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Beginners, by Florence L. Bowman**

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A HISTORY FOR BEGINNERS

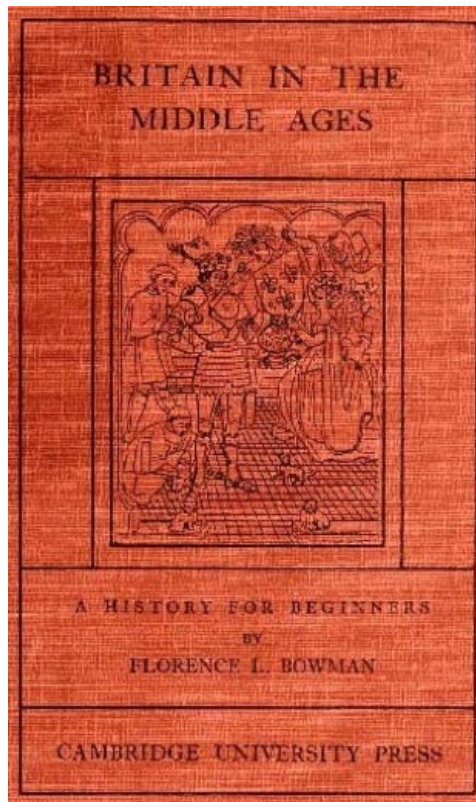
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THE ARMING OF A KNIGHT

BRITAIN IN THE MIDDLE AGES

A HISTORY FOR BEGINNERS

BY

FLORENCE L. BOWMAN, M.ED.

FINAL HONOUR SCHOOL OF MODERN HISTORY, OXFORD



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PREFACE

Since, in the early stages of school work, it is more important to present, as vividly as possible, some of the fundamental historic ideas than to give any outline of events, it is hoped that this collection of stories, told from the chronicles, may provoke readers to discussion and further inquiry.

Questions have been included in the appendix, some suggesting handwork, both as a means of presentation in lessons and for illustrative purposes.

Considerable use has been made of literature as historic evidence. Stories like those of the Knights of the Round Table often leave us with a clearer impression of the spirit of the times than any historic record. Many books of the kind are now easily accessible and could be read side by side with the text. Collections of pictures, such as the Bayeux Tapestry, published by the Victoria and Albert Museum, and Foucquet's *Chroniques de France*, offer valuable opportunities for some research on the child's part.

F. L. BOWMAN.

HOMERTON COLLEGE
December, 1918

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CHAPTER I

BEFORE THE COMING OF THE ROMANS

The world is very old, and it has taken a long time to discover much of the ancient story of Britain. Scholars have found out many things because they are able now to read the signs on the rocks and under the soil. From the tools left behind, from the remains of dwellings and from treasures found in graves, we have learned about the ways of men in times before history was written down.

Once, it seems, Britain was a hot land. Great forests grew up everywhere. Strange wild creatures roamed about, and there were monsters in the waters.

Once, too, it was a very cold land, and the snow lay in the valleys and ice-glaciers came sliding down the mountains, making great river beds as they passed.

As it grew warmer, the ice melted and disappeared. The ice fields left pools of water behind them, the lakes that you find in the country still. The rivers, too, brimming over, flowed swiftly to the sea. Mighty rivers they must have been, broader and deeper than they are now.

When men came, they made their homes in the caves and in underground dwellings, and later they built mud huts. They hunted for their food, learned to weave clothes from the grasses, to make weapons from stone and to strike fire from the rocks. This is a very long story and we know little about it.

Of the Britons who dwelt here, we know something from those who had heard of them and wrote about them. Round about their villages, they made wattle-fences to keep away their enemies and the wild beasts that came out of the forests in winter nights.

They were shepherds and had many herds of sheep and cattle, and they grew a little corn. Sometimes, travellers from far-off lands came to visit them, to exchange their eastern coins for grain and skins.

The Britons loved beautiful things. They made cunning designs on their shields and helmets and with dainty tracings they ornamented their pots and jugs. They wove linen in fine patterns and knew how to make dyes. They were fond of music and told stories to one another of dragons and heroes and the great dreams of men.

When their chief died, they raised a mound over his grave; sometimes, too, great pillars of stone. They carried presents of corn and meat and fruit to put upon the grave, because they thought he might need them on his long journey. In some parts of the country, there are pillars of stone set up in circles. It is thought that perhaps the Britons used these as temples, praying and making their offerings under the sky, in sunshine and starshine.

The Romans said that the Britons loved riding wild horses, which they had tamed, and they were so skilful that however fast they galloped, the rider could make the horse stand quite still at any moment. They sometimes rode in chariots and drove furiously. When they went into battle they armed their chariots with sharp knives and cut the enemy down on both sides. But they did not use their chariots often, for they would rather tend flocks in the fields than go to war.

CHAPTER II

THE ROMANS

The best soldiers in the world were the Romans, who came from the great city of Rome, far away in Italy. Everybody had heard of their mighty deeds, for they had conquered nearly every land except Britain, and to them Britain seemed to be in the farthest corner of the world, just on the edge, a land, no doubt, of dragons and strange wild people. Now the Romans had heard that there was meat and corn in plenty in the land, that there were tin mines, and tin was very useful for mixing with copper to make armour. So they invaded Britain.

The great Roman army moved very slowly through the land, for there were few roads. Sometimes the soldiers had to cut down trees to make their way through the forests, sometimes they had to cross the dismal fenlands, sometimes to make a bridge over a flooded river, or to wade knee-deep through the swamps. As they marched, they had to fight with the Britons.

The Scots had heard of their coming and were safely hiding in their fastnesses when the Romans reached the Borderland. Then the Romans built a great wall from sea to sea between the two countries, Scotland and Britain, a wall that must have taken several years to build even if they had thousands of men to build it. It was made of the finest stone, which they seem to have carried many miles across the country. It was nine feet wide and eighteen feet high and the turrets were placed so near together that the sentinels could call to one another and so send a message quickly. Below the wall, on the enemy's side, they dug a deep ditch, often having to make it through the hard limestone rock. Every mile, they built a spacious fort for the soldiers to rest in, well defended and quite close to the wall. Every four miles, there was a station, sometimes a small town, surrounded by a wide wall, too, where perhaps the chief officers lived. From station to station, from east to west, ran the great road, for the traffic of the army. Up to the gates of the stations, too, came the new Roman roads from the south, for the army sometimes had to call for help from other places and needed food and many things from the south. It must have been a stern duty to keep watch in the bleak winter months, and the soldiers seem to have had few comforts. The remains of this great wall still lie from Wallsend to the west coast.

At the cross-roads, by the great rivers, the Romans built their towns and camps all over Britain, just like those they had known in Italy. Every town was surrounded by a great wall, whence the soldiers could keep a look-out for the enemy, and nobody could enter the place except through the gates between sunrise and sunset. Outside the town, they sometimes built an amphitheatre, where games and wild beast fights were held on holidays.

The houses of the chief officers were built like those in sunny Italy. The most interesting room in the house was the bath-room, with a large tank, like a swimming bath, in the floor and a furnace to keep a good supply of hot water. The floor was paved with beautiful coloured tiles and scenes were painted on the walls. This room was very important, because the Roman often received his guests there and sometimes invited them to share in the ceremony of the bath. The garden was often lovely, there were orchards and smooth lawns and closely clipped hedges of box and yew, sometimes cut into fantastic shapes like birds and beasts. There were brightly coloured flowers, which had been brought from Italy—geraniums, roses and orchids. Then, there was the summer house, whose walls were made of tall trees growing close together, and inside were couches and rugs and sometimes even a little lake in the centre, where jellies and fruits were to be seen floating in beautiful dishes, to keep them cool and fresh, as though the summer in Britain were very hot.

There was much work to be done. The Roman officer had to visit the camps, driving in his chariot or carried in his litter by his slaves. He had to see that the road-making went on well, for the Romans made fine roads through Britain from north to south, to the east and to the west. He had to look after the building of the factories, where the wool was made into cloth and dyed in the famous purple dye, and if he lived in the south west, the tin mines in Cornwall had to be supervised. Sometimes, he had even to take the long and difficult journey to Rome. The Britons looked on at this new life with great fear and wonder, and soon they learned to make better houses, to raise better crops and to live in the towns.

When, three hundred years later, all the Romans were called to their own land to protect it against a strong enemy, the Britons were worse off than ever they had been before. Not only did the Scots come over the wall to burn and steal, but a new and a stronger enemy came over the seas from Denmark and Germany to seize the treasure that the Romans had left unguarded.

CHAPTER III

THE SAXONS

These sea robbers were the Angles and the Saxons, and Britain became Angleland or England. They were fine men, tall and strong, with long fair hair and blue eyes. The Britons gazed in wonder as boat after boat glided into the bays. Graceful, brightly coloured boats they were, with forty oars on each side and a magnificent sail, sometimes made of silk, embroidered with a dragon or a serpent, the gift of a great prince may be. Every sailor, as he stepped ashore, became a soldier, armed himself with his shield which he took from the vessel's side, and a sword, the best in the world, dearer to him than all other treasures, made by the chief, or by a famous blacksmith.

The Britons marked the chief long before he landed, for he stood at the prow or gave orders. His corselet was of beaten gold or bronze, his helmet too. If indeed he were a great champion, he carried on his helmet a pair of eagle's wings, or a cock's comb, as the reward of his bravery and skill in battle. All these men had been soldiers since they were twelve years old. They had learned "to run, to ride, to swim, to wrestle and to leap," so it is no wonder that the Britons fled before them in terror. Some fell into the hands of these stern warriors and became their servants, but those who lived in peace in the mountains of the west were called "Welsh," i.e. "foreigners," by all who heard of them afterwards. The Scots vanished into their fastnesses and the Saxons became lords of Britain.

The Saxons loved fighting and hunting, but when the hunt and the fight were over they came back to their spacious halls, where they hung up their swords and trophies and gathered round the banquet table or sat by the fire, making rhymes and listening to the tales and songs of the gleemen. While the mead cup was being passed round, they heard the songs about the gods and the great heroes of old, and sometimes they liked to think that Odin took a seat amongst them and told his tale. Odin, the one-eyed father of all the gods, crept in with a scarlet cloak wrapped round him, feasted with them, and, at dawn, the doors of the hall opened mysteriously, a great wind blew, and he was gone.

They had many stories about the gods and Valhalla, the home of the spirits, whither every good soldier hoped to journey at the end of his life. Thor was the great god of thunder; you could see his red beard, when the Northern light shone in the winter sky. Sometimes he drove by in his chariot with the sound of a storm, the lightning was the flash of his eye, and the thunder his mighty hammer striking the rocks as he passed.

The most beloved of the gods of the northmen was Baldur, the god of Spring. Once, he had a dream that a great cloud passed over him, and his mother, in sorrow, summoned all the things upon the earth to promise never to hurt her son. Everything promised, the mountains and the trees and the rocks and the rivers, everything except the little mistletoe, which grew at the palace gate and was so small that nobody thought it could do any harm. But Loki, the god of mischief, Baldur's brother, guided the hand of blind Hödur and so killed Baldur with an arrow made from the mistletoe.

Odin was very angry when he heard the news and mounted his war horse to ride to Valhalla, to fetch Baldur from the home of the spirits. But the old witch, who sat at the gates, would not let Baldur return to the earth until she heard that everything on the earth was weeping for him. Everything did weep, except Loki and the little mistletoe. So the witch allows Baldur to come back for three months every year, and then the earth puts on her freshest green, the flowers blossom, the corn ripens, and gods and men rejoice. Thus, the Saxons showed how much they loved the sunshine and the warmth and the south winds that come in the summer time.

When a hero died, the Saxons sent him on his journey to Valhalla, with food enough to last a week and with all his treasures, his sword and helmet, his hunting trophies and his most loved things. They liked best of all to send him on his boat across the unknown seas. They towed it to the harbour mouth, set fire to it, when the sun was going down, shouting as they watched it drift away, "Odin, receive thy Champion." They fancied Odin sat in the far North with all the gods waiting to welcome a brave man and to give him a seat of honour in his hall. For the Saxons thought a brave soldier the noblest of all men.

CHAPTER IV

THE SAXON VILLAGE

Though the Saxons loved fighting, they soon learned to love peace and to rule their kingdoms well. They divided the spoil amongst themselves and the chiefs rewarded their soldiers with

lands. They built their villages as near the streams as they could, so that they might get water easily. They built them near the woods, if possible, so that they could get timber to build their houses and fuel for the winter; but not so near that an enemy could spring on them suddenly without a warning, or the packs of hungry wolves come prowling round in the long, dark nights. Any stranger who came in sight of the village must blow his horn three times loudly, else the Saxons killed him, for they feared anyone they did not know.

The soldiers who settled in the village were freemen, and they shared in the harvest of the soil. Only half the land was ploughed for seed and the other half was left fallow or idle for a year. In the ploughed land, they planted wheat or rye one year and barley next time, after a year's rest. Sometimes they divided the land and planted wheat in one half in October and barley in the other in March. When the ploughing was done, they were all very careful to throw up a little heap of earth to make a ridge between the strips in each field, so that each freeman might know his own strip in the wheat field and in the barley field too. He made bread from the wheat or rye and a drink from the barley, and if there were any to spare he would exchange it for some of the things he wanted very much, honey perhaps, for everybody needed that when there was no sugar.

Beyond the ploughed lands, there was a piece of common ground, where all the freemen turned out their geese and cows and sheep and pigs, though the pigs liked the woods better, for there they could find acorns and hazel nuts.

There was a hayfield, too, and, when spring came, a fence was put all round it and it was carefully divided into strips, so that everyone had a share of the hay. The "hayward" was a busy man, for it was his duty to keep the woods, corn and meadows. In haytime, he looked after the mowers. In August, he was to be seen, rod in hand, in the cornfields, watching early and late, so that no beasts strayed and trampled down the corn.

When Lammastide came, all the freemen kept holiday for joy that harvest time had come.

Now, there was sure to be one man who had more treasure than the others, and oxen perhaps for the plough. It was very hard work trying to plough the fields with less than eight, so the other freemen were glad to borrow the oxen sometimes. But the chief, the rich man, made a bargain, that those who borrowed his oxen should pay him by doing three days' work a week for him in his fields, for they had no money. So, in time, he became lord over them.

Then he made a mill where all the corn should be ground into flour and every man who brought a sackful must pay so many handfuls of flour to the miller for his trouble. Not every village had a mill, so it sometimes happened that men travelled far to make a bargain with the miller, for they found it slow work to grind their own corn between the grindstones at home.

From an old writing [1] that we have still, we can find out many things about the peasants, for they tell how they spend their time. The ploughman says: "I work hard. I go out at daybreak driving the oxen to the field and I yoke them to the plough. Be it never so stark winter I dare not linger at home for awe of my lord, but having yoked my oxen and fastened share and coulter, every day I must plough a full acre or more. I have a boy driving the oxen with a goad-iron, who is hoarse with cold and shouting. And I do more also. I have to fill the bins of the oxen with hay, and water them and take out their litter. Mighty hard work it is, for I am not free." The shepherd says: "In the first morning I drive my sheep to their pasture and stand over them in heat and in cold, with my dogs, lest the wolves swallow them up; and I lead them back to their folds and milk them twice a day, and their folds I move, and I make cheese and butter and I am true to my lord."

The oxherd says: "When the ploughman unyokes the oxen, I lead them to pasture and all night I stand over them waking against thieves; and then again in the early morning I betake them, well-filled and watered, to the ploughman."

The King's hunter says: "I braid me nets and set them in fit places and set my hounds to follow up the wild game, till they come unsuspecting to the net and are caught therein, and I slay them in the net. With swift hounds I hunt down wild game. I take harts and boars and bucks and roes and sometimes wild hares. I give the King what I take because I am his hunter. He clothes me well and feeds me and sometimes gives me a horse or an arm-ring that I may pursue my craft merrily."

The fisherman says: "I go on board my boat and cast my net into the river and cast my angle and baits and what they catch I take. I cast the unclean fish away and take the clean for meat. The citizens buy my fish. I cannot catch as many as I could sell, eels and pike, minnows and trout and lampreys. Sometimes I fish in the sea, but seldom, for it is a far row for me to the sea. I catch there herring and salmon, porpoises and sturgeon and crabs, mussels, periwinkles, sea-cockles, plaice and fluke and lobsters and many of the like. It is a perilous thing to catch a whale. It is pleasanter for me to go to the river with my boat than to go with many boats whale-hunting."

The fowler says: "In many ways I trick the birds—sometimes with nets, with snares, with lime, with whistling, with a hawk, with traps. My hawks feed themselves and me in winter, and in Lent I let them fly off to the woods and I catch me young birds in harvest and tame them. But many feed the tamed ones the summer over, that they have them ready again."

The merchant says: "I go aboard my ships with my goods, and go over sea and sell my things and buy precious things which are not produced in this country and bring them hither to you, brocade and silk, precious gems and gold, various raiment and dye-stuffs, wine and oil, ivory, and brass and bronze, copper and tin, sulphur and glass and the like. And I wish to sell them dearer here than I buy them there, that I may get some profit wherewith I may feed myself and my wife and my sons."

While all the village people were busy at their work in the fields, they must have peace and order in the land. Every week, the lord and the freemen met together under the great oak tree to talk about business. If they heard of any evil deed done near their village, the lord rode out at the head of all the men who could ride or run, to find the evil doer, and they searched for miles, shouting "Hi! Hi!" and if they passed through any village, they summoned every freeman to follow in the chase. When the thief was found, he was brought back to his own village, and if he could not find any who would stand by him as "oath helpers," then none would listen to his tale. They said that only the great god could judge, so they prayed that Odin would send a sign. Sometimes, they bound the prisoner hand and foot and threw him into the village pond; if he floated they said, "He is not guilty." Sometimes, they burned the prisoner with hot irons or made him thrust his hand into boiling water; then the wounds were bound up; and if, after three days, they were healed and there was no scar, they said, "He is not guilty." But this did not happen often.

Sometimes, if the man had a bad character, they branded him on the forehead with the sign of a wolf's head and took him to the forest, where he had to live all the rest of his life, for no one would have an outlaw in a village. If a man were afraid of being made an outlaw, he must find a great lord and ask him to protect him. If the man promised to work for a lord or gave him a present of fish or corn or honey every year he could find a lord. If it should happen that he were caught by the Hue and Cry, on that day the word of his lord in his favour was worth more than the words of six freemen against him. So most people worked for a lord.

As time went on, the King began to call the lords and freemen together to ask them about a great war, or to make some new laws. They did not like going very much, for travelling was troublesome and dangerous. So the King usually asked only his cup-bearer and chamberlain and the great men of his court for advice.

[1] *Ælfric's Dialogues.*

CHAPTER V

THE COMING OF CHRISTIANITY

Some there were who had heard of Christ in the old days, but a band of monks landing on the coast of Kent brought the news again to this country. Pope Gregory had sent Augustine from Rome to tell the Saxons about Christ, for he was sorry that they loved Odin and Thor, and did not know any other god. Ethelbert, the King of Kent, had a Christian wife, and he was very anxious to know what these strangers had to say about the new God. But he was afraid that they might know how to work charms and to call out wicked spirits, so he let Augustine and his monks preach to the people out of doors, for he thought that they could not harm any one in the open air. When the Roman monks preached, many people became Christians, but the old Saxon poets sang sorrowful stories of Odin's anger, and how the gods had left the world for ever because the people were not faithful. Bede tells a story of how the old wise men of Northumbria met together to decide whether they would give up the old gods for Christ or not, and as they sat in solemn silence, thinking of this great thing, an old man rose and said, "The present life of man, O King, seems to me like the swift flight of a sparrow, who on a wintry night darts into the hall, as we sit at supper. He flies from the storms of wind and rain outside, and for a brief space abides in the warmth and light, and then vanishes again into the darkness whence he came. So is the life of man, for we know not whence we came nor whither we go. Therefore if this stranger can tell us anything more certain, we should hearken gladly to him." Thus, they became Christians. They built churches in their villages; first of wood, then of stone.

Many Christian teachers then came to England and built homes or monasteries, wherever they went, first of rough timber, then of stone. They made clearings in the forests and drained the fenlands, and the people followed and built houses for themselves near the monasteries, for they found that they could learn many things from the monks. The sick, the poor, the tired and the old were always welcome, and travellers too were glad to rest there, for there were no inns in those days.

The monks were ruled by an abbot, and the nuns, who lived in other houses, by an abbess. They

took a vow of poverty and thought that they served God best by giving their time to prayer and praise.

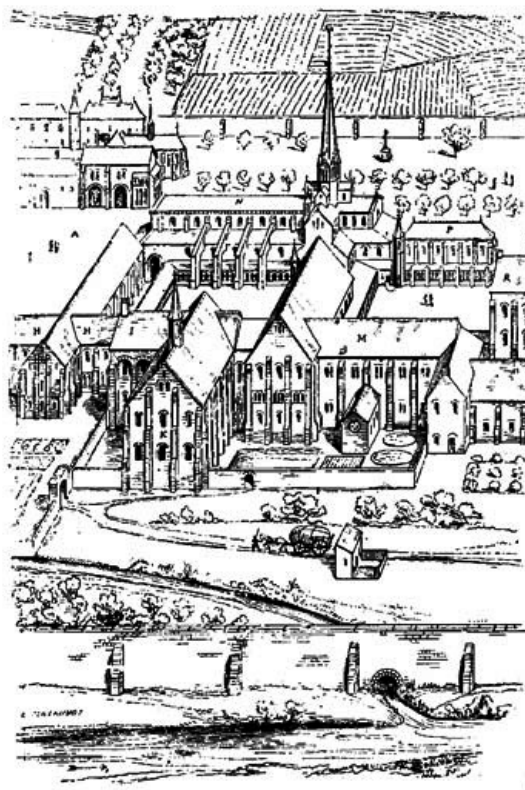
They loved their monastery, and, as the centuries went by, they made it more and more beautiful. The people gave rich offerings and builders came from foreign lands, skilled in stonework and other arts. Carvings were made for the church, pictures were painted on the walls, and flowers and trees were brought from the Holy Land to plant in the gardens. In this way came the cedar trees and the juniper, and certain plants that now grow wild in parts of the country like the poisonous hellebore, the grape hyacinth and the little fritillary or snake's head. Great men brought gifts of frankincense and myrrh, to be burned in the church on holy days, or jewels for the altar, and silk from the east for hangings, but the greatest treasure of all was the "relic." People would travel many miles to see this, for those who saw it could be healed of their sickness or forgiven for their sins. There were many curious relics. There were little bits of wood, that men believed belonged to the real cross, on which Christ was crucified, and thorns, which were said to have come from His crown. S. Louis, King of France, built the beautiful Sainte Chapelle in Paris, where he might keep the crown of thorns, which the Crusaders brought from Palestine.

The monastery was usually built round a square garden or lawn. On one side was the church, on another the hall and large kitchens and pantries, for there were often visitors, some of high estate, and they must be royally feasted. In the Rule of S. Benedict it was written, "Let all guests who come to the monastery be entertained like Christ Himself; because He will say, 'I was a stranger and ye took me in.'" The guest-house must stand apart "so that the guests, who are never wanting in a monastery, may not disquiet the brethren by their untimely arrivals." Anyone could claim a lodging for two nights, and in a few monasteries there was stabling provided for as many as three hundred horses.

There was a long dormitory where the monks slept. It was the custom for them to get up at midnight to make a procession into the church by the night stairs. There they said matins and lauds (the last three psalms), and then returned to the dormitory to sleep if it were winter until daybreak, if summer till sunrise. Only those who had worked hard in the fields all day were excused. They dressed by the light of the wicks set in oil in little bowls at either end of the dormitory.

In the cloisters were troughs for washing before meals, filled with water by taps; and above were little cupboards for towels.

Some monasteries had a library, for they were quite rich in books. Then there was a writing room, where the scribes were busy making beautiful copies of the precious books, some skilled in writing, others in painting and illuminating. When the writing was done, the artist brought his colours to make the capital letters and the little pictures in the text. There was music to be copied too, and the accounts of the Abbey must be kept neatly. Sometimes a chronicle was made of great events that happened. It is from such books as these that we have learned much about the story of the country.



THE ABBEY OF CITEAUX

A. Round this court, stables and barns. H. Guest houses and abbot's quarters. N.



A SERVICE IN THE CHAPEL

The monks led peaceful lives in days when most men were busy about war.

The monks divided the hours between sunrise and sunset into twelve equal parts, so it happened that the hour in winter was twenty minutes shorter than in summer. Every three hours, there was a service in church, prime at the first, terce at the third, sext at the sixth and none at the ninth. After prime, on summer mornings, the monks were summoned by the Abbot to the chapter house and there each man received his task. The latest business was talked about and plans were made for the coming guests. Then each monk went to his business, some to the gate to give food to the poor and help to the sick, some to work in the orchard and garden, to spin or to weave, though in some monasteries this kind of work was done for the brethren. They had their first meal at midday in the hall in silence. While they ate, one of their number, who had already had his meal, would read to them from a book of sermons or the Lives of the Saints. After grace, the Miserere (Psalm 51) was sung through the cloister. In summer, they would rest in the afternoon, in the dormitory or perhaps in the cloister, on the sunny south side, where they could read or think or pray. In winter, they worked at this time, because their nights were long. Vespers was read at sunset, then came supper. Compline ended the day, but it sometimes happened that they lingered in the warming-house to chat with one another, but this was against rules.

Kings and princes found out what wise counsellors these men were and brought them to the courts to help them govern, though this was against the rules of the monastic orders.

Then, in those days, Abbots began to ride forth like princes, monasteries were full of treasure and monks forsook the humbler ways of life they had once followed.

CHAPTER VI

ALFRED AND THE DANES

After the Saxons had been in England many years, when their weapons had grown rusty and they had almost forgotten how to fight, bands of Danes came sailing over the North Sea to plunder the land. "God Almighty sent forth these fierce and cruel people like swarms of bees," says the chronicler. First, they carried away the beautiful things from the monasteries and churches, and then they came to live here. They drove the Saxons from their houses or built new villages by the side of the old ones. We know that they must have settled in Yorkshire and Lincolnshire, in Westmorland and Cumberland, because they gave Danish names to many places, such as Grimsby (Grim's town), Whitby, Appleby. In those days, the Danes grew very bold. "Ships came from the west ready for war with grinning heads and carven beaks," runs the legend, "the golden war banner" shining in the bows. They tried to conquer the west and south, as well as the north and east. In the land of the West Saxons, many battles were fought, and still the little band of hungry, worn-out soldiers stood at bay.

It was at this time that Alfred was made King and, like his father and brothers, was soon defeated and driven into Athelney, a little island in the west in the midst of a great swamp. There, he spent

the winter drilling his soldiers and making plans to drive away the Danes in the spring time. A story is told of how he went into the Danish camp as a bard. He carried a harp, and while the mead cup was handed round, he sang the old sagas. When the feast was done and the chess board was brought out, the captains talked about the war, as they played their favourite game. So Alfred heard their plans.

The Danes were surprised when the spring came, for Alfred drove them out of his kingdom and made them promise never to come into the land of the West Saxons again.

But he did not try to drive them out of England, for he knew that it would be many years before his people would be strong enough, perhaps not until his own children were grown up. So he worked hard all his life to make his people good soldiers and thoughtful men, in order that, when the time came, they could drive the enemy across the seas and rule over the whole land in their stead.

"Formerly," said the King, "foreigners sought wisdom and learning in this land, now we should have to get them from abroad if we would have them." Alfred found his nobles careless and idle, they loved hunting and feasting and thought very little about ruling a kingdom or leading an army. They were too old to learn, but the king made up his mind that their children should grow up good soldiers and wise rulers. So he made a school at his court for these boys. There they learned the art of war and many other things too.

They read the history of their own country from Bede's Book, that had been kept at York. This book was written in Latin, so the King had to have it translated for them. He had heard of the fame of a great writer, Asser, who lived in South Wales. Messages were sent to him to ask him to come to Alfred's court to write the history of the reign. Asser did not wish to leave his beautiful home, but in the end, he promised to stay for six months every year; that is why we know so much about this great King.

Alfred turned into English some beautiful old Latin books that taught men how to rule well, and in the margins he himself wrote what he thought wise counsel. Two of these books had been written by Pope Gregory who sent Augustine to England, and at the beginning of one of them there are these words, "Alfred, King, turned each word of me into English and sent me to his writers, north and south, and bade them make more such copies that he might send them to the bishops."

Alfred loved reading and he wrote down all the wise sayings that he found. Asser tells the story of how the King came to do this.

"When we were one day sitting together in the royal chamber and were holding converse upon divers topics, as our wont was, it chanced that I repeated to him a quotation from a certain book. And when he had listened attentively to this with all his ears, and had carefully pondered it in the deep of his mind, suddenly he showed me a little book which he carried constantly in the fold of his cloak. In it were written the Daily Course and certain psalms and some prayers, which he had read in his youth, and he commanded that I should write that quotation in the same little book. And when he urged me to write that as quickly as possible, I said to him, 'Are you willing that I should write the quotation apart by itself on a small leaf? For we know not that at some time we shall not find some other such quotation or more than one, which will please you: and if it should so turn out unexpectedly we shall rejoice that we have kept this apart from the rest.'

"And when he heard this, he said 'Your counsel is good.' And I, hearing this and being glad, made ready a book of several leaves, in haste, and at the beginning of it I wrote that quotation according to his command. And on the same day, by his order, I wrote in the same book no less than three other quotations pleasing to him, as I had foretold."

"This book he used to call his handbook, because with the utmost care he kept it at his hand day and night and in it he found, as he said, no small comfort."

Alfred desired to hear of other lands, but there were hardly any maps in those days and no books of geography. Great travellers were welcomed at his court, for, when he was very young, he had paid a visit to Rome and had seen a little of foreign lands. Othere, the famous seaman, who had sailed in the Arctic regions, came to tell his stories of the frozen seas that men could walk upon and of the strange midnights when the sun shone as bright as by day. Othere spoke of whales and walruses and he brought their tusks of fine ivory to show the King. Wulfstan came, too, and he had travelled in Prussia and brought stories of a land rich in honey and fish.

Travellers came from the hot lands, from India and the far east. They brought presents of tiger skins and spices, of rich silks and jewels. They told stories of wonderful deserts, of the high snowy mountains and thick jungles, that they had passed on their long journey. The King delighted to read of elephants and lions and of "the beast we call lynx" that men said could see through trees and even stones.

"Or what shall I say," says the chronicler, "concerning the daily intercourse with the nations which dwell from the shores of Italy unto the uttermost bounds of Ireland? for I have seen and read letters and gifts sent to Alfred by Elias, patriarch of Jerusalem."

In this way the West Saxon folk heard of great, unknown countries and peoples, and the sons of the nobles learned not only "to run, to ride, to swim and to make runes or rhymes," but to be great rulers and adventurers as their forefathers had been.

Alfred was a very busy King, for not only had he to receive ambassadors and counsellors, but he had to ride through the land, seeing justice done, and restoring the ruined churches and monasteries. He taught the workers in gold and artificers of all kinds, "to build houses majestic and good, beyond all that had been built before. What shall I say of the cities and towns which he restored, and of the others which he built, where before there had never been any? Or of the work in gold and silver, incomparably made under his directions? Or of the halls and royal chambers wonderfully made of stone and wood by his command? Or of the royal residences built of stone, moved from their former positions and most beautifully set up in more fitting places by the King's command?"

The King gave many gifts to the craftsmen whom he had gathered from all lands, men skilled "in every earthly work," and he gave a portion "to the wayfaring men who came to him from every nation, lying near and far, and who sought from him wealth, and even to those who sought it not."

There were no clocks in those days and the King was much troubled, "for he had promised to give up to God half his services." "He could not equally distinguish the length of the hours by night, on account of the darkness: and oftentimes of the day, on account of storms and clouds." "After long reflection on these things he at length, by a useful and shrewd invention, commanded his chaplain to supply wax in sufficient quantities." "He caused the chaplain to make six candles of equal length, so that each candle might have twelve divisions marked upon it. These candles burned for twenty-four hours, a night and a day. But sometimes, from the violence of the wind, which blew through the doors and windows of the chambers or the canvas of the tents, they burned out before their time. The King then considered by what means he might shut out the wind; and so he ordered a lantern which was closed up, by the King's command, by a door made of horn. By this means, six candles lasted twenty-four hours, and when they went out others were lighted."

Thus the King left behind him as he wished "a memory in good works," and, after him, his son and daughter drove the Danes eastward beyond Watling Street.

The northmen came back with the strong King Cnut, who conquered the whole country. Now Cnut was a great king before he took England, for he ruled Sweden and Denmark and was lord over Norway. When he was crowned King of England, he began to love this kingdom more than all his lands, and he made his home in London. He wanted to be a real English King, so he looked for the old laws of Alfred the Great and told the English people that he would rule as Alfred had done.

The King had a fine army of tall, strong soldiers, but he sent nearly all of them back to their own land and kept only three thousand house-companions for a body guard. The English people knew that he trusted them, for he could not have kept the land in order with so few soldiers, if the people had hated him. For seventeen years, there was a great peace in the land and ships could pass to and fro, carrying "skins, silks, costly gems and gold, besides garments, wine, oil, ivory, with brass and copper, and tin and silver and glass and such like."

When Cnut's two sons had reigned in the land, then the Saxons once more had a Saxon King.

CHAPTER VII

THE BATTLE OF HASTINGS

Edward the Confessor, the Saxon prince, had taken refuge in Normandy in the days when the Danish Kings ruled in England. There he learned to speak Norman French and to love Norman ways. When the Saxons chose him to be king, he brought some of his Norman friends to court with him. He was a man "full of grace and devoted to the service of God." He left the rule of his kingdom to three Saxon Earls, Siward the Stout, a man who struck terror to the hearts of the Scots, Leofric of the Marsh land, "wise in the things of God and men," and Godwin of Wessex.

There was much trouble because there were no heirs to the throne, and the Norman chroniclers say that the King promised his crown to William, Duke of Normandy. The Saxons did not know this, and if they had they would not have crowned him; so they chose Harold, son of Godwin and brother of the Queen, to rule after Edward the Confessor. They chose Harold for he was a man after their own heart, strong and fearless, like the heroes of old. Harold had two elder brothers, but they were cruel and lawless and the people feared them.

The Normans told a story of how Harold had been wrecked on the coast of Normandy, two years before this, and was taken before the Duke as a prisoner. The Duke would not let him go until he had sworn, with his hand upon the holy relics, that he would never claim the Saxon crown.

When Edward died, Harold forgot this oath and the people crowned him with much rejoicing. When the news reached the Duke of Normandy "he was in his park of Quévilly, near Rouen, with many knights and squires, going forth to the chase." He had in his hand the bow, ready strung and bent for the arrow. The messenger greeted him and took him aside to tell him. Then the Duke was very angry. "Oft he tied his mantle and oft he untied it again and he spoke to no man, neither dare any man speak to him." Then he bade his men cut down the trees in the great forests and build him ships to take his soldiers to England. When they were ready, there arose a great storm and for many weeks he waited by the sea shore for a fair wind and a good tide. Tostig, too, Harold's brother, became very jealous and asked for a half of the kingdom. And because Harold would not listen, Tostig went to Norway, to beg the great King Hadrada to call out his men and ships and sail for England. So the Northmen sailed up the river Humber and took York. Then, Harold and his soldiers marched to the North to fight against Tostig. When he had pitched his camp, he sent word to Tostig, "King Harold, thy brother, sends thee greeting, saying that thou shalt have the whole of Northumbria or even the third of his kingdom, if thou wilt make peace with him." "But," said Tostig, "what shall be given to the King of Norway for his trouble?"

"Seven feet of English ground," was the answer, "or as much more as is needful, seeing that he is taller than other men." Then said the Earl, "Go now and tell King Harold to get ready for battle, for never shall the Northmen say that Tostig left Hadrada, King of Norway, to join the enemy." And when Harold departed, the King of Norway asked who it was that had spoken so well. "That," said Tostig, "was my brother Harold." When Hadrada heard this he said, "That English king was a little man, but he stood strong in his stirrups." A great fight there was, and Hadrada fought fiercely, but he was killed by an arrow. When the sun set, the Northmen turned and fled, for Tostig, too, lay dead upon the field. That night there was a great feast in the Saxon camp.

As they held wassail, a messenger came riding into the camp, breathless with haste, for he had rested not day nor night in the long ride to the North. He shouted to those who stood by, "The Normans—the Normans are come—they have landed at Hastings—Thy land, O King, they will wrest from thee, if thou canst not defend it well." That night, the Saxons broke up their camp and hurried towards London. The wise men begged Harold to burn the land, that the enemy might starve, but Harold would not, for he said, "How can I do harm to my own people?" So they rode off to meet the Duke near Hastings.

Now Harold chose his battle-field very wisely, a rising ground, for most of his soldiers were on foot and many of the Normans were on horse-back and the King knew that it was hard riding up hill. So Harold stood under the Golden Dragon of Wessex watching the enemy below. In the front of the Normans rode their minstrel, throwing his sword into the air and catching it again, as he sang of the brave deeds of those knights of old, Roland and Oliver. Fierce was the onslaught, and soon the Normans turned to flee. Then were the Saxons so eager for the spoil that they came down from their high ground to chase the enemy. When the Duke saw this, he wheeled his men in battle array and the fight began again fiercer than ever. Then the Duke ordered a great shower of arrows to be shot up into the air, so that when they fell, they pierced many a good soldier. And Harold fell, shot through the eye by an arrow. Still, the Saxons fought on, for they held it shame to escape alive from the fields whereon their leader lay slain. That night, William pitched his tent where the King's banner had waved. Then came Gyda the mother of Harold to beg Harold's body from the Duke. But he gave orders that it should be buried by the seashore, "Harold guarded the cliffs when he was alive, let him guard them, now that he is dead," said William.

So the King's mother and his brothers hid in the rocky west, in Tintagel, for fear of the Duke's anger.

Then did William march slowly to London, burning and harrying the land, and all men feared him.





A BATTLE IN THE 15TH CENTURY

There is a piece of "tapestry" still kept at Bayeux in France, showing how England was conquered. It was probably made later than the reign of William and perhaps was intended to go round the walls of the choir of Bayeux Cathedral, for it has been measured and found to be of the right length. Though it is old and torn and faded, we have been able to learn many things from it [2].

There were few histories written in those days, for the Normans were too busy fighting for their new lands and the English were too sorrowful to tell their story.

[2] There is a copy in Reading Museum. See *Guide to Bayeux Tapestry*, published by Textile Department, Victoria and Albert Museum.

CHAPTER VIII

THE NORMAN KINGS

The strong men of the north had not bowed to William the Conqueror on the field of Hastings, and when they heard that he was crowned, they armed themselves against him. The King marched towards the north slowly, burning and harrying the land as he passed, and his path was marked by flaming villages and hayricks.

When he came into Yorkshire, he laid waste the land, and for nine years not an acre was tilled beyond the Humber, and "dens of wild beasts and of robbers, to the great terror of the traveller, alone were to be seen."

The Saxons fled; some died of hunger by the wayside, some sold themselves as slaves, and a few hid themselves in the Fens, a great stretch of water and marsh land, in the east, dotted here and there with islands and sometimes crossed in winter on sledges. There Hereward the Wake built his camp in the swamps of Ely and there all true men gathered round him. He was bold and hardy and even William said of him, "if there had been in England three such men as he, they would have driven out the Normans."

The King gave orders that a causeway should be built across the Fens and he besieged the Saxons in Ely, and some said that Hereward was betrayed. But William pardoned him and sent him to Normandy to command his army. Many stories are told of his adventures. It was said that

he was slain one day as he slept in an orchard, for there were many in the King's court who envied him.

The Conqueror was a wise king, and he desired to know what manner of kingdom he had conquered. "He held a great council and very deep speech with his wise men about this land, how it was peopled and by what men."

So he sent his clerks to every shire and commanded them to write down on a great roll all that they could find out about the country. They were to ask of the lord and of the freemen in the villages and of the monks in the monasteries these questions: How much land have you? Who gave you that land? What services do you owe the King for it? Have you paid them? How many people dwell upon your land? How many soldiers must you lend to the King if need be? How many cattle have you? Have you a mill? (if they had, they owed every third penny to the King). Have you a fish pond? (fish was a great luxury).

The lords and the monks were unwilling to answer, for they knew they must pay to the King all that was due. "So narrowly did the King make them seek out all this that there was not a single yard of land (shameful it is to tell, though he thought it no shame to do) nor one ox, nor one cow, nor one swine left out, that was not set down in his rolls, and all these rolls were afterwards brought to him." These records are called Domesday Book. The Kings, when they desired to get money or soldiers from the great lords and monks, turned to the Domesday Book.

When the book was brought to the King, he summoned the lords and freemen to come to do him "homage." These men came and they placed their hands between the King's hands and, kneeling before him, they promised to be the King's men and to follow him in time of need. "Hear, my lord," said the baron, "I become liege man of yours for life and limb ... and I will keep faith and loyalty to you for life and death, God help me."

William I made great peace in the land, and, as he was dying, he called his three sons to him, and to Robert, the eldest, he gave Normandy and to William Rufus, England. Then Henry turned sorrowfully to his father, "And what, my father, do you give to me?" The King replied, "I bequeath £500 to you from my treasury." Then said Henry, "What shall I do with this money, having no corner of the earth I can call my own?" But his father replied, "My son, be content with your lot and trust heaven, Robert will have Normandy and William England. But you also in your turn will rule over the lands which are mine and you will be greater and richer than either of your brothers."

Rufus ruled over England thirteen years, and he was hated by the people. Robert gave Normandy to his brother for a sum of money; and thus Henry, when Rufus was dead, became Duke of Normandy and King of England. He married a Saxon lady and "there was great awe of him in the land, he made peace for man and beast."

CHAPTER IX

THE NORMAN BARONS

The Norman barons who came to England with William the Conqueror were much disappointed, for they had hoped to share the kingdom with him and to be great lords. But William had not given them as much land as they desired, and he had made Domesday Book so that they should render to him due service and payment in return for his gifts. The barons had not always paid that which they owed; and Henry I made a rule that all should come to his Court three times a year, to Winchester at the feast of Easter, to Westminster at Whitsuntide and to Gloucester at Mid-winter, when he wore his crown, and then they should do homage and pay their taxes.

To this court came the officers of the household, and the King appointed a Bishop to receive the money and priests to keep the accounts, since there were few among the nobles or citizens who could read, write and add figures. The money was counted out on a chequered table, and so the court came to be called the Exchequer.

The barons could not easily cheat the King; for, when their money had been counted out upon the table, some of it was melted on the furnace, lest it should contain base metal, and it was weighed in the balances, lest the coins should have been clipped. Then Domesday Book was searched and the priests read out what sum was due to the King from this lord.

When the Chancellor was satisfied, a tally was handed to the baron. This was a willow or hazel stick, shaped something like the blade of a knife, about an inch thick. Notches were cut in it to show the amount paid and the halfpennies were marked by small holes. The tally was then split down the middle through the notches, and the baron took one half so that he might show it to the

Chancellor when he came to court to pay again, and the Chancellor kept the other half to prove that the baron was not cheating. Thus the King kept his barons in order and there was peace in the land.

Now Henry I had an only son, and to him he gave a ship, "a better one than which there did not seem to be in the fleet," but as he was sailing from Normandy to England, it struck upon a rock and all perished, save only a butcher, who was found in the morning clinging to a plank.

When the King heard the news, he was in great distress; for no woman had yet ruled in England and his daughter Matilda was married to a French Count, whom all the Normans hated for his fierce temper and overbearing ways. The King, nevertheless, made them swear to put her on the throne, but, when he died, the barons chose her cousin, Stephen, for "he was a mild man, soft and good, and did no justice."

Stephen quarrelled with the Chancellor and closed the Court of Exchequer where the barons had paid their dues, and he let the barons build castles and coin their own money. When he was in need of soldiers, he hired foreign ruffians, and because he could not pay them, he let them loose upon the land to plunder: thus he "undid all his cousins had done."

"The barons forswore themselves and broke their troth, for every nobleman made him a castle and held it against the King and filled the land full of castles. They put the wretched country folk to sore toil with their castle-building; and, when the castles were made, they filled them with devils and evil men. Then they took all those that they deemed had any goods, both by night and day, men and women alike, and put them in prison to get their gold and silver, and tortured them with tortures unspeakable. Many thousands they slew with hunger. I cannot nor may not tell all the horrors and all the tortures that they laid on wretched men in the land. And this lasted nineteen winters, while Stephen was King, and ever it was worse and worse.

"They laid taxes on the villages continually, and, when the wretched folk had no more to give them, they robbed and burned all the villages, so that thou mightest easily fare a whole day's journey and shouldst never find a man living in a village nor a land tilled. Then was corn dear, and flesh and cheese, and there was none in the land.

"If two or three men came riding to a village, all the village folk fled before them, deeming them to be robbers. Wheresoever men tilled, the earth bore no corn, for the land was fordone with such deeds, and they said openly that Christ and His Saints slept. Such, and more than we can say, we suffered nineteen winters for our sins." Then Stephen made a treaty with Matilda's son Henry and promised him the crown of England; for Henry was already a great prince, holding more lands than the monarch of France. Moreover, he was valiant in battle, strong in the Council chamber and never weary. The French King said of him, "Henry is now in England, now in Ireland, now in Normandy, he may be rather said to fly than go by horse or boat."

Henry II could ride all night and, if need were, sleep in the saddle. "His legs were bruised and livid with riding." "He was given beyond measure to the pleasures of hunting; and he would start off the first thing in the morning on a fleet horse and now traversing the woodland glades, now plunging into the forest itself, now crossing the ridges of the hills, would in this manner pass day after day in unwearied exertion; and when, in the evening, he reached home, he was rarely seen to sit down whether before or after supper. In spite of all the fatigue he had undergone, he would keep the whole court standing."

This tireless ruler, before he became King, had restored order in England, for he commanded the hired soldiers to be gone immediately, and they went as they had come like a flight of locusts. He destroyed more than a thousand castles, and those that were well built he kept for himself. "All folk loved him, for he did good justice."

He opened the Court of Exchequer, so that the Barons were forced to pay all they owed Stephen for the nineteen years of his reign. He visited all the courts of justice in the land, and no man durst do evil, for none knew where the King might be. He appointed judges to travel round the country and to sit at Westminster and hear complaints, for many had sought the King in vain, so swiftly did he travel from place to place. Thus the barons were made to fear the King and rule justly.

CHAPTER X

NORMAN PRELATES

There came one day, to the Abbey of Bec in Normandy, a great scholar named Lanfranc. The Abbot was building an oven, "working at it with his own hands. Lanfranc came up and said, 'God

save you.' 'God bless you,' said the Abbot Herlwin. 'Are you a Lombard?' 'I am,' said Lanfranc. 'What do you want?' 'I want to become a monk.' Then the Abbot bade a monk named Roger, who was doing his work apart, to show Lanfranc the book of S. Benedict's Rule; which he read and answered that, with God's help, he would gladly observe it. Then the Abbot, hearing this and knowing who he was and from whence he came, granted him what he desired. And he, falling down at the mouth of the oven, kissed Herlwin's feet."

The fame of the Abbey of Bec spread far and wide. "Under Lanfranc," said the chronicler, "the Normans first fathomed the art of letters; for under the six dukes of Normandy, scarce anyone among the Normans had applied to studies, nor was there any teacher found, till God, the Provider of all things, brought Lanfranc to Normandy."

He was William the Conqueror's friend and counsellor and brought the Church into much honour when he became Archbishop of Canterbury.

Among the strangers, who came to Bec, was Anselm. He had long desired to be a monk and had travelled over the Alps from Italy to join the order. When he was young, he used "to listen gladly to his mother, and having heard from her that there is one God in Heaven above, ruling all things, he imagined that Heaven rested on the mountains, that the palace of God was there and that the way to it was up the mountains." Before he was fifteen, he had written to a certain Abbot asking him to make him a monk, but he would not, when he heard that Anselm had not spoken to his father about it.

Anselm was a scholar, too, and men counted it a great thing to have been taught by him. "He behaved so that all men loved him as their dear father." If any were sick, he nursed them; if any angry, he sought them out. It was said that even the King, Rufus, so harsh and terrible to all others, in his presence became gentle and gracious.

When he was Abbot of Bec, he gave so much to the poor that the monks were often in need of bread themselves. Many came to seek his advice, "whole days he would spend in giving counsel" and his nights in correcting the books that had been copied out.

When Lanfranc died, William Rufus brought the kingdom into much trouble and sorrow, by closing churches, taking their money and refusing to choose an Archbishop. It happened that the King fell ill and messengers were sent to Anselm begging him to see the King and show him the way to health. Anselm was stern and bade the King confess his sins, and those who stood round urged him to make Anselm Archbishop. When the King's choice was told him, Anselm trembled and turned pale. "Consider I am old and unfit for work, how can I bear the charge of all this church? I am a monk and I can honestly say I have shunned all worldly business. Do not entangle me in what I have never loved and am not fit for." The Archbishop of Canterbury was a great officer, for he anointed the King when he was crowned, he held many lands and must protect the Church against the King if need be, for the Church was rich and the King poor.

The bishops and barons would not listen and they dragged him back to the King, shouting, "A pastoral staff, a pastoral staff." When they had found one, the King pressed it into his hand, though he held his fist clenched, and the crowd shouted, "Long live the Bishop." The Archbishop soon after asked for a council, for the King was still robbing the Church and "the Christian religion had well-nigh perished in many men." Rufus was angry, "What good would come of this matter for you?"

"If not for me, at least, I hope, for God and for you."

"Enough, talk no more of it to me."

The Archbishop begged the King not to rob the Abbeys and the King answered, "What are the abbeys to you? Are they not mine? Go to! you do what you like with your farms and am I not to do what I like with my Abbeys?"

"They are not yours to waste and destroy and use for your wars."

The King said, "Your predecessor would not have dared to speak thus to my father. I will do nothing for you."

Then Anselm departed with speed and left him to his will.

"Yesterday," said the King, "I hated him much, to-day still more; to-morrow and ever after, he may be sure I shall hate him with more bitter hatred. As Father and Archbishop I will never hold him more; his blessing and prayers I utterly abhor and refuse."

Anselm asked leave to go to Rome, for the Archbishop must wear the white stole, woven from the wool of the sheep of S. Agnes in Rome and blessed by the Pope "the Father of all Christian people."

"From which Pope?" said the King, for there were two at this time.

"From Urban."

"Urban," said the King, "I have not acknowledged. By my customs, and by the customs of my father, no man may acknowledge a Pope in England without my leave. To challenge my power in this is as much as to deprive me of my crown."

Anselm, seeing that in no way could he bring the King to have respect for the Church, went to Rome to seek the Pope's help. He said to the bishops and barons, "Since you, the Shepherds of the Christian people, and you, who are called chiefs of the nation, refuse your counsel to me, your chief, except according to the will of one man, I will go to the chief shepherd and prince of all."

The Pope honoured Anselm by giving him the chief seat among the Cardinals, but he kept him waiting at the Court, for he feared to offend all other kings and tyrants.

It was the custom to read the laws of the Church once a year in S. Peter's Church in Rome, and there was gathered there a great crowd of pilgrims from many countries. The Bishop of Lucca, a man of great stature and loud voice, was chosen to read the laws. When he had got a little way, his eyes kindled and he called out, "One is sitting among us from the ends of the earth in modest silence, still and meek. But his silence is a loud cry. The deeper and gentler his humility and patience, the higher it rises before God, the more it should kindle us. This one man, this one man, I say, has come here in his cruel afflictions and wrongs to ask for your judgment. And this is his second year and what help has he found? If you do not all know whom I mean, it is Anselm, Archbishop of England," and he broke his staff and threw it on the ground.

"Brother, enough, enough," said the Pope, "good order shall be taken about this."

"There is good need, for otherwise the thing will not pass with Him who judges justly."

Anselm left Rome, for he knew the Pope could not help. With much patience and meekness, Anselm contended yet again with Henry I for the rights of the Church. Becket, too, Archbishop of Canterbury, the King's friend and servant, defended it once again in the days of Henry II—even with his life.

CHAPTER XI

NORMAN BUILDERS

The Normans were soldiers and rulers and great builders too. With the white stone, which they found in their own land, they built magnificent cathedrals, abbeys and churches, for they were cunning craftsmen and dreamers.

The Cathedral was vast and grand, with its stately pillars and roof so lofty that it was lost in dim shadows. The master mason, who planned it, took great joy in building and often travelled far to see the works of other men. There are pictures of him with his cap on his head, the sign that he was a master, and his compass in his hand.

All the years of his life, the ironmaster laboured to cast a beautiful peal of bells. One old man died of joy on the day that his bells were first rung, for they were almost perfect.

The Normans, who came to England, did not forget their art. They built Ely Cathedral in the midst of the Fens, and Durham, overlooking the river. "You might see churches rise in every village and monasteries in the towns and cities, built after a style unknown before," says William of Malmesbury.

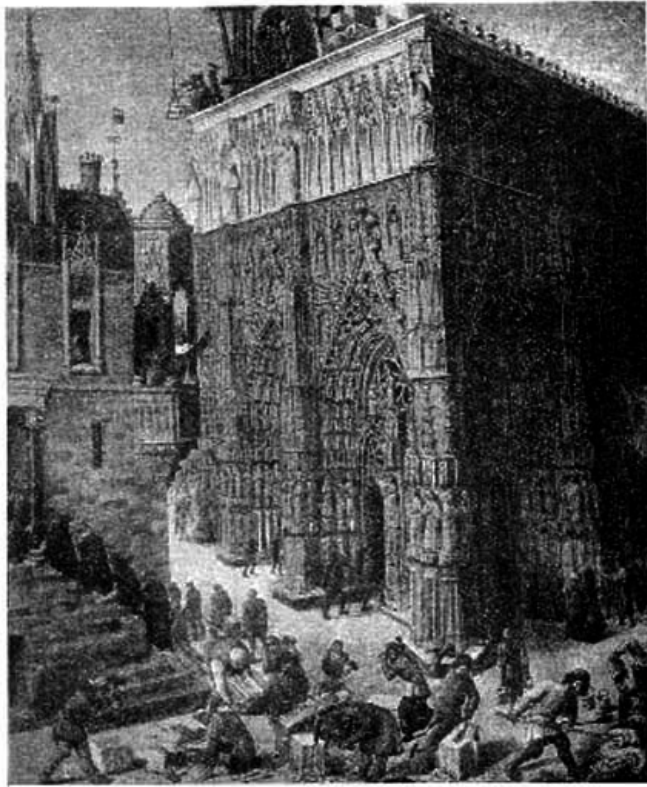
At first, they built of the rough stone found in the quarries worked by the Romans in other days. Woods were cut down to give fuel for the lime-kilns, and machines were devised for lifting blocks of stone, roads and even waterways were made for this great traffic.



ARCHITECT AND BUILDERS



BUILDING A CHURCH IN THE 15TH CENTURY



IMAGINARY PICTURE OF THE BUILDING OF THE TEMPLE OF JERUSALEM,
SHOWING GOTHIC ARCHITECTURE

So much work was there for the masons that there were not skilled craftsmen enough in the land to do all that was needed. As the years went by and the people gave to the Church of their riches, more new buildings were made and yet more decoration was used. Organs were built and stained glass of lovely hues was put in the windows, orange and blue and red, colours so rich they seemed almost to have caught and held the sunlight.

A monk, who was also an artist, wrote "Man's eye knoweth not whereon to gaze; if he look up at the vaults, they are as mantles embroidered with spring flowers; if he regard the walls, there is a manner of paradise; if he consider the light streaming through the windows, he marvelleth at the priceless beauty of the glass and at the variety of this most precious work."

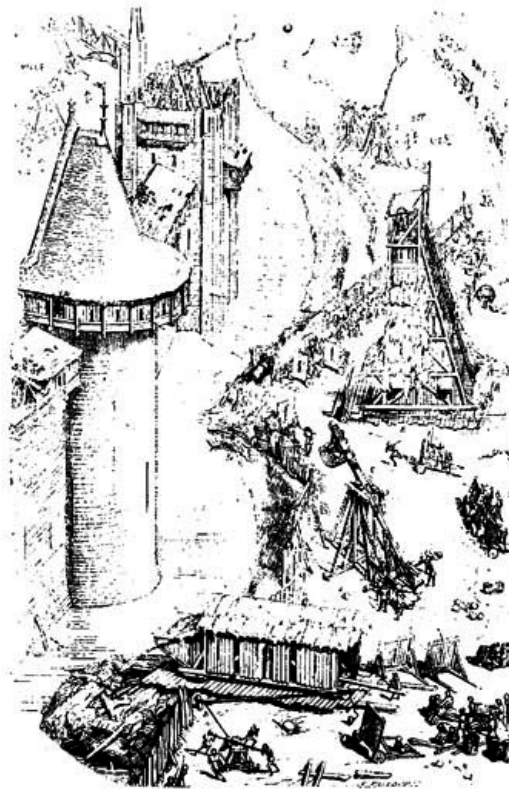
So full of riches were these buildings that S. Bernard, and other preachers too, called to the monks to remember their vows of poverty and to return to humbler dwellings like those they had once built where they might worship God.

Round the Saxon earthworks, the Normans built strong walls that they might hold them against foreign foe or angry neighbour. By the rivers and on high rocks, they made great keeps or towers, first of timber, later of stone, where they could withdraw if pressed by foes. The stone walls were often 13 feet thick and round about there was a deep moat. The doorway was of stout oak barred with iron. Over this, they would drop the portcullis, a single grate of iron, worked from a chamber above by cords and chains round a windlass. Across the moat, they flung a drawbridge, which could be raised at pleasure. There were only a few rooms in the keep, storerooms below and chambers in the two stories above, for the Norman lord only sought shelter there in times of siege. In such a tower, he was safe enough if he had plenty of food and a well, secure from the enemy.

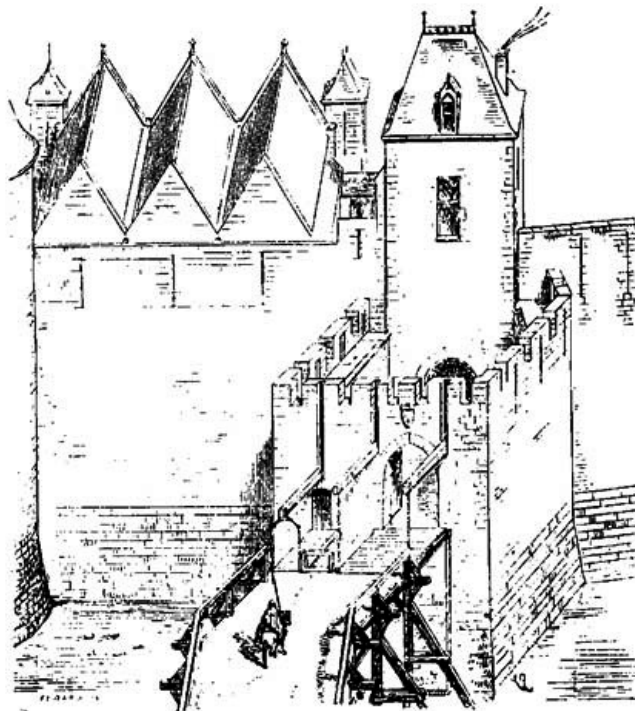
Sometimes the Normans built strong walls and another moat round about the keep, and towers where they kept watch by night and day, looking towards the four quarters of heaven lest an enemy should surprise them.

Much later, when the lord brought his family and soldiers to live in the castle, they made it still larger. Storerooms and stables were built round the courtyard and above these were the chambers of the lord and his followers. Here was a fine larder and a kitchen where the ox and wild boar were roasted whole and the mead was brewed and brown bread baked.

There was a great hall where everyone dined and where the servants slept at night. The floor was strewn with rushes, for there were no carpets until the days of Queen Eleanor, and then they were hung on the damp cold walls or put on the tables. Down the centre of the room ran a long table, sometimes fixed to the floor, sometimes on trestles, with wooden benches on either side, covered with osier matting. Under the table, the dogs gathered to gnaw the bones that were flung to them. For the meat was carried round on a spit and each man helped himself with a knife from his girdle.



A SIEGE



GATEWAY AND DRAWBRIDGE

So strong were these castles that, though the enemy used a ram, it was almost impossible to make a breach in the walls. If they brought scaling ladders, it was difficult to climb when the moat ran below and the archers shot from the ramparts. If they mined beneath the rock, the defenders could make a counter-mine. The besiegers could bring catapults to hurl heavy stones upon the walls, and siege towers to shoot their arrows high. These attacks were usually in vain, for the garrison of a castle only surrendered when there was famine.

These were days of great strife and turmoil, and strong was the King in whose reign it was said that "a man might travel through his realm with his bosom full of gold, unhurt."

CHAPTER XII

KNIGHTHOOD

In such troublous times when there was great fear abroad, when men feared the King, feared their neighbours and feared all foreigners, it seemed to them necessary that every lord should be trained to war. Yet they learned, too, to honour the courteous, gentle, generous knight, sworn to help the weak, and if need be to fight for the faith of Christ.

Every knight served his lord for many years before he was deemed worthy of knighthood. At seven years old he became a page, attending his lord and lady in hall and bower. From the chaplain and the ladies he heard of gentleness and courtesy and love. In the field, he was taught by the squires to cast a spear, bear a shield, and march with measured tread. With falconer and huntsman, he sought the mysteries of wood and river.

Then he became a squire, carving and serving in hall, offering the first cup of mead to his lord and the guests, carrying ewer and basin for them to wash after the meal. Upon him fell the duty of clearing the hall for dancing and minstrelsy and setting the tables for chess and draughts.

In the field, he learned to ride a war-horse and to practise warlike exercises. Armed with a lance he tilted at the quintain, a shield bound to a pole or spear fastened in the ground. After the Crusades, the figure of a Saracen, armed at all points and brandishing a wooden sabre, was set up instead of the shield. If the squire could not strike it in the centre of face or breast, it revolved rapidly and struck him in the back. Then there was the pel, a post or tree stump, six feet high. This he struck at certain points, marked as face and breast and legs, covering himself at the same time with a shield. He must learn also to scale walls, to swim, to bear heat, cold, hunger and fatigue.

If he were a "squire of the body" he bore the shield and armour of his lord in battle, cased and secured him in it and assisted him to mount his war-horse. To him fell the honour of defending the banner and securing the prisoners. If his lord were unhorsed, he must raise him and give him a new mount; if wounded, he must bear him to a place of safety. Froissart tells the story of a knight who fought as long as his breath served him and "at last at the end of the battle, his four squires took him and brought him out of the field and laid him under a hedgeside for to refresh him, and they unarmed him and bound up his wounds as well as they could."

The squire did not fight unless his lord was sore pressed, but he kept a careful watch, as did the son of the King of France, at Poitiers, standing by his father in the mêlée, though he was but fifteen, shouting "Guard thyself on thy right, father. Guard thyself on thy left, father," till he was taken prisoner.

A squire might be dubbed a knight on the battle-field in reward for bravery, or at the age of twenty-one he became a knight if he so desired, and this was the manner of his knighting, though often some of these ceremonies were left out. In the evening, he was placed in the care of "two squires of honour, grave and well seen in courtship and nurture and also in the feats of chivalry." A barber then attended and shaved him and cut his hair. After this he was led by the squires into his chamber where a bath was prepared, hung within and without with linen, and covered with rich cloths. While he was in the bath, "two ancient and grave knights attended on him, to instruct and counsel him touching the order and feats of chivalry." When this had been done, they poured some of the water of the bath over his shoulders, signing the left shoulder with the Cross. He was then taken from the bath and put into a plain bed without hangings, and there he remained until his body was dry. Then the two squires arrayed him in linen and a white shirt, and over that "a robe of russet with long sleeves, having a hood thereto like unto that of a hermit." In this way, knights of the order of the Bath were made.

Then the "two ancient and grave knights" returned and led him to the chapel, the squires going before them "sporting and dancing, the minstrels making melody." And when they had been served with wines and spices they went away, leaving only the young squire, his companions, the priest, the chandler and the watch who kept the vigil of arms till sunrise. At daybreak he confessed to the priest, heard matins, took part in the service of the Mass, offering a taper and a piece of money stuck in the taper as near the lighted end as possible, the taper to the honour of God, the money to the honour of the person who made him a knight.

Afterwards he was taken back to his chamber and remained in bed until the knights, squires and minstrels went to him and roused him. The knights then dressed him, mounted their horses and rode to the hall or the church where the new knight was to receive knighthood. His future squire rode before him, bareheaded, carrying his sword by the point of the scabbard with his spurs hanging from the hilt. If they rode to the hall, the lord there delivered the right spur "to the most noble and gentle knight" present and directed him to fasten it on the squire's right heel. The knight, kneeling, placed the squire's foot on his knee, fixed the spur and signed him with the Cross. In the same way, the left spur was fixed by another knight. And he, who was to create the new knight, took the sword and girded him with it, and then embracing him, lifted his right hand

and smote him on the neck or shoulder, saying "Be thou a good knight."

When this was done they all went to the chapel with much music, and there the sword was sprinkled with holy water by the priest who gave it to the knight, saying "Receive thy sword and use it in thine own defence and that of the Holy Church of God and to the confusion of the enemies of the Cross of Christ and for the Christian faith."

"Be thou a knight who lovest peace, firm, faithful and a true servant of God." Then girt with his sword the new knight arose, drew it from its sheath and waved it twice mightily over his left arm and put it back in the scabbard. Sometimes it happened as he came from the chapel, that the master cook awaited him at the door, and claimed his spurs as a fee, saying, "If thou do anything contrary to the order of chivalry (which God forbid) I shall hack the spurs from thy heels."

Some rode forth to protect "the good peace of the Lord their God" and some to break it.

CHAPTER XIII

THE KNIGHTS OF THE ROUND TABLE

If we want to know about the ways of men in those days, we must read some of their tales. Many stories were sung and told of knightly deeds and adventures. There are a number that have come down to us about a great king, Arthur, and his knights, called the Knights of the Round Table. These are recorded in that "noble and joyous book" *Le Morte Darthur*, which Caxton printed.

We do not know where this King lived nor are we sure where his kingdom lay. The English storyteller says he lived in Wales, but the French people say he lived in their land. When he was crowned King, those who loved him took a vow to follow him wherever he went. He chose twelve knights who promised to help the weak and suffering and to release men from their enemies. These were the Knights of the Round Table and they rode out into all the world to seek adventure.

There was the good knight Sir Tristram, "the best chaser of the world and the noblest blower of an horn of all manner of measures, for, as books report, of Sir Tristram came all the good terms of hunting and all the sizes and measures of blowing of an horn; and of him we had first all the terms of hawking and which were beast of chase and which were vermins and all the blasts that belonged to all manner of games."

There, too, was the beloved Knight Launcelot, "the courteoust Knight that ever bare shield, the kindest man that ever struck with sword, the goodliest person that ever came among press of knights, the meekest man and the gentlest that ever ate in hall among ladies, the sternest knight to mortal foe that ever put spear in rest."

King Arthur had a beautiful sword and he came by it in this way. Merlin, the magician, led him down to the shores of a great lake, and as they gazed upon the dark waters an arm "clothed in white samite" came forth, holding the sword Excalibur. "With that they saw a damsel going upon the lake. What damosel is that? said Arthur. That is the Lady of the Lake, said Merlin; and within that lake is a rock and therein is as fair a place as any on earth, and richly beseen; and this damosel will come to you anon and then speak ye fair to her that she will give you that sword. Anon withal came the damosel unto Arthur and saluted him and he her again. Damosel, said Arthur, what sword is that, that yonder the arm holdeth above the water? I would it were mine for I have no sword. Sir Arthur, King, said the damosel, that sword is mine, and if ye will give me a gift when I ask it you, ye shall have it. By my faith, said Arthur, I will give you what gift ye will ask. Well! said the damosel, go ye into yonder barge and row yourself to the sword and take it and the scabbard with you and I will ask my gift in time. So Sir Arthur and Merlin alit and tied their horses to two trees, and so they went into the ship, and when they came to the sword that the hand held, Sir Arthur took it up by the handles and took it with him, and the arm and the hand went under water."

Then Merlin built the King a beautiful palace at Camelot and there they brought the Queen Guinevere. Now some of Arthur's knights went in search of the Holy Grail, a mysterious cup, that had disappeared because men were evil. They thought that if they could find it and bring it back to the earth again, there would be no more sorrow nor pain.

One day, there came in to the court an old man, clothed all in white, and there was no Knight that knew from whence he came. And with him, both on foot, he brought a young Knight, in red arms, without a sword or shield, save a scabbard hanging by his side. "Sir," said the old man to King Arthur, "I bring you here a young Knight." Then the old man made the young man un-arm him, and he was in a coat of red sandal and bare a mantle upon his shoulders that was furred with fine

ermine, and put that upon him, and the old man said unto the young Knight, "Sir, follow after." And so he brought him unto the Siege Perilous. Now this was a seat at the Round Table, covered with a cloth, and no man durst sit in it, for Merlin had said that only he who should see the Holy Grail might sit therein without harm. "The old man removed the cloth and found letters written 'This is the siege of Sir Galahad the Good Knight'." "Sir," said the old man, "wit ye well, this place is yours." Then all the Knights of the Round Table marvelled greatly of Sir Galahad that he durst sit in that Siege Perilous."

Then Sir Galahad took his seat in the Siege Perilous. "Then anon they heard cracking and crying of thunder, that they thought the place should fall. In the midst of this blast entered a sunbeam more clearer by seven times than ever they saw day and all they were alighted of the grace of the Holy Ghost. Then began every knight to behold other and either saw other, by their seeming, fairer than ever they saw afore. There was no Knight might speak one word a great while and so they looked every man on other as they had been dumb. Then there entered into the hall the Holy Grail covered with white samite, but there was none might see it, nor who bare it. And there was all the hall fulfilled with good odours and every knight had such meats and drinks as he best loved in this world. And when the Holy Grail had been borne through the hall, then the Holy Vessel departed suddenly that they wist not where it became; then had they all breath to speak."

Then all the Knights of the Round Table arose and set forth in search of the Holy Grail, and through the world they wandered doing deeds of might and valour as they passed. But the Holy Grail never came back to the earth again, for not all the Knights were pure. Then King Arthur grew old and weary and was wounded unto death in battle. "Therefore, said Arthur unto Sir Bedivere, take thou Excalibur, my good sword, and go with it to yonder water side, and when thou comest there I charge thee throw my sword in that water and come again and tell me what thou there seest. My lord, said Bedivere, your commandment shall be done, and lightly bring you word again. So Sir Bedivere departed and by the way he beheld that noble sword, that the pommel and the haft was all of precious stones; and then he said to himself: if I throw this rich sword in the water, thereof shall never come good but harm and loss. And then Sir Bedivere hid Excalibur under a tree. And so, as soon as might, he came again unto the King and said he had been at the water and had thrown the sword in the water. What saw thou there? said the King. Sir, he said, I saw nothing but waves and winds. That is untruly said of thee, said the King, therefore go thou lightly again and do my commandment, as thou art to me dear, spare not, but throw it in. Then Sir Bedivere returned again and took the sword in his hand, and then him thought sin and shame to throw away that noble sword and so again he hid the sword and returned again and told to the King that he had been in at the water and done his commandment. What saw thou there? said the King. Sir, he said, I saw nothing but the waters wappe (lap) and waves wanne (ebb). Ah traitor untrue, said King Arthur, now hast thou betrayed me twice. Who would have weened that, thou that hast been to me so dear? and thou that art named a noble Knight would betray me for the richness of the sword. But now go again lightly, for thy long tarrying putteth me in great jeopardy of my life, for I have taken cold. And but if thou do now as I bid thee, if ever I may see thee, I shall slay thee with mine own hands; for thou wouldst for my rich sword see me dead. Then Sir Bedivere departed, and went to the sword and lightly took it up and went to the water side; and there he bound the girdle about the hilts and then threw the sword as far into the water, as he might; and there came an arm and an hand above the water and met it and caught it and so shook it thrice and brandished and then vanished away the hand with the sword in the water. So Bedivere came again to the King and told him what he saw."

Then came the three Queens and took Arthur in their hands and bore him to the barge. They floated out across the seas towards the west and there was the sound as of a city rejoicing at the return of a hero.

CHAPTER XIV

THE CONQUEST OF IRELAND

Away to the west lay the beautiful country of Ireland. It was known in all the world for its riches, and the ships of many lands were seen in its havens. For the rivers and seas were full of fish, the pastures gave abundant food to the flocks and herds. "Dark was the shadow of the corn in their fields" of which "great plenty was sent over-seas," and rich was the harvest of their orchards. Merchants came laden with spices, figs, pepper and ginger, with wine and carpets and many things from the east to offer in exchange for their wealth.

It was the home of craftsmen, skilful in all manner of handiwork. They made the beautiful book of Kells, "the great Gospel of Columkill, the chief relic of the western world on account of its unequalled cover." So wonderful was their work in illuminating and lettering that an English

writer who saw one of their books in 1185 said that it must have been done by angels, not men.

Gold and silver were found in the land, and of these their goldsmiths wrought delicate ornaments. Their blacksmiths too were famed for fine armour and good weapons.

They were weavers, and their cloth was sold in England; "white and green, and russet and red," for they had the secret of making lovely dyes. Of the reign of a good King it was said, "In his time, there was abundance of dye-stuff." Kings and Queens in far-off lands were anxious to buy their cloth for trimming mantles and gowns. The Irish made linen too, both fine and coarse, and leather gloves, shoes and belts.

The people of Ireland were given to hospitality and were courteous in their ways. They loved rich clothes and beautiful things, and in their stories and songs you may still read of the fine golden goblets and beakers of horn from which they quaffed their ale, of the dress of cloth of gold that the lady donned when she entertained the poets, of the crimson velvet mantle bordered with black velvet that the chieftain wore on feast-days. Of their wide hanging linen sleeves, an Englishman wrote "30 yards are little enough for one of them."

They were singers and makers of song like the Saxon people. They loved the harp and delighted in the old stories, such as you may still read, of the hero Cuculain and Deirdri of the Sorrows, of Patrick and the saints.

William Rufus looking towards this rich country had said: "For the conquest of that land, I will gather together all the ships of my kingdom and will make them a bridge to cross over." But the King had no leisure to set sail for Ireland.

In the days of Henry II, it befell that Dermot, King of Leinster, carried off the wife of O'Ruarc, the one-eyed, Prince of Meath, who was "heart-struck both by his shame and by his loss." Then he gathered his men together and marched against Dermot, "a man tall of stature and stout of frame, a soldier whose heart was in the fray and held valiant among his own nation. From often shouting his battle-cry, his voice had become hoarse. A man who liked better to be feared by all than loved by any." So his followers left him and Dermot sought refuge in Bristol.

One of his men, who was sorry at his departure, wrote in the margin of the Book of Leinster, where you may still see them, these words: "O Mary! It is a great deed that has been done in Erin on this day; Dermot, King of Leinster and of the Foreigners, to have been banished by the men of Erin over the sea East-wards! Uch, Uch, O Lord! What shall I do?"

Now Dermot asked help of the Normans in England, saying:

Whoever shall wish for land or pence,
Horses, trappings or chargers,
Gold or silver, I shall give them
A very ample pay.
Whoever may wish for soil or sod
Richly shall I enfeoff them.

The Normans were glad of the promises of gold and of land and willingly set sail for Ireland. Strongbow, Earl of Pembroke, was their leader, "a man with reddish hair, freckled skin, grey eyes and tall of stature," strong in battle and of much wisdom.

The King of Leinster gave him Eva, his daughter, in marriage. Then did the Kings submit to Dermot, for there was much bloodshed and he "made Ireland a trembling sod." When the King died, Strongbow succeeded him, and Henry II, when he heard the news, was not willing that his barons should be lords in a new land. Therefore, he too set sail for Ireland that they might do him homage. And all the lords and chiefs came, for they feared him.

Then the Norman barons built castles and married Irish ladies, and they no more desired to return to England, for Ireland was a country abounding in treasure.

"The old chieftains of Erin prospered under these princely English lords, who were the chief rulers and who had given up their surliness for good manners, their stubbornness for sweet-mildness and their perverseness for hospitality."

So Ireland prospered, but it is not easy to find out its ancient history, for many of the old books have been lost or burnt and some have been used as though they were of no account. "By long lying shut and unused," says one writer, hundreds of years ago, "I could hardly read," and "by taylors being suffered to cut the leaves of the books in long pieces to make their measure" many pages are missing.

CHAPTER XV

THE COMING OF THE FRIARS

About this time, Francis, the son of a merchant, was born in Italy in the town of Assisi. When he grew up his parents were very proud of him and gave him much money, for he dressed gaily, feasted often and led the young men of fashion.

Then it chanced that he fell ill and, as he lay upon his bed, he thought of the sick and the poor, of the rich monks and the idle priests, and he made up his mind when he grew well to live as Christ lived among men.

He left his father and mother, to their great sorrow. He gave all he had to the poor and dwelt near a ruined chapel beyond the city gates. There he busied himself in rebuilding the chapel, and when he came amongst men it was with a cheerful countenance and a merry heart to do them service.

Though many laughed at him, some desired to become his followers, "and those who took upon themselves that life gave away to the poor all that they chanced to have. And they were content with one tunic patched as they required, within and without, together with a girdle and breeches."

In the heat of the day, on the dusty roads, S. Francis and his companions trudged along, singing songs of joy and cheering those whom they chanced to meet. At night, they sometimes lay out-of-doors, singing praises all the while of "Sister moon and the stars bright and precious and comely" and watching for the rising of the sun, "that doth illumine us with the dawning of day."

For food, they laboured or begged, and of that which was left they gave to the poor. One day, when they had done their begging, they met together to eat in a place without the city, where was a fine fountain and hard by a fine broad stone, upon which each set the alms that he had begged.

And S. Francis, seeing that Brother Masseo's pieces of bread were more and finer and larger than his own, rejoiced with great joy and said, "Brother Masseo, we are not worthy of such vast treasures," and when he repeated many times these words, Brother Masseo made answer,

"Father, how can one speak of treasure, where is such poverty and lack of all things whereof we are in need? Here is not cloth, nor knife, nor plate, nor porringer, nor house, nor table, nor manservant nor maid-servant."

Quoth S. Francis, "And this it is that I account vast treasure, wherein is no thing at all prepared by human hands but whatsoever we have is given by God, as doth appear in the bread that we have broken, in the table of stone so fine and in the fount so clear; wherefore I will that we pray unto God that He make us love with all our heart the treasure of holy poverty, which is so noble that thereunto did God Himself become a servitor."

Of his courtesy and love towards all creatures on the earth, many stories are told. "And as with great fervour, he was going on the way, he lifted up his eyes and beheld some trees hard by the road, whereon sat a great company of birds well-nigh without number, whereat S. Francis marvelled and said to his companions, 'Ye shall wait for me here upon the way and I will go to preach unto my little sisters the birds.'"

"And he went into the field and began to preach unto the birds that were on the ground and immediately those that were on the trees flew down to him and they all of them remained still and quiet together until S. Francis made an end of preaching."

It was a great surprise even to his followers that so many should seek him. Quoth Brother Masseo, "I say, why doth all the world come after thee and why is it seen that all men long to see thee and hear thee and obey thee? Thou art not a man comely of form, thou art not of much wisdom, thou art not noble of birth, whence comes it then that it is after thee the whole world doth run?"

And as his companions increased in number, he made a journey to Rome to desire the Pope to bless their Order. There is a story which may not be true that when the Pope saw his untrimmed hair and beard and read the rules, which seemed too hard for any man to keep, he made answer, "Go, brother, go to the pigs, for you are more like them than men, and read to them the rules you have drawn up."

Then Francis humbly bowed his head and went away and coming to a field where there were pigs, he rolled in the mud with them. Then he returned to the Pope and said, "My lord, I have done as you commanded, grant me now, I beseech you, my petition." The Pope was astonished at his humility and, repenting of his own harshness, he granted the prayer.

Thus was the order of the Grey Brothers or Friars [3] founded. Soon the little Brothers of S.

Francis were scattered over the world and many joined them in England. They had no possessions, and they travelled from place to place preaching to the people and tending the sick and the lepers, of whom there were many in sore need.

[3] French *Frères*, Latin *Fratres*.

CHAPTER XVI

THE THIRD CRUSADE

In the time of William Rufus, Peter the Hermit travelled from country to country calling all Christian men to follow him to Palestine; for the holy places where Christ and His disciples had lived had fallen into the hands of fierce men, the Mohammedans. The pilgrims had been tortured and forbidden to enter Jerusalem, and their number was great, for men of all nations went sometimes in sorrow and carrying rich gifts to make their prayers at the tomb of Christ where, it was said, many wonders were done. Those who had sinned much sought forgiveness, those who were sick desired health and others came to pray for friends and patrons.

Therefore the preacher asked of the rich that they should give all that they had, and of the strong and valiant that they should fight for the banner of the Cross.

And many set out for the war—peasants and princes, French, Italian, English and Austrian—to rescue the land that some held dearer than their own. In that great company was Robert of Normandy, who had sold his dominions to his brother that he might go.

The way was long and perilous, through forests, over mountains, by strange towns and across the treacherous sea, and many died of hunger or of fever on the journey. Twice did the Christian armies march to Jerusalem, yet though they took the city, they could not keep it. Then Richard of the Lion-heart, son of Henry II, planned to join the Third Crusade, for he was a great soldier and loved war.

The King begged money from everyone for his journey. He invited his barons to join him and bring their best men, and from those who would not come he asked large sums of money, promising to pray for them when he reached Jerusalem.

He seized the treasure of the Jews, for they were a people who worked hard and spent little. The Jews were much hated, and when the news went abroad that the King had taken their money, the English thought to do him service by killing them; but the King was angry, for he had only wanted their money.

Then Richard sold the chief offices in his court to those who could pay well, caring little how they ruled while he was away. When he had gathered treasure enough, he set out with the boldest of his barons, and John, his brother, was left to govern England.

After many adventures, he arrived at Acre, and there he found the French King and the Austrians and others surrounding the city. Then Richard besieged it and took it and the great army made him their leader, for they admired his prowess. The French King was much angered and returned home, and the Austrian Duke was envious and led his troops back to their own land. But Richard marched towards Jerusalem. Over the burning desert went the soldiers in their armour, so heavy that if a man fell from his horse, he would be stifled to death unless a comrade were near to raise him; and the horses found it heavy work in the shifting sand. At the rear of the army rode the Knights Hospitallers, who had made vows to succour the wounded and those who fell by the way, and for this service they were held in high esteem.

The enemy watched in hiding to cut off the stragglers by the way. Mounted on swift Arab steeds and clothed in light garments, they moved rapidly, and the poisoned arrow was a deadly weapon. When the tired soldiers came in sight of Jaffa, it was the season of oranges and the time of vintage was at hand, so there they made a camp.

Much refreshed they marched within twelve miles of Jerusalem, but the weather was bad and their tents were torn up and whirled away. The horses perished of cold and the stores were spoiled and their armour grew rusty and many fell ill from long sojourn in this land. There, too, Richard received a letter telling him that his brother John was plotting to take away his inheritance and that the King of France intended to make war on Normandy.

Reluctantly he turned his back upon the Holy City, for he had desired above measure to take it. When one of the knights would have pointed it out to him in the camp, he snapped the switch he held in his hand and cast his surcoat over his head, praying with tears, "O Lord God, suffer not mine eyes to behold Thy Holy City, since Thou wilt not suffer me to deliver it out of the hands of

Thine enemies."

Now the Mohammedans held Richard in great awe. When the officers returned to their master after a battle, he asked them mockingly whether they were bringing Richard in chains and they answered, "Know, O King, for a surety that this Richard of whom you inquire is not like other men. In all time, no such soldier has been seen or heard of; no warrior so stout, so valiant or so skilled; his onset is terrible, it is death to encounter him, his deeds are more than human."

Then Richard made a truce with the valiant Saladin, the ruler of the Mohammedans, and this was to last three years and three months and three days and three hours, and once again pilgrims were allowed to visit the tomb of Christ. Now the King dared not return through France for fear of the French monarch, therefore he pretended he was a rich merchant, and hiring two ships he sailed for Austria, hoping to make his way through that land in disguise. But the Duke of Austria hated him almost as much as did the French King.

One evening, Richard sent his page into a city for food, and by mistake he carried the King's gloves in his belt and on them was embroidered the golden lion of England. And the lord of the castle happening to be in the market place saw these and gave orders to follow. Then Richard was captured and cast into a donjon to await the Duke's pleasure. The Duke demanded a ransom for the King so large that he thought the English could not pay it. But Eleanor, the King's mother, rested not till she had raised the money, and the English paid gladly.

When the Crusaders returned to their own lands they spoke of the strange things they had seen and of the courage of Christian soldiers of many nations. Then also the people began to desire spices and silks from the East more than ever before, and they must often have longed for oranges, figs, grapes and dates, such as these adventurers described.

CHAPTER XVII

THE LOSS OF NORMANDY. THE SIGNING OF THE CHARTER

By the river Seine, on a high rock, Richard built a fine castle to guard Normandy. When the King of France heard of its building, he said, "If its walls were of iron I would take it," and Richard replied, "If its walls were of butter I would hold it," and he named it Château Gaillard, Saucy Castle. When Richard died, his brother John did not trouble to keep many soldiers there, and the King of France was glad, for he desired it greatly.

Eleanor, the King's mother, gathered soldiers for her son, and though she was very old she did her best to save Normandy. Yet Saucy Castle fell and the Norman barons would not fight for John. So Normandy was lost and the barons had to choose between their French lands and their English lands. Many, who were fierce and turbulent, went to live in Normandy, and those who had learned to love their new country stayed in England. Though they still spoke French they served England well and tried to make the King rule more justly.

Now the people of England had been proud of Normandy and they were angry with John because he had lost it. In his days, too, there was a great quarrel between the King and the Pope, and the priests were forbidden to hold any services in England, and for five years the churches and monasteries were closed, the dead were buried without prayer in the ditches and highways, and no one could marry in church.

"The images of saints were taken down and veiled; the frequent tinkle of the convent bell no longer told the serf at the plough how the weary hours were passing or guided the traveller through the forest to a shelter for the night." The people grew afraid, and they hated the King, who was the cause of much evil.

Yet John did not care, and he would not receive the new Archbishop whom the Pope had sent. Then the Pope banished the King from the Church and declared him an outlaw, whose life any man might take, and still the King had no fear. At last, the Pope offered the English crown to the French King and John knew that the French King was a dangerous enemy, therefore he promised to do whatever the Pope wished.

So the new Archbishop, Stephen Langton, was received by the King. Soon he began to talk with the barons of the wrongs that the King did daily in the land, and they searched for the old charter that Henry I had given his people. Then they drew up the Great Charter, asking the King to grant them justice.

John met the barons and the Archbishop in a meadow near Windsor, called Runnymede. When he saw the charter he said, "These articles are pure foolishness! Why do they not ask me for the

Kingdom at once? I will never give them such freedom as would make me a slave." But looking round at the fierce barons there, unwillingly he set his seal to it.

Thus the King promised that no freeman should be imprisoned without a trial by his equals, that no one should be fined so heavily that he could not pay or that he had to give up the tools by which he earned his daily bread. He promised too that he would not take money from his people without asking the advice of his council and that he would let the merchants come and go freely in the land.

In London, you may still see the old charter signed by the barons who were present, and bearing the King's seal, and when you are able to read it, you can find out what other promises the King made that day.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE LAWS OF EDWARD I AND THE FIRST PARLIAMENT

IN the days of Henry III, the barons had become powerful, and his son Edward I remembered the days of Stephen and how the great lords had destroyed "the good peace" of the realm, and he wisely framed the laws against them.

Now the King had grown poor and the barons had grown rich. They did not care to pay their taxes, so they pretended to give their lands to the Church. These lands were then "in the dead hand" because the Church held them for ever and owed nothing to the King. Yet all the time, the priests took their share and the lands were still held by the barons, free of all dues to the King. So the King forbade any man to give lands to the Church without his permission.

Again, many had taken lands which did not belong to them and seized the King's dues in the courts and no one had made inquiries since Domesday Book was written. The King sent round his messengers to ask by what right they held their lands and courts, and the barons were angry. One man drew out his sword and defied the King, saying, "My ancestors came over with William and won the lands with their sword, and with the sword I will keep them." The King made other laws and the barons feared him.

Edward desired that the people in the towns should prosper, for he hoped to get money from the traders. Much complaint was made that the roads were in danger from lurking bands of robbers and the cities too were unguarded. The merchants suffered most, for their mule packs, carrying merchandise, had to be strongly guarded. So the King gave orders concerning the watch and ward and bade the townsmen search out the evil doers or pay heavy fines for every crime done in their boundaries.

The gates of the towns were to be shut from sunset to sunrise and the trees and undergrowth were to be cut down for a distance of 200 feet on either side of the highway, lest they gave shelter to men with evil intent.



A COURT OF JUSTICE IN THE 15TH CENTURY

Duke of Alençon condemned for treason by Charles VII, King of France, 1458
The figure of the artist is to be seen inside the barrier, turning from the scene as though he were not interested



THE PARLIAMENT OF EDWARD I

This picture probably dates from the 16th century

Then the King planned to take not only from the richest of the nobles and the priests but also from the treasure chests of the citizens. When he was about to make war and desired money, he sent out a letter asking not only the bishops and barons to meet him but two knights from every shire and two citizens from every city and two burgesses from every borough.

The new comers were at first flattered to sit with the great barons, but soon they found it very troublesome, for the King asked for much money, the journey to the meeting place was often long and dangerous and the King would take no excuses for absence. Then the members began to find fault with the King and to ask how he spent the money, and they made even the strong man Edward sign again the Great Charter.

There is an old picture of one of these parliaments and in it the artist has drawn, not only the two Archbishops seated on either side of the King but also the King of Scotland and the Prince of Wales, but this no doubt he did to show the power of Edward I over these princes, for they never really were in Parliament. The judges sat on the four wooolsacks which faced one another. On the right of the King sat the Archbishops, Bishops and Abbots; on the left, the great lords; and opposite him the Commons stood.

CHAPTER XIX

THE CONQUEST OF WALES

In the old days, the Britons had fled before the Northmen, who came conquering from the eastward; but those who dwelt in the mountain fastnesses of the west had been secure from Saxon and Norman foes. Their country was called Wales or the land of the foreigner, by all who heard of it. Between England and Wales lay the borderland or Marches as the Normans named it, and there the troublesome Norman barons had been given lands by the King to keep them far from the court and busy with their wild neighbours.

When Edward ruled in England, Llewelyn, "towering above the rest of men, with his long red lance, and red helmet of battle, crested with a fierce wolf," was Prince of Snowdon. The bards sang of his fame and prophesied that he should rule from sea to sea. "Men spoke of the return of King Arthur, they whispered that the Northmen should be driven back to their fatherland" and the nation waited in expectation.

Llewelyn desired to marry the daughter of one of the Lords of the Marches and to find friends among those barons. Edward, fearing this, captured the bride on her way to Wales and summoned the prince to London to do homage for his lands; but he would not come.

"We dare not submit to Edward," said the Welsh, "nor will we suffer our prince to do so, nor do homage to strangers whose tongue, ways and laws we know nought of."

So the King raised an army and marched into their country by way of the old Roman road along the north coast. His army marched untroubled with heavy stores and baggage, for Edward was a great soldier and had planned that his fleet should attend him, sailing in sight of the coast, till they reached the island of Anglesey, the granary of the Welsh.

As he marched, he gave orders to build strong castles. Builders and architects were as busy as soldiers and there was great rivalry amongst them. Some boasted of the number of towers, some of their size, some of the speed at which they were able to build. The fine castle of Conway was made from the stones of a stronghold close by. Carnarvon and Beaumaris were built to guard the island of Anglesey, and Caerphilly looked towards the lands of the South Welsh.

Llewelyn, hidden in the wilds of Snowdon, hoped ever that the King would risk a march into these unknown paths, but he waited in vain. Then Llewelyn fought on the coast road, but with dismay he saw himself cut off on all sides but one, and, looking towards the south, he knew it to be his only way of escape, and that was the land of his enemies. There, it is said, he died, by the treachery of the South Welsh, as he stood upon the bank of a river, but the South Welsh say that he was slain in battle by his enemies, the English.

Then Edward summoned the Welsh to meet him at Carnarvon Castle, where he promised they should do homage to a new Welsh Prince, whom he would choose. When the day came, he showed to them his eldest son, who had just been born at Carnarvon, and they paid homage.

Among the laws which he made, he bade the Welsh speak English, but to this day they can speak in their own tongue. "My people," said the Welsh chieftain, "may be weakened by your might and even in great part destroyed, but unless the wrath of God be on the side of its foe it will not perish utterly, nor deem I that other race or other tongue will answer for this corner of the world before the Judge of all at the last day save this people and the tongue of Wales."

CHAPTER XX

THE WAR WITH SCOTLAND

The old King of Scotland, dying, left his kingdom to his little granddaughter, the Maid of Norway, who was only seven years old. Edward planned to marry her to his son the Prince of Wales and so make England and Scotland one kingdom. He sent a ship to bring her from Norway in the winter and he stored it with good things, with toys and sweetmeats for the voyage.

The weather was stormy and Margaret died on the voyage. There was much woe in Scotland and trouble in the English King's mind. Many Scottish nobles claimed the crown and they asked Edward to choose amongst them. It was a difficult matter but Edward was trusted, for all men praised him as the Lion of Justice.

He chose Balliol to rule over them, but this man proved himself of no wisdom and little counsel and his rivals Bruce and the Red Comyn were more powerful than he.

Balliol thought to win favour of the Scots by defying the English King. Edward then harried the land and carried off the Stone of Destiny from Scone. This stone was said to be Jacob's Pillow and had been brought to Ireland long ago and thence into Scotland. On it, all the Kings of Scotland had sat to be crowned and it was put in Westminster Abbey, where it still lies underneath the coronation chair. English barons were sent to rule Scotland but they were not so wise as Edward and there was bitterness among the people.

In their distress, they found a leader in William Wallace, who drilled them to fight on foot against the foreigner, for they were too poor to buy horses and ride into battle in costly armour. On the field, they stood close together, shoulder to shoulder, awaiting the onslaught of the knights, and then they fought with spear and battle-axe.

The English soldiers were taken by surprise, for they had never heard of such a strange army nor seen such steady ranks of men. Edward, however, was a thoughtful general, and he soon learned to use his Welsh archers to trouble the Scots and break their lines. Yet when they were driven from the field, he found he could not rule in Scotland as he had done in Wales, for it was a barren land and the Scots were a hardy people.

Now there was a great feud between Bruce and the Red Comyn. One day when the two met, they entered a church to talk and Bruce killed his foe on the steps of the high altar and, rushing out, he cried to his men, "I doubt I have slain the Red Comyn." "Ye doubt? I make certain," cried one of his followers as he pushed his way into the church.

The people of Scotland were angry for this sin in their hero, but they could not do without him, for Wallace had been caught and hanged as a traitor. So they crowned the Bruce in the old city of Scone, and the golden circlet was placed upon his head by the Countess of Buchan, whose husband was with the invader.

Many stories are told of these times and of the high courage of the Scots, for there were great perils in this strife and there was hunger and cold and faithlessness.

Hearing of the deeds of this man, who had once paid vows to him, Edward, now an old man, led his armies northward again. There on the Borderland he died, leaving this charge to his son, that he should rest neither day nor night till he was prince of Scotland also.

Yet the young King turned his face towards London to make ready for his coronation and wedding. Then the Bruce became indeed King of Scotland, and seven years afterwards, when it was too late, the English King marched with his men to the field of Bannockburn. There he was defeated and from the shame of that day he could never escape.

The Scots harried the north of England for many a year. They rode on swift ponies, carrying only a tin platter and a bag of oatmeal for food, drinking from the streams and eating flesh when they could catch wild deer or mountain sheep or the fat oxen in the pastures. It was a hard matter to find this army, for they rode hither and thither silently, surely and swiftly. Thus was Scotland separated from England for many a generation.

CHAPTER XXI

THE WAR WITH FRANCE

In the days of "the courteous knight" and King, Edward III, a great war was waged with France, for the English merchants complained bitterly that the French had troubled them as they passed bearing wool to the great markets. So bold had the French become that they had harried the Isle of Wight and burned many villages along the southern shore.

As the King passed over seas to make war, he came in sight of the harbour of Sluys, "and when

he saw so great a number of ships that their masts seemed to be like a great wood, he demanded of the master of his ship what people he thought they were."

He answered and said, "Sir, I think they be men laid here by the French King, and they have done great displeasure in England, burnt your town of South Hampton and taken your great ship, Christopher." "Ah," quoth the King, "I have long desired to fight with the Frenchmen, and now shall I fight with some of them by the grace of God and S. George."

The battle began with the sound of trumpets and drums and other kinds of music and "it endured from the morning till noon, for their enemies were four to one and all good men of the sea." But the English fought so valiantly that they obtained the victory and Edward received the title of Lord of the Seas.

Some years later, Edward led his men into France to take Paris, but he found that a great army was drawn up to defend the city and that the bridges over the rivers had been destroyed. Many of his soldiers fell sick, so he hastened towards Calais. Then the French King gave chase.

On the hill of Crécy, Edward III drew up his men to await the enemy. While they were waiting, a great thunderstorm burst over the land, and the King gave orders that the archers should cover their bows with their cloaks lest the heavy rain should spoil them. But the French King, in his haste, urged his men forward, and, wet and weary, they came in sight of their foe.

When the French King saw the hosts on the hill, "he hated them" and bade the Italian crossbowmen, whom he had hired, begin the attack. They said their strings were slack and they could not fight that day, but he called them cowards and bade them fall on.

As they advanced into battle, the sun shone in their faces, and when they drew near "the Italians made a great leap and cry to abash the English but they stood still and stirred not for all that. And a second time, they made another leap and a dreadful cry and stepped forward a little but the Englishmen removed not one foot. Again they leapt and cried and went forward till they came within shot, then the English archers stepped forward one pace and let fly their arrows so hotly and so thick that it seemed snow. When the Italians felt the arrows piercing through their heads, arms and breasts, many of them cast down their cross-bows and cut their strings and ran back discomfited."

When the French King saw them fleeing, he said, "Slay those rascals, for they will hinder us and block up our path for nothing." Then the men-at-arms dashed in among them and killed a great number and still "the English kept shooting wherever they saw the thickest press and the sharp arrows ran into the men-at-arms and into their horses and many fell among the Italians and when they were down they could not get up again, for the press was so thick that one overthrew the other."

It was in this battle that gunpowder was first used, but the cannon was only fired once an hour, and then it frightened those who stood by more than the enemy.

The Prince of Wales, who was but sixteen years old, was hard-pressed by the horsemen of France, and the Knights under his banner sent a messenger to his father, the King, who was watching the battle from a windmill on the hill.

"Is my son dead or hurt or felled to the ground?" asked Edward.

"No sir, but hardly pressed."

"Then go back to them that sent you and tell them to send to me no more whatever betide as long as my son is alive, and bid them let him win his spurs, for, please God, I wish this day and the honour thereof to be his and those that are with him." And they that heard it were greatly encouraged.

The old King of Bohemia, fighting for the French, was led into battle by four of his comrades, for he was dim of sight. There he fell fighting, and his crest of three black feathers, with the motto, "Ich Dien," "I serve," was taken by the Prince and has been worn by his successors ever since.

The French King was wounded and his soldiers scattered in dismay. Then the English made great fires and lighted up torches and candles, for it was very dark. And the King came down to the field and said to his son:

"Fair son, God give you good perseverance, ye are my good son, thus ye have acquitted you nobly; ye are worthy to keep a realm." The prince inclined himself to the earth, honouring his father.

THE WAR WITH FRANCE (*continued*)

Calais was the great port of Northern France. It was a strong town and the King besieged it. For eleven months it held out against him. The King was sore displeased that he should tarry so long before its gates, and when the citizens desired to make peace he demanded that six burgesses, bare headed, bare footed, in their shirts, with halters about their necks and with the keys of the castle and town in their hands, should give themselves as a ransom for the inhabitants.

The bell in the market place was sounded and the people assembled. When they heard this "they began to weep and make much sorrow." At last the richest burgess of all the town, called Eustace of Saint Pierre, rose up and said openly, "Sirs, great and small, great mischief it should be to suffer such people as be in this town to die by famine or otherwise, wherefore to save them, I will be the first to put my life in jeopardy."

Then another honest burgess rose and said: "I will keep company with my gossip Eustace," and so the six offered themselves and went and apparelled them as the King desired.

When they were brought into the camp, they begged for mercy, "then all the earls and barons and others that were there wept for pity. The King looked felly (cruelly) on them, for greatly he hated the people of Calais for the great damages and displeasures they had done him on the sea before."

Then he commanded their heads to be stricken off. Every man requested the King for mercy but he would hear no one on their behalf.

"They of Calais have caused many of my men to be slain, wherefore shall they die like-wise."

Then the Queen kneeled down and sore weeping said, "Ah, gentle sir, since I passed the sea in great peril, I have desired nothing of you, therefore now I humbly require you in honour of the Son of the Virgin Mary, and for the love of me, that ye will take mercy on these six burgesses."

The King beheld the Queen and stood still in a study a space and then said: "Ah dame, I would ye had been now in some other place, ye make such request to me that I cannot deny you. Wherefore I give them to you and do your pleasure with them."

"Then the Queen caused them to be brought into her chamber and made their halters to be taken from their necks and caused them to be new clothed and gave them dinner at their leisure and then gave them each some gold and made them to be brought out of the host in safeguard and set at their liberty."

This is the story told by Froissart, who attended on the Queen, and thus did Calais fall into the hands of the English, and over its portals the conquerors inscribed the proud boast,

Then shall the Frenchmen Calais win
When iron and lead like cork shall swim.

CHAPTER XXIII

THE BLACK DEATH, AND THE PEASANTS' REVOLT

In those days, the great men of the land were rich and they dressed gaily in silk and fur, gorgeous were their jewels, and their scabbards were decked with beauteous workmanship. From their bridles jangled the merry bells, as they followed their hounds to the hunt.

The court too was magnificent. The King gave bounteous feasts and there were many dishes set before the guests.

"There came in at the first course, before the King's self,

Boars' heads on broad dishes of burnished silver,
Flesh of fat harts with noble furmenty,
And peacocks and plovers on platters of gold,
Herons and swans in chargers of silver,
And tarts of Turkey full pleasant to taste.
Next hams of wild-boar with brawn beglazed,
Barnacle-geese and bitterns in embossed dishes,
Venison in pasties, so comely to view,
Jellies that glittered and gladdened the eye.

Then cranes and curlews craftily roasted,
Conies in clear sauce coloured so bright,
Pheasants in their feathers on the flashing silver,
With gay galantines and dainties galore.
There were claret and Crete wine in clear silver fountains
Rhenish wine and Rochelle and wine from Mount Rose
All in flacons of fine gold; and on the fair cupboard
Stood store of gilt goblets glorious of hue,
Sixty of one set, with jewels on their sides.

When the banquet was over the guests washed their hands in rosewater and partook of wine and spices in another chamber.

But the poor were much oppressed. Their fare was very simple, a loaf of beans and bran, an oaten cake with cheese or curds and cream, and sometimes perhaps parsley and leeks or cherries and apples in their season.

Of the poor ploughman, the poet sang,

His coat of the cloth that is named carry-marry,
His hood full of holes, with the hair sticking through them;
His clumsy knobbed shoes cobbled over so thickly,
Though his toes started out as he trod on the ground,
His hose hanging over each side of his hoppers,
All plashed in the puddles as he followed the plough;
Two miserable mittens made out of old rags,
The fingers worn out and the filth clotted on them,
He, wading in mud, almost up to his ankles,
And before him four oxen, so weary and feeble,
One could reckon their ribs, so rueful were they.
His wife walked beside him, with a long ox goad,
In a clouted coat cut short to the knee,
Wrapped in a winnowing sheet to keep out the weather,
Her bare feet on the bleak ice bled as she went.
At one end of the acre, in a crumb-bowl so small,
A little babe lay, lapped up in rags,
And twins two years old tumbled beside it,
All singing one song that was sorrowful hearing,
For they all cried one cry, a sad note of care.

A year after the siege of Calais, a great sorrow befell all men, for a little ship coming out of the east brought a terrible plague, called the Black Death. And the wind blew the plague from the south to the north, and as it passed, the towns were left desolate, for the rich escaped into the woods and many of the poor died. In Bristol, "the living were scarce able to bury the dead and the grass grew several inches high in Broad Street and High Street."

When the wind reached the border of Scotland, it changed and blew from the north-west and down the eastern coast of England it sped, slaying thousands by the way. When it was gone, the lords could find but few to gather in the harvest and those that were left demanded high wages. Many landowners turned their fields into pastureland. For one shepherd and his dog could look after many sheep and there were merchants in Calais ready to buy English wool.

In vain did the lords beg the King to forbid the labourer to ask for hire. If a man fled from his lord's land, whereon he was born, he should be branded with the letter F for fugitive, but still the peasants got away and offered themselves for hire in other places and those for whom they laboured were glad to have them.

The peasants had many grievances. The wars with France had cost much money and the taxes were heavy. There were few who gave thought to the labourer and his troubles, for the monks had become idle and rich, and the friars had forgotten their vows and the priests their duties.

Among the people, there was a band of sturdy men, who had learned to read and who took ideas of freedom from the Bible. They preached that the peasants should take up arms against the King and his lords, for they said, "they are clothed in velvet and warm in their furs and their ermine, while we are covered with rags. They have wine and spices and fine bread and we oat cake and straw and water to drink. They have leisure and fine houses, we have pain and labour, the wind and the rain in the fields. Yet it is of us and our toil that these men hold their state," and the people said

When Adam delved and Eve span
Who was then the gentleman?

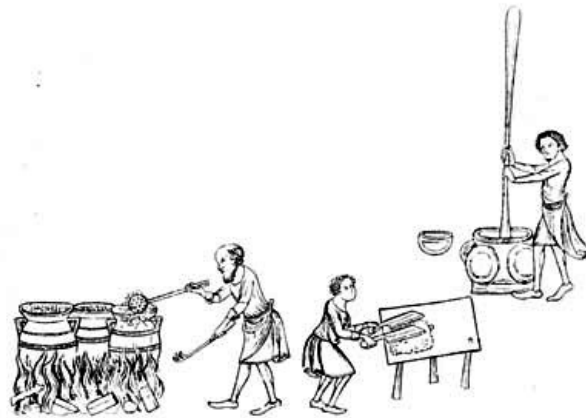
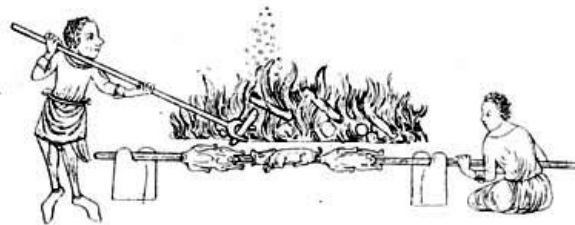
So the peasants planned to march to London to seek the new King, the boy Richard II, who was but fifteen years old, and "armed with clubs, rusty swords and axes, with old bows, reddened by

the smoke of the chimney corner and old arrows with only one feather," they came to the city, only to find that the gates were shut.

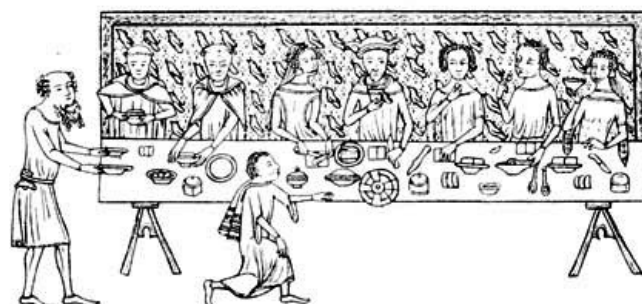
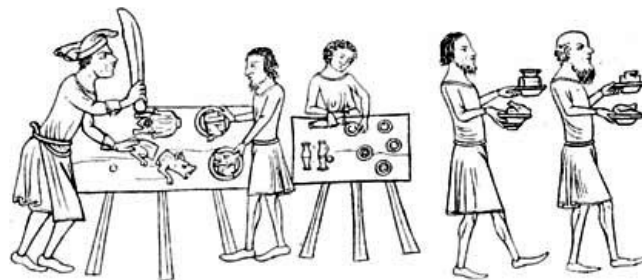
Then they threatened to burn and slay, and the citizens in their fear said, "Why do we not let these good people enter into the city? They are our fellows and what they do is for us." So the gates of the city were opened and the peasants sat down in the houses to eat and drink and afterwards they burned the dwellings of foreigners and great lords and slew many.

The King was left alone in the Tower, for the courtiers had fled, and desiring to speak with the rebels, he rode out to an open space beyond the city where they were gathered, and there he entered in among them and said to them sweetly, "Ah, ye good people, I am your King. What lack ye? What will ye say?"

Such as understood him answered, "We will that ye make us free for ever, ourselves, our heirs and our lands."



PREPARING THE FEAST



THE FEAST

"Sirs," said the King, "I am well agreed thereto; withdraw you home into your houses and into such villages as ye came from and leave behind you of every village two or three and I shall cause writings to be made and seal them with my seal, the which they shall have with them, containing everything that ye demand." They said, "It is well said, we desire no better," and so they returned to their own homes.

The King could not keep his promise to the peasants, for the lords were stronger than he, yet not long after this time we find the peasants more free and labouring for hire.

CHAPTER XXIV

THE WAR WITH FRANCE (*continued*)

When Henry V was crowned King, he desired much to revive the glories of Crécy and so he summoned his nobles to war. Then he built a great fleet to carry them to France, cutting down the oak trees in the Forest of Epping for that purpose.

He was much loved by all his soldiers, "for in wrestling, leaping and running, no man could compare with him. In casting of great iron bars and heavy stones, he excelled all men, never shrinking at cold, nor slothful for heat; and when he most laboured, his head commonly uncovered; no more weariness of light armour than a light coat, very valiantly abiding at need both hunger and thirst, so manful of mind as never to seem to quinch at a wound or to smart at the pain."

When he came into the realm of France, he laid siege to the strong city of Harfleur. It was summer time and many of the soldiers fell sick. Though the town was captured, Henry could but turn his back on Paris and march homeward on the old road to Calais, as his great-grandfather Edward III had done in like case.

"The English were brought into some distress in this journey, by reason of their victuals in manner spent and no hope to get more: for the enemies had destroyed all the corn before they came. Rest could they none take, for their enemies with alarms did ever so infest them; daily it rained and nightly it freezed; of fuel there was great scarcity; money enough, but wares for their relief to bestow it on had they none. Yet, in this great necessity, the poor people of the country were not spoiled nor anything taken of them without payment, nor any offence done by Englishmen."

In the French camp, there was much strife and discontent, yet when the news of the English King's distress reached them, and they sent after him their herald to demand ransom, the King answered with scorn. So Mountjoy, King-at-arms, was sent to the King of England to defy him as the enemy of France and to tell him that he should shortly have battle. King Henry advisedly answered, "Mine intent is to do as it pleaseth God. I will not seek your master at this time, but if he or his seek me I will meet them, God willing." When he had thus answered the herald, he gave him a princely reward and licence to depart.

Then the French, coming to the field of Agincourt, and seeing how small an army stood before them, sent the herald once again to seek a ransom. Henry answered that he would never pay such ransom. "When the messenger was come back to the French host, the men of war put on their helmets and caused their trumpets to blow to the battle."

As the English soldiers looked at the great host before them, there were some who sighed for the thousands lying idle in England. Henry, hearing them, answered, "I would not have a single man more. If God give us the victory it will be plain that we owe it to His grace. If not, the fewer we are, the less the loss for England." "What time is it now?" he asked. "The bells are ringing prime [six o'clock], my lord," answered the Bishop. "Now it is good time," said the King. "England prayeth for us, let us be of good cheer. Banners advance!"

Then these Frenchmen came pricking down, as they would have over-ridden all our company. But God and our archers made them soon to stumble, for our archers shot never arrow amiss that did not pierce and bring to ground horse and man. And our King fought like a man, with his own hands. So were the French put to rout, though they indeed had been strong in their pride.

Then the King passed into England and "in this passage the seas were so rough and troublous" that two ships were driven ashore, and the French prisoners said they would rather fight in another battle than cross the seas again. As they came in sight of the shore, the townsmen of Dover came out to meet them, wading waist-deep in the water, so great was their joy at the news. Bonfires were lit and bells were rung and money was freely given to the soldier King.

"The mayor of London and aldermen, apparelled in orient grained scarlet, and four hundred commoners, clad in beautiful mulberry cloth, well-mounted and trimly horsed, with rich collars and great chains met the King on Blackheath, rejoicing at his return, and the clergy of London, with rich crosses, sumptuous copes and massy censors, received him at S. Thomas of Waterways [on the Old Kent Road] with solemn procession."

It was not long before he set out again to win back Normandy, lost by John long ago. He laid siege to its chief city, where there was much suffering, of which the King had pity.

Of the people to tell the truth
It was a sight of mickle ruth;
Much of the folk that was therein
They were but bones and the bare skin
With hollow eyes and face a-peak,
They scarce had strength to breathe or speak.

When the city surrendered, the King, "clothed in black damask, mounted on a black horse, with a squire behind him, bearing a fox-brush on a spear, for a banner, rode to the minster to give thanks for his victory."

Then Henry marched on towards Paris, for "he had such knowledge in ordering and guiding an army with such a gift to encourage his people that the Frenchmen had constant opinion he would never be vanquished in battle." The Dauphin of France was idle and the old French King ill, so it befell that Henry married the French Princess and ruled Northern France.

To the sorrow of all men he died soon after, and his son when he grew up had many troubles; for in those days, a soldier was held more in honour than a poet and a dreamer.

Some years after Henry's death, Joan of Arc appeared to rescue her land from the enemy, for there was no hope either in the Dauphin who should have been its King or among the French lords who had lost their honour.

Joan described how it happened to her in these words, "At the age of thirteen, I had a voice from God to guide me, and the first time I was very frightened; this voice came at the hour of noon in summer time, in my father's garden; it was on a fast day, I heard the voice on the right side where the church is. I saw at the time a great light."

Then the Archangel Michael addressed her desiring that she should "have pity on the fair realm of France." She answered him, "Messire, I am but a poor maiden; I know not how to ride to the wars or to lead men-at-arms." But the voices were ever in her ear.

When her friends desired her not to go, she answered them, "I had far rather rest and spin by my mother's side; for this is no work of my choosing, but I must go and do it, for my Lord wills it." "And who is your Lord?" they asked. "He is God," she said.

When she had come with much danger and trouble to the place where the Dauphin lay, she desired to see him, but those that stood round mocked her.

Coming into the presence, she said, "Gentle Dauphin, my name is Jeanne the Maid. The Heavenly King sends me to tell you that you shall be anointed and crowned in the town of Reims and you shall be lieutenant of the Heavenly King, who is the King of France."

After many weary days, the Dauphin considered her message and he gave to her some of his armed men that she might prove that God was on her side. He bade her go to get back the good city of Orleans, which was in dire need by reason of the great armies of the English encamped round about it.

Then was the might of the maid proved, for no sooner had her standard touched the walls of the city than the town was saved. Soldiers, who had scoffed or stood aside, now joined her. Thus was she able to march through the land in triumph to the city of Reims, where it was the custom to crown the Kings of France, and in the host there marched the Dauphin.

In that city, she crowned the King, and the English fell back at the terror of her name. Then kneeling before the King, she said, "O gentle King, the pleasure of God is done, would it were His pleasure that I might go and keep sheep once more with my sisters and my brothers. They would be rejoiced to see me again."

The King dared not let her go, yet she had many enemies, for the lords of France did not care to think that she had led their armies. To their bitter shame, they made little effort to save her from the English and she was burnt as a witch. From that day, the English gradually lost all France save Calais.

So the victories of Henry V were of no avail and there was much poverty in England and murmuring against the rulers.

CHAPTER XXV

NEW WORLDS

The barons came back from France. They were practised in the art of war and they turned their homes into strong forts and their servants into soldiers. Of these, they found many who were well versed in arms and ready to fight. They gave them food and lodging for their services and liveries to distinguish them from the followers of their neighbours and they no longer fought for the King but each for his own gain.

The squires in the manors and the merchants in the towns stood in awe of these unruly subjects of the realm, but against them there was no remedy, and every man was forced to choose out a lord to protect him.

Of the long wars which these men waged, fighting for the rival princes of York and Lancaster, for the white and the red rose, and of the havoc that they wrought in the land, there are many stories.

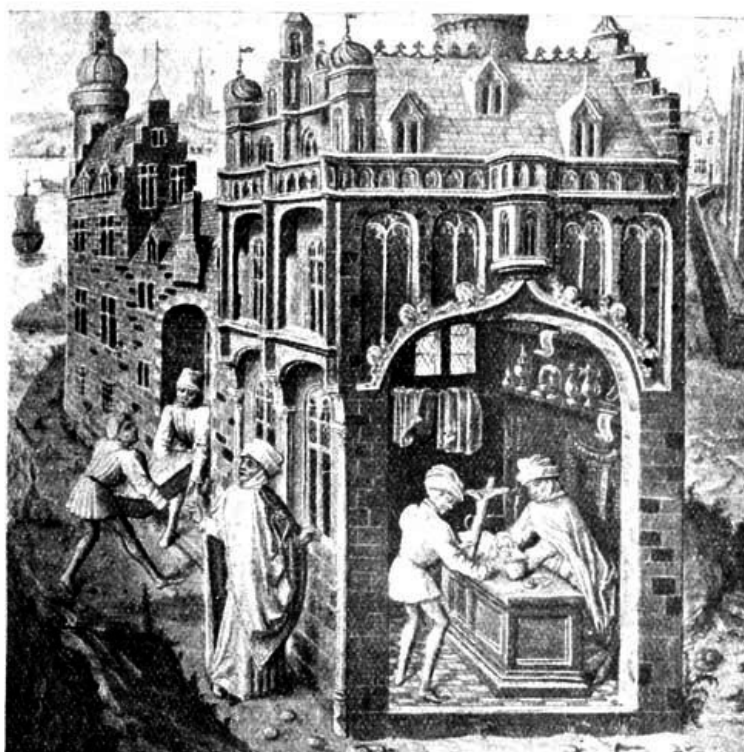
Though the barons made war on one another, the citizens held their markets and fairs and worked with skill in their trades. Foreigners desired to buy, and they were anxious for peace with a country that could give them the finest wool. More ships were built to cross the narrow seas, and they were free to come and go, since England watched them from her two eyes, Calais and Dover.

The merchants began to use more of their own good wool and many skilled craftsmen were needed for cloth making. First the wool was sorted and the coarse taken from the fine, then it was dyed, orange, red, green, russet made from madder, or blue from woad, a flower, which grew abundantly in France. The carder came next and the spinster spun it into long threads on her distaff.

The weaver next doth warp and weave the chain,
Whilst Puss, his cat, stands mewing for a skein.

The cloth was cleaned and thickened by the walkers, who trampled it in a trough of water and stretched it upon tenters to dry. Then came the rower who beat it with teazles to find out all the loose fibres and the shearman stood by with shears to cut off the knots and ends when they appeared. Before it was sold, the drawer must mend any holes or bad places in it:

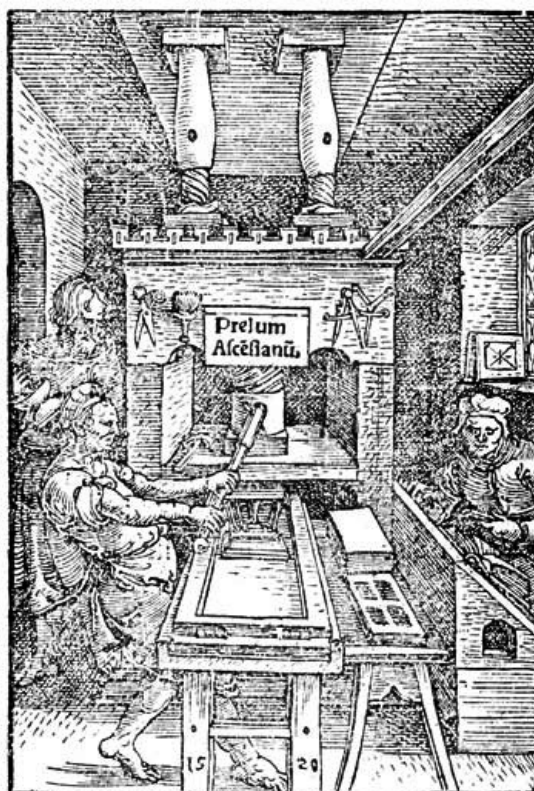
The drawer last that many faults doth hide,
(Whom merchant nor the weaver can abide)
Yet is he one in most clothes, stops more holes
Than there be stairs to the top of S. Paul's.



A CHRISTIAN OF CONSTANTINOPLE BORROWING MONEY FROM A JEW AND
PLEDGING HIS CRUCIFIX



MIÉLOT IN HIS STUDY



A PRINTING PRESS

They worked as a rule from five in the morning till seven at night in summer and from dawn till dusk in winter, with half an hour for breakfast, and an hour and a half for dinner and a sleep on hot days. There was a holiday for every festival of the Church.

Of Jack of Newbury's workshop we read,

Within one room being large and long
There stood two hundred looms full strong;
Two hundred men, the truth is so,
Wrought in these looms all in a row.
By every one a pretty boy
Sate making quilts with mickle joy,
And in another place hard by
An hundred women merrily
Were carding hard, with joyful cheer,

Who singing sate with voices clear.
And in a chamber close beside
Two hundred maidens did abide,
In petticoats of stammel red,
And milk-white kerchers on their head.

Those who worked in one trade bound themselves together into a guild, and often lived in one quarter of the city to protect one another; those who desired to become members must serve seven years' apprenticeship. To guard their honour, the masters made a strict rule that no work should be sent to market until it had been inspected and found well done.

If a man fell ill, he received help from the guild. When the feast days came round and all made holiday, the elders of the guild provided a banquet and pastimes, and sometimes they welcomed the players who acted stories from the Bible and old legends. There was dancing and feasting and much merriment.

So the citizens became more important than great barons and soldiers, for they brought trade to the country and riches to the King's Exchequer.

A new world, too, was opening to the people, the world of books. With care the monks had copied down the old stories and histories, but there were few who could procure them to read.

The printing press was brought to England by Caxton. He was an English merchant, trading in the city of Bruges. It was his custom to spend his spare time in reading Latin and French stories. He translated the story of Troy into English, and the Duchess of Burgundy and her courtiers liked it so much that they asked him to write several copies. He says that his pen was so much worn, his hand so weary and his eyes so dim that he thought it worth while to learn the art of printing from those who could teach him.

Then he brought a press to London, and out of his shop he hung a sign "Books bought here good cheap." Only the rich could buy, for books were very dear. He printed the stories of King Arthur and also the Golden Legend, or Lives of the Saints, Reynard the Fox and many another tale. That the poorer folk might also read, he printed a few sheets of poems and fables. Among them was a book of good teachings for children. In this he bade them,

Arise early
Serve God devoutly
The world busily
Go thy way sadly [seriously]
Answer demurely
Go to thy meat appetently
And arise temperately.

And to thy soup [suppers] soberly
And to thy bed merrily
And be there jocundly
And sleep soundly.

It was at this time that scholars were beginning to read the old writings of the Greeks, and there were many other books, too, that they desired to have printed.

Then also men were moved to seek what lay beyond the ocean in the far west. They were in search of a new way to India, for India seemed to them the treasure house of the world. Out of the east came gold and silver and spices and silk, but the way was by mountain and desert and many a dangerous place. Few had ventured far across the uncharted seas that stretched away towards the setting sun, for their ships were small and much at the mercy of the winds. It was necessary, too, to put into shore to get fresh stores of water when rain failed. A sailor wrote of their sufferings from thirst on one of these voyages, "The hail-stones we gathered up and ate more pleasantly than if they had been the sweetest comfits in the world. The rain-drops were so carefully saved, that, as near as we could manage it, not one was lost in all our ship. Some hung up sheets, tied with cords by the four corners and a weight in the middle, that the water might run down thither, and so be received into some vessel set or hung underneath.... Some lapped with their tongues the boards under their feet, the sides, rails and masts of the ship. He who obtained a can of water by these means was spoken of, sued to, and envied as a rich man."

It was with a good compass and stout heart that Columbus and his men set sail to find India, and to their great joy they saw, after many months, "a little stick loaded with dog roses" floating in the sea, a sign that they were near land.

The natives, pointing to the setting sun, told them to seek gold in the great lands that lay beyond. Columbus thought he had found India, but it was America. To these lands adventurers came to seek for treasure and soon to find a new home.

SUGGESTIONS FOR STUDY

1. Find out from the pictures in the Saxon Calendar:

- (a) the occupations of the Saxons,
- (b) the instruments they used in farming,
- (c) the kind of dress they wore.

(See Traill and Mann, *Social England*.)

2. Plan and build a Saxon village (in a sand tray or with clay, etc.).
3. Write down what you think the miller and the goose boy would say in the dialogue.
4. Describe a Saxon Hall. (Read descriptions in *Beowulf* and *Ivanhoe*.)
5. Look at some old manuscripts, if you can, and make some illuminated letters.
6. Build a monastery in cardboard, paper or clay.
7. Cut out in paper some figures of Saxons and make a procession on their way to Church to keep a festival.
8. Write the story of Alfred's messenger arriving at the monastery to borrow the chronicle for the King's use.
9. Make a piece of tapestry showing a scene from the history of the Normans.
10. What can you discover about the Normans from the pictures of the Bayeux Tapestry?
11. Find out about Hereward the Wake.
12. Build a castle and defend it.
13. Find out some more stories of S. Francis of Assisi.
14. Find out as many Norman French words in English as you can.
15. Read the tales of Robin Hood.
16. Cut out of paper some figures of soldiers and make a picture by pasting them on a large sheet, showing them landing in England after the victory at Crécy.
17. Find out about a tournament and make the lists. (See Scott's *Ivanhoe*.)
18. If there are any old buildings where you live, find out when they were built and who used them.
19. Make a subject-index to the book and arrange it in alphabetical order.
20. Make a date chart and illustrate it with pictures.

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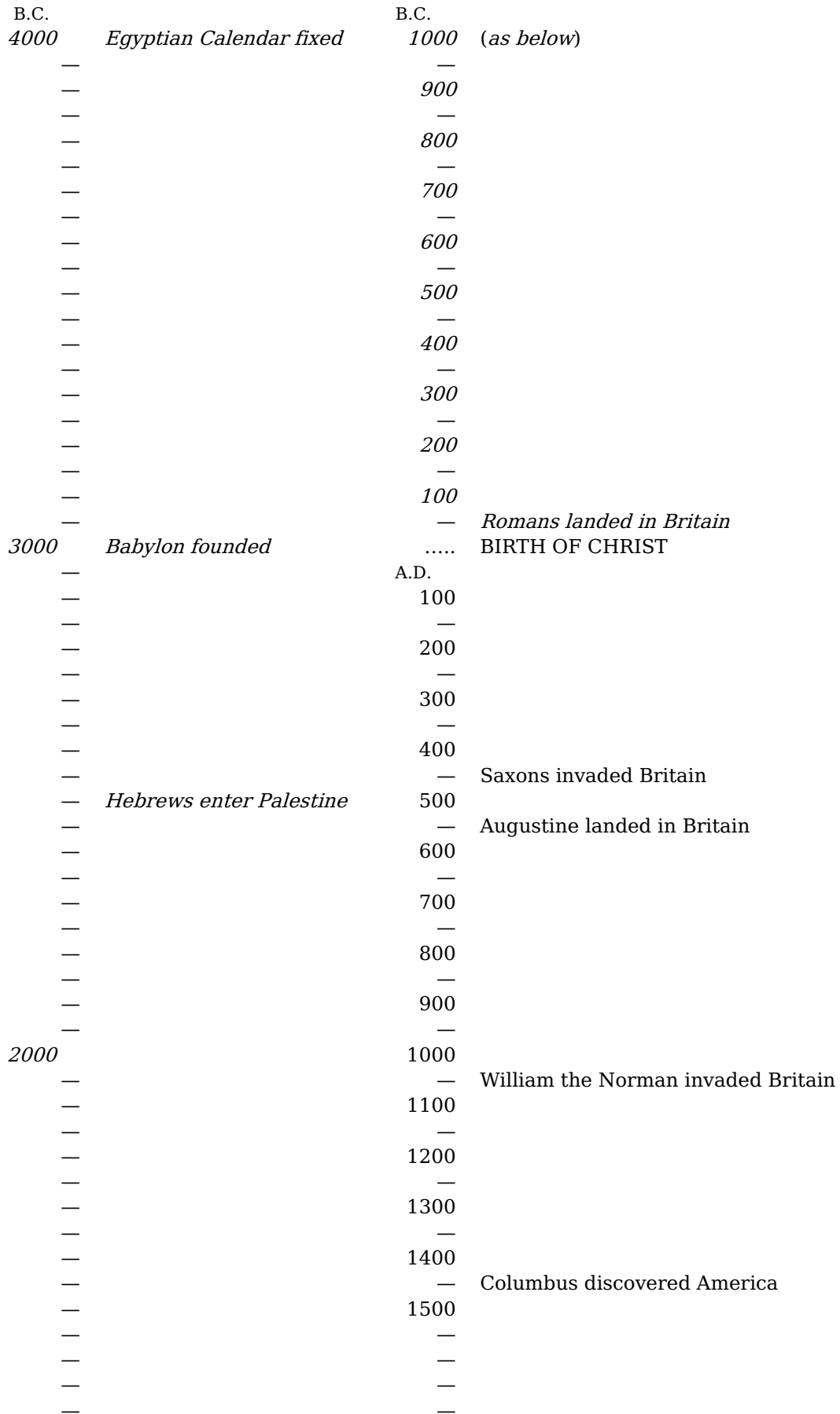
* *Suitable for Children.*

DATES

B.C. 55	The Romans first landed in Britain.
A.D. 410	Saxons began to settle in Britain.
410	Romans left Britain.
597	S. Augustine landed.
787	Danes invaded England.
871-901	Alfred reigned.
1017-1035	Cnut reigned.
1066	Battle of Hastings.
1070	Lanfranc became Archbishop of Canterbury.
1086	Domesday Book.
1093	Anselm became Archbishop of Canterbury.
1096	The First Crusade.
1107	The Exchequer was founded.
1162	Becket became Archbishop of Canterbury.
1169	Strongbow landed in Ireland.
1147	The Second Crusade.
1189	The Third Crusade.
1204	The Loss of Normandy.
1215	The Great Charter.
1283	Conquest of Wales.
1295	The Model Parliament.
1295	War with Scotland began.
1346	Battle of Crécy.
1346	The Siege of Calais.
1347	The Black Death.
1381	The Peasants' Revolt.
1415	The Battle of Agincourt.

1429	Joan of Arc took Orleans.
1476	Caxton set up a printing-press.
1455-1485	The Wars of the Roses.
1492	Columbus discovered America.

Time Chart



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1000

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1900
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[Scale 1 inch to 500 years]

THE TWELVE MONTHS

In the following pages twelve pictures are reproduced from a *Book of Hours* of the 15th century. All except "Feeding pigs in November" were painted by Pol de Limbourg for the Duke of Berri.

Each of them shows a typical occupation of the season and most of them have a famous castle in the background.

A FEAST IN JANUARY
A FARM IN FEBRUARY
PLOUGHING AND VINE-LOPPING IN MARCH
A BETROTHAL IN APRIL
THE FIRST OF MAY
HAYMAKING IN JUNE
HARVESTING AND SHEEP-SHEARING IN JULY
HAWKING AND SWIMMING IN AUGUST
THE VINTAGE IN SEPTEMBER
SOWING SEEDS IN OCTOBER
FEEDING PIGS IN NOVEMBER
HUNTING BOAR IN DECEMBER

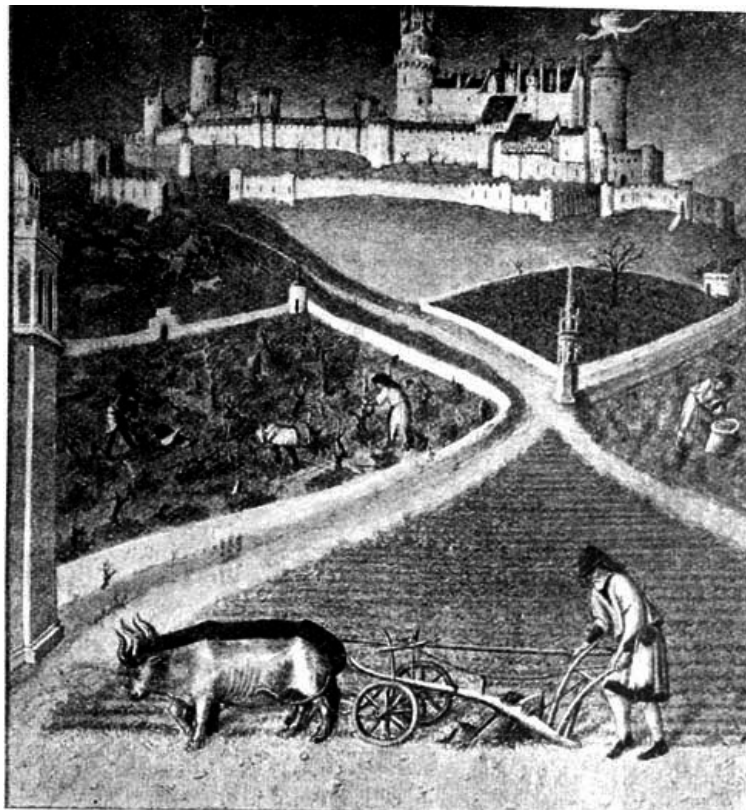


A FEAST IN JANUARY

Showing the Duke of Berri seated at table, with a tapestry in the background



A FARM IN FEBRUARY



PLOUGHING AND VINE-LOPPING IN MARCH

In the background, the castle of Lusignan on the Vienne, the favourite residence of the Duke of Berri



A BETROTHAL IN APRIL

In the background, the Castle of Dourdan, belonging to the Duke of Berri



THE FIRST OF MAY

In the background, the Towers of Riom, the capital of the Duchy of Auvergne, belonging to the Duke of Berri



HAYMAKING IN JUNE

In the background, the Towers of Paris, showing the Sainte Chapelle, the Conciergerie and the postern gate on the Seine



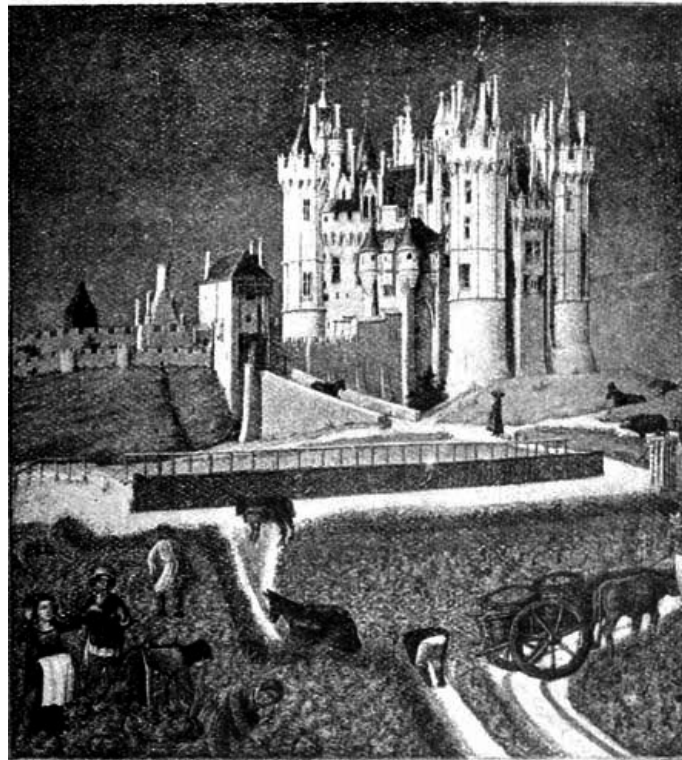
HARVESTING AND SHEEP-SHEARING IN JULY

In the background, the Castle of Poitiers, rebuilt by the Duke of Berri



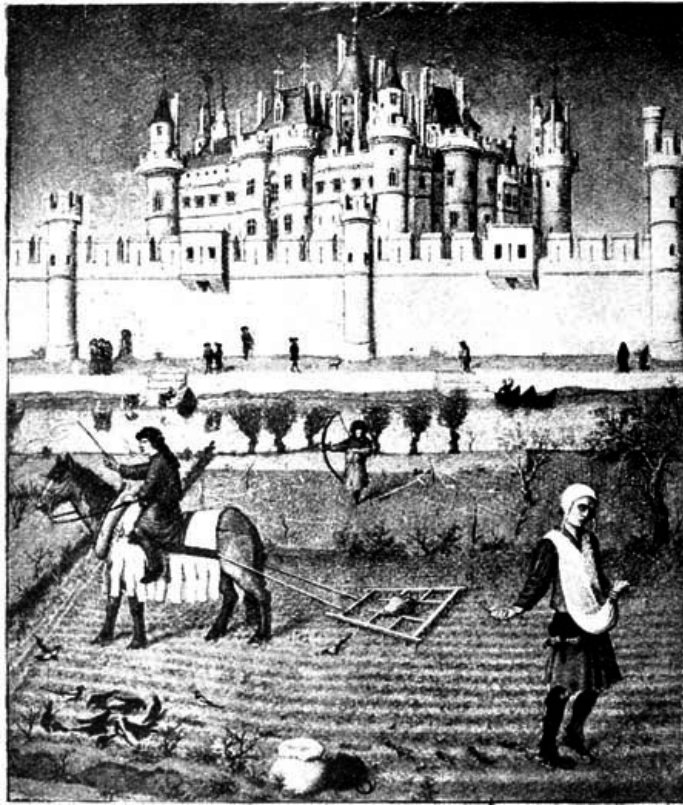
HAWKING AND SWIMMING IN AUGUST

In the background, the Castle of Étampes, acquired by the Duke of Berri



THE VINTAGE IN SEPTEMBER

In the background, the Castle of Saumur, in a district noted for its vineyards



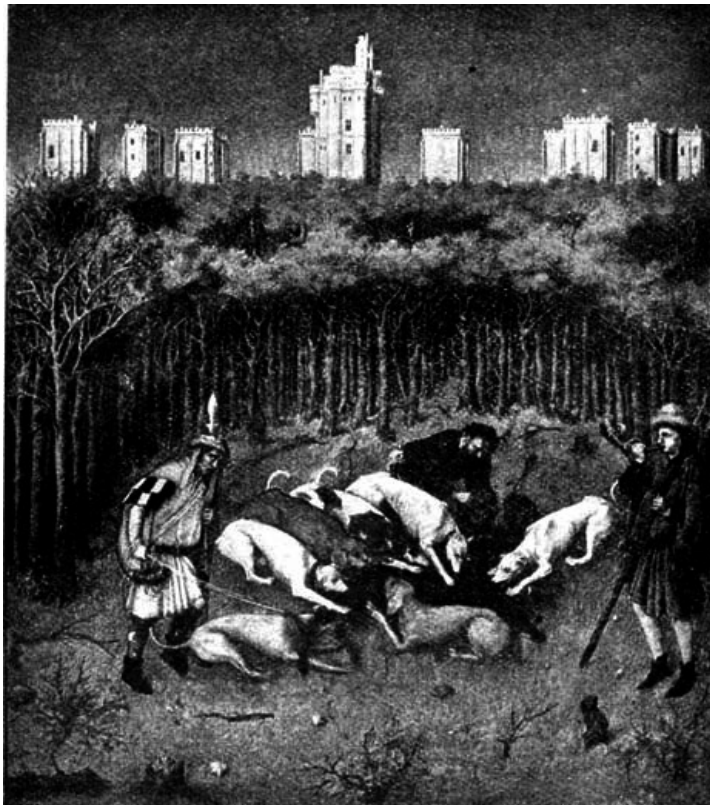
SOWING SEEDS IN OCTOBER

In the background, the River Seine and the old Louvre
Note the scarecrow with a bow in his hands



FEEDING PIGS IN NOVEMBER

This picture is by another artist at the end of the 15th century



HUNTING BOARS IN DECEMBER
In the background, the Castle of Vincennes
This picture was borrowed from an Italian artist

CAMBRIDGE: PRINTED BY
J.B. PEACE, M.A.,
AT THE UNIVERSITY PRESS

*** END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK BRITAIN IN THE MIDDLE AGES: A HISTORY
FOR BEGINNERS ***

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