty with him. The author of his life says, the Danes swore by the holy relics of the church, that they would never set foot again in Wessex[3]. In all appearance it cost the king dear to bring them to these terms.

It is something strange that Alfred should insist upon men's swearing by the holy relics, who, being yet Pagans, could not think themselves, more strongly bound by this than their usual oath, by their bracelets. However, they made no more conscience of this, than of their former oaths; but broke it even. before they were out of Wessex. As they were marching towards Mercia, they met a body of English horse, who were riding in a careless manner, by reason of the treaty's being concluded, and unexpectedly setting upon them, slew the greatest part of them. The horses they took upon this occasion were of service to carry them with the more speed towards the western parts of Wessex, where they laid siege to Exeter.

AD 876] Alfred finding it was in vain to conclude treaties with such perfidious people, :resolved to take more effectual measures to secure himself from their treachery. To this purpose, he convened a general assembly; and, in a pathetic speech, plainly shewed them, they had nothing to trust to but their valour and courage to deliver them from their miseries; that upon so urgent an occasion there was a necessity of venturing their lives in defence of their country; and of sacrificing part of. their estates to preserve the rest; in fine, that a generous resolution was the only means left to avoid the calamities their neighbours had fallen under.

These remonstrances having produced the effect he expected, an army was levied, with which he engaged the enemy seven times in one campaign. But as fortune was not equally favourable to him in all these engagements, he was once more constrained to treat with the Danes; and the new treaty, by which the Danes were obliged to return no more into Wessex, was better kept than the former.

The West-Saxons looked upon the retreat of these formidable enemies as a great deliverance. But they were not yet at the end of their miseries. This band, that had struck them with such terror, were scarcely gone, when a new swarm arrived under the command of Rollo, the famous Norman general, who became afterwards the scourge of France. By good fortune, Alfred was prepared to receive them. After some attempts; Rollo, despairing of procuring a settlement in England, resolved to go in quest of one in France. In all probability, finding the best part of England in possession of his countrymen, and Alfred ready to dispute the rest with him, he imagined he had better prospect in France.

After Rollo's departure, Alfred enjoyed some repose, which afforded him leisure to think of means to prevent these frequent invasions. He found no better or readier way than to equip a good fleet, and engage the Danes before they came to land, where they generally had the advantage. As, hitherto, the engaging them. at sea had not been thought of, their ships were only fit for transports, whereas those, now built by Alfred, were built for warfare[4]. It was not long before he reaped the fruit of this wise precaution. His fleet meeting with six Danish vessels, gave chase to them, and one of the largest being taken, the soldiers and mariners were thrown overboard. This first engagement was followed by a much more considerable one. An hundred and twenty sail of Danish transport ships making to the shore in order to land, their men, the king's fleet attacked them, and sunk the greatest part of them. The next year another Danish fleet sailing westward, met with so violent a storm, that all the ships perished, except a few that fell into the hands of the English.

Alfred, encouraged by these successes, resolved to attack the Danes in the west, where they had fortified themselves by the taking of Exeter. Besides, the Cornish men had uniformly assisted them. He executed this resolution with such courage and success, that in the end he obliged the Danes to give him hostages, and entirely abandon Wessex. They retired into Mercia, where, being weary with leading such unsettled lives, they were incorporated with their countrymen, who were in possession of that kingdom. After that, they deposed, with one consent, Ceoluph, and divided the land among themselves.

What kind of government they established, we know not; the English historians, passing over in silence the civil affairs of the Danes, relate only their wars. Thus an end was put to the kingdom. of Mercia, after it had subsisted near three hundred years.

The year before the kingdom of Northumberland had met with the same fate. Halfden, who was gone thither, made Egbert king in the room of Ricsige, who died in 876. The new king, or Vice-Roy, was of no long continuance. In the first year of his reign Halfden dethroned him, and divided the land among his countrymen. Thus the kingdom of Northumberland, which had lasted three hundred and thirty years from the time of Ida the first king, was parcelled out among the Danish officers.

Though the Danes were in possession of three of the ancient kingdoms of the Heptarchy, there was not room enough for all those that were already in England, and for those which were continually coming over with intent to settle. The newcomers beheld Wessex with a greedy eye. On the other hand they, who had shared the lands of the other kingdoms among them, perceiving their countrymen envied their good fortune were apprehensive that they might endeavour to dispossess them, if they were not otherwise provided for.

This made them all agree to invade Wessex, and exert their utmost to conquer that kingdom, which hitherto had so bravely withstood their attacks.[5] They carried on their design with all possible secrecy and expedition. On a sudden appeared in the field a more formidable army of Danes than had yet been seen, advancing towards Wessex before Alfred could possibly put himself in a posture of defence. They marched directly to Chippenham, one of the finest and strongest cities of the kingdom.

The taking of this place, which the Danes made themselves masters in a few days, inspired the West-Saxons with such terror that they had no longer the courage to defend themselves. Some fled into Wales or beyond the sea, while others went over to the Danes and swore allegiance to them. In this general revolt Alfred was left alone with a few domestics, who, out of duty and affection were unwilling to abandon him in adversity.

But as they were chargeable to him, and could do him little service, he dismissed them all, that he might with more ease shift for himself. Such was his distress, that he was forced to conceal himself at a Neat-herd's, in the isle of Athelney in Somersetshire[6]. This place was surrounded with a large morass, through which there was but one narrow footpath leading to the Neat-herd's cottage, that was hid by bushes and briars. In this place the king lay concealed for some time, from his friends as well as enemies, without being so much as known by the Neat-herd's wife, who employed him about her little household affairs[7].

This was a wretched situation for a prince; but he had not been six months in his retreat, when the scene was shifted by a lucky and unexpected turn in his affairs. It is pretended by the monks that this happy change was revealed to him in a dream by St. Cuthbert, formerly bishop of Lindisfarn, who appeared to him and told him, he should suddenly be raised to an infinitely more glorious state than that from whence he had fallen.

Hubba, who commanded the Danish troops in the absence of his brother Ivar, had invaded Wales, and destroyed all with fire and sword. After which he entered Devonshire in the kingdom of Wessex, with the same intent. At his approach, the earl of Devon, with a handful of brave men, retired into Kinwith castle to avoid the first shock of the Danish fury. Hubba was not long before he laid siege to the castle, not doubting the garrison, being few in number, would soon be obliged to surrender.

The earl of Devon, finding all the defence he could make would be to no purpose, took a sudden resolution. He represented to the besieged the danger they were in of falling into the hands of their merciless enemies, and assured them they had but one way to escape, which was, by opening themselves a passage with their swords through the enemy's army. He told them the enterprise was not rash and desperate as they might imagine; that undoubtedly the Danes were very negligent and secure, not regarding a handful of men pent up within walls; that therefore what he proposed was far from being impracticable, provided they gave the enemy no time to prevent it; that after all they ventured only their lives and liberties, which would be in much greater danger by standing a siege.

This remonstrance had such an effect upon the besieged, that, without farther deliberation, they sallied out sword in hand upon the Danes, and, by their sudden and furious attack, put them immediately in extreme disorder. This happy beginning made them forget their first design, and inspired them with a resolution to pursue their advantage. They continued therefore to press the

Danes with fresh impetuosity, without giving them time to recover themselves; and, having at length entirely dispersed them, made a dreadful slaughter of them[8]. Hubba was slain[9], and his famous standard called Reafan, or the Raven, fell into the hands of the English.

The Danes entertained a notion, that there was a secret virtue in this standard, which Ivar's sisters had wrought with their own hands[10]. By the help of a strong fancy, they imagined they saw this raven, before a battle, clap his wings in token of victory, or hang down his head, as a presage of their defeat. This at least is what historians tell us, adding, that the loss of their standard did not a little contribute to dishearten them afterwards.

The news of this defeat, and the death of The Danish general, having reached Alfred in his retreat, he immediately considered how to turn this lucky blow to his advantage. He sent word to his friends, where he was, that they might come and consult what was to be done. After he had conferred with them, he gave them orders to draw together in several parts of the kingdom small bodies of troops, which at a minute's warning might be ready to join each other[11]. The most difficult as well as most important point was, to know exactly the posture of the enemy, that measures might be concerted accordingly.

Alfred, not knowing who to pitch upon for this necessary service, took one of the boldest resolutions that ever entered into the thoughts of a prince; which was, to go himself into the Danish camp, and be informed by his own eyes of the condition of the enemy. To this end, having disguised himself and taken a harp in his hand, as though he had got his livelihood by playing on that instrument, he entered the Danish camp, and stayed there several days, observing, to the utmost of his power, every thing he wanted to know.

Among other things, he took notice, that whereas generally the Danes were wont to encamp and entrench themselves on a hill, they had neglected to do so now. They had not so much as placed any advanced guards to secure the avenues to their camp, as having nothing to fear, since the enemy had no army in the field. Having observed every thing, he returned to his friends at Athelney, and appointed Selwood forest[12] for the general rendezvous of all their troops. This affair was transacted so secretly and expeditiously, that in a little time the king at the head of an army appeared near the Danes before they had the least intelligence of the matter. They were in the utmost consternation when they saw on a sudden the English army approaching to attack them. Alfred was unwilling to give them time to come to themselves; and, therefore, briefly exhorting his troops not to have the least dread of an army already vanquished by their fears, gave the signal of battle.

The Danes, though assaulted thus unexpectedly, defended themselves with great courage. But whether they had not time to draw up their troops in order, or the loss of their standard had possessed them with an idea that their gods were averse to them, they were at length entirely routed, and almost their whole army cut in pieces: the few that escaped betook themselves to a castle, where they were immediately besieged. Alfred taking advantage of their consternation, pressed them so briskly, that, in fourteen days, they were brought to capitulate.

The terms he granted them were more advantageous than they had a right to expect in their circumstances. He articed to give up the lands of East-Anglia, to those that were willing to turn Christians, but required the rest immediately to quit the island, never more to set foot in England, and to give hostages for the performance of articles. Guthrum, governor of East-Anglia, who since the death of Hubba commanded the Danish army, agreed to these conditions, and came to Alfred, with thirty of his chief officers, having shipped off all those that refused to be baptized[13].

This great victory set Alfred at the height of his wishes. He had, by one single battle, driven out the Danes, and recovered his kingdom, and saw every day his subjects flock to him, whom fear had dispersed or constrained. to submit to the enemy.

He gave Guthrum and his officers kind reception, and kept his word faithfully with them. He invested the Danish general with the title of king of East-Anglia, which was wholly inhabited by Danes. It was, however, next to impossible that all should be equally satisfied with their lot. Several of the Danish bands accepted of the terms of the last treaty only because they knew not where to go, having elsewhere neither house nor home. If they seemed desirous to turn Christians, it was to procure a subsistence, in expectation of a favourable opportunity to return to their old course of life[14]

When it was least expected, the most considerable among them, headed by one Hastings, earnestly solicited Guthrum to renew the war in Wessex[15]; but not prevailing, they put to sea, and went and ravaged the coasts of Flanders. Shortly after, another and no less numerous troop, informed of the great booty which the first ravagers had met with at Ghent, shipped off to join them. These two bands thus united overran Brabant, Haynault, Flanders, Picardy, and Artois,[16] acting unheard of cruelties.

After which, being again divided into two bodies, one of them sailed back for England, in hopes of plundering the country, where they imagined they should come unexpected. Having landed in Kent, they marched towards Rochester, with design to surprise the city. But Alfred, who, contrary to their expectation, had his army in readiness, speedily marching that way upon the first notice of their arrival, his approach made them fly to their ships in such haste, that they left their plunder behind them. The vigilance of this prince having prevented their designs upon England, they returned to France; and, rejoining their companions, continued their devastations in that kingdom.

AD 882] Hitherto the English had been only upon the defensive. Exposed to the continual invasions of the Danes, and uncertain where the enemy would land, they were generally surprised, before it was in their power to defend themselves. The seacoast remaining uninhabited, there was nothing to hinder these rovers from landing where they pleased. Alfred being in peace, which he had never enjoyed till now, resolved to put his affairs in better order.

His first care was to equip a considerable fleet, the advantage of which he had already experienced. As soon as his fleet was in condition to sail, the admiral had orders to cruise along the coasts, and attack all the Danish ships in what place soever he should meet them. He surprised sixteen in the port of Harwich, of which, taking some and sinking the rest, he brought off a considerable booty. Guthrum, incensed at this act of hostility in one of his harbours, suffered the parties concerned to endeavour to retrieve their losses, and even furnished them with means. It was not long before they found an opportunity of attacking in the night the king's ships, and had some advantage over them. However, the fleet kept the rovers in awe, and freed England from their ravages.

Alfred having thus secured the seacoasts, diligently set about fortifying the rest of the kingdom with castles and walled towns. He repaired those that were gone to ruin,[17] and built others in so strong a manner, that they could not easily be assaulted. However, he could not be entirely guarded against them, without the possession of one important place. This was the city of London, considerable both for largeness and situation, and which being in the hands of the Danes would give them a free passage into Wessex, whenever they had a mind to invade his dominions.

This consideration made him resolve to invest it, knowing the garrison to be weak and unable to stand a long siege. Accordingly, the besieged were in a little time forced to capitulate. He was no sooner master of this great city, but he very much added both to its strength and beauty. He committed the government of it to Ethelred; who had married his daughter Elfreda or rather gave it him in fee, with the title of earl of Mercia.

The great number of towns repaired and fortified by Alfred found him employment some years. These fortifications served equally to defend the kingdom against the foreign Danes, and to keep

those in awe that were settled in the island; who, seeing all the precautions taken by this wise prince, were much more disposed to remain in submission. They even permitted several of the English, whom they had driven from, their habitations, to return and live among them under the king's protection[18].

Then it was that Alfred had the satisfaction to see peace and tranquillity restored, after so many years of troubles. This happy calm lasted twelve years during which he was constantly employed in procuring the good and benefit of his subjects, till he was interrupted by fresh invasions; of which to preserve the thread of the narrative, we shall at once proceed to speak.

AD 893] The Danes, who under the conduct of Hastings, ravaged for twelve or thirteen years. together France and the Low-Countries, were not. satisfied with the prodigious booty they had gained. According to the custom of pirates, as they prodigally squandered away what they had acquired without pains or labour, they were always under a necessity of renewing their ravages in order to have wherewithal to subsist. However, disheartened by two terrible checks given them by Eudes and Arnulph kings of France and Germany, they resolved to return to England.

Accordingly they fitted out three hundred ships, which they divided into two fleets. With the first, consisting of two hundred sail, they arrived on the coast of Kent, and took Appledore. This place, which was then very considerable, made them masters not only of that province, but of Sussex and Surrey. The other fleet, commanded by Hastings, entered the Thames, and landed at Milton, in Kent[19].

Alfred was then in East-Anglia, on account of Guthrum's death, and on some complaints of his subjects against the inland Danes. As he had received no intelligence of their designs, he had made no preparations for his defence. All he could do for the present was to take a new oath of fidelity from the East-Anglian Danes, which they regarded only whilst he stayed with them. After his departure, they went and joined Hastings, in order to share in the plunder: Alfred, however, drew together what troops he could, and marched against the Danes who were pillaging Kent. But being informed by the way, that another body of Danes had entered Wessex, he altered his course, and advanced towards these last, as judging them most dangerous. The Danes, who were now before Exeter, hastily raised the siege.

It is impossible to give the correct particulars of this war, so confusedly are they related by the historians. We are ignorant also by what fortunate accident Alfred saw himself freed on a sudden from his enemies, who were spread over his whole kingdom. Thus much however is certain, that, after they had reduced England to a deplorable state, the last comers retired. Their sudden departure, it is probable, was owing to the plague, which raged then in England, and swept away great numbers of Danes as well as English. The greatest part of the Danish rovers returned to France, under the command of Hastings; but they did not stay there long.

Presently after, Hastings had new projects on foot. The terror he had every where spread along the seacoasts having put all upon guard, he resolved to steer his course where he was not expected, and sailed for the Mediterranean. Whilst there, he found means, by an impious and perfidious stratagem, to become master of Luna, situated on the coast of Tuscany. He pretended to be extremely desirous of turning Christian, and was actually baptised by the bishop, whom he had sent for. Some days after, the bishop was told, his new convert had departed this life, and died like a good Christian, earnestly desiring to be buried in the church of Luna, to which he had bequeathed a considerable legacy. By this device, a great number of Danes, on pretence of tending the corpse, entered the city, and immediately fell to murdering and plundering the inhabitants. Hastings, after so much mischief done to England, France, and the Low-Countries, chose at length for his retreat, the city of Chartres[20] which Charles the Simple presented him with, on purpose to keep him quiet. Here it was he ended in peace a life, almost wholly spent in plundering the maritime countries of Europe.

The Danes, that refused to follow him when he left England, put themselves under the command a one Sigefert, and settled in Northumberland. For some time these also committed ravages on the coast of Wessex, without venturing, however, to advance into the country, by reason of their small number, and at last they retired to seek their fortune elsewhere.

Alfred, being at length freed from his enemies, passed the rest of his days in profound tranquillity. Hitherto we have considered this prince as a warrior only, sometimes victorious and sometimes vanquished; but, whether prosperous or unfortunate, showing on all occasions signal marks of valour and military conduct[21] It is now time to display his other virtues, and set him in another light. Henceforward he is to appear as a just, learned, and religious prince, a lover of his subjects, and an indefatigable promoter of arts, sciences, justice, and religion. But, not to confound his political with his moral virtues, we shall begin with what he did for the good of his people, as sovereign, and then speak of his private life, and manner of regulating his domestic affairs.

As the laws, during the wars, had been very much trampled upon, and were become almost unknown to the people, he employed himself for some time, in making a collection of the best laws he could find. He inserted some of the judicial laws[22]: of the old Testament, and several of those formerly enacted by Ina king of Wessex, and Offa king of Mercia[23], in their respective kingdoms. To these he added many of his own, adapted to the circumstances of his people.

Throughout these laws may be observed, an ardent zeal for justice, and a sincere desire of rooting out oppression and violence[24]. They were indeed mild, if compared to those of later ages, seeing they punished most offences by mulcts and fines[25]. But the strictness wherewith Alfred caused them to be observed counterbalanced their lenity. If with respect to private persons the rigour of the law was somewhat abated, it was not so with regard to corrupt magistrates; to such Alfred was ever inexorable. He was very sensible it would be in vain to oblige his subjects to an exact observance of the laws, if care were not taken that the magistrates should give them a good example. History takes notice of his executing four and forty judges within the space of a year, for not doing justice[26]

These precautions seemed to be sufficient to hinder the poor and low from being oppressed by the rich and great. But as Alfred was sensible the spirit of oppression naturally grew upon men in authority, he studied to prevent that inconvenience. To that end, he ordered, that in all criminal actions twelve men, chosen for that purpose, should determine concerning the fact, and the judge give sentence according to their verdict. This privilege, enjoyed by the English to this day, is doubtless the noblest and most valuable that subjects can have. An Englishman accused of any crime is to be tried only by his peers, that is, by persons of his own rank. By this means, he is out of all danger of being oppressed, how powerful soever his accusers may be. These twelve men, chosen out of many others, with the approbation of the person accused, are called by the collective name of Jury. These are properly the persons by whom the life or death of the party accused is determined.

The wars had caused such disorders and licentiousness in the kingdom, that vagabonds and vagrants every where abounded, who committed all manner of crimes with impunity, their poor and mean condition screening them from justice. As they had no settled abode, upon committing any offence, they shifted their quarters, and went where it was difficult to discover them. Alfred, beholding with indignation honest men thus exposed to the insults of villains, was extremely desirous to put a stop to such great mischief. Having consulted those whom he judged capable of giving advice, he took the following method to prevent any person from living in his dominions, without being obliged to give an account of his actions. He divided all England into shires or counties, the counties into hundreds, and the hundreds into tythings. This being done, all the inhabitants of the kingdom were obliged to belong to some tything; whoever did not was looked upon as a vagabond, and as such denied the protection, of the law. Every householder was to answer for his wife, his children under fifteen years of age, and his domestics.

If any one by his way of living fell under suspicion, he was obliged to give security for his good behaviour: in case he could find none, the tything threw him into prison, to prevent their being liable to the penalty he should incur by any offence. Thus the householders being responsible for their families, the thing for the householders, the hundreds for the tythings, and the counties for the hundreds, everyone was watchful over his neighbours' actions. If a stranger guilty of any crime made his escape, information was taken of the house where he lodged, and if he had been there three days, the master of the family was condemned to pay his fine. But in case he had not stayed so long as three days, the householder was acquitted upon making oath he was not privy to his crime.

To prevent the kingdom from being infested any more by foreign enemies, Alfred disposed the Militia in such a manner as enabled him to make head against an invasion in case the Danes should renew their incursions. He kept in each county a body of troops always ready to march under the conduct of the earl or governor. Upon the first notice of an invasion, the earls had orders to join forces at certain places, under the command of a generalissimo appointed by the king.

By this means, together with a numerous fleet which was always either ready to put to sea, or cruising round the island, he kept the foreign Danes so in awe, that, during the rest of his reign, they durst not attempt to make a descent. For the same reason, those that were settled in the island found themselves constrained to be quiet.

When by these wise regulations Alfred had provided for the safety of the state, he endeavoured to make the people relish the fruits of peace, by introducing trade and commerce. He ordered a great number of merchant ships to be built, which he let out to the principal merchants, for the encouragement of traffic. So that by degrees the English were in a condition to repair by this means the losses occasioned by so long a war: It is affirmed that some of these merchants traded as far as the East-Indies, whence they imported several things, before unknown to the English[27].

After this great prince had thus regulated affairs, he turned his thoughts to the arts and sciences, which the wars had almost entirely frightened from the land. To this end he invited over from foreign countries learned men, to whom he gave pensions, and dispersed them in the several dioceses, to instruct the people.

Not satisfied with this, and desirous of having in his own kingdom a nursery of learning, he founded four schools or colleges at Oxford. In the first, the abbots Neots and Grimbald read Divinity. In the second, Asserius, a Benedictine monk, taught grammar and rhetoric. In the third, John, a monk of St. David's, set up a chair for logic, arithmetic, and music. In the fourth, Johannes Scotus professed geometry and astronomy. This last was surnamed Erigena, that is, the Irishman, from the word Erin, the name of Ireland. He was also called Scotus, probably on the same account, the inhabitants of Ireland being then termed Scots.

We find moreover among the learned men encouraged by Alfred, Plegmund a Mercian, who became archbishop of Canterbury. From these small beginnings, the University of Oxford, famous throughout Europe, has attained its present height.

Though Alfred was very capable himself of knowing the best means of promoting his designs for the good of his people, he consulted others, eminent for their abilities, and paid a great deference to their opinions. He had ordered matters so, that all resolutions relating to the public were to pass through three several councils. The first was a cabinet council, to which none but those the king had a particular esteem for were admitted. Here all affairs were first debated that were to be laid before the second council, which consisted of bishops, earls, viscounts, judges, and some of the principal thanes, called afterwards barons.

This resembled the present privy council. None belonged to it but those whom the king was pleased to appoint. The third was a general council or assembly of the nation, called in Saxon, Wittena-Gemot, in which quality and offices gave a right to sit, independent of the king. This assembly, styled at present the Parliament, a name taken from the French, was composed of the two archbishops of Canterbury and York, the bishops, earls, viscounts or high sheriffs of the counties, and the thanes of the first rank, or barons.

These councils, and particularly the Wittena-Gemot, which was convened generally once a year, being for the most part held at London, it is easy to conceive that the city received by it a greater air of splendour than before. The Danes, who had been masters of it for some time, had demolished it in such manner that it was hardly to be known. It was a pleasure to Alfred to beautify it, and augment its privileges[28].

Matters of greater moment being settled, Alfred next induced the English to build their houses in a stronger and more regular manner than they had been used to. At that time, there were scarcely any but timber-houses. Alfred having raised his palaces with stone or brick, the nobility by degrees began to follow his example. But this custom did not become general till several ages after. The monasteries, we may believe, that were destroyed by the Danes, and afterwards rebuilt, had their share of this improvement, as places that were held in still greater veneration in the following than in the present century.

The religious houses, however, did not begin to be inhabited again till the following reigns. At the time we are speaking of they were almost forsaken; for the lands designed for the maintenance of the monks being wasted by the Danish wars, there was scarcely a man to be found willing to embrace a monastic life. During the reign, of Alfred, the backwardness to a monkish life was so great, that the king was forced to stock the monasteries with foreigners. But after his death, when the lands were restored to the monasteries, the zeal for that way of life began to rekindle. Whereas in Alfred's days there were more monasteries than monks; in a few years after the monks were grown so numerous, and increased daily in such a manner, that there were not religious houses enough to contain them.

Hitherto we have seen Alfred so taken up with the care of the public, that he seems to have had no time or leisure for his own private concerns. But we must have a very different idea of this prince. He was one of those happy geniuses that seem born for whatever they do, and are continually employed, without appearing to be so. He knew too well the value of time, to lose any part of it. Whilst he lay concealed in the Isle of Athelney, he made a vow to dedicate to the service of God the third part of his time, as soon as he should be restored to a state of tranquillity. Accordingly, he allotted eight hours every day to acts of devotion, eight hours to public affairs, and as many to sleep, study, and necessary refreshment. As the use of clocks and hour-glasses was not as yet introduced into England, he measured the time by means of wax-candles, marked with circular lines of divers colours, which served as so many hour lines[29]. And to prevent the wind from making them burn unsteadily, it is said he invented expedient of inclosing them in lanthorns[30].

His charities were very extraordinary considering revenues; and so much the more praise-worthy, as they were private, or at least without ostentation. He abdicated, at court or at Oxford, a great many young noblemen, who were instructed in all things necessary to render them serviceable to their country. But this was not his only method to cause the arts and sciences to flourish: his own example greatly contributed towards it; for never was prince more attached to his studies. The progress he made in learning, notwithstanding his being so long employed in his wars, and the administration of the government, demonstrate how well he improved his intervals from public business.

The author of his life assures us, he was the best Saxon poet of his time, an excellent grammarian,

author, philosopher, architect, geometrician, and historian[31] He. composed several works, that were in great esteem. Among others, he translated into Saxon, Gregory's Pastoral, Boetius de Consolatione[32], and Bede's Ecclesiastical history[33] This prince complained bitterly that from the Humber to the Thames there was not a priest who understood the liturgy in his mother tongue, and that from the Thames to the sea, there was not one who knew how to translate the easiest piece of Latin.

This universal ignorance, and the little relish which the English had then for the arts and sciences, caused the king to seek all occasions of earnestly inviting into his dominions foreigners who were eminent in their professions. He took particular care to have always about him the most able workmen and architects, and keep them employed, with the sole view of improving their skill[34].

He placed in the chairs at Oxford men famous for their learning, and allowed them handsome salaries. His aim was to stir up the emulation of the English, and stimulate them to use their endeavours to come out of that state of gross ignorance they were in. The fame of his great wisdom and piety reaching as far as Rome, the Pope sent him a large quantity of relics, and upon his account granted some new privileges to the English college. Abel, patriarch of Jerusalem, willing also to shew him marks of his esteem, sent him a present of relics.

In his domestic concerns, his prudence was no less conspicuous than in his management of state affairs. He made three divisions of his attendants, who were to wait monthly by turns. His revenues he divided in two parts, one whereof was wholly assigned for charitable uses, and subdivided into four portions. The first for alms to the poor; the second for the maintenance of the monasteries he had; the third for the subsistence of the professors and scholars at Oxford; the fourth for poor monks, as well foreigners as English.

The other half was thrown into three divisions: one was expended in his family; another in paying his architects and other curious workmen; the rest was bestowed in pensions upon strangers, invited to his court for the encouragement and instruction of his subjects.

What has been said of this illustrious prince may suffice to make known the principal events in his reign, and to give an idea of his personal qualities. We might add many more particulars, as his life alone affords matter for a large volume; but we believe we may venture to stop here; without injuring the memory of this monarch, who is justly distinguished with the surname of Great. No historian charges him with any vice; but all unanimously agree to represent him as one of the most glorious princes that ever wore the crown[35].

He died in 900, in the 52nd year of his age, after a reign of twenty-eight years and six months[36], the greatest part whereof was spent in wars and troubles. His history shews that both in war and peace he governed with prudence and steadiness. But what chiefly distinguishes him from the generality of princes, was his sincere and constant love for his people. Of this he gave demonstration, not by words only, as is too commonly the case, but by real and substantial deeds. Accordingly never was prince better beloved by his subjects.

Alfred had several children by Alswitha his queen. Some of them, particularly Edmund his eldest son, whom he designed for his successor, died before him. Of those that survived him, Edward mounted the throne after him. Ethelward, who was bred a scholar at Oxford, was a very learned man, and died in the fortieth year of his age, in 922. Elfleda his eldest daughter, wife to Ethelred earl of Mercia, became very famous in her brother Edward's reign. Alswitha, or Ethelswitha, called also Eltrude by the Flemish writers, married Baldwin earl of Flanders. Ethelgitha, who chose to be a nun, was made abbess of Shaftsbury nunnery founded by the king her father[37].

Notes to Alfred

1. A.D. 873

2. A. D. 875.

3. The most solemn manner of swearing among the Danes and other northern nations was by their Arms.

4. Alfred has justly been regarded as the restorer, if not as the actual founder, of the naval power of Britain. At this time, the ships used by the European nations were called keels, or cogs; vessels of a very clumsy form, short, broad, and low; which made them very slow sailers, and very hard to work: Alfred, observing these defects, ordered the ships to be built of a new construction. They were about twice the length of the former, and much more lofty; which made them much swifter sailers, more steady in the water, and not so apt to roll. Some of these vessels had upwards of sixty oars, and consequently required at least sixty or seventy sailors to navigate them. From this concise description, abstracted from the Saxon Annals, it is evident that a great improvement was here effected in naval architecture. The new ships were not only more beautiful, but more commodious, either for war or commerce than the former. By their length and sharpness, they ploughed the sea with greater ease and celerity. By their altitude, when employed in commerce, they secured both men and goods more effectually from the waves; and when engaged in war, they were more difficult to board, and gave the combatants the great advantage of throwing their weapons from above on those below them. They appear to have been a kind of galley, or galliots, navigated with oars as well as sails, that they might prosecute their voyage, or pursue their enemies, in a calm, as well as on a wind.

5. A. D. 878

6. Formerly called. Athelingey, i. e. the island of Nobles. It lies near Taunton, where the Thone and Parrot join. The firm ground is not above two acres.

7. She having one day set a cake on the coals, and being busied about something else, the cake happened to be burnt; upon which she fell a scolding at the king for his carelessness in not looking after cake, which she told him he could eat fast enough. Alfred then sitting in the chimney corner, making bows and arrows, and other warlike instruments.

8. There were twelve hundred slain. The place was afterwards call Hubbestow or Hubbelow, from the mount raised on the place where Hubba was buried. For it was the common way of burial the Danes to raise mounts upon the bodies of their famous men which were called Lowes.

9. S. Dunelm says, that Inguar and Haldene were also slain in this battle.

10. They pretend it was worked magically in almost an instant; in one forenoon.

11. In 878, about Easter, Alfred erected a fortification at Athelney, from whence he often sallied out, with a body of Somersetshire men and defeated the enemy.

12. This is the great wood in Somersetshire. This was done seven weeks after Easter, and the rendezvous was Petra Ecbrichti, supposed to be Brixstan in Somersetshire: staying there one night, he marched away the next morning to Æcglea, or Okely, where he encamped one night: The next day he came to Ethaudun, or Edington in Somersetshire, where the battle was fought.

13. Alfred stood godfather to Guthrum, and named him Ethelstan. He was baptized about three weeks after the conclusion of the treaty at Alre, near Athelney, with thirty of his officers, and with almost all his people. Alfred made him very considerable presents, and also to his people.

14. A. D. 879.

15. They came up the Thames, and wintered at Fulham

16. A. D. 885.

17. A. D. 887.

18. In the year 890, or 891, died Guthrum king of East-Anglia and was buried at. Headleaga (perhaps Hadley in Suffolk.)

19. The Danes built a castle here, part whereof is still remaining at Kemsley downs. They now call it Castle-Ruff. On the other side of the water, the ditches of Alfred's fortifications, with some stone work, remain also by the name of Bavord-castle, near Sittingburn.

20. Forty-two miles from Paris.

21 He is said to have fought fifty-six pitched battles with the Danes. With the Decalogue at their head. These laws of Alfred were used at Westminster, down to the reign of Edward IV.

22. And likewise Ethelbert king of Kent, who was the first that reduced the Saxon laws into writing.

23. If king Alfred, as is supposed, drew up a complete body of laws, it is now lost; for those published by Dr. Wilkins, (who has given all the laws extant from Ethelbert, the first Christian lawgiver in England, down to the Magna Charta of Henry III.) fall short of an entire system of law. Alfred's laws are ranked under two heads, I. The laws of Alfred, forty in number. 2. The league between Alfred and Guthrum, which seems to be no more than articles of pacification, and conditions on which Guthrum was to hold East-Anglia. The 37th law secures the entail of estates, and enacts, that those who have book-land (of estates in land) left them by their parents, should not alienate it from their heirs, provided there could be proof made that he that first granted the estate settled it upon condition of non-alienation. Another law forbids, the buying a man, horse, or an ox, without a voucher to warrant the sale; the occasion of which was this: when the Danes first settled in England, it was a common practice between the two nations, not only to steal horses and oxen, but also men and women, and sell them to each other. By which means owners not only lost their cattle, but men were wrongfully made slaves; to remedy which this law was enacted. Afterwards fairs and markets obtained the same privilege, vouchers had. But as to horses, the frauds were so common, that the statute of 31 Eliz. 12 revived the express law of Alfred.

24. The 40th law sets a certain value upon every limb and member, as well as upon every person, from a king to a bond-slave.

25. He used to re-examine the causes tried in his absence; and in case he found any injustice done out of favour or interest, he punished the judges severely. If they pleaded ignorance, he sharply reprimanded them, and asked how they durst presume to take a commission to determine about life and property, when they knew themselves so wretchedly unqualified! and ordered them either to know better or quit their post. Thus the earls and great men, rather than be turned out of their office with disgrace, applied themselves to study. Brompton says, justice was so strictly administered in Alfred's reign, that though there were gold bracelets hung up at the parting of several highways, no man durst touch them.

26. From the Saxon word Scyre, i.e. to branch or divide. Spelman says, that Alfred was not the first who divided the kingdom into shires, but only fixed their number and limits. Spelman ascribes to king Alfred the institution of sheriffs, under-sheriffs, and original writs, &c.

27. Malmsbury says, he sent a present to the Indies in honour of St. Thomas. Sigelin bishop of Sherborn was employed to deliver it, who performed the voyage successfully, and brought back precious stones, perfumes, and other commodities, which were then great curiosities in England. It is thought Alfred caused with these diamonds a more august and imperial sort of crown than had been used before to be composed. For in the arched roof in the cloisters of Westminster Abbey, where the antient regalia of the kingdom are kept, upon a box, the cabinet of the most antient crown, there are these words, *Hæc est principalior corona corn qua coronabantur reges Alfredus, Edwardus, &c.* This crown is of a very antient work, with flowers adorned with stones of somewhat a plain setting.

28. He repaired also, or rebuilt, Winchester and Norwich.

29. He ordered just such a quantity of wax to be made into six candles, each twelve inches long, with the division of the inches marked out distinctly. These being lighted one after another did orderly burn four hours a piece, that is, every three inches an hour, so that the whole six candles lasted just twenty-four hours, the watching of which was committed to the keepers of his chapel, whose office it was to put him in mind how each hour passed.

30. Glass was then a great rarity in England, so that the king was forced to order some fine white horn to be scraped so thin as to become transparent, and to be put into close frames of wood, which defended the candles from the injury of the wind. Thus lanthorns, though of vulgar use and estimation, were the invention of a king.

31. All this must appear the more astonishing, and must place the character of Alfred in a more exalted point of view, when we are told, that, from the general ignorance of the age, he was not taught to know one letter from another, till he was above twelve years old. A book was then put into his hand, rather by accident than by design. The queen, his mother; being in company with her four sons, of which Alfred was the youngest, and having a book of Saxon poems in her hand, beautifully written and illuminated, observing that the royal youths were charmed with its beauty, said—"I will make a present of this book to him, who shall learn to read it the soonest."—Alfred immediately took fire; and, by dint of the most sedulous application, he, in a short time, both read and repeated the poems to the queen, and received the promised reward! From that moment, reading and study became his chief delight.

32. Published at Oxford, An. 1698, 8vo. by Christopher Rawlinson, Gentleman Commoner of Queen's College. Some say it was translated by Wenefrid, bishop of Worcester; but Dr. Plot tells us Alfred, did it at Woodstock. Alfred was so delighted with this book, that he always carried it with him in his bosom.

33. Published at Cambridge in 1644, by Dr. Whelock, who observes, it is rather a paraphrase than a translation. He is likewise said to have translated the Old and New Testament. However, it is on all bands agreed he undertook a version of the Psalms, but died when it was about half finished.

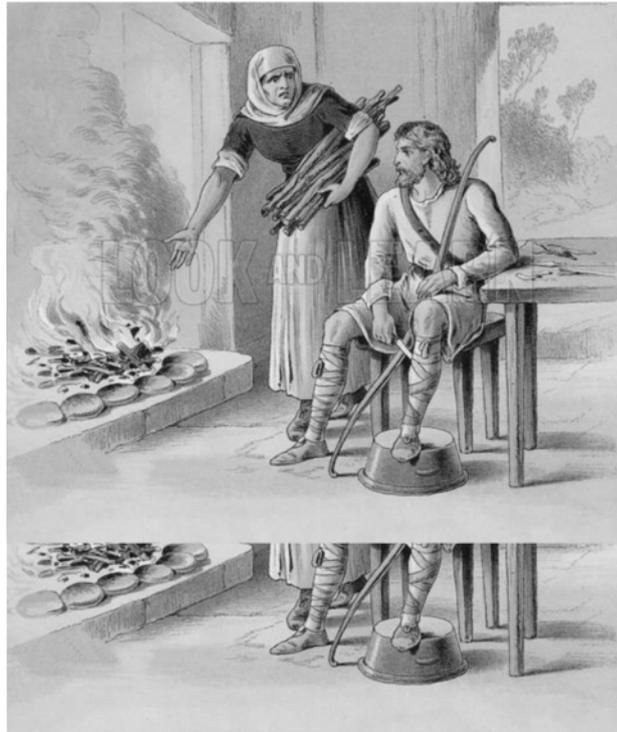
34. Asserius relates, that, amongst the various artists collected by Alfred, were several who wrought in gold and silver, and, under the instructions of their royal master, performed several works of incomparable beauty. The truth of this assertion is abundantly confirmed by a most beautiful jewel, of exquisite workmanship, that was found at Athelney, in Somersetshire. this jewel (of which a detailed account is given in the Philosophical Transactions, No. 247.) bears a Saxon inscription, to the following effect;—Alfred commanded me to be made. It is a thin plate. of gold, enamelled, and beautifully engraved with various figures, of an oblong form, rather more than two inches long, and a little more than one inch broad.

35. We have the sum of his character given us by a great man, to the following effect. O Alfred, the wonder and astonishment of all ages! If we reflect on the devout part of him, he seems to

have lived always in a cloyster. If on his conduct and exploits in the field, one would think he had spent his days in a camp. If on his writing and studies, one would conclude the University had engrossed him. And, lastly, if we regard his prudence and skill in the administration of government, he seems to have made law and politics his whole study.

36. He was born at Wanating, now Wantage in Berkshire, which was formerly a royal manor. His body was buried first at Winchester; next removed into the church of the new monastery; and, lastly, his body, monument, church, and monastery, were all removed (about two hundred years after) without the north gate of the city, since called the hide.

37. Besides this nunnery, Alfred built two monasteries, one at Athelney, and another at Winchester.



King Alfred and The Burnt Cakes





EDWARD THE ELDER

A. D. 900



WHEN Edward ascended the throne, England was almost equally divided between the English and Danes. The Danes inhabited Northumberland and East-Anglia, whence they had driven the English during the wars. The English were still in possession of Wessex, containing the ancient Kingdom of Essex, and all the country south of the Thames. Mercia was peopled with a mixture of Danes and English; the English being superior in the south and west parts, and the Danes in the east and north.

During the latter part of Alfred's reign, the Danes had remained quiet, from the fear of provoking that prince to invade their possessions. They were also pleased to enjoy some repose, in order to fortify their settlements in England. For this reason, the retreat of their countrymen was to them rather an occasion of joy than sorrow. Indeed, they could never have attained their ends, if the war had been continually renewed by the arrival of other Danes, who, under the name of friends, would have been as incommodious to them as to the English themselves.

The retreat of these dangerous guests, and the profound tranquillity spread over the whole kingdom, by Alfred's just administration, having given them time to cultivate their lands, and augment their riches by commerce, they began to entertain thoughts of shaking off the English yoke. Accordingly, they embraced the first favourable occasion to excite new troubles in England.

We have observed that king Ethelbert, elder brother to Alfred[1], left two infant sons. Ethelward, the eldest, being grown at the death of Alfred to man's estate, thought it time to assert his right to the crown. He pretended, that Ethelwulph, his grandfather, could not with justice settle the kingdom upon all his sons successively, to the prejudice of the children of the eldest. That granting he had a power to do this, there was no reason that the succession, after the death of the four brothers, should continue in the family of the youngest, when the heirs of the second were alive. At most he could but entail the kingdom of Kent, which he was in possession of, and not the kingdom of Wessex, which belonged not to him when he made his will.

These reasons appeared very plausible; yet Ethelward could meet with no encouragement from the Doubtless, the great veneration they had for Alfred's memory, made them adhere to his son, or it may be, they did not question Ethelwulph's power of settling the succession as he pleased. Ethelward, finding his countrymen unwilling to support his title, was forced to apply to the Danes.

He began his design upon the crown, with seizing Winburn, a fortified town in Dorsetshire. He expected to be attacked; but hoped, if that place should make ever so little resistance, the Danes would keep Edward so much employed in other parts, that it would not be possible for him to retake it. But his hopes were in vain. Edward came upon him with such expedition, as nearly to surprise him in Winburn; and he had hardly time to get out of the town, and fly to the Danes,

who were now up in arms. Upon this prince's coming among them, they proclaimed him king of England, pretending, as they were in possession of half the kingdom, they had as much right to Make a king, as the West-Saxons.

The retreat of Ethelwald among the Danes, made the king sensible he should be involved in a troublesome war. Not that he thought himself unable to withstand the Danes settled in England; but he was apprehensive that the foreign Danes would take this opportunity to plunge the kingdom again into its former calamities. This consideration made him resolve to do his utmost to put an end to the war, before the Danes had time to send for their countrymen to their assistance. Immediately after the taking of Winburn, he marched towards Northumberland, at the head of his army, which daily increased, by troops. coming in from all parts.

The Danes were astonished[2] at this expedition; and, finding themselves in no condition to resist him, were constrained to abandon and banish from their country the prince whom they had undertaken to protect. This fruitless attempt of theirs cost them several strongholds in Mercia, which Edward deemed necessary to secure. He did not think proper to chastise them more severely at this time, lest the war, which seemed to be over, should break out afresh, if he reduced them to a necessity of sending for succours from Denmark. He was satisfied with repairing some fortresses in Mercia, in order to confine them within narrower bounds.

Ethelred earl of Mercia,[3] and the princess Elfreda his wife, were very serviceable to the king in this war, by making head against the Mercian Danes, and preventing the Welsh from coming to their aid. It is related of Elfreda, that having suffered extremity in childbirth, she made a resolution never to come into the like case again, and was as good as her word. Thenceforward she wholly devoted herself to arms, and like a true Amazon gave proofs of her courage in all her brother's wars with the Danes. She was generally styled, not only lady and queen, but king, in admiration of her masculine and royal abilities.

AD 904] Meanwhile Ethelward, though absent, was not idle. Upon leaving England, he applied to France, and obtained a powerful aid of Normans. With these forces he landed in Essex, and easily became master of that kingdom. Edward, not expecting his enemy could have been so soon ready to make a fresh attempt, had taken care only to guard Mercia against the Northumbrian Danes, imagining Essex to be in no danger.

The arrival of the Normans roused the Danes of Northumberland and East-Anglia, and caused them to make a diversion in favour of Ethelward. Accordingly they took up arms again, and throwing themselves into Mercia, ravaged the country inhabited by the English in a merciless manner[4] Edward, not without extreme regret, saw himself forced to bear their insults, till he could draw his troops. together, which he had dismissed, as believing he should not want them so soon. The moment he was at the head of his army, he made the Danes pay dear for the mischief they had done the English in this war he gained so many victories, that the Danes lost all hopes of throwing off the English yoke, and his cousin of mounting the throne.[5]

At length Ethelward being slain in battle, and the Danish forces considerably diminished, they were not able to carry on the war with that vigour they begun it. However, they continued it two years after Ethelward's death. But having in vain endeavoured to repair their losses, they sued for peace;[6] which Edward readily granted them, on condition they would acknowledge him for sovereign as they had done his father, and the Normans forthwith return to France.

This peace could not hold long between two neighbouring nations so exasperated against one another. Accordingly[7] after three years the war was renewed. It proved fatal to the Danes, who lost in a very little time two battles. Edward, who knew how to improve his victories, took from them several towns in Mercia, and at length drove them quite out of that kingdom. Then it was that Ethelred,[8] who had all along bravely seconded the king his brother-in-law, became in reality earl of Mercia; but he was taken out of the world by death, almost as soon as that province

was united under his government. This earl was not barely governor or viceroy of Mercia. Malmsbury says, he held the country as a fief of the crown, much in the same manner as the German princes formerly held their territories of the empire.

Elfreda having taken upon her the government of Mercia, after Ethelred's death, followed the example of her father and brother, in fortifying towns, to take away from the Danes all hopes of settling in Mercia again. When Elfreda had taken these precautions, she carried her arms into Wales and, after several victories, obliged the Welsh to become her tributaries.

From the year 970, when the war between the English and Danes was rekindled, to the year 922 we find in history nothing but a long series of battles, the relation whereof could not possibly be rendered either correct or interesting.

The princess Elfreda, sister to king Edward, died during this war, leaving an only daughter named Elfwin, then marriageable. Whilst Elfreda lived, Edward seemed not to be jealous of her prosperity, and had no thoughts of dispossessing her of what she had gained in great measure by her own valour. But after her death he did not think fit to leave her daughter Edwina in possession of a demesne, which put it in her power to raise new troubles in England by some ill contrived match. Indeed, some historians affirm, that the young princess had resolved upon marrying a Danish prince[9], and that therefore her uncle deprived her of her dominions. He seized upon Mercia, and carried his niece with him into Wessex. In all probability she passed the rest of her days in a nunnery.

AD 921-922] In their wars with Edward, the Danes daily lost ground, and were at length compelled to submit. The Mercian Danes were the first that threw down their arms. The East-Angles followed soon after, and submitted without terms. The Northumbrians were the last, as being the most powerful. The progress Edward had made in the other provinces, convinced them, it would be better to submit than continue a war, which must end in their ruin. They were then governed by three kings. Sithric and Nigel his brother reigned beyond the Tyne, and Reginald, who resided at York, ruled all the country between the Tyne and the Humber. Some time after, Sithric having slain his brother Nigel, became sole king of the north.

The state of the Welsh depended in some measure on that of the Danes. As long as the Danes were in arms the kings of England left the Welsh peaceably to enjoy their liberty. But as soon as they had nothing to fear from the north, they seldom failed to attack them. At such a juncture it was, that Elfreda, assisted by the troops of the king her brother, compelled them to become her tributaries. After her death the Welsh endeavoured to free themselves from the tribute she had laid upon them; and, to keep Edward employed, sent a powerful aid to the Danes. Edward, having then other affairs upon his hands, took no notice of it: but as soon as he had concluded a peace with the Danes, he marched against Rees ap Madoc king of Wales, who was assisted by Leoffreth a Danish general.

After several skirmishes, Edward obtained a signal victory, which reduced the Welsh king to a necessity of suing for peace, with a promise of paying the usual tribute. The Britons of Cumberland, who had put themselves under the protection of the Danes, submitted also to Edward; and even the king of Scotland did homage for his kingdom to the king of England.

Edward was enjoying the fruits of his victories, feared and respected by all that could give him any umbrage at home, and greatly esteemed abroad, when death took him out of the world in 925, after a reign of twenty-four years[10]. He gained as great a reputation by his arms as the king his father; for, like him, he gave law to all England, and procured the kingdom repose. But if he equalled the great Alfred in military virtues, he was far short of him in all other respects.

He had children by three women. The first, named Egwina, a shepherd's daughter, was only a concubine. An historian relates concerning this woman, a sort of romance, which, on account of

the sequel, it is necessary to insert. Egwina, a shepherd's daughter, as she lay asleep in the fields, dreamt that the moon shone out of her body so brightly, that all England was enlightened by the splendour. Some time after, she related her dream to an old woman that had been king Edward's nurse. This woman, who pretended to interpret dreams, imagining there was something extraordinary in this, took Egwina into her house, and educated her as a person of quality.

Egwina in time became an accomplished beauty. Whilst she was in the house of her benefactress, prince Edward, before he was king, happening to pass by the place where his nurse lived, made her a visit. He cast his eyes on Egwina, immediately fell in love with her, and solicited the nurse to put him in possession of her. The old woman, who had a great affection for Edward, and had always the dream in her thoughts, yielded to his request, and brought Egwina to consent to what he desired. From that time, Edward was extremely fond of Egwina, and had by her three children, of whom Athelstan, the eldest, succeeded him. Alfred the second died before his father. The third was a daughter, called by some Editha, by others Beatrix.

By one of his wives, Edward had two sons and six daughters; Elsward the eldest son died at Oxford a few days after his father; so that he had no time to taste the sweets of a crown. Edwin the second was deprived of his just rights, and came to a tragical end, as shall be related hereafter. Of the six daughters, some were married to powerful princes, and others became nuns. Elflada the eldest was abbess of Ramsey, in Hampshire. Ogina was married to Charles the simple, king of France, and was mother of Lewis de Outre-Mer. Edilda passed her days in a monastery.

The fourth, of the same name, was married to Hugh the Great, earl of Paris, father of Hugh Capet. Edgitha was wife of Otho emperor of Germany. Edgiva the youngest espoused Lewis the blind, king of Provence, who had a son by her, named Constantine.

By Edgiva, another of his wives, Edward had two sons and two daughters, Edmund and Edred. The two sons were both kings of England. Edburga was a nun, and her sister Edgiva was married to Lewis prince of Aquitain.

During the reign of Edward the elder, Rollo, chief of the Normans in France, obtained such firm footing in Neustria, that it was not in the power of the French to drive him thence. Charles the Simple, then king of France, was forced, in order to free himself from the continual fears of so troublesome a neighbour, to give him a grant of that part of Neustria which he was possessed of, lying between the Seine and the Epte, with the title of Duke of Normandy. The conditions were, that Rollo should do homage to the crown of France, be baptized, and marry Giselle the king's daughter. Rollo died in 917. William his son, by Poppa daughter of the earl of Bayeux, was his successor.

Notes to Edward The Elder

1. A. D. 901.

2. A. D. 902

3. A. D. 903.

4. They overran and spoiled all Mercia, as far as Cricklade in Wiltshire; and there passing the Thames, carried away whatever they could find in Brædon forest in the same county. King Edward pursued them, and wasted all the country that lies between the devil's ditch upon Newmarket heath, and the Ouse. Edward recalled his forces from thence; but the Kentishmen staying behind, were surrounded by the Danes; whereupon there followed a smart engagement, in which several were killed on both sides, and among the rest Ethelward; but the Danes got the victory.

5. A. D. 905.

6. A. D. 907

7. A. D. 910.

8. A. D. 912.

9. Reginald king of the Danes.

10. He died at Farrington in Berkshire, and was buried at Winchester by the side of his father.



Edward The Elder





ATHELSTAN

A. D. 925



ELSWARD, Edward's eldest son, surviving his father but a few days, and the rest of the legitimate children being all under age, Athelstan, son of Egwina, was placed on the throne. Though this prince had a mixture of base and royal blood in his veins, the latter had so far the ascendant, that the blemish of his birth was entirely effaced by his noble qualities. Alfred his grandfather had conferred the honour of knighthood upon him, by girding him with a sword according to the custom of those days. Edward his father had committed the care of his education to earl Ethelred his brother-in-law, and the princess Elflada his sister, who did their utmost to train him up to virtue. As he had been present at all their councils, and attended them in all their warlike expeditions, he had acquired such great experience both in military and political affairs, as, joined to his natural parts, gained him universal esteem.

When he mounted the throne, he was in his thirtieth year. History does not inform us what determined the English to give the crown to this prince; but it is probable that, after the death of Elsward, notwithstanding his illegitimate birth, Athelstan's mature age and noble qualities gained him the preference before Edwin, the eldest of the legitimate sons, who was too young to govern[1]

This election, however, was not pleasing to all. Some of the principal lords disdaining to be governed by a bastard conspired to dethrone Athelstan, and place Edwin in his room. Alfred, chief of the conspirators, had even taken private measures to seize Athelstan at Winchester, and put out his eyes. This plot being discovered, he was apprehended by the king's order, but would confess nothing. He obstinately persisted in protesting his innocence, and offered to purge himself by oath in the presence of the Pope. Athelstan accordingly sent him to Rome, to take his oath before Pope John. Shortly after, word was sent from Rome, that Alfred, having sworn his innocence before the Pope, suddenly fell into a fainting fit, which lasted three days, and ended with his life; and that the Pope, convinced of Alfred's perjury, had ordered his body to remain in the English college till the king's pleasure should be known.

Athelstan, pleased with being thus rid of his enemy, consented he should have Christian burial. However, his lands were confiscated, and given to Malmsbury monastery. The king took care to insert in the grant the whole conspiracy, to testify to the world that he dedicated to God what was his own.

In the meantime, new troubles were preparing for the king. As the Danes, settled in England, had been subdued by force, they thought it lawful to make use of the same means to shake off their yoke. The death of Edward, and the conspiracy of Alfred, affording them, as they imagined, a favourable opportunity to revolt, they had begun to take such measures as obliged Athelstan to march into their country. He would doubtless have met with more resistance, had he given them time to make greater preparations. But as they had not drawn their forces together, they were surprised by the arrival of the king on their frontiers, and without endeavouring to defend themselves, they returned to their allegiance. Sithric, king of Northumberland, went and sued for peace, upon what terms the king was pleased to impose.

Athelstan being desirous to live in peace with the Danes, that he might have time to establish himself on the throne, not only pardoned his revolt, but gave him his sister Editha in marriage, on condition he would receive baptism[2]

The troubles in the north being thus appeased, Athelstan marched back to Wessex, where advice was brought him soon after of Sithric's death, who by a former marriage had left two sons[3], Anlaff and Godfrid. We are ignorant of the reason of Athelstan's resolving to deprive these two princes of their father's dominions. However, as soon as he heard of Sithric's death, he returned at the head of his army into Northumberland. His march was so expeditious, that Anlaff and Godfrid, as well as Reginald, another Danish king residing at York, had scarcely time to escape falling into his hands. Their hasty flight gave him opportunity of becoming master of all Northumberland, except the castle of York.

Though he had taken care to secure his conquest, by placing strong garrisons in all the towns, he was uneasy at the escape of the three Danish princes. It was not known what was become of Reginald; and Anlaff was fled into Ireland, where it was no easy matter to come at him. Athelstan therefore was forced to be satisfied with requiring Constantine king of Scotland to deliver up Godfrid, who had retired into his dominions. Constantine being sensible he was not in condition to deny anything to a prince at the head of so powerful an army, promised to deliver the prince into his hands, and give him a meeting at Dacre, in Cumberland.

But whilst he was preparing for his journey, Godfrid made his escape. Constantine, however, went to meet Athelstan, accompanied by Eugenius king of Cumberland. Athelstan admitted Constantine's excuses for the Danish prince's escape; but he is said to have obliged both the kings to do homage for their kingdoms.

Before Athelstan quitted the north, Godfrid made an attempt upon York; but, missing his aim, he put to sea, where for some time he exercised piracy. At length, he surrendered himself to the king of England, who received him kindly, and allowed him a handsome pension. Some time after, upon some disgust or ill grounded suspicion, he withdrew again, and was never more heard of.

Anlaff, a prince of greater abilities than his brother, took better measures for his restoration. He had retired into Ireland, where being informed that the king of Scotland was displeased with Athelstan, he believed he might make use of this opportunity to persuade him to espouse his cause. To that end, he came to Scotland; and intimated to Constantine, that he had reason to fear the worst from the king of England. He represented to him that Athelstan having by surprise seized upon Northumberland, without the least pretence, might proceed in the same manner with regard to Scotland, and therefore it was absolutely necessary to prevent him. To this he added the offer of a powerful aid from Ireland, assuring him that with increase of strength he might easily drive Athelstan out of Northumberland, and free himself from a troublesome and dangerous neighbour, by restoring that kingdom to the Danes who would serve as a barrier against England.

Anlaff found great difficulty to prevail with the king of Scotland, who, besides his being secretly exasperated at the haughty reception he met with at the late interview, was grown uneasy at Athelstan's successes, and apprehensive of being invaded himself. He resolved therefore to embark in this enterprise; and, having concerted measures with Anlaff, they parted in order to prepare what each had engaged to provide.

Meanwhile, Athelstan, having viewed his garrisons, and taken all the precautions he thought proper to secure his late conquests, had returned into Wessex, where he remained in peace, not knowing what his enemies had plotted against him. Shortly after he was engaged in a war with Howel king of Wales. This new enemy was raised by Constantine, to keep him employed against the Welsh, whilst he and Anlaff should invade Northumberland. Athelstan, by his expedition, broke all the measures of the king of Scotland. The moment he was informed of the motions of

the Welsh, and the aid sent them by Constantine, he marched into Wales, and giving Howel battle, obtained a complete victory[4]. After this happy success, he augmented the tribute paid by that prince to England.

AD 934] This war thus ended, Athelstan approached the borders of Scotland, to make Constantine repent of his assisting the Welsh. As soon as he entered the enemy's country, he took, some towns, and gave the Scots reason to dread more considerable losses. As Anlaff had not yet arrived with the promised supplies, Constantine durst not venture to engage alone. Wherefore, to gain time till the Irish joined him, he sued for peace. Athelstan readily granted his request, being extremely desirous to make him his friend, for fear he should countenance the insurrections of the Northumbrians. For this reason he restored to him all the places he had conquered in Scotland.

AD 938] Athelstan's generosity, however, was not sufficient to hinder Constantine from pursuing the execution of his first projects. Athelstan returned to Wessex, where he hoped to enjoy some repose, as he saw nothing about him likely to give him any disturbance. But he met at home with what troubled him more than anything the war could occasion.

A certain court lord, enemy to Edwin the king's brother accused the young prince of being concerned in Alfred's conspiracy. The king too readily gave ear on this accusation. however, he would not put him to death publicly, but ordered him to be exposed to the fury of the waves in a vessel without sails or rudder.

The young, prince went on board protesting his innocence; but, finding the king inexorable, he cast himself headlong into the sea. Athelstan at first was pleased with this occasion to destroy his brother; but, the moment he had gratified his passion, he was seized with grievous remorse. To quiet his conscience he was advised to atone for his crime by some meritorious art. With this view he founded the abbey of Middelton in Dorsetshire[5], where prayers were offered to heaven day and night for him and for his brother's soul. The historians, Brompton and Malmsbury, add, that, not content with this, he submitted to a seven year penance. Edwin's accuser had not reason long to rejoice at the success of his malicious calumnies.

One day as he waited at table with the king's cup, one of his feet slipping, he would certainly have fallen, had he not by the nimbleness of the other recovered himself. Whereupon he jokingly says, "See how one brother helps another!" This jest cost him his life. Athelstan, who over-heard what he said, taking it for a reproach or banter upon him, ordered him to be executed immediately, and thus revenged his brother's death by that of his false accuser[6].

Whilst these things passed at court, Constantine continued his preparations for the execution of the project concerted between him and Anlaff. The latter had found means to engage in the league the Irish, Welsh, and Northumbrian Danes, who ardently desired to have a king of their own nation on the throne. Anlaff appeared as head of this league, though Constantine was no less concerned in it, the war being carried on chiefly at his expense. This project was managed so privately, that Anlaff entered the Humber with a fleet of six hundred sail, and invaded Northumberland before Athelstan had any intelligence of his motions.

With such considerable forces, and the assistance of the Danes settled in those parts, he easily became master of several small ill guarded towns. But the fortified places that were well garrisoned by the English, stopped his progress, and gave Athelstan time to draw his army together. He used such great expedition, that he surprised the two confederate princes. They were now upon the march towards Bernicia, in order to conquer it for the king of Scotland, but found they were obliged to turn back and oppose king Athelstan, who was very near them, when they imagined him as yet employed in his preparations. The two armies met at Brunanburgh[7], where a bloody battle was fought. Victory declared for Athelstan, and the allies lost Constantine king of Scotland, six other Irish or Welsh kings, and twelve earls and general officers.

This victory was chiefly owing to the valour of Turketul, the king's cousin, who was afterwards abbot of Croyland. Athelstan, after winning this battle, easily extended his conquests farther into Scotland, and chastised the Welsh by raising their tribute to twenty pounds' weight of gold, three hundred of silver, and twenty five thousand head of cattle. Besides, they were pent up beyond the Wye, and lost all the country between that river and the Severn.

As for the Northumbrian Danes, who had openly sided with the allies, Athelstan for a punishment increased their yoke, and kept for the future a stricter hand over them. After he had settled the affairs of the north, he marched against the Cornish Britons, who had also assisted the confederates. He took Exeter, formerly destroyed by the Danes, and caused it to be repaired and forthwith fled. From that time the Britons were forced to retire beyond the Tamar, which served for a boundary to the two nations.

We shall conclude the reign of Athelstan with an incident, which the best historians have thought worth their notice. A few days before the battle of Brunanburgh, Anlaff, wanting to know the posture of the enemy, went into the English camp disguised like a harper, as Alfred the great had formerly done. But, notwithstanding his disguise, he was recognized by a soldier, who, however, suffered him to go away undiscovered. As soon as the soldier thought him safe, he told Athelstan what had happened, and advised him to remove his tent, judging that Anlaff had some design upon that quarter.

He excused himself for not having discovered this secret sooner, by saying, he had formerly given his military oath to Anlaff, and, therefore, could not resolve to betray him. Athelstan forgave him, and followed his advice, which he soon found to be of great consequence. The next night the Danish prince, with a body of chosen troops, attacked the English camp, and penetrated to the very place where he had seen the king's tent. A bishop coming to the camp that night, and accidentally pitching his tent in the same place, was slain with all his followers.

Athelstan outlived the victory of Brunanburgh but three years. He died a natural death in 941, in the forty sixth year of his age, and the sixteenth of his reign[8]. Historians have dilated on the glorious success of his arms, but much more on the miracles heaven wrought in his favour. But, without insisting on the wonders his history abounds with, we shall content ourselves with giving him this commendation: his merits made him to be equally feared by his neighbours, beloved by his subjects, and respected by the greatest princes in Europe[9].

The emperor Otho, and Hugh the Great his brothers-in-law, gave him frequent demonstrations of their esteem, by making him considerable presents. The noble matches he made for those of his sisters who preferred the marriage state to a cloyster are clear evidences of his great reputation in the world. His sister Ogina, widow of Charles the simple, king of France, being obliged to fly for refuge into England with her son Lewis, who from thence had the surname of Outremer, he gave them an honourable reception, and furnished them with all things necessary during their exile. It is even affirmed, his application and credit did not a little contribute to the restoring the king his nephew to the throne of his ancestors. Though he seemed to be entirely engrossed by military affairs, he found time to cause justice and civil government to flourish in his dominions; as is evident from the excellent laws he from time to time added to those of Alfred his grandfather.

It appears from these laws, several whereof are still extant, that his intent was, that all persons, ecclesiastical as well as civil, should be subject to them. He was no friend to those privileges and immunities, which the clergy have so much improved, and which very often serve only to authorize wickedness, and prove a sanctuary to criminals.

Amongst all the monuments of his piety, the translation of the Scriptures into Saxon, the then vulgar tongue, is one, the usefulness whereof appears to be least dubious. He took particular care to have it well done, employing those that were deemed the most learned persons in the kingdom. Hence it is evident how much the state of learning had been improved by the wise regulations

of the great Alfred, since in his time it would have been impossible to find any Englishmen capable of undertaking a work of that nature.

The famous Dunstan, so often mentioned hereafter, was born in the first year of this reign.

Athelstan, having no issue, Edmund, the eldest of the legitimate sons of Edward the elder, was unanimously placed on the throne.

Notes to Athelstan

1. Athelstan was crowned at Kingston upon Thames by Athelm archbishop of Canterbury. This ceremony of crowning and anointing the English kings was, in all probability, first used in the reign of Alfred.

2. After Sithric death, (who lived but one year after his marriage,) Editha became a nun at Polesworth in Warwickshire.

3. Florence of Worcester more probably supposes Anlaff not to have been the son of Sithric king of Northumberland, but of another of that name, king of Ireland, and who had married the daughter of Constantine.

4. But he restored Howel and Constantine to their kingdoms, saying, "it was more glorious to make a king, than to be one."

5. Now called Melton abbey; it lies three miles north of the Piddle.

6. As the affair of Edwin is the only thing that sullies the memory of Athelstan, Malmsbury, who relates it, disbelieves the whole story, because of his great kindness to his other brothers and sisters, and owns it was grounded only on some old ballads. Huntingdon speaks of the loss of Edwin by sea, but mentions it as a sad accident, and a great misfortune to Athelstan. Brompton indeed delivers it as a certain truth. But Buchanan the Scotch historian makes Athelstan not only to have procured the death of his brother Edwin, but also of his father king Edward, whom he, therefore, fancies to have been called the martyr; and, not content with this, adds, that he put to death his brother Edred also. More mistakes can scarcely be committed in so few lines; for in the first place it is agreed by all our historians, that king Edward died a natural death; and as for him, whom he calls the martyr, he was son of king Edgar; nor did he begin to reign till above a hundred and fifty years after.

7. Supposed to be Bromford near Bromridge in Northumberland; though some think it was somewhere nearer the Humber. After this victory, Athelstan took Cumberland and Westmoreland from the Scots, and recovered Northumberland from the Danes.

8. He died at Gloucester, and was buried with many trophies at Malmsbury.

9. Malmsbury concludes king Athelstan's character with this sentence: his life was little in time, but great in action.





EDMUND I



ATHELSTAN left England in profound tranquillity. The Welsh paid their tribute regularly. Anlaff, after his defeat, had retired into Ireland, where he seemed to lay aside all thoughts of any further projects; and the Danes remained in subjection. But as soon as this prince was laid in his grave, these last prepared for a revolt. Edmund's youth made them hope they should at length be able to accomplish their long projected design of having a king of their own nation, and throwing off the English yoke.

Anlaff having perfect intelligence how they stood inclined, resolved to make use of this juncture to recover the crown of Northumberland. But as he was sensible this grand undertaking could not be executed without foreign aid, he found means to persuade Olaus, king of Norway, to espouse his cause. With the troops lent him by this prince, he once more entered Northumberland; and, appearing before York, the gates were opened to him. The example of the metropolis was followed by most of the other towns,[1] whose garrisons were either expelled, or cut in pieces, by the citizens, who were generally of Danish race. Anlaff, not content with being master of Northumberland, marched into Mercia, where his countrymen received him with open arms, and assisted him in recovering several places which Edward the elder had formerly taken from them.

Though Edmund was not above seventeen or eighteen years of age, the progress of the enemy was so far from daunting him, that it rather made him more eager to decide by a battle, to whom a country, so often and so long contended for, should belong. As soon as he had drawn all his forces together, he resolutely marched towards the north, though he well knew the superiority of his enemy. On the other hand, Anlaff hearing Edmund was advancing with long marches to give him battle, went to meet him with the same resolution.

The two armies meeting near Chester, came to an engagement, wherein victory held the balance so even, that when night came, neither could boast of the least advantage. Both sides prepared to renew the fight as soon as day should appear. But the archbishops of Canterbury and York[2], who were in the two armies, laboured so earnestly to make peace, that a treaty was begun that very evening, and concluded by break of day. This peace was the more easily made as neither of the parties could insist upon any advantage gained in that day's action, since neither of them could know either their own or the enemy's loss.

By this treaty, Edmund was obliged to deliver up to the Danes all the country lying north of the Roman highway, called Watling Street, which divided England into almost two equal parts, running from North Wales to the most southern parts of Kent, quite to the sea. Edmund was not at all pleased with these terms, but was in a manner forced to accept them by the nobles that were in his army. These lords, weighing the hopes of recovering what was lost, with the apprehension of being still greater losers, judged it better to end the war on these conditions, than continue it with the hazard of what might happen. Accordingly, Anlaff was put in possession of the kingdom of Northumberland, whose bounds by this treaty, were enlarged with several counties which his father Sithric had never enjoyed.

AD 944] The Northumbrian Danes had not reason long to rejoice at the restoration of Anlaff, which they had so ardently desired. This prince having contracted a large debt with the king of Norway for the troops he had lent him, was willing to pay it. To this end, he laid heavy taxes on the people, by which he forfeited their affection.

The inhabitants of the ancient kingdom of Deïra were the first that revolted, and having sent for Reginald, his brother Godfrid's son, crowned him king at York. Reginald was no sooner on the throne, but he made preparations for the war against his uncle, who was also preparing to dispossess him. The quarrel between these two kings put Edmund upon marching towards the north, at the head of an army, as well to improve the present opportunity, if there was any appearance of success, as to appease the troubles there, being apprehensive they might give occasion to the foreign Danes to return into England. He arrived upon the borders of Northumberland when the uncle and nephew, wholly intent upon their private quarrel, thought of nothing less than repulsing the English. Probably, he might with ease have made himself master of that kingdom however, he was satisfied with procuring peace between the two kings, in such a manner that Reginald was to keep the crown he had lately received. But, at the same time, Edmund obliged them both to swear allegiance to him, and be baptized, himself standing godfather.

This forced peace lasted not long. Edmund had scarcely returned into Wessex, when the two Danish princes took up arms with one consent to free themselves from his yoke, having engaged the Mercian Danes and the king of Cumberland to espouse their quarrel. Whereupon, Edmund immediately marched into Mercia; and before the Danes there could be joined by the Northumbrians, took from them Leicester, Stafford, Derby, Nottingham, and some other places of less note. Then advancing with the same expedition towards Northumberland, he surprised the two kings before they had drawn their forces together. This sudden attack threw the Northumbrians into such disorder, that the two kings fearing to fall into the hands of Edmund, believed it their only refuge to abandon the island, where they could not possibly remain in safety, so closely were they pursued. Their flight depriving the Danes of all hopes of withstanding Edmund, they threw down their arms and swore allegiance.

AD 945] Before he returned to Wessex, Edmund resolved to punish the king of Cumberland, who, without cause, had sided with the Danes. He easily subdued that little kingdom, whose forces bore no proportion to his; but he kept it not for himself, thinking it more for his advantage to present it to the king of Scotland, in order to attach him to his interest, and prevent him from assisting the Northumbrians. However, he reserved the sovereignty of it, and obliged that prince to do him homage and appear at the king of England's court, at the time of the solemn festivals, if summoned.

Edmund's successes, his valour and abilities, rendered him famous both at home and abroad. The king of Denmark, though frequently solicited by the Danes in England, did not think proper to assist them against a prince of such great reputation, and from whom there was so little to be obtained.

Edmund was not wholly employed in military affairs, there are some of his laws still in being, which demonstrate how desirous he was of his people's welfare and happiness. Having observed that pecuniary punishments were not sufficient to put a stop to robberies, which were generally committed by people who had nothing to lose, he ordered, that in gangs of robbers, the oldest of them should be condemned to the gallows. This was the first law in England that made it death to rob or steal.

A. D. 948] In all appearance this prince would have rendered his people happy had his reign been longer; but a fatal accident robbed him of his life, when he began to enjoy the fruits of his victories. One day, as he was solemnizing a festival^[3] at Pucklekirk in Gloucestershire, he spied Leolf, a notorious robber, who though banished from the kingdom for his crimes, had the

impudence to come and sit at one of the tables in the hall where the king was at dinner. Enraged at his insolence, he commanded him to be apprehended[4]. But perceiving he was drawing his dagger, to defend himself, the king leaped up in great fury, and catching hold of him by the hair, dragged him out of the hall. This imprudent action cost him his life. Whilst he was intent upon venting his furious passion, Leolf stabbed him in the breast with his dagger, so that he immediately expired upon the body of his murderer. This was the tragical end of king Edmund, in the twenty-fifth year of his age, and the eighth of his reign[5]. By Elgiva his wife he had two sons, Edwy and Edgar, who did not succeed him by reason of their minority. Edred his brother was placed on the throne by the unanimous consent of the clergy and nobility: He was crowned at Kingston, by Odo, archbishop of Canterbury.

Dunstan was in great favour with Edmund, Who made him abbot of Glastonbury.

About this time William Long-Sword, second duke of Normandy, was assassinated by Arnold earl of Flanders, in a little island of the Somme over against Peguigni. Richard I. his son, a minor, succeeded him.



Notes to Edmund I

1. A. D. 942.
2. Odo and Wulstan.
3. In memory of St. Augustin, who first preached the Gospel to the Anglo-Saxons.
4. Malmsbury and. Brompton say, that the rest of the guests being drunk, he was the only one that spied him, and flying upon him in a violent passion, was stabbed. But Hoved. Chron de Mailros, &c. say, that he received the wound as he was endeavouring to rescue Leon his sewer out of Leolf's hands. Brompton relates, that, according to some, Leolf escaped during the confusion and hurry occasioned by this tragical action.
5. He was buried at Glastonbury, where Dunstan was abbot; and the town where he was killed was bestowed. upon the same monastery to sing masses for his soul.





EDRED



HE Northumbrian Danes bore the English yoke with extreme impatience. Though during Edmund's reign they had not been very successful, upon news of death they began to think of means to recover, their liberty. The better to execute their designs, they gained to their side Malcolm king of Scotland, who looked upon all obligations to be cancelled by the death of Edmund. This prince, as well as the Danes, was persuaded, that Edred, by reason of his youth, would be so embarrassed at this unexpected attack, that it would not be possible for him to make any resistance. But the success was not answerable to their expectations. Edred, not being inferior to his predecessor, either in conduct or courage, was so expeditious, that he was in the heart of Northumberland, before the Danes were ready to oppose him; and they were forced to submit and sue for peace upon what terms he pleased.

After having chastised the Danes, Edred. advanced towards Scotland, to be revenged of the ungrateful Malcolm. But Malcolm seeing the Northumbrians subdued, and himself destitute of assistance from that quarter, concluded a peace with Edred, paying him the homage due to him.

AD 949] This expedition being ended, Edred returned into Wessex; but he had scarcely begun to enjoy repose, when the Danes revolted again, and recalled Anlaff. Their measures were so just, and Anlaff's expedition so great, that he made himself master of the most considerable places before Edred could draw his army together. Whilst he was preparing to save Northumberland, Anlaff, continued his conquests and put his affairs in such condition, that his enemy saw no possibility of recovering that kingdom out of his hands. But the turbulent and tyrannical temper of Anlaff would not suffer him to treat his subjects more gently than formerly.

In a little time so strong a party was formed against him[1] that he was forced once more to retire to Ireland, and one Eric was placed on the throne.

Meanwhile, part of the Northumbrians still adhering to Anlaff, Northumberland was divided into two factions, who, endeavouring to destroy each other, gave Edred an opportunity, which he well knew how to improve. He marched his army without loss of time into the north, and before the Northumbrians had taken any measures to resist him[2]. At his approach Eric; fled into Scotland, leaving his people to the mercy of Edred who threatened utterly to destroy their country.[3] They had no room to expect a second pardon, after so notorious an abuse of the first as yet; they had no refuge left, they cast themselves upon Edred's mercy, and amused him with the strongest protestations and most solemn oaths.

As this prince was naturally of a generous disposition, he was moved with their submissive behaviour, and replaced Eric on the throne, satisfied with imposing a tribute, and making him swear allegiance. When he had, as he thought, allayed these commotions, he returned towards Wessex marching in a careless manner, not mistrusting any treachery from a people that had just received such sensible marks of his clemency. But the Danes, who had been rather compelled by his arms, than gained by his mildness, laid hold of the present, opportunity to attack him with advantage.

They privately came together, and laying an ambush in his way, suddenly fell upon his rear, and put them in extreme disorder. Had it not been for the valour, conduct, and resolution, of the king, his army had infallibly been cut in pieces; and it was not without great difficulty, that he escaped. Enraged at their perfidiousness, he returned to Northumberland, with a resolution to punish them without mercy.

His return caused an universal consternation. In this extremity, submission was their only refuge. To convince him further, of their sincerity, they solemnly renounced their allegiance to Eric, and put Amac, son of Anlaff to death; charging them with being the principal authors of their treachery[4].

Edred was appeased by these submissions. However, to prevent similar revolts, he secured all their towns, and garrisoned them with English. After that, having entirely divested it of its royalty, he reduced Northumberland to a province, and made Earl Osulf, an Englishman, the first governor. From thenceforward the Northumbrians, kept in awe by strong garrisons and the English earls or governors, gave England no farther disturbance, till such time as the foreign Danes once more became masters of Northumberland.

After the Northumbrians were thus quelled, Edred lived in profound peace. Absolute lord of all England, and dreaded by the kings of Scotland and Wales his neighbours, he governed his dominions in perfect tranquillity. This calm was the occasion of his turning his thoughts entirely to religious affairs, being guided by the advice of Dunstan, abbot of Glastonbury, who had great influence over him. The abbot knew so well how to improve his credit with the king, that he became master of his conscience, and consequently of all state matters. The trust Edred placed in Dunstan was so great, that not content with being advised by him in all things, and making him treasurer, he submitted sometimes even to receive discipline from his hands. He was persuaded, that this blind submission to Dunstan was the readiest way to heaven. To gratify this favourite it was that he undertook the re-building of Glastonbury church and monastery, in a very sumptuous and magnificent manner. He laid out immense sums upon this work, without having the satisfaction, however, to see it finished.[5]

The monks made use also of Dunstan their protector's interest, to get into the ecclesiastical benefices. Though Dunstan's proceedings in this affair raised the clamours of the secular clergy, he gave himself no trouble about them so long as he could obtain his ends. However, his haughty manner of acting procured him many enemies, who in the following reign made him feel the effects of their hatred, which they had taken care to conceal during Edred's life. If Dunstan favoured the monks, they were no less zealous upon all occasions to promote his glory.

They every where proclaimed that Dunstan was a great saint, that heaven daily wrought miracles in his favour, and that he was frequently honoured with Divine revelations: In their account, neither saints of the first rank, nor the apostles themselves, were partakers of so many graces as he. Though all they said of this prelate was aggravated to the last degree, it failed not to make impression on the minds of the generality of the people, who were more easily confirmed in their belief of what they were told; as they who knew better things, durst not contradict the monks, for fear of incurring the displeasure of the king and his favourite.

AD 955] Had Edred lived any length of time, Dunstan and the monks. would doubtless have carried all before them. But this prince died when the monks were just beginning to creep into the benefices. Those historians who have made it their business to extol the merits and sanctity of Dunstan, tell us, that Edred's death was revealed to him by a voice from heaven, as he was coming to see him.

Edred reigned but ten years[6]. Elfrid and Bedford, his two sons, whom he left very young, did not succeed him. His nephew Edwy, son of Edmund his elder brother, was placed on the throne after him.

We find in one of Edred's charters, that he took the title of monarch of Albion; and in another, that he stiled himself king of Great-Britain, in which he was followed by Edgar his nephew. However this be; the title was neglected by their successors, till the time of James I about the end of the sixteenth century.

Notes to Edred

1. A. D. 952.
2. And destroyed all the rebels in a merciless manner. He wasted the country, so that it remained uncultivated for many miles, a long while after. In this general devastation Ripon Monastery was burnt.
3. They made him also very considerable presents.
4. Wulstan, archbishop of York, was taken into custody for abetting this rebellion. But after he had been in prison some time, Edred set him at liberty in respect to his character. However, he is said to have taken his disgrace so to heart, that it occasioned his death soon after. Mat. Westm. says, he was imprisoned for causing several of the inhabitants of Thetford to be put to death, in revenge for their having murdered abbot Adelm.
5. He also rebuilt Croyland, and Abington monasteries.
6. He was buried in the old Minster at Winchester. S, Dunelm. His bones, with those of other kings, were preserved in a gilt coffer fixed upon the wall, in the south side of the Choir.



King Edred





EDWY

AD. 955.] EDWY[1] came to the crown at seventeen years of age, with very different notions of Dunstan from those of his predecessor. Whether he was prepossessed by the enemies of that minister, or had some particular cause of complaint against him, he was no sooner on the throne but he ordered him to give an account of the sums which the late king had entrusted him with. Dunstan replied, the money that had passed through his hands, having been laid out in pious uses, he was not accountable for an administration solely relating to religion.

As he urged the building of Glastonbury, which the late king had so much at heart, Edwy's council thought it not proper to push the affair any farther, lest the people should espouse the abbot's cause. The founding and repairing of monasteries were at that time such sacred things, that there was no speaking against them, without being branded with the name of impious and profane. And therefore the king's council finding there was no attacking Dunstan on that head, without running some risk, took another course to undermine his credit, which was, to reverse whatever had been done in favour of the monks.

Accordingly, the monks were turned out of their benefices, and the secular priests put in their room. By this proceeding, three things were intended: first, to mortify Dunstan; secondly, to lessen the people's esteem for him; lastly, as Dunstan and the monks were in strict union, their disgrace could not but reflect upon him. The persecutions of the most cruel tyrants against the church never extorted from the primitive Christians such bitter invectives, as this pretended persecution did from the monks. The monks Of Malmsbury, who were the most concerned, made the greatest noise of all, and for that reason were turned out of their monastery, which was given to the secular priests. William of Malmsbury upon this occasion says, that after it had been inhabited by monks two hundred and seventy years, it was made a stable for clerks. Whether Dunstan stirred up the monks to make these complaints, or the charging him with it was made a pretence to punish him, he was banished from the kingdom. Some say he voluntarily went into exile, without any previous condemnation. However this be, he retired to a monastery in Flanders, where he lived in expectation of being recalled by some favourable turn of affairs.

Dunstan's enemies gloried in his disgrace. The king himself was highly delighted with being freed from a man whom he hated, and who, in the former reign, had shown him marks of disrespect. But he found, by fatal experience, there is no giving offence to ecclesiastics with impunity, and to saints least of all others. The monks, enraged to the last degree for the loss of their benefices, cried down, to the utmost of their power, the administration of the young king, whom they looked upon as the principal author of their disgrace. By their lies and calumnies, they at length persuaded their votaries, he was the most impious of men. The consequence of which was, that great numbers of malcontents appeared in Mercia, of whom Edgar, the king's brother, was declared head and protector. Having secured Mercia,[2] he went into Northumberland and East-Anglia, where he found the Danes ready to join him.

This insurrection was the more surprising to Edwy, as he had never given his people, much less his brother, any just cause of complaint. Besides, he never imagined, the monks could have interest enough to raise such great disturbances.

In this extremity, not knowing how to recover what he had lost, he chose to reduce himself to the sole kingdom of Wessex, which continued faithful to him, and deliver up all the rest. In the meantime the rebels, dreading to fall again under the dominion of Edwy, came to a resolution of having a king of their own, whose interest would oblige him to protect and defend them. But as they were a mixture of English and Danes, each nation was desirous that the choice should fall on one of their countrymen.

The Danes, to attain their ends, endeavoured to make it believed, that the only way to be safe from Edwy's attacks, was to call the assistance of Denmark. But in truth, their aim was only to carry the election. The English, on the contrary, perceiving their intent, did all they could to hasten the election, representing how fatal their present state of anarchy might prove. But the more forward the English appeared to be, the more full of delays were the Danes, who daily raised fresh obstacles, in hopes there would be a necessity at last of sending for aid from Denmark.

At length, after a year spent in debates, Edwy making no efforts for the recovery of his dominions, and consequently the assistance of Denmark becoming unnecessary, prince Edgar was chosen with the title of king of Mercia, by which was meant all the country lying north of the Thames, except the ancient kingdom of Essex. To heighten the merit of the new king,[3] it was given out, that whilst the great men were deliberating on the choice of a king, a voice was heard from heaven, commanding them to elect Edgar. This revelation was easily swallowed by the great bulk of the people, at a time when it was the general opinion that every the least remarkable event, was attended by some miracle:

Notes to King Edwy

1. He was so extraordinarily fair and comely, that he obtained the surname of Pancalus, or The Fair. He was crowned at Kingston by Odo archbishop of Canterbury.

2. A.D. 937

3. A.D. 959



Edwy in Wessex - Edgar in Mercia

A. D. 959



HIS partition of England lasted not long. Being deprived of the kingdom of Mercia, and seeing the monks triumphing over his misfortunes, sat so heavy upon Edwy's mind, that he fell into an excess of melancholy, which brought him to his grave, after he had reigned four years and some months.[1] If we believe the monkish writers, Edwy was a very wicked prince. However, we find but one thing which can have any foundation, and which after all has very much the air of a fiction, or, at least, is greatly aggravated.

They say, he kept the wife of one of his courtiers for his mistress; and on the very day of his coronation, whilst the great men were debating the affairs of the kingdom, he abruptly withdrew to the apartment of this woman, whence he was brought back by Dunstan, who alone had the boldness to reprimand him for this infamous action.

From that time, they tell us, the king and his mistress' were so incensed against this holy man, that they would have proceeded to the taking away his life, had he not prevented their wicked design by voluntary exile. These pious and conscientious monks also say, that after Edwy's death, his soul being dragged into hell by a legion of devils, one of them was dispatched with the good news to Dunstan. But far from rejoicing at it, the saint prayed so intensely for the soul that was going to be eternally miserable, that God, moved by his zeal, snatched it from the devils, and translated it into Paradise. This last instance of the animosity of the monks against Edwy, renders their charge of adultery very suspicious, especially if we consider he was not above seventeen years of age when he ascended the throne.[2]

Notes Edwy & Edgar

1. He was buried at Winchester, in the new monastery.

2. The fact appears to have been, that, in opposition to the advice of his gravest, counsellors, and the remonstrances of the more dignified ecclesiastics, Edwy ventured to marry a beautiful princess, named Elgiva, though she was within the degrees of affinity that were prohibited by the canon law. On the day of his coronation, Edwy, attracted by softer pleasures, retired into the queen's apartment, and in that privacy gave reins to his fondness towards his wife, which was only moderately checked by the presence of her mother. Dunstan conjectured the reason of the king's retreat; and, carrying along with him Odo, archbishop of Canterbury, over whom he had gained an absolute ascendant, he burst into the apartment, upbraided Edwy with his lasciviousness, probably bestowed on the queen the most opprobrious appellation that can be applied to her sex, and tearing "him from her arms, pushed him back, in a disgraceful manner, into the banquet of the nobles. Edwy neither forgot nor forgave this insult; and, it was probably his desire of revenge that led to the banishment of Dunstan. The partizans of that priest, however, filled the public with high panegyrics on his sanctity: they exclaimed against the impiety of the king and queen; and, having poisoned the minds of the people, they proceeded to still more outrageous acts of violence against the royal authority. Archbishop Odo sent into the palace a party of soldiers; who seized the queen; and, having burned her face with a red-hot iron, in order to destroy that fatal beauty which had seduced Edwy, they forcibly carried her into Ireland; there to remain in perpetual exile. Edwy was compelled to consent to a divorce and a catastrophe still more dismal awaited the unhappy Elgiva. That amiable princess was cured of her wounds; and, having even obliterated the scars with which Odo had hoped to deface her beauty, she returned into England, and was flying to the embraces of the king, Whom she still regarded as her husband; when she fell into the hands of a party, whom the primate had sent to intercept her. Nothing but her death could now give security to Odo and the monks; and the most cruel death was requisite to satiate their vengeance. She was hamstrung; and she expired a few days after at Gloucester, in the most acute torments.—So blinded with superstition were the English, at this period, that, instead of being shocked at the horrible guilt of the murderers, they considered that the misfortunes of Edwy and his consort were a just judgment for their dissolute contempt of the ecclesiastical statutes.





Edgar the Peaceable

A.D. 957



EDWY dying without issue, his brother Edgar succeeded him, and united the two kingdoms which were lately divided. Though he was not above sixteen years old, his great genius and solid judgment rendered him more capable of governing than many other princes of a more advanced age.

The first thing he did, after he was elected king of Mercia, was to recall Dunstan from banishment, and promote him to the see of Worcester, then vacant. The suddenness with which this prelate was recalled gives room to suspect, that he had been, though absent, concerned in the insurrection that placed Edgar on the throne of Mercia; and his great interest at court, during this prince's reign, strengthens this

suspicion.

The reign of Edgar is chiefly remarkable for the continual peace which the kingdom enjoyed; whence he was surnamed the peaceable. This uninterrupted calm was owing neither to his victories nor slothfulness, but to his extraordinary preparations for his defence, in case he should ever be engaged in war. By this means he, became so formidable, that no one durst venture to attack him. He always kept a standing army in the northern provinces, as well for a terror to the kings of Scotland and Wales, as to keep in awe his own subjects, particularly the Danes. On the other hand, to prevent the invasions of the foreign Danes, who were no less to be feared, he took the most effectual method.

He is said to have fitted out, great and small, four thousand ships. Some have even raised the number to four thousand eight hundred. This numerous fleet, being distributed in all the ports of the kingdom, and cruising incessantly round the island, made the pirates beware of making descents, and suffered no ships to come upon the coast unexamined. These precautions produced the effect intended by Edgar. They prevented invasions from abroad, and kept all quiet at home. With such an army and fleet, this prince, without once drawing his sword, obliged the kings of Wales, Ireland, and the Isle of Man, to swear allegiance to him, and acknowledge him for their sovereign, As a proof of his superiority over the kings his neighbours, the English historians tell us, that this prince keeping his court at Chester, and having a mind to go by water to the monastery of St. John the Baptist, was rowed down the Dee in a barge by eight kings, himself sitting at the helm[1].

Edgar, not content with having secured England from all foreign assaults, thought it necessary for the further repose of his subjects, to free them from two domestic plagues, by which they were infested. The one was a horrible multitude of wolves, which coming down in droves from the mountains in Wales, made such havoc among their flocks and herds, that the country was in a continual alarm. To effect their destruction, he converted the tribute of gold, silver, and cattle,

paid him yearly by the Welsh, into three hundred wolves heads. He also published throughout all England a general pardon for all past offences, on condition each criminal brought him by such a time a certain number of wolves' tongues, in proportion to his crimes. Upon publishing this act of grace, the wolves were hunted and destroyed in such a manner, that in three years there was not one left in the kingdom.

The other plague that infested England was the magistrates appointed in the cities and provinces to administer justice to the people. These mercenary judges, abusing the exorbitant power which Edgar's predecessors had suffered them to usurp during the wars, were become intolerable to the nation. Without any regard to law or justice, they consulted only their own interest. They who made them the largest presents were sure to be favoured; and though by that means the poor were most oppressed, the rich were entirely screened from their partial proceeding's. Edgar, undertaking to reform this abuse, took a progress every year through some part of the kingdom, on purpose to hear the complaints that were made against those judges who abused their authority. Not satisfied with inspecting their misdemeanours, he thought it necessary to redress them for the future by making a law that every judge, convicted of giving sentence contrary to the laws, should be fined twenty-six shillings[2], if he did it ignorantly, but if knowingly, should be cashiered for ever.

If Edgar were a lover of peace, it was not for want of courage. There is a story related of him, which, though it has the air of a fiction, proves that he was reckoned a courageous prince. Being informed that Keneth III, king of Scotland, had jested on the littleness of his stature, he sent for him to court, and walking with him in a certain place where he had ordered two swords to be hidden, he bade him take his choice, telling him, he should see, if he pleased, what a little man could do. Keneth, so far from accepting the challenge, threw himself at his feet and begged his pardon.

Edgar's noble qualities, and the tranquillity which England enjoyed during his reign, rendered him, no doubt, very praiseworthy. But perhaps they would have been buried in eternal oblivion, had not his extraordinary attachment to the monks engaged them to proclaim his praises even to an extravagant degree. Virtue was the principal reason of the commendations given him by historians, and of his being honoured with the title of saint after his death. He is said to have founded forty monasteries, and repaired and beautified many more, particularly that of Glastonbury built by his uncle Edred. Ingulphus, in his history of the abbey of Croyland[3] says, that in the reign of Edgar; the treasure of that monastery amounted to ten thousand pounds, besides holy vessels, shrines, relics, and the like. This was a very great sum, considering that house had been rebuilt but thirty years.

Edgar, not content with being thus liberal to the monks, undertook to put them in possession again of the ecclesiastical benefices, which he performed with a high hand. Dunstan, whom he had made archbishop of Canterbury, was the principal author of this project.

This prelate was so much in his favour, that Edred's affection to him was nothing in comparison of Edgar's. Dunstan, it may here be proper to remark, was the son of Herstan, and nephew of Athelm, archbishop of Canterbury. He was born at Glastonbury in 925. He spent his youthful years with his uncle the archbishop, who took care to have him instructed in all the sciences, as far as that age of ignorance would permit.

He excelled in music, painting, and engraving. As soon as he had finished his studies, the archbishop recommended him to king Athelstan, who sent for him to court, but however gave him no preferment. Osborn, the author of his Life, pretended that the courtiers, envying his virtue and learning, maliciously represented him to the king as a dissolute and scandalous liver; which the king believing, forbade him the court, without examining the truth. Some time after the archbishop finding means to undeceive the king, Dunstan was restored to favour, and presented

with some lands near Glastonbury. Here he spent several years in retirement, with certain devout men, whom he had drawn thither, living with them a sort of monastic life.

After Dunstan had been some time at Glastonbury, Edmund, successor of Athelstan, having conceived an esteem for him, built a monastery there^[4] and made him abbot. As Dunstan was a person of great address, he knew how to manage this prince so dexterously, that he was very much in favour all his reign. His interest at court still increased under Edred, to whom he was prime minister, favourite, and father confessor.

Dunstan's extreme fondness for a monastic life made him use, without any caution, all his interest to restore the monks to their benefices, and eject the secular priests, whom he heartily despised, and at length mortally hated. This attachment to the monks, added to his haughty carriage, procured him abundance of enemies, and drew upon him the displeasure of Edwy, successor of Edmund. Edgar, however, never ceased to give him fresh marks of his esteem; and his high conceit of him was the more confirmed by the miracles attributed to him. After Athelm's death, Odo, by birth a Dane, was made archbishop of Canterbury, but lived not long after his installation.

To him succeeded Elfin, who died as he was going to Rome for his pall^[5] This happening in the beginning of Edgar's reign^[6]. Brithelmi bishop of Bath, was elected to the vacant see. But Edgar being desirous of having Dunstan archbishop, called a general council, where he represented Brithelm as unqualified for so great a post; whereupon he was ordered to return to his old diocese, and Dunstan was chosen in his room. This election not being exactly canonical, it was thought fit Dunstan should go to Rome, on pretence of receiving his pall, that he might at the same time justify these proceedings. The Pope, who was not ignorant how great a sway Dunstan bore at the court of England, and with what zeal he had espoused the interest of the church of Rome and the monks, readily confirmed his election, constituting him moreover his legate for England, with a very extensive authority.^[7]

At his return, Oswald his relation was through his means made bishop of Worcester, and Ethelwald, his intimate friend, of Winchester. These three prelates, by holding together, entirely governed the church. during this reign.

As soon as Dunstan saw his credit firmly established, he returned to his grand project in favour of the monks, which he had been forced to lay aside during the reign of Edwy. This affair was not without its difficulties. The great men of the nation looked upon it as a misfortune, that the guidance of the churches should be wrested out of the hands of the ancient and lawful governors. They were still less pleased with its being committed to the monks, who, by the rules of their order, and according to the custom hitherto observed, were excluded from the pastoral functions, in order to employ themselves wholly in prayer within the walls of their monasteries.

Besides, they were of opinion, that instead of encouraging and enriching the monks, it would be much better to put a stop to the people's zeal, who were perpetually bequeathing to them considerable legacies, whereby estates were passed away in mortmain, to the great prejudice of the nation. On the other hand, the people, who did not look so far before them, were entirely in the interest of the monks, and extremely offended at the scandalous lives of the secular clergy, who applied the revenues of the church to uses directly contrary to the intent of the donors. The clergy, at that time were very ill-livers; and pride, avarice, gluttony, drunkenness, and luxury, openly reigned among them. Dunstan and his party did all that lay in their power to expose these irregularities, in order to irritate the people against their pastors.

They succeeded so well in their design, that multitudes espoused the cause of the monks, merely out of contempt to the secular clergy. But what did the monks most service, was the king's being so vigorous a champion for them.^[8] To give the finishing stroke to this work, Dunstan caused a council to be assembled, in hopes that their authority, together with the king's, would surmount all obstacles.

Edgar was pleased to assist in person at this council, and made a speech, which plainly showed how greatly he was prejudiced in their favour. As this harangue manifestly discovers the disposition of the king, of Dunstan, and of the other directors of the affairs of the church, with regard to the secular clergy, it will not perhaps be amiss to insert the whole of it, the rather, as it relates to one of the principal events of this reign.

"Almighty God having vouchsafed of his infinite mercy to shew his goodness to us in a remarkable manner, it is most reasonable, reverend fathers, we should exert our endeavours to make a suitable return. That we are in possession of this plentiful country is not owing to the strength of our own, but to the help of his all powerful arm, who has been pleased to manifest his loving kindness towards us. It is but just therefore that we should bring ourselves, our souls and bodies, in subjection to him, who has subdued all things for us, and should take care that all that are under us should be obedient to his laws. It is my office, reverend fathers, to administer justice without respect of persons; to suppress the rebellious; to punish the sacrilegious; to protect the poor and weak from the hand of the oppressor.

It is my business also to take care that the church and her ministers, the holy fraternities of the religious, have all things necessary to their subsistence and well being. But it is your duty to examine into the life and conversation of the clergy. To you it belongs to see that they live agreeably to their profession: that they are sober, temperate, chaste, hospitable to the poor and the stranger: that they are careful in the administration of their office, constant in their instructions to the people. In a word, that they are worthy of the glorious character of the ministers of Jesus Christ.

With submission be it spoken, reverend fathers, had you taken due care of these things, I should not have had the dissatisfaction of hearing from all hands the enormous crimes daily committed by the clergy of this land. I insist not on the smallness of their tonsure, contrary to the canons of the church, on their effeminacy in their habits, on their haughtiness in their gestures, on their immodest discourses, which plainly show all is not right within. I omit their negligence with regard to Divine service; hardly will they vouchsafe their company at the public prayers, and when they come to church to celebrate the holy mysteries, one would think they were going to act a play.

Battle chief subject of my complaint, I speak it with extreme regret, is what ministers occasion of grief to the goods, and of joy to the profane, I mean the lewd and scandalous lives of the clergy. They spend their days in diversions, entertainments, drunkenness and debauchery: Their houses may be said be so many sinks of lewdness, public stages, and receptacles of libertines. There they have gaming, dancing, and obscene singing. There they pass the night in rioting and drunkenness:

It is thus, reverend fathers, it is thus the bounty of my predecessors to the church, and their charities for the maintenance of the poor; and what is more the adorable blood of our Saviour, are consumed? Was it for this that our ancestors exhausted their treasures? Was it for this they were so liberal of their estates? Was it to deck the concubines of the priests, to provide for them splendid entertainments; to furnish them with dogs and hawks that our forefathers displayed their munificence to the church? These are the crimes which the people complain of in private, and the soldiers in public; which are sung in the streets; and acted on the stage and yet they are forgiven, they are overlooked, they are connived at by you!

Where is now the sword of Levi, and the zeal of Simeon? Where is the wrath of Moses against the worshippers of the golden calf? Where is the indignation of St. Peter against Simon the Magician? Imitate, reverend fathers; imitate the zeal of these holy persons, and follow the way of righteousness; shown you by the Lord. It is high time for you to draw the sword of St. Peter, whilst I make use of the great Constantine's. Let us join our forces to expel the lepers out of the temple; to cleanse the sanctuary, and to cause the Lord to be served by the true sons of Levi,

who said to his father, and to his mother, I know you not, and to his brethren, I know not who you are? Let the disrespect to the relics of the saints, and the daily profaning of the holy altars, rouse you up. Be moved at the great abuse of the piety of our forefathers. One of my ancestors, you all know, dedicated to the church the tithes of the kingdom; the glorious Alfred, my great grandfather, laid out his revenues in religious uses.

You are not ignorant of the great benefactions of my father and uncle, which it would be highly dishonourable so soon to forget, seeing the altars are still adorned with them. You, O Dunstan, father of fathers, raise your imagination a little I pray you, and fancy you behold my father looking down from heaven, and expostulating with you in this manner; it was you that advised me to the building of so many churches and monasteries. It was you I made choice of for my spiritual guide, and the spectre of my behaviour. Did not I always obey your voice? Did I not always prefer your advice before wealth?

How frankly did I lay out my treasures, when you said the word? My charities were always ready when you called for them. Whatever was desired for the church was immediately granted. If you complained that the monks were short in their conveniences, they were forthwith supplied. You used to tell me, such liberalities brought forth immortal fruit, and were highly meritorious, since they were expended in supporting the servants of God, and maintaining the poor. And is it not an intolerable shame they should be laid out in adorning and decking a pack of prostitutes?

Are these the fruits of my benefactions? Are these the effects of your glorious promises? These O Dunstan, are the complaints of the king my father.

What can you answer to this charge? I am convinced that you have hitherto been unblameable, when you saw a thief you consented not to him, neither have you been partaker with the adulterer: No, you have endeavoured to correct these abuses. You have argued, exhorted, threatened. But since these means have proved in vain, it is time to apply more effectual remedies. You have here ready to assist you the reverend father Ethelwald bishop of Winchester, and the venerable Oswald bishop of Worcester. To you three I refer the management of this important affair. Exert the episcopal in conjunction with the regal authority, to expel from the church of God the disorderly clergy, and put in such as live regularly in their room.

After the king had made so full a declaration of his mind, the friends, of the seculars durst no longer oppose Dunstan's designs. Shortly after,[9] the secular-priests were expelled from the monasteries, and the regulars put in their place: Ethelwald bishop of Winchester leading the way in his diocese, was quickly followed by Dunstan and Oswald, and all the other bishops, who being monks, without much solicitation, imitated these three prelates.

Perhaps it will seem strange that the secular clergy should at this time be more bitterly inveighed against than in the following centuries, when the lives of the priests were no less scandalous. To account for this, it must be observed, the Popes had for sometime prohibited the clergy from marrying, and were very severe to comply with their decrees. This prohibition, which at present is a fundamental article in the church of Rome, met at first with great opposition, especially in England, which set the Popes upon using all means to bring the English priests to a compliance.

Dunstan's interest, and his address to engage Edgar in the project, were important helps to them. We must therefore carry in our minds this prohibition against the clergy's marrying, in order to comprehend the occasion of the complaints of the monks and their favourers against the seculars, and to judge how far they are to be credited. Though it is but too true, the priests at that time led very disorderly lives, that was not the thing that drew this storm upon them. It was their marriage which gave the offence, and which their enemies would fain have to be thought a more heinous crime than concubinage, or any other they could lay to their charge. Their wives were always called concubines, or by a more opprobrious name. But, notwithstanding all the endeavours of

the court of Rome, this pretended abuse could not be reformed till the end of the twelfth century, when the celibacy of the clergy was established after a three hundred years' struggle.

The monks were bound in gratitude to make a suitable return for the service Edgar had done them. Accordingly, the monkish historians have endeavoured by their excessive commendations, to make him pass for a real saint. But, whether for want of attention, or some other reason, they have related some particulars of his life, which favour not that idea. To consider only his political actions, it must be confessed, he was a great prince; but a great king and a great saint, are two very different characters. For instance, it is difficult to justify, by the rules of the Gospel, a bloody execution^[10] done by Edgar's order in the Isle of Thanet. What might not these same historians have said of his unruly lust, and vicious inclination to women, of which I am now going to give a few instances; who published to the world that the soul of his brother Edwy was about to be dragged into hell, for his having had but a single mistress?

Edgar's amours were somewhat uncommon, and show that his good qualities were not without a great mixture of failings. His first mistress, Wilfrida, was a Nun, whom he took by force out of a Convent, and could not be prevailed with to send back again, by the solicitations of Dunstan. He had a daughter by her named Editha, who was greatly celebrated for her sanctity. It is true, he atoned for his crime by not wearing his crown during the space of seven years. A severe penance indeed for a fault, which his confessor ought to have looked upon as a sacrilege! His second mistress, whom some however call his lawful wife, was Elfleda, surnamed the Fair, from her complexion.

By her he had a son called Edward, who succeeded him. An extra ordinary adventure gained him a third mistress. Going one day by Andover, he took up his lodging at a nobleman's house, who had a very beautiful daughter, with whom he fell passionately in love at first sight. Resolved to gratify his love without delay, he commanded the young lady to be brought to his bed, without troubling himself to obtain her consent. The mother of the lady was utterly against her daughter being the king's concubine; but withal, dreading by her denial to draw down his displeasure upon herself and family, prevailed upon one of her waiting women to attend the king instead of her daughter.

At break of day the king perceiving that his bedfellow was going to rise, prevented her, by which means she was forced to discover the cheat. He was at first very angry; but the good liking he had taken to the girl, moderating his anger, and giving him time to reflect on the dishonour which he intended his host, he forgave the trick, and kept the fair impostor as his mistress till he married.

Edgar was informed that Ordang, earl of Devonshire, had a daughter, the greatest beauty in England, upon which he resolved to marry her, if she answered the description given of her. However, as he was unwilling to make any advances, which he might have reason to repent of, he communicated his design to earl Ethelwold his favourite, and ordered him to go and ascertain whether the lady's beauty was as great as same reported. Ethelwold having arrived at the earl of Devonshire's, no sooner cast his eyes on Elfrida his daughter, but he fell violently in love with her.

Forgetting all the king his master's favours, he demanded Elfrida for himself. His suit being granted, he was married as privately as possible, making his father-in-law believe that he had important reasons for not divulging his marriage. Returning soon after to court, he told the king there was nothing extraordinary in Elfrida; that he was amazed the world should talk so much of her charms; that in all appearance, the fame of her beauty was owing more to her father's riches than any thing else.

This report had the effect which Ethelwold expected. Edgar laid aside all thoughts of the match. Ethelwold, perceiving the king was grown cool, represented to him, that though the fortune of the earl of Devonshire's daughter was nothing to a king, yet it would be the making of a subject;

and therefore humbly desired his leave to make his addresses to her, as being the greatest heiress in the kingdom. Edgar willingly granted his favourite's request. Ethelwold, as soon as he had obtained the king's consent, returned to his wife, and publicly solemnized his wedding. But fearing she should appear too beautiful in the king's eyes, he kept her on some pretence at his country seat, without suffering her to come to court.

How cautious soever Ethelwold had been, it was not possible that his treachery should be long a secret. Edgar at length was informed of the truth; and, to be satisfied with his own eyes, he took occasion to go into those parts where Ethelwold kept his wife, and when he came near the place, told him he had a mind to visit his lady, of whom he had formerly heard so much. Ethelwold, thunder struck at his proposal, did all he could to divert the king from his propose; but his artifices served only to confirm the king in his resolution. All he could obtain, was leave to go before, on pretence of preparing for the king's reception. As soon as he arrived, he threw himself at his lady's feet, and confessing what he had done for the sake of obtaining her, conjured her to use all her endeavours to conceal her charms from the king. Elfrida promised him whatever he desired, but was bent however to break her word.

No sooner was he gone to meet the king, but she set off, her natural beauty with all the art she was mistress of. The event answered her expectation. The moment Edgar cast his eyes on her, he resolved to make her his own. The better to effect his design, he pretended to see nothing extraordinary in Elfrida's beauty. He took his leave of her with a seeming indifference, though in his heart raged love and revenge. Quickly after, he ordered Ethelwold to go for Northumberland, on pretence of some urgent affairs. But the unfortunate earl never performed his journey. He was found dead in a wood, where he was thought at first to have been murdered by robbers. But the eyes of the people were soon opened, when they saw that the king, instead of making inquiry after the murderers, married the widow. According to some, Edgar slew Ethelwold with his own hand at a hunting match[11].

After what has been said, it is evident that there was a great mixture of good and bad qualities in this prince, and that the commendations given him, are in many respects carried too far. The prejudice of the monks in his favour, for so vigorously espousing their cause, was so great that one of them makes no scruple to say, Edgar was to the English, what Romulus was to the Romans, Cyrus to the Persians, Alexander to the Macedonians, Arsaces to the Persians, and Charlemagne to the French. After-ages, however, have ranked him among more suitable company, in a much lower class.

Very judicious historians have taken him from among the saints, where his flatterers placed him, and have not scrupled to rank him in the number of the vilest of princes[12] This notion of him may be grounded on what is related of Canutus the Great, who upon mention of the sanctity of Editha, Edgar's daughter said, He could never believe it possible for the daughter of so wicked a father to be a saint.

Edgar reigned sixteen years from the death of his brother Edwy. He died in 975, in the 32nd. year of his age, leaving two sons and a daughter. Edward, his eldest son, was born of a concubine, or at least of a very doubtful marriage. Ethelred, his youngest, was the son of the beautiful Elfrida. Editha, his daughter by his first mistress, passed her days in a nunnery, and after her death was honoured with the title of saint.

Edgar had too well deserved of them, who looked upon themselves as authorized to reward their votaries with a saintship, not to have a place in the calendar. But as there are no other proofs of his sanctity during his life, but his affection to the monks, and his founding of monasteries[13], it is pretended, that he gave more substantial ones after his death. It was reported, when his body was taken out of the coffin, to be put into a stately shrine, that it was as fresh as when he resigned his last breath. It was further affirmed, that the shrine being made too short, though he was very little of stature, and some body daring to sever his head from his body, the blood gushed out in

great abundance. After such convincing proofs as these, of the sanctity of this prince, his body was placed near the high altar of Glastonbury church, where it was said to work afterwards several miracles.

Notes to Edgar

1. Some reckon among them Keneth III. of Scotland, who was vassal to Edgar for Cumberland. The eight kings were, however, more probably, Malcolm, king of Cumberland; Machus, lord of the isles; and these six Welsh princes, Dufnal, Sifert, Howel, Jago, Inchell, Jevaf.

2. His law says a hundred and twenty.

3. He observes that in 974, in Edgar's reign, one Swarling a monk of Croyland died in the hundred and forty second year of his age, and another in the hundred and fifteenth, which is the more remarkable, because that abbey was situated in a fenny and watery place in Lincolnshire.

4. Camden says, Dunstan introduced into this monastery a new order of monks, viz Benedictions, who by the bounty of princes got so much wealth as exceeded that of kings. After they had as it were reigned above six hundred years (for all their neighbours were at their beck) they were driven out by Henry VIII, and the monastery which was environed with a wall of a mile in compass, and replenished with stately buildings, was by degrees entirely demolished. In his time here was a walnut tree in the church-yard that was said never to bud before Barnabas day (11th of June) and always to shoot out its leaves on that very day. And also a hawthorn tree (in Wirral Park hard by) that budded on Christmas-day as if it were in May.

5. He was frozen to death on the Alps, which the monkish historians interpret as a judgment for his disrespect to Odo's grave.

6. A. D. 959

7. A.D. 963

8. A.D. 969

9. A.D. 964

10. Edgar, in the Saxon Annals, Anno 969, is said to have ordered all Thanet to be laid waste. Brompton says, it was for insulting his laws. Westminster affirms, it was for seizing and plundering some York merchants that touched upon the island.

11. Malmsbury says, he took Ethelwold into a wood (Harwood forest) upon pretence of hunting, and killed him there with his lance. The natural son of this nobleman happening to come in at this accident, and viewing the dead body of his father, the king sternly asked him, how he liked the game? the youth replied calmly, that whatsoever pleased the king, ought not to be displeasing to him. This courtly answer, on so moving an occasion, surprised the king, and gave him a strong affection for the young man ever after. Elfrida built a nunnery in the place where her husband was slain.

12. Dr. Burnet, in the preface to his History of the Reformation, places Edgar in the same class with Brumchild and Irene.

13. It is observed, that his building so many monasteries proved one great occasion of the Danes conquering England; for by these means he exhausted the treasury, and gave great portions of lands for the maintenance of the monks, who refused his son Ethelred assistance according to his necessity.



Edward II The Martyr



UPON Edgar's decease, they who had with impatience borne the great power of the monks, thought it a fair opportunity to reduce them to their primitive state. Elfer, duke of Mercia, their sworn enemy, turned them out of all the benefices they possessed in that province, and replaced the seculars in their room. Some other lords did the like in other places. But Ethelwin, duke of East-Anglia, and several other great men, firmly adhered to Dunstan and his party.

This diversity of opinion, on account of the monks, caused such heart-burnings among the nobles, that they were upon the point of coming to blows. The breach still grew wider, when they came to chuse a successor to the deceased king. That prince had left two sons who had both their adherents, though their age would not permit them to prosecute their respective titles to the crown.

Ethelred's party being most numerous, Edward was in danger of being excluded, if Dunstan his supporter did not find means to break their measures. As he saw himself favoured by the people, from their high conceit of his sanctity, he made use of their inclination to execute his designs. In the midst of the public debates, which of the two princes should succeed, Dunstan suddenly rose and taking prince Edward by the hand, led him towards the church, attended by the other bishops- and a great crowd of people. As soon as he came there, he anointed the young prince king, without regarding the opposition of the contrary party. The nobles bemoaned their falling once more under the government of that imperious prelate. But as they saw the people ready to support him, they were obliged to submit.

Edward was but fourteen years old when he began to reign under the guardianship of Dunstan, who immediately took all the power into his hands. As soon as he was fixed in the regency, he used all possible endeavours to keep the monks in possession of the benefices they had acquired in the last reign. But he met with greater opposition than he imagined. As the king was only a minor, the orders given in his name were not so readily complied with. Dunstan assembled several councils about this affair. But perhaps his endeavours would have all proved ineffectual, if by means of several pretended miracles, he had not brought the people to believe that heaven interposed. In one of these councils, held at Winchester, the majority being against the monks, they would have infallibly lost their cause, if, suddenly a crucifix that hung aloft in the room had not pronounced these words with an audible voice: "It shan't be done, it shan't be done: you have decided the matter well hitherto, and would be to blame to change." Astonished at this oracle, the most obstinate came in and voted for the monks.

Another time, at an assembly in the same place, Dunstan used all his endeavours to have one Elphegus a monk chosen dean of that church: but the people were for having that dignity conferred on a secular priest. The contest ran so high, that there was likely to be a sedition which might have been of dangerous consequences. But. St. Andrew the apostle suddenly revealing himself to St. Dunstan, before all the people; that the Monk ought to be elected, he was

immediately installed. The miracles not being, however, sufficient to unite all men in favour of the monks, there was one at last that stopped the mouths of their most strenuous opposers.

AD 978] Dunstan had called a council at Calne in Wiltshire, to decree that the monks should keep their benefices. This was one of those mixed councils spoken of hereafter, where the king and all the nobility were present, as well as the bishops and abbots: In all appearance, the affair would have been decided against the monks, considering the great number of their opposers in this assembly. But whilst they were warmly disputing on both sides, the floor of the room happened to break under the company, and crush several to death. The beam on which Dunstan's chair was placed, was the only one that did not give way, so that he came off unhurt.

This was sufficient to convince the people, that the monks were the favourites of heaven, since their head and protector was so wonderfully preserved. There were some malicious people however, who insinuated that Dunstan prevented the king, contrary to custom, from being in the council that day.

Besides these ecclesiastical matters, we find nothing remarkable in the reign of Edward, but his tragical death in 979, four year after he ascended the throne. The story is thus related. Edward passing one day, as he was returning from hunting, near Corfe-castle[1], where his mother-in-law Elfrida resided with her son Ethelred, rode off from his company in order to pay her a visit. Elfrida being told the king was at the gate, ran to receive him, and urged him very earnestly to alight, and come in to refresh himself. But as the king's design was only to pay his respects to his mother-in-law, as he went by her castle, he only desired a glass of wine to drink her health. Whether Elfrida had already formed a design of destroying the king, to make way for her son, or that a favourable opportunity put the thought in her head, the young king had no sooner lifted the glass to his mouth, but a ruffian stabbed him in the back with a dagger.[2]

Perceiving himself wounded, he set spurs to his horse, which soon carried him out of sight. But not being able to keep his saddle, from the loss of blood, he fell off his horse; his foot hung in the stirrup, and by that means he was dragged a considerable distance before his horse stopped, just by a poor blind woman's house in the road. At this house, the people sent after him by Elfrida, tracing him by his blood, found him dead, and his body miserably torn. Elfrida imagining she could conceal this horrid deed, ordered the corpse to be thrown into a well. But it was found there a few days after, and carried to Warham[3], whence it was removed to Shaftsbury, and laid in a monastery founded by king Alfred. It is pretended to have worked many miracles there. Elfrida, willing to atone for her crime, founded two nunneries, one at Ambresbury[4], and another at Whorwel near Andover. In the latter she shut herself up, in order to do penance the residue of her days.

We know not upon what foundation Edward has been denominated both a saint and a martyr, unless it was pretended, he was murdered out of revenge for his great affection to Dunstan and the monks. It is certain, that in those days all the favourers of the monks passed for so many saints, and their enemies for the objects of God's wrath. The young prince, however, whose reign we have just gone through, is generally known by the name of Edward the martyr.[5]

THE STATE OF THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND, FROM THE UNION OF THE SEVEN KINGDOMS, TO THE END OF THE REIGN OF EDWARD THE MARTYR.

THE continual wars in England during the hundred and fifty years we have just run through, were no less fatal to the church than to the state. They produced an extreme corruption of manners and a .profound ignorance all over the kingdom. The destruction of churches and monasteries, the plundering what was designed for their subsistence, and the necessity of defending themselves against the Danes, and of being wholly employed in the exercise of arms, turned multitudes from the study of religion.

In the reign of Egbert, Ethelwufph, Ethelbald, Ethelbert, and Ethelred I, we have nothing relating to the church, but the destruction of the monasteries, and the pathetic descriptions given by the historians, of the Danish fury exercised upon the monks. They particularly lament the three famous monasteries of Croyland, Ely, and Medeshamsted, whose monks were all massacred, and the libraries burnt.

The pretended martyrdom of Edmund king of East-Anglia, would require our notice, had it not been spoken of elsewhere. We call it pretended, because it does not appear, that this prince lost his life in any of those causes which make the sufferer a martyr. Otherwise, we must say that there were in England as many martyrs as there were Christians put to death by the Danes. However, he stands in the calendar with that title, and miracles were affirmed to be frequently wrought at his tomb during several ages[6].

It has been seen, that as soon as Alfred was rid of the Danes, he built monasteries, and furnished them with foreign monks, there being none to be found in the kingdom. To do away the gross ignorance, which the English had fallen into during the war with the Danes, that prince also invited into his dominions as many learned foreigners as possible, to found the university of Oxford, and used several other means to restore the sciences in his kingdom. Edward the Elder, as some assert, following the example of his father, founded, for the same reason, the university of Cambridge.

Malmsbury relates in his history, that in the reign of Edward the Elder, Pope Formosus being informed, there had been a seven years' vacancy in the West-Saxon sees, sent a bull into England, excommunicating the king and all his subjects. Whereupon the king assembled a general council, and Plegmund archbishop of Canterbury, causing the bull to be read, it was resolved, that the vacancies should be filled, and three new sees erected in Wessex.

Plegmund (continues the historian) went afterwards to Rome, to get the censure taken off, and at his return, consecrated seven bishops in one day. An ancient register of the priory of Canterbury says much the same thing, with this addition, that the council made a particular provision for the Cornish men to recover them from their errors. We are to understand by the errors of the Cornish, Who were some of the remains of the old Britons, their refusing to acknowledge the papal authority.

The Roman Catholic writers make a great flourish upon this bull, and produce it as a strong instance of the Pope's authority, not only over the bishops, but over the kings of England. But after all, this bull upon examination will be found inconsistent with chronology; and, consequently falls to the ground. As to the consecration of the seven bishops, there is not the same reason to question the matter of fact. As to the time, this circumstance is somewhat perplexed; it is certain, however, in the beginning of the Xth century there were six bishops in Wessex, whereas a little before there were but three.

We meet with very few particulars of moment, except some councils spoken of hereafter, in the reigns of Athelstan, Edmund, and Edred. The most remarkable thing was the charter of privileges granted by Edmund, on account of Dunstan the first abbot, to Glastonbury abbey, after it was re-built. These privileges were so extensive, that the king seemed to intend to invest the abbot with a sort of sovereign power within the precincts of his jurisdiction[7].

The abbey of Croyland was also re-built in the reign of Edmund, by Turketul the king's cousin and chancellor. He afterwards turned monk himself, and was made abbot by Edred, who put him in possession, by the delivery of a pastoral staff, according to the custom of those days. Turketul obtained a very advantageous charter for his abbey. However, Edred refused to grant him the privilege of sanctuary, which that abbey had enjoyed before its destruction, being unwilling that malefactors should be protected from justice.

The councils were properly mixed assemblies, consisting of the clergy and nobility, and termed in Saxon Wittena-Gemot, that is, an assembly of wise men, or rather, mycel-synod, which signifies in the same language, the great, or general assembly. As for councils purely ecclesiastical, it does not appear there was any, from Egbert to Edward the martyr.

Next to the assembly of Winchester, where Ethelwulph is said to have given a grant of the tithes, the most considerable with regard to religious affairs, was the synod of Graetley, in the reign of Athelstan.[8] The canons or laws of this council are these nine.

The 1st enjoins the payment of tithes.[9]

The IInd commands the magistrates to put the laws in execution against those that were convinced by all the circumstances of an ordeal trial.

The IIIrd is against witchcraft and highwaymen.

The IVth relates to the towns where the money was to be coined. At Canterbury there were to be seven mints, four for the king, two for the archbishop, and one for the abbot of St. Augustine's. Rochester was to have three, two for the king and one for the bishop[10]

The Vth regulates the circumstances and formalities of the ordeal trial, to know whether the person accused were guilty or not. And here we have two things worth remarking. The first is, that the priests are spoken of as fixed or settled in certain places. Whence it is plain, that in those days they did not live together in common; but each had his particular church. The second is, that the accused person was to receive the consecrated bread. Whence it may be inferred, that since the eucharist was called bread after the consecration, the church of England was far from believing transubstantiation.

The VIth forbids buying and selling on Sunday.

The VIIth is against perjuries and false witnesses.[11]

The VIIIth orders the bishops to assist the judges in the execution of the laws, and to sit upon the bench with them[12].

The IXth lays a fine upon remiss and negligent magistrates, which was to be paid to the bishop of the diocese.

We find another synod or mixed assembly, in the reign of Edmund, wherein the ceremonies of marriage, and preliminary securities which the parties were to give one another, are settled.

To the ecclesiastical laws passed at these general assemblies or councils,[13] may be aptly subjoined certain constitutions- made in- those days. The ten following are Odo's, archbishop of Canterbury.

The 1st threatens all those. who injure the church in her property with excommunication.

The IInd exhorts princes and other great men to be governed by the direction of the bishops, because God has entrusted them with the keys of the kingdom of heaven.

The IIIrd admonishes bishops to discharge their duty, without any mercenary views, or respect of persons.

The IVth and Vth give good advice to the clergy.

The VIth does the same with regard to the monks.

The VIIth prohibits unlawful marriages, upon the score of nearness of relation: but the degrees of consanguinity and affinity are not recited.

The VIIIth recommends unity and charity among Christians:

The IXth presses fasting on Wednesdays, Fridays, and the four Ember-weeks.

The Xth enjoins the punctual payment of tithes, from reasons taken out of the old testament, without any mention of Ethelwulph's charter.

There are other constitutions, published under king Edgar, but the author of them is unknown. The principal are, The 1st, which confirms the civil privileges and immunities of the church, and orders the payment of tithes[14].

And the Vth, by which the solemnity of Sunday is to begin at three o'clock, on Saturday in the afternoon, and to continue till break of day on Monday[15].

In this reign. were published a body of canons, of which the following are particularly remarkable. By the Vth, if a priest received any injury, the complaint was to be preferred to the synod, who were to treat the case, as if the injury had actually been done to the whole body of the clergy, and take care that satisfaction be made at the discretion of the bishop of the diocese.

The XIth enjoins the priests to learn some employment, in order to get their livelihood in case of misfortune.

The XVIIth orders parents to teach their children the Lord's-prayer and the apostles creed, without which they were neither to be admitted to the Eucharist, nor buried in consecrated ground.

The XXIXth forbids the burying in churches all those that were not of known and approved probity.

The XXXIInd prohibits the priests from officiating without the service-book before them, for fear the trusting to their memories might make them mistake.

By the XXXVIth, no person was to eat or drink before receiving the communion.

The XXXVIIIth enjoins the priest to have the holy Eucharist (or consecrated bread) always ready by him: but in case it grew-so stale that it could not be eaten without disgusting the palate, it was to be burnt in a clear fire, and the ashes laid under the altar.

The LIIIInd forbids the eating of blood.

The LXIVth declares hunting and hawking are improper diversions for a priest, who is to make books his entertainment.

After these canons, there follows a particular form of confession, with what penances the confessor is to enjoin. We find here that the penitent was ordered to say the Lord's-prayer threescore times a day, but not so much as one Ave Maria; a clear evidence, that the praying to the Virgin Mary was not yet introduced into the church.

Nothing remains relating to the church of those days, but to give a brief account of the most noted persons for piety and learning;

The first saint we meet with is Swithin or Swithun[16], who having been preceptor to king Ethelwulph, was promoted to the see of Winchester. By his advice Ethelwulph is said to have granted a charter of the tithes to the church. This alone was sufficient to gain him a saintship, though he had been distinguished upon no other account. But besides this, he is affirmed to have wrought abundance of miracles.

Humbert, bishop of East-Anglia, massacred, or martyred by the Danes, with king Edmund, has the honour also of being ranked with the saints.

Alfred the great, independently of his royal dignity, was one of the most considerable for his piety and learning[17]

Johannes Scotus, surnamed Erigena, or the Irishman, lived at this time. He had acquired a great reputation in France, where Charles the bald entertained him at his court, and used to converse with him with great familiarity[18], when Alfred invited him into England. At first he was the king's preceptor in languages and the other sciences, afterwards he taught at Oxford, whence, in all appearance, he was removed to Malmsbury, since it was in this monastery that he is said to have been stabbed to death by his scholars with pen-knives.

Before he left France, he was engaged by the emperor's order in the dispute concerning the nature of the Eucharist. In his treatise, upon this subject, he strongly argued against Paschasius's doctrine, who maintained, the body of Christ in the Eucharist to be the same that was born of the blessed Virgin. It must needs be, that the contrary opinion defended by Scotus, was not looked upon then as heretical, since it prevented not Alfred from inviting him into England, from having a very great esteem for him, and entrusting him with the education of youth. Nay, it is certain, he was honoured as a saint and a martyr after his death. Roger de Hoveden says, Scotus at first had an obscure burial; but afterwards a miraculous light shining over his grave for several nights together, the monks of St. Laurence's removed his body into their church, and buried it close by the altar[19].

Grimbald lived also in the same century: he was one of the first class for his learning, and had a great reputation. He was invited into England by Alfred the Great, and preferred to the government of the new abbey at Winchester.

This monk was particularly famous for his theological and ecclesiastical learning, and his skill in church music; which rendered him a valuable acquisition to Alfred, and a useful instrument for promoting his designs for the restoration of learning.

Among the Englishmen, eminent for their learning, Asserius was one of the most considerable. He wrote the life of Alfred the Great in 893, and died bishop of St. David's in Wales. He must not be confounded with another of the same name, bishop of Sherborn, who died 883.

Alfred having heard him much celebrated for his learning, invited him to his court; and he was so charmed with his conversation, at the first interview, that he earnestly pressed him to come and live constantly with him. To this Asserius, not being his master, could not agree; but at length, with the consent of his monastery, it was settled that he should spend one half of every year at St. David's, and the other at the court of England; where he employed much of his time in reading with the king, who rewarded him with three rich abbeys, and many noble presents.

Werefrid, bishop of Worcester in Mercia, lived in the reign of king Buthred. When the Danes became masters of Mercia, he retired into France, whence he was recalled by king Alfred. He translated the dialogues of Gregory the Great into Saxon; and having acquired a great reputation when living, he was registered a saint after his death.

Plegmund, archbishop of Canterbury, passed for a very learned prelate, and was particularly eminent for his skill in Divinity.

Denulf had been a herdsman. He is affirmed by some to be the same that sheltered Alfred, whilst the Danes were masters of the kingdom. However this be, he had the good fortune to be known to this prince; who finding him a person of a genius superior to his birth and employment, got him instructed in learning, and promoted him afterwards to the see of Winchester. As this city was then the metropolis of Wessex, where Alfred kept his usual residence, he used the advice of this prelate in affairs of the greatest moment.

Wulfig bishop of London, had also a great share in Alfred's esteem, as appears by his letter to this prelate prefixed to his translation of Gregory's pastoral.

Neots was an abbot distinguished for his birth, learning, regularity, and zeal for promoting the interest of the true religion. Some say, he was nearly related to king Alfred, and others that he was descended from the blood-royal of East-Anglia. He died in 890 in Cornwall, where he left his name to the town of Neotstow or St. Neots[20].

Odo, archbishop of Canterbury, was the son of an East-Anglian Dane. Though he was born of Pagan parents, he had the good fortune to know and approve the Christian religion, and for that reason was expelled from his father's house. In this extremity, he put himself into the service of an English nobleman, who had him baptized, and sent him to school. When he became capable, he entered into orders, in the reign of Edward the elder. His zeal, virtue, and capacity, gained him so great a character, that Athelstan made him bishop of Sherborn. Odo had no less interest with king Edmund, who resolved to promote him to the archiepiscopal see of Canterbury: but Odo modestly excused himself, telling the king his abilities were too slender for so high a post.

The king not admitting his excuse, he further alleged, that translations were not warrantable by the canons. This scruple being removed, by the examples of Justus and Mellitus who were translated from Rochester and London to Canterbury, he started another objection, and alleged, that the archbishops from Augustin downwards having been all monks, he looked upon himself as unqualified for that station, since he had not been educated under any religious rule. This new difficulty was also got over by sending to the abbot of Fleury in France, and entreating him to admit Odo into his society. Thus the prelate having nothing more to object, accepted at length, though with great reluctance; the see of Canterbury. As he became afterwards a vigorous champion for the monks, it may be presumed, this was one of the chief reasons of placing him among the most illustrious ecclesiastics of his time.

Dunstan would make a large article here, did we not think what we have elsewhere said of him sufficiently makes known his character. "He excelled," says one of his biographers, "as much in learning as he did in piety; and by his prodigious diligence, and the amazing genius that God had bestowed upon him, he easily acquired, and he long retained, all kinds of knowledge; so that in a little time, he became equal in learning to his teachers, and far superior to all his fellow scholars. So acute was his reason, so lively his imagination, and so admirable his elocution, that no man ever conceived things with greater quickness, expressed them with greater elegance, nor pronounced them with greater sweetness."—"At this time," says another, "England was enlightened with many bright luminaries, like so many stars from heaven; amongst whom St. Dunstan shone with superior lustre, and was, next to king Alfred, the greatest promoter of learning that ever appeared in this island."

We are also gravely told,—"that, in the days of St. Dunstan, all men worshipped God with fervour and sincerity; that the earth itself rejoiced, and the fields rewarded the labours of the husbandman with the most abundant harvests; that all the elements smiled, and the face of heaven was never obscured with clouds; that there were no such things as fear, discord, oppression, or murder; that all men lived in perfect virtue and profound tranquillity; and that all those felicities flowed from

the blessed St. Dunstan; for which, as well as for his miracles, he was loaded with glory." Of this "blessed saint," the following story is also related by Osbern; it will give the reader some idea of astonishing impiety and impudence of these monks, and of the no less astonishing blindness and credulity of those times. "The most admirable, the most inestimable father Dunstan," says that author, in a high tone of exultation, "whose perfections exceeded all human imagination, was admitted to behold the mother of God and his own mother in eternal glory: for, before his death, he was carried up into heaven, to be present at the nuptials of his own mother with the Eternal king, which were celebrated by the angels with the most sweet and joyous songs. When the angels reproached him for his silence on this great occasion, so honourable to his mother, he excused himself on account of his being unacquainted with those sweet and heavenly strains; but being a little instructed by the angels, he broke out into this melodious song.—O king and ruler of nations, &c. It is highly probable, that Dunstan's firm adherence to the monks, was the ground of those excessive praises bestowed on him, of which, perhaps, he would otherwise have been deemed unworthy[21]

The same may be said of Ethelwald, bishop of Winchester, and Oswald, bishop of Worcester first, and afterwards archbishop of York.

Turketul, king Edmund's near relation and chancellor, became famous in this age, for preferring a cloyster to a court, where he lived in great reputation. But what raised his merit most with the historians, was his rebuilding and restoring to its former splendour, the abbey of Croyland[22] demolished by the Danes.

A monk, named Flobert, who was appointed abbot of Pershore, a monastery out of which the secular canons had been turned by Oswald, deserves also to be mentioned here, as a prodigious zealot for the monastic institutions, though in other respects of a very indifferent character. This abbot fell sick and died; and we are seriously told, when all the monks of his own monastery, with Germanus abbot of Winchelcomb, and many others were standing about his corpse, to their great astonishment, he raised himself up, and looked around him. All the monks were struck with terror, and fled, except Germanus; who asked his brother abbot what he had seen, and what had brought him back to life. To which the other answered, that he had been introduced into heaven by St. Benedict; that God had pardoned all his sins for the merits of his beloved darling Oswald bishop of Worcester; and had sent him back to acquaint the world, that Oswald was one of the greatest saints that ever lived. Being asked further by St. Germanus, what kind of figure St. Benedict made in heaven, how he was dressed, and how he was attended, he answered that St. Benedict was one of the handsomest and best dressed saints in heaven, shining with precious stones and attended by innumerable multitudes of monks and nuns, who were all perfect beauties.

This, it must be confessed was a very simple tale; but it was well enough calculated to answer the purposes for which it was invented, in that age of ignorance and credulity.

Notes to King Edward II

1. In the island of Purbeck in Dorsetshire.
2. Knyghton says, that Elfrida herself stabbed him.
3. In Dorsetshire. Part of his body was buried in Leot or Leof's monastery, (perhaps Leominster) near Hereford; and the other part at Abington.
4. In Wiltshire, so called from Ambrosius, who built there a monastery for three hundred monks, to pray for the souls of the British noblemen slain by Hengist. The tomb of Quinever, Arthur's wife, was found here in the seventeenth century, and this inscription on the wall in massy gold letters, R. G. A. C. 600. The antiquity of which is very suspicious, since she must have out-lived

Arthur fifty years; and, besides, she is said by historians of credit to have been buried at Glastonbury. Queen Elfrida's nunnery is famous for queen Eleanor's being a nun there; and also Mary, daughter to Edward I. with thirteen noblemen's daughters, were veiled there on Assumption Day, 1285.

5. King Edward's martyrdom was kept on three several days; on the day he was murdered, and at the two removes of his body. See Martyr. Engl. 18 of March, and February and June 20. He has likewise the honour of standing in the Roman Martyrology, March 18. Where Baronius takes notice of a letter in Pope Innocent IV's register, for the keeping St. Edward's festival.

6. Matthew of Westminster says, his head being thrown among the briars and thorns in the same wood where Lodebroch was murdered by Bern, the East-Anglians, after the Danes were gone; went out to look for it, and having sought in vain for some time, the head, at last cried out, here, here, here, and never ceased till they came to the place. The head was put to his body, and buried with it. When they came to take up his corpse, many years after, it was found whole and entire, and the head grown to the body, without the least scar, only a mark round the neck like a scarlet thread.

7. This charter was engrossed in letters of gold in a book of the four Gospels, and presented to the abbey by the king.

8. A. D. 928.

9. To which is added the king's order to all his officers and governors, to maintain a poor man in diet and cloathes; namely, that out of every two of his vile, or towns, there should be given an amphora or nine gallons of meal, a gammon of bacon, or a ram worth four pence. They were each of them also to manumise a slave.

10. London was to have eight, Winchester six, Lewis, Southampton, Exeter, Shaftsbury, Wareham, two each, and every other great town was to have one. If any person belonging to these mints was found guilty of debasing the coin (which was to be all of one sort) his right hand to be cut off, and nailed upon the out-side of the mint. The same appointment was made by Athelstan, only he ordered that (besides the places here mentioned) Canterbury should have seven, Rochester three, Hastings and Chichester one each, &c

11. The penalty is, not to be believed afterwards, and to be debarred of Christian burial.

12. In this same council were some remarkable civil laws enacted, particularly one against thieves, requiring, that if a thief be taken in contrary the fact, no man shall spare him, if he be above twenty years old, and had stolen any thing above the value of eight pence. If any one do thereto, he shall pay the value of the thief's head, or make amends for the fault, and yet the thief himself shall not be spared; Who, if he contumaciously make resistance, or fly for it, shall find no favour. A thief cast into prison shall there stay forty days, and then after the payment of one hundred and twenty shillings be discharged; but his kindred must give security for his good behaviour; after which if he steal again, they must either pay the value of his head, or bring him back to prison; and in case one resist, he shall pay to the king, or to any other whom it concerns, the value of his own head; and if any defend him, he shall pay to the king one hundred and twenty shillings.

13. A. D. 923

14. The IIInd orders the payment of the tithe of cattle before Whitsuntide, of the fruits of the earth before the equinox, and of seeds at the feast of St. Martin.

15. Edgar made several other constitutions for the regulation of religious houses, In those in the book belonging to Winchester cathedral, Edgar makes himself general of the monks, and queen of the nuns.

16. He was bred a monk at Winchester, where he was made abbot.

17. Posterity had so great a veneration for his memory, that he has the title of saint sometimes bestowed upon him, and what is more, his name stands in the calendar of the English martyrology, printed in 1608, and in two Saxon calendars cited by the annotator on the Saxon translation of the N. T. The day of his death is registered on the 26th of October.

18. The emperor one day, as he was sitting opposite to him at table, asked him merrily, what stood between a Scot and a Sot? He replied, nothing but a board! Which the emperor took in good part.

19. Some historians are of opinion, that Erigena ended his days in France; and that Rapin has here confounded him with another John Scot, who taught at Oxford, and was slain by the monks of the abbey of Ethelinge, of which he was abbot.

20. Where he was buried, and when earl Alric's seat in Huntingtongshire was turned into a monastery upon his account, his body was removed thither, and the town before called Ainuiphsbury, was from him named St. Neot's; whence his bones were a third time removed to Croyland minister in 1213.

21. The famous story of St. Dunstan and the devil is thus related by the monkish historians. As St. Dunstan was one day busied in his cell near Glastonbury, in making a gold cup of a curious workmanship, the devil appeared to him in a beautiful form, tempting him to sin. Dunstan perceiving in spirit who he was, took up a red hot pair of tongs, and catching hold of the devil by the nose, made him howl in such a terrible manner, that he was heard all over the neighbourhood.

22. Turketul left the monastery at his death in possession of many curious relics; among the rest Ingulphus mentions the thumb of St. Bartholomew the apostle, given him when chancellor by the emperor he had so great a veneration for it, that he always carried it about him, and when in any danger, crossed himself with it. The naming of hells, together with the benediction, as a defensive against thunder and lightning, being introduced in this age by Pope John XIV. Turketul cast a great bell, which he called Guthlac. His successor taking the hint, added some more to it, and made the first tuneable ring of bells in England.

BOOK IV



**THE NEW CHRISTIAN CRUSADE
CHURCH**

CALLING THE PEOPLE OF BRITAIN

At last the bible makes sense!

At last we know its meaning.

Its the book of the RACE

**"For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the
Word of the Lord from Jerusalem"
(Isaiah 2:3)."**

