

THE SECOND  
NORMAN CONQUEST  
OF ENGLAND

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## PREFATORY NOTE.

The following sketch had its birth in the mind of the writer through his accidental possession of a copy of *L'Histoire des Ducs de Normandie et des Rois d'Angleterre*—an anonymous chronicle in ancient French, which is supposed by competent authorities to have been written in the first quarter of the thirteenth century. By so distinguished an historian as Petit-Dutaillis (whose *Life of Louis VIII.* of France has been of invaluable aid in the preparation of this essay), *L'Histoire des Ducs de Normandie et des Rois d'Angleterre* is believed to be the work of an eye-witness of the scenes and events related. Careful study has been given in the preparation of this paper to the works of such chroniclers as Matthew Paris, Matthew of Westminster, Walter of Coventry, and especially Roger of Wendover. Among modern histories, in addition to *La Vie et la Règne de Louis VIII.*, by Petit-Dutaillis, Norgate's *Life of John Lackland*, Ramsay's *Angevin Empire*,

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and Milman's Latin Christianity have been freely consulted.

The writer desires to express his great obligation, for valuable suggestions and the use of rare historical works, to Professor James Westfall Thompson, of the University of Chicago.

C. E. C.



## THE SECOND NORMAN CONQUEST OF ENGLAND



ON the twenty-first day of May in the year of grace 1216,<sup>1</sup> a horseman in full armor drew rein upon the beach where the ancient town of Sandwich looks out upon the sea. Though short of stature, and lacking the stately presence often associated with long lineage and lofty rank, his broad shoulders and well-knit frame suggested physical strength, while the heavy jaw, not wholly hidden by his tawny beard, bespoke a man of iron will and a temper it were wise not to rouse.<sup>2</sup> Lifting his mailed hand to his forehead to shield his eyes from the glare of the morning sun, the

<sup>1</sup> Roger of Wendover, vol. 2, p. 364. Norgate's King John, p. 268.

<sup>2</sup> Norgate, p. 10. Ramsay's Angevin Empire, p. 502.

rider looked eagerly to the eastward. For two days and nights the coast had been swept by a tempest so fierce that every chronicler of the thirteenth century records the story of its terrors.<sup>1</sup> But as the sun rose on that memorable day, the almost preternatural clarity of the atmosphere which sometimes follows a furious storm revealed across the English Channel the outlines of the shores of France. It was not, however, the distant coast-line, hardly distinguishable from the yet troubled sea, which fixed the attention of that early visitor. Only a few miles from the British coast, and rapidly sweeping before a favoring wind toward that southeasternmost point of England known as the Isle of Thanet, a squadron of seven ships was plainly visible.<sup>2</sup> Witnesses of that scene have drawn in vivid colors the picture of its effect upon their leader. Turning to his trumpeter, the horseman ordered him to sound. As if the narrow streets of Sandwich and the dunes of the shore had given birth to a host of men, an army answered to the call. Then, seized with indecision, the chief gave the signal for retreat. As his puzzled troops withdrew, he gave himself up to impotent rage. Spurring his horse till its

<sup>1</sup> Hist. des Ducs de Normandie, p. 168. Petit-Dutaillis, Vie de Louis VIII., p. 99.

<sup>2</sup> Petit-Dutaillis, p. 100. Histoire de la Marine Française, p. 309.

flanks were wet with blood, he rode at a mad pace—now north—now south, up and down the sands of Pegwell Bay, venting in an aimless gallop his mingled wrath and terror.<sup>1</sup> Says one of the old chroniclers, portraying the same conspicuous figure on another but similar occasion, "His whole body was so contorted with fury as to be scarcely recognizable; a scowl of rage furrowed his brow, his eyes flashed fire, and his color changed to a livid white."<sup>2</sup>

Such, on that historic day, was John Lackland, King of England. The seven ships which he watched till they came to anchor at Stonar,<sup>3</sup> a few miles distant from his point of view, were the vanguard of a mighty fleet. On the evening of the twentieth of May, eight hundred vessels had set sail from Calais, bearing a vast host of the nobility and chivalry of France, with their retainers, to conquer England, punish its wicked monarch, and place upon the throne Louis, the heir of the King of France. Travelling backward over a period of nearly two hundred years, the student of history finds a parallel to this invasion. On the twenty-eighth of September, 1066, William

<sup>1</sup> Norgate's *Life of John*, pp. 268, 269. *Hist. des Ducs*, p. 169. *Vie de Louis VIII.*, p. 100.

<sup>2</sup> Norgate (quoting R. Devizes), p. 32.

<sup>3</sup> Norgate, p. 268. *Petit-Dutaillis*, p. 100. *Wendover*, vol. 2, p. 364.

the Norman had set foot on English soil.<sup>1</sup> Contrasting the two military enterprises, that of Louis gave by far the greater promise of success. William had scant grounds for counting upon support from the people whose crown he coveted,<sup>2</sup> while Louis entered England only by the urgent solicitation of the great lords and powerful barons of the realm. The Norman nobles hesitated long before committing themselves to the hazardous venture of their war-lord, and only fear of his terrible vengeance overcame their reluctance at the last.<sup>3</sup> But Louis was the idol of the French, and his summons to rally to his banner was answered with universal enthusiasm. The great military chief whose daring and strategy gained the victory of Senlac, and left his rival Harold dead upon the field, was after all the grandson of a tanner. His birth record was smirched with shame, and when he had besieged Alençon, the mocking citizens had hung out upon the walls hides bearing the legend, "Work for the Tanner."<sup>4</sup> In strong contrast is the fact that Louis was the eldest son and heir apparent of the monarch whose political craft and warlike prowess had revived in France the

<sup>1</sup> Green, *Hist. Eng. People*, vol. I, p. 100.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 99.

<sup>3</sup> Green, *Hist. Eng. People*, vol. I, p. 99.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. I, pp. 95, 96.

memories of Charlemagne.<sup>1</sup> But that which gives to the enterprise of Louis a peculiar conspicuity is, that it was a reversal of the current of history. The tide of conquest had rolled the other way. William Rufus, Henry First, Henry Second, and Richard of the Lion Heart,<sup>2</sup> had each in turn led his armies across the channel, and harried the realm of France. But not since William the Conqueror landed at Pevensey and fought at Hastings had a great French armament whitened with its canvas the separating sea, and borne a mighty host to invade the territory of an English king. When all the precedents of two centuries are thus turned upside down, so exceptional a fact demands explanation as imperatively as would the reversal of the current of some great river, or the backward movement of a planet in its orbit.

Such explanation, amply adequate, is found in the life and character of John Lackland. No contemporary chroniclers have given us what may be called a biography of King John. But they have reproduced certain isolated events in his stormy life with all the vividness of instantaneous photography. This paper is designed merely to provide the screen upon which the light of historic study may throw

<sup>1</sup> Petit-Dutaillis, p. 3.

<sup>2</sup> Green, vol. 1, pp. 114, 115. Wendover, vol. 2, pp. 31, 135, 136.

these scenes, and to make them pass like moving pictures in rapid succession before the mental vision. As we catch these glimpses of the man from his early youth until the hour when his dishonored body lay stark in death, we shall behold such a revelation of moral obliquity that we shall cease to wonder that the English people, driven to desperation, turned to a foreign prince for deliverance from a tyranny so intolerable.

No one of the ancient chateaux of Touraine has a profounder fascination for the lover of history than the Castle of Chinon. The memories of kings and queens cling like the ivy to its mouldering walls. Its desolate apartments seem haunted by the ghosts of famous men and fair women, who schemed and plotted, loved and hated, fought and danced, in those now lonely halls. It was the fourth day of July in the year 1189 that an aged man, sick unto death, lay propped by cushions in one of the smaller chambers of Chinon, and fastened his eager eyes upon a parchment scroll which his sole attendant was about to read. Henry Plantagenet, King of England, second of the name, had reached the last stage of a hitherto brilliant career. The morning of that fateful July day had seen him bend his proud knee to his great rival, Philippe Augustus of

France, and surrender himself in abject humiliation to whatever conditions the conqueror might demand.<sup>1</sup> But—bitterest ingredient in his cup of gall—Henry had thrown down his arms in the full knowledge that the French king could not have humbled the sovereign of England, if Henry's own son Richard had not allied himself to Philippe in parricidal conspiracy.<sup>2</sup> Through all the wretched rebellion of his children, one spark of consolation had been nurtured by Henry, till now, in the awful chill of his dying hour, it warmed his very soul. Whatever his other sons had been, his youngest, his favorite, John, could not be seduced from filial devotion. Henry's passionate attachment to his latest born had made the young prince, while yet a boy, lord of Ireland, with the royal pledge that he should be crowned king of that island.<sup>3</sup> One chronicler asserts that Henry had declared a purpose to put John in possession of the vast Angevin empire which Henry ruled, save only Normandy and England. Bound by such ties of gratitude, one son of the crushed and dying monarch could be trusted even in the hour of his father's disastrous defeat and shame. That night at Chinon there

<sup>1</sup> Ramsay's *Angevin Empire*, p. 244. Wendover, vol. 2, p. 76.

<sup>2</sup> *Hist. des Ducs*, p. 84.

<sup>3</sup> Ramsay, pp. 228, 232.

had been placed in the hands of the chancellor a list of the great nobles and princes of the blood, whose treachery had contributed to the triumph of France.

“Read the names,” said the king to his companion. The chancellor hesitated. The king repeated his command. “Sire,” stammered the chancellor, with tears in his voice, “the first name upon the list is that of your son, the lord John.” Henry turned on his couch with a groan. “Now,” said he, “let all things go as they will. I care no more for myself, nor for anything in the world.” His heart was broken, and his death-blow struck.<sup>1</sup>

The panoramic canvas moves, and another glimpse is given us, revealing this scion of the Plantagenet line farther on in his career. Richard has become King of England, and of all the splendid heritage on the continent which Norman William bequeathed to his successors. Frenzied with the chivalrous enthusiasm of the age, and possibly dreaming that he might atone by deeds of heroism in the cause of the Church for the crimes of his earlier years, the king with the lion's heart had gathered a huge armament, and gone across the seas to recover the Holy Sepulchre from the infidel Saracen. But not until he had lavished upon his brother John

<sup>1</sup> Ramsay, p. 244. Wendover, vol. 2, p. 76.

stately castles and broad manors from Cornwall to the Scottish border. Nor were the flood-gates of the royal bounty shut down before six great and wealthy earldoms — Nottinghamshire, Derbyshire, Dorset, Somerset, Devon, and Cornwall — with all their enormous revenues, had been laid at the feet of John.<sup>1</sup>

The story is familiar which relates how Richard, returning from Syria, was imprisoned by Henry Sixth, Emperor of Germany. Immured in the Castle of Speyer, where the Rhine receives the tribute of the Speyerbach, the fiery king of England had been for eighteen months like an eagle beating against the bars of its cage. The 2d of February, 1194, may have been wintry in the valley of the Rhine. But to King Richard it brought the warmth and cheer of hope. On that day the emperor led forth his captive, and with a splendid cavalcade of the princes of the Empire, and bishops and archbishops of the Church, escorted Richard to Mainz,<sup>2</sup> there to meet the envoys of his brother John. Aware that almost superhuman efforts had been made by his subjects to gather a ransom for the monarch whom they idolized,<sup>3</sup> the king must have felt that these representa-

<sup>1</sup> Norgate, p. 27. Ramsay, p. 275.

<sup>2</sup> Walter of Coventry, p. 48.

<sup>3</sup> Roger of Wendover, vol. 2, pp. 128, 129. Ramsay, p. 333.

tives of England, coming direct from John, could be none other than the bearers of the price of Richard's liberty. But when the public conference had closed, the emperor showed his prisoner a private letter bearing his brother's sign-manual. It did indeed proffer a great sum of money; but not to ransom the king from his captivity. It contained a pledge that if the emperor would hold his prisoner for another year, until John should be firmly seated on the English throne, this loving and grateful brother would pay thirty thousand marks for the service thus rendered!<sup>1</sup>

Four years pass by. A cross-bow bolt has ended the strange, romantic, and half-savage career of Richard. His body is lying, by his own direction, at Fontevraud, buried at the feet of the father whose gray hairs he had brought down in sorrow to the grave. The heart, which tradition says was of larger mould than those of other men, rests in a casket of gold under the high altar of the cathedral of Rouen. John has reached the goal of his long-cherished ambition. As a wolf which at last has run down some noble stag, and feasts his eyes upon his prey before he rends it, so does John Lackland gloat over England, Ireland, and nearly half of France, prostrate at his feet. Yet like the favorite of the Persian Xerxes,

<sup>1</sup> Walter of Coventry, pp. 46, 48. Ramsay, p. 333.

who cried, "All this availeth me nothing, so long as Mordecai the Jew sitteth at the king's gate," John realizes that in his cup of success one bitter ingredient is mingled. His brother Geoffrey had left a son—Arthur by name—who had inherited the lordship of Brittany. Though Arthur was but a lad at John's accession, the crafty Philippe of France had recognized the possibilities of the boy's future. At sixteen years of age the young Duke of Brittany became the husband of Philippe's daughter Jeanne, and received at the hand of his father-in-law the order of knighthood, with the investiture of Anjou, Maine, Touraine, and Poitou.<sup>1</sup>

Well did the new king of England know that the law of primogeniture branded him as a usurper, and made Arthur, as Geoffrey's only surviving son, the true heir of the English throne. Like hot coals in his bosom was the recollection that when Richard set out for Palestine, he had designated Arthur as his successor.<sup>2</sup> It does not affect the moral quality of the tragedy which followed, that the young prince, conscious of the righteousness of his cause, allowed the hot blood of his Angevin ancestry to show itself in defiance of his

<sup>1</sup> Ramsay, pp. 393, 394. Petit-Dutaillis, p. 5. Norgate, p. 61.

<sup>2</sup> Wendover, vol. 2, p. 95. Matt. of Westminster, vol. 2, p. 81. Norgate, p. 308.

uncle.<sup>1</sup> Captured at the storming of the fortress of Mirabeau on the Vienne, Arthur was imprisoned in the Castle of Falaise. Thence, in order that he might be more immediately under the surveillance of John, he was transferred to Rouen, where the king was then holding court.<sup>2</sup>

From the hour that the drawbridge of the Castle of Rouen was trod by the young duke's entering feet, and the portcullis fell behind him, Arthur, Duke of Brittany, Count of Maine, Anjou, Touraine, and Poitou, legitimate heir to the crown of England, and son-in-law of one of the greatest of the long line of the kings of France, vanished from the knowledge of men as completely as if the earth had yawned and swallowed him up. That his royal uncle murdered him with his own hand was universally believed on both sides of the British Channel. Though John was publicly charged with the crime again and again, neither he nor his partisans ever contradicted the terrible accusation.<sup>3</sup> Even contemporary writers vary in their stories as to the method of the assassination. That which historians count as having the most probability is sufficiently blood-curdling. Under cover of the night a boat was

<sup>1</sup> Wendover, vol. 2, p. 205. Norgate, p. 91.

<sup>2</sup> Wendover, vol. 2, p. 205. Ramsay, p. 396.

<sup>3</sup> Ramsay, p. 396. Petit-Dutaillis, p. 77. Roger of Wendover, vol. 2, p. 206.

rowed at high tide to the water-gate of the Castle, and moored to its stone stairs. The warden was summoned, a few whispered words were exchanged, and Arthur was brought from his cell. In an instant John's poniard was plunged in his nephew's heart. A cry! A splash! Then the waters of the Seine closed over the only rival that John's jealous soul could fear.<sup>1</sup>

Five years have passed since Arthur's blood stained the dagger of his royal uncle. It is Easter Sunday, the thirtieth of March, 1208. The sun shines, the hedge-rows put on their spring greenery, here and there the early flowers unfold their blossoms, the cattle dot the hillsides, from the pastures comes the bleating of the flocks, and little children are playing on the village green. But from where the Cornish coast thrusts itself out into the Atlantic, northward to the Northumbrian hills, no church bell sends out its Easter summons. Over cathedral and minster and village Church alike broods a deathlike silence. No skilful fingers press the organ keys, the chaunting choirs are stricken dumb; and the awful stillness itself becomes a pitiful "*Deus Misereatur.*"

For King John had at last defied the only power before which tyrants in that

<sup>1</sup> Ramsay, p. 397. (Vide Ramsay's quotation from Le Breton, same p., foot-note.)

age were forced to bow, and over the land Pope Innocent the Third had flung the black shadow of an interdict. From one end of England to the other, no public prayer was offered, no sacrament celebrated, no message preached from pulpit or wayside cross. The dying stretched out their hands in vain pleading for priestly offices, and the dead, barred out from consecrated churchyards, were buried as unblessed by religious rites as if men covered from sight the carcasses of beasts.<sup>1</sup> Three bishops—they of London, Ely, and Worcester—had pronounced the sentence of the Pope on Palm Sunday, and then “fled from the wrath to come.”<sup>2</sup> None too early did they make their escape. In uncontrollable fury John swore his favorite oath, “by the teeth of God,” that he would tear out the eyes and split the nose of any priest who dared to proclaim the papal edict.<sup>3</sup> Every bishop in the realm, save two abject pensioners of the king, followed the three chief offenders into exile.<sup>4</sup> Every priest was banished. The monks were driven from their convents. Abbeys, priories, and bishoprics were put in charge of laymen, and the entire revenue of the

<sup>1</sup> Roger of Wendover, vol. 2, p. 246.

<sup>2</sup> Wendover, vol 2, p. 246. Norgate, p. 127. Ramsay, p. 415.

<sup>3</sup> Wendover, vol. 2, pp. 245, 246.

<sup>4</sup> Norgate, p. 130.

ecclesiastical establishments was confiscated to the crown.<sup>1</sup> When a bandit who had robbed and then murdered a priest was brought before John as his judge, "Let him go," was the monarch's decree, "he has killed one of my enemies."<sup>2</sup> But the flames of John's wrath swept beyond the bounds of the Church. In the madness of his fury all men became his enemies. He desolated the agricultural districts, tearing away hedges and filling the ditches which protected tilled fields, "so that," says one of the old chroniclers, "while men starved, the beasts of the chase should fatten on the growing crops."<sup>3</sup> The unknown writer of "The Dukes of Normandy and Kings of England" tells us that the wild creatures "roamed as freely through the fields and along the highways as if they had been sheep, and did not fly at the approach of men."<sup>4</sup>

Dark suspicion of the nobility brooded in the mind of the king. He forced the great families of the realm to place their sons in his ward as hostages for the loyalty of the distinguished houses that they represented.<sup>5</sup> William de Braose was the lord of vast estates in England, Wales, and

<sup>1</sup> Wendover, vol. 2, pp. 246, 247.

<sup>2</sup> Wendover, vol. 2, p. 247. Ramsay, p. 416.

<sup>3</sup> Norgate, p. 131.

<sup>4</sup> Hist. des Ducs, p. 109.

<sup>5</sup> Wendover, vol. 2, pp. 247, 248.

Ireland.<sup>1</sup> One day in the year 1208 there appeared at one of the many castles of de Braose a detachment of John's foreign mercenaries demanding that the eldest son of the family should be delivered up to the guardianship of the king. As the royal messengers delivered the mandate of their master, the Lady Maud, the wife of de Braose, could not restrain her indignation. "I will not," she cried, "give up my son to your lord, King John. His hands are yet red with the blood of his own nephew Arthur."<sup>2</sup> Terrified at her own daring words, she fled to Ireland, only to be ultimately captured with her son, loaded with chains, carried back to England, and immured in the dungeons of Windsor Castle. There, by John's command, the mother and son were starved to death.<sup>3</sup> The contemporary chronicler describes with gruesome detail the horrible appearance of the corpses, when, after eleven days of agony, the dungeon doors were opened.<sup>4</sup> De Braose himself wandered from one hiding-place to another, but within a year died of a broken heart.<sup>5</sup>

Such were the horrors which roused the barons of England to a sense of their

<sup>1</sup> Ramsay, p. 416. *Hist. des Ducs*, p. 111.

<sup>2</sup> Wendover, vol. 2, p. 248. Norgate, p. 150.

<sup>3</sup> Wendover, vol. 2, p. 255. Norgate, pp. 156, 288.

<sup>4</sup> *Hist. des Ducs*, pp. 114, 115.

<sup>5</sup> Wendover, vol. 2, p. 256. *Hist. des Ducs*, p.

shameful degradation. But the first effective blow dealt to the maddened despot was to come from another source. The Pope added to the miseries of the interdict the personal excommunication of the king. Every subject was absolved from allegiance, and John and all his posterity were pronounced incapable of exercising any regal function.<sup>1</sup> To Philippe of France was offered the throne of England by the loftier sovereignty of the Pope, on condition that the French King should at once lead a crusade against the rebellious monarch.

Sudden as a lightning-flash was John's recoil from the black gulf yawning at his feet. On the 22d of May, 1213, he flung himself prostrate before Pandulf, the legate of the Pope, confessing himself to be the chief of sinners against God and His holy Church. To earn absolution he surrendered England and Ireland to the Pope. Henceforth he would hold his ancestral realms only as the Holy Father's tenant, paying to the See of Rome a yearly rental of a thousand marks.<sup>2</sup> He would prove his sincerity by a humble invitation to the banished bishops to return to their sees, the priests to their cures, and the monks to their convents. Nor did his humilia-

<sup>1</sup> Norgate, p. 161. Roger of Wendover, vol. 2, p. 250.

<sup>2</sup> Norgate, p. 161. Wendover, vol. 2, p. 259.

<sup>3</sup> Roger of Wendover, vol. 2, pp. 268, 269.

tion stop short of a vow to restore in full the wealth of which he had robbed the Church.<sup>1</sup> Curious is the commentary on this profound conviction of sin afforded by a story which, alone of the old chroniclers, Matthew Paris relates. True or false, it is an index of the contemporary opinion of King John. The monk tells us that the King, repenting of his humiliating agreement before the year was out, sent a deputation to the great Emir of Morocco, then holding sway over North Africa and part of Spain, offering, on condition of the Moor's military aid, to make over to him the realm of England, to abandon the Christian religion which he had ceased to believe, and to yield an implicit obedience to the laws of Mahomet.<sup>2</sup>

John's reconciliation to Rome was the cunning of the trapped wild beast. Across the Channel Philippe Augustus, with his huge army and splendid fleet, balked of his prey, gnashed his teeth in impotent fury. Henceforth John and his barons found their old positions reversed. The nobles of England had become the rebels against the Pope, and the awful spiritual power of interdict and excommunication was to reinforce the tyrant in his struggles

<sup>1</sup> Wendover, vol. 2, pp. 265-270. Norgate, pp. 180, 190.

<sup>2</sup> Wendover, vol. 2, p. 283. (Note from Matt. Paris.) Norgate, p. 182, note.

to enslave the people. All the world knows the story of the revolt of the barons, resulting in wresting from the unwilling not terrified John, the Great Charter of English liberty. But there were consequences flowing from that check upon the tyrant, which all the world does *not* know, because the historians have been almost silent regarding the details. England had not long to wait for proofs of the Pope's resolve to buttress with all his mysterious power the tottering authority of John.<sup>1</sup> Innocent hurled a new excommunication, aimed, not, as six years before, against the monster on the throne of the Plantagenets, but against those who dared to defend the Magna Charta when assailed by this pious son of the Church.<sup>2</sup> Then burst out the conflagration of civil war. John's mercenaries, gathered from the dregs of his continental domains,<sup>3</sup> swept through the unhappy island with fire and sword. The track of these hired banditti was like that of the locusts of the Orient. "Before them the land was as the garden of Eden, and behind them a desolate wilderness."<sup>4</sup> Even before the Great Charter had been

<sup>1</sup> Wendover, vol. 2, p. 326. Walter of Coventry, vol. 2, p. 222.

<sup>2</sup> Norgate, p. 246. Wendover, vol. 2, pp. 329, 330. *Ibid.*, vol. 2, pp. 355, 357.

<sup>3</sup> Walter of Coventry, vol. 2, p. 224.

<sup>4</sup> Wendover, vol. 2, pp. 356, 357. Norgate, pp. 248-252.

extorted from him, the horrible cruelties of John had lost for him the capital of Britain. While the king was storming the castles of the great, burning the cottages of the peasantry, and putting women and children to torture or the sword, the citizens of London opened its gates to the armies of the barons, and from that hour the ancient city never knew again the pollution of the presence of King John.<sup>1</sup>

At last retribution, which even his great ally at Rome could neither prohibit nor postpone, was on the track of the wickedest monarch that ever wore the English crown. It could not have been far from the last day of October, 1215, that a distinguished English embassy appeared at the court of Philippe Augustus. Headed by the Earls of Winchester and Hereford, these representatives of the barons, in the most solemn and definite language, offered the crown of England to Louis, the eldest son of the King of France, and swore upon the Gospels that they would never again accept the sovereignty of John.<sup>2</sup> In the midst of this impressive scene a startling incident had well-nigh put an end to further negotiations. A letter was placed in Philippe's hands, over which he glanced with visible agitation. Then bursting

<sup>1</sup> Walter of Coventry, vol. 2, p. 220. Wendover, vol. 2, p. 307. Ramsay, p. 473.

<sup>2</sup> Petit-Dutaillis, p. 70. Wendover, vol. 2, p. 358.

through all the restraints of diplomatic courtesy, he hurled at Saher de Quinci, Earl of Winchester, the accusation of treachery. For the letter bore the signatures and seals of the great nobles of England, and announced that King John having come to terms with the barons, Louis need put himself to no further trouble or peril on behalf of his English allies.<sup>1</sup> It was a terrible moment for the two great Earls and their associates. But the cloud was dispelled as quickly as it had risen. The Earl of Winchester asked the royal permission to examine the letter, and demonstrated, even to the satisfaction of King Philippe, that both signatures and seals were clumsy forgeries, by which John had tried to postpone the day of retribution. Sir Walter Scott has been severely criticised for making a brave knight commit a crime more congruous with a commercial than a chivalrous age. But John Lackland, belted knight and royal head of England's chivalry, had wrought that very crime three hundred years before the days of Marmion.<sup>2</sup>

Before that momentous conference closed, Louis of France had become King of England, so far as such dignity was in the power of the barons to bestow, and Phi-

<sup>1</sup> Petit-Dutaillis, p. 71.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 71.

lippe Augustus had entered into definite agreement to send his son across the Channel with a force which should make his claim irresistible.<sup>1</sup> Between the promise and its fulfilment a wide gap was to intervene, and obstacles anticipated by neither of the parties to the contract were to be surmounted. Louis was a man of sincere religious character. His pure life, in happy contrast to that of his father and other monarchs of his time,<sup>2</sup> may not have been wholly the fruit of the religious influence of the Church. But it cannot be supposed that such a man was superior to the terror which in the thirteenth century the wrath of the Pope inspired. For no sooner did the news of the compact with the English barons reach Rome, than Innocent the Third denounced the proposed invasion, and threatened with excommunication any who should dare to lift a finger against that loyal son of the Church, King John of England. Crafty and time-serving, Philippe Augustus drew back. He dared not brave the thunders of the papal indignation. While secretly hoping for his son's success, Philippe endeavored to deceive the Pope with the idea that the enterprise of Louis met with his father's disapproval.<sup>3</sup> On the twenty-fourth day of

<sup>1</sup> Petit-Dutaillis, p. 71. Hist. des Duces, p. 160.

<sup>2</sup> Petit-Dutaillis, p. 14.

<sup>3</sup> Petit-Dutaillis, p. 95.

April, 1216, a great Council was convoked by the King of France, where Cardinal Gualo, the papal legate, again fulminated the prohibition of his master. With a show of judicial fairness, Philippe Augustus addressed the assembly, professing his loyalty to the see of Rome, but demanding that Louis's reasons for the step he proposed should be heard.<sup>1</sup> Out of the throng appeared a knight whom Louis had chosen as his advocate.<sup>2</sup> In eloquent terms he set forth the iniquities with which John Lackland had shocked the moral sense of Christendom. His treachery to his brother Richard, his murder of his nephew Arthur, his surrender of his kingdom to the Pope as if it were a commodity to be bought and sold, his trampling beneath his feet the rights of the barons and the people guaranteed by the Magna Charta, and above all the desolation of his own country, the torturing of his own subjects, and the innocent blood with which he had crimsoned the very soil of England, formed some of the counts in that terrible indictment. Had the pleader for the condemnation of the English king paused here, his argument would have been well-nigh irresistible. But when he proceeded to urge that because Louis had married Blanche of Cas-

<sup>1</sup> Wendover, vol. 2, p. 362. Petit-Dutaillis, p. 94.

<sup>2</sup> Wendover, vol. 2, p. 362. Petit-Dutaillis, p. 94.

tile, a niece of John, therefore the young prince was the legitimate heir of the throne of England,<sup>1</sup> the weakness of this link in the chain of his logic vitiated his entire argument. Gualo, the legate, fought fiercely and with the eloquence of sincerity the pretensions of Louis. Once more he threatened the most terrible arrows in the quiver of the Church, to be launched against the assailant of the saintly monarch of England, who had pledged himself to a crusade for the recovery of the Holy Sepulchre.<sup>2</sup> It was impossible that such disputants should find any common ground, and without attaining any definite results the council was dissolved. Louis and his friends hastened to make their final preparations, and Gualo, in a paroxysm of rage, resolved to dog the steps of the prince, follow him across the Channel, and thwart his plans on English soil.

Meantime, John had learned of his enemy's preparations, and formed a bold but skilful plan to frustrate them. The tonnage of the English ships gave him a vast advantage. One of John's great vessels, according to the chroniclers of the time, was worth four of those in the service of Louis.<sup>3</sup> With such superiority on the sea,

<sup>1</sup> Wendover, vol. 2, p. 363. Petit-Dutaillis, p. 84.

<sup>2</sup> Petit-Dutaillis, p. 73. Wendover, vol. 2, p. 363.

<sup>3</sup> Hist. des Ducs, p. 167.

John resolved not to wait till actual invasion should occur, but to make a sudden dash across the Channel, and blockade and burn the French fleet in the harbor of Calais.<sup>1</sup> But the stars in their courses fought against him. The fearful tempest of the 20th of May had scattered the naval force of England from one end of the Channel to the other. With no opposition save that of the heavy seas, Louis had embarked. As we have already seen, only seven of his nearly eight hundred vessels<sup>2</sup> braved that memorable storm, and bearing the prospective conqueror of England, came to anchor in the narrow waterway which then parted the Isle of Thanet from the mainland.<sup>3</sup> Stonar, at which Louis made his landing, for three hundred years after the Norman conquest was a seaport of importance. But the silting of the Channel, and a terrible inundation which overwhelmed it in 1385, have blotted out from the modern maps of England this ancient and historic town.<sup>4</sup> The thirteenth century was a superstitious age, and Louis must have been strangely unlike most mediæval characters, if an incident attending his landing did not waken some dread

<sup>1</sup> Petit-Dutaillis, p. 100. Norgate, p. 267.

<sup>2</sup> Hist. de la Marine Française, p. 309. Hist. des Ducs, p. 167.

<sup>3</sup> Hist. de la Marine Française, p. 309.

<sup>4</sup> Thanet and the Cinque Ports, vol. I, pp. 119-121.

forebodings in his soul. Eager to be the first to set foot on the coveted island, and seeing a priest bearing a crucifix, who had come to the water's edge to welcome the invader, Louis leaped from his boat, but only to plunge neck-deep in the water. Apparently the prince discerned no omen of ill in his unpremeditated bath, and wading ashore, he seized the crucifix, and having devoutly kissed it, he planted his lance deep in English soil.<sup>1</sup>

John's hesitation in striking a decisive blow when he first saw the seven tiny French ships making for the coast at Stonar, was fatal to his cause. For, when on the day following more than seven hundred vessels which had been storm-bound at Calais rejoined the prince, and disembarked a great French army on the Isle of Thanet, John's opportunity was forever lost. In his distrust of his hirelings—most of whom were French—he had slunk away from the sight he had seen off the shore at Sandwich, and taken flight to Dover.<sup>2</sup> Thence he hurried to Winchester, there to meet Gualo, and in Winchester Cathedral, the ancient burial-place of John's ancestors, the legate thundered forth a general excommunication against Louis, his French comrades, and the

<sup>1</sup> Petit-Dutaillis, p. 100.

<sup>2</sup> Hist. des Ducs, pp. 169, 170. Petit-Dutaillis, p. 100.

rebellious barons of England.<sup>1</sup> Meanwhile Louis had seized upon Sandwich,<sup>2</sup> and captured the greater part of John's fleet, together with a vast quantity of provisions and military stores.<sup>3</sup> Philippe Augustus is said to have declared, after his son's invasion had ended, that Louis had shown himself no strategist when he pushed into the heart of England, and left behind him Dover, "the key to the country," in the hands of King John.<sup>4</sup> But knowing as he did that the barons were eager to receive him in their stronghold in London, the prince shrank from the long delay that the reduction of Dover Castle would involve. Canterbury opened its gates to the invader, and Rochester was taken with but slight resistance. Here a force of French knights and men at arms, whom he had sent over the Channel some months before his own fleet had set sail, came out from London to bid their lord a welcome to the land.<sup>5</sup> But far more significant was the fact that with these compatriots of his own was a great crowd of the most famous English nobility, men whose ancestral names had been interwoven with Anglo-Norman history from the days of William the Con-

<sup>1</sup> Hist. des Ducs, p. 170.

<sup>2</sup> Thanet and the Cinque Ports, vol. 2, p. 24.

<sup>3</sup> Hist. des Ducs, p. 170. Petit-Dutaillis, p. 101.

<sup>4</sup> Norgate, p. 275. Petit-Dutaillis, p. 108, footnote.

<sup>5</sup> Hist. des Ducs, p. 171. Norgate, p. 270.

queror.<sup>1</sup> The Earls of Hertford, of Essex, of Oxford, of Pembroke, together with a host of barons hardly less distinguished, came to kiss the hand of Louis, and to swear allegiance to him as the rightful King of England.<sup>2</sup> One after another the castles along his line of march yielded to his authority, and on the second day of June, only ten days after his landing, he entered London in triumph, welcomed with wildest enthusiasm by a populace drunk with the joy of deliverance from the monstrous despotism of King John.<sup>3</sup> The stay of the prince at London was of brief duration. Tarrying only long enough to receive the homage of the people, and to take a solemn oath that he would rule England with justice and with scrupulous observance of their ancestral customs,<sup>4</sup> Louis hurried to Winchester, where John had taken refuge, and where Gualo was gnashing his teeth and thundering his curses. At the invader's approach both his royal and ecclesiastical foes took to flight. Winchester, with its two great castles, surrendered, but not until half the city had been swept away by a conflagration, which some of the chroniclers assert was kindled by

<sup>1</sup> Hist. des Ducs, p. 171. Petit-Dutaillis, pp. 101, 102.

<sup>2</sup> Hist. des Ducs, p. 171.

<sup>3</sup> Hist. des Ducs, p. 171. Petit-Dutaillis, p. 102.

<sup>4</sup> Petit-Dutaillis, p. 102.

the orders of King John.<sup>1</sup> Then Louis awoke to the consciousness that he had committed a strategical blunder in having left such a fortress and seaport as Dover in the hands of the royalists. That town and castle were defended by the famous Hubert De Burgh, a knight whose magnificent qualities as a soldier were only surpassed by his fidelity to a bad master. For fifteen weeks was the fortress bombarded with huge stones hurled by the French magonels.<sup>2</sup> The siege failed, but to Louis came compensation grateful to his wounded pride. While his attack upon Dover was at its height, Alexander, King of Scotland, made his way through England with an army at his back, and offered alliance and homage to the invader.<sup>3</sup>

It would be tedious to relate the details of this wonderful yet almost unknown conquest of England. It suffices to say, that from the time of Louis's landing on the 21st of May, to the close of the month of July, only two months and ten days had elapsed. But in that brief space the French prince and his English allies had brought into subjection all England, from the Channel to the Scottish border, with some important "missing links" in the

<sup>1</sup> Norgate, p. 271. Petit-Dutaillis, p. 106.

<sup>2</sup> Wendover, vol. 2, p. 374. Petit-Dutaillis, pp. 108, 109.

<sup>3</sup> Wendover, vol. 2, p. 376.

chain of conquest.<sup>1</sup> John still held several of the southwestern shires, although it is uncertain from the chronicles of the time whether the great peninsula of Devon and Cornwall may be counted as his or his rival's, and over some of the strongest castles here and there throughout the realm the royal standard still floated. But the great earldoms of the southeast were in Louis's possession. All the north to the very bounds of Scotland had accepted him as the sovereign of England. Even the wild tribes of Wales, among whom it never had been forgotten that John starved to death the wife and son of William de Braose, threw themselves into the invader's arms.<sup>2</sup> Far more important in its moral effect must have been the fact that at London, where from Anglo-Saxon days had been the capital of England, this foreign prince fixed his throne and ruled with authority which none disputed. When it is recalled that for the greater part of a year Louis held sovereign sway over the major part of England, it does not seem historically inaccurate to style this dominance "The Second Norman Conquest of England."

The venturesome craft which had Louis at its helm, for half a year made pros-

<sup>1</sup> Petit-Dutaillis, pp. 112, 113. Norgate, p. 274.

<sup>2</sup> Petit-Dutaillis, pp. 112, 113.

perous voyaging. But now through more than one gaping seam disaster found its way. Some of the great lords who had followed Louis from France, discouraged by the failure to capture Dover, and probably terrified by the spiritual weapons of Gualo, deserted with all their following, and weakened irreparably the army of invasion.<sup>1</sup> In his well-meant efforts to retain the remainder of his French forces, Louis began to show a natural favoritism toward the nobles of his own race. As might have been expected, the English barons grew moody and jealous as they saw high offices and rich domains bestowed upon foreign adventurers.<sup>2</sup>

It may have been in the summer or autumn of the year 1216 that the Vicompte de Melun, one of the bravest of the nobles of King Philippe's court, was seized at London with a mortal malady. Conscious that his end was near, he summoned some of the English barons to his bedside, and made to them a startling confession. In effect it was that Louis and sixteen of his lords—among whom was the Vicompte de Melun himself—had entered into an oath-bound agreement that as soon as the French Prince should be crowned King of England, all the Eng-

<sup>1</sup> Hist. des Ducs, pp. 177, 178.

<sup>2</sup> Petit-Dutaillis, p. 119.

lish nobles who had solicited and welcomed the invasion should be sent into perpetual banishment, on the strange charge that they were traitors to their liege lord! Scarcely had this terrible revelation escaped his lips, when the vicompte breathed his last.<sup>1</sup> Although nearly all the chroniclers concur in the telling of this story, it bears suspicious marks of being a fiction, contrived by John or his partisans.<sup>2</sup> But, true or false, its effect was irresistible. Henceforth, a suspicion which nothing could allay, filled with brooding solicitude the minds of the English barons.<sup>3</sup> Meanwhile, Louis had sworn that he would never cease to batter the walls of Dover till that stronghold acknowledged him as King of England.<sup>4</sup> John recognized his opportunity. While the greater part of the French army and its English allies were pounding at the battlements of Dover, the King of England burst forth from his hiding-place, and, like a tiger escaped from its cage, began to rend and devour. His course was northward along the eastern border of the island. The story of that savage raid lingered for centuries among the people of Suffolk, Norfolk, and Lin-

<sup>1</sup> Wendover, vol. 2, p. 377. Matt. Paris, vol. 2, p. 287.

<sup>2</sup> Petit-Dutaillis, p. 118.

<sup>3</sup> Wendover, vol. 2, p. 377.

<sup>4</sup> Wendover, vol. 2, p. 375.

colnshire. One hundred and sixty-five years after John was laid in his unhonored grave, Wat Tyler and his rebels—many of whom were from the eastern counties—compelled Richard the Second to swear that no prince of the name of John should ever sit upon the English throne—an oath which yet remains inviolate.<sup>1</sup> In the path of the raging king broad earldoms were swept with fire and sword. Peasants dared no longer cultivate the soil. Fairs and markets ceased to be held. Everything of value was buried in the earth. Men furtively bought and sold in the graveyards under the illusion that such a place had a sacredness that even John might respect.<sup>2</sup> The churches and abbeys were profaned. At Crowland, which from Saxon days had been regarded with something of the reverence inspired by the Holy Sepulchre or the Garden of Gethsemane, John ordered the abbey church to be set on fire, and stood at a distance to watch the blaze. When one of his officers, moved by the pleadings of the monks, brought to the king a sum of money as a ransom for their ripe harvest fields, John's fury knew no restraint. Heaping abuse on his too tender-hearted lieutenant, the raging monarch with his own hands fired

<sup>1</sup> Green's Hist. Eng. People, vol. 1, p. 394.

<sup>2</sup> Petit-Dutaillis, p. 127.

the wide expanse of waving gold, running up and down amidst the smoke and flames, till the whole territory of St. Guthlac was a blackened desert.<sup>1</sup> The chroniclers record that neither women nor little children were spared by this pitiless monster. To extort money, men were tied to the tails of horses; they were hung by the feet or hands; salt and vinegar were flung into their eyes; they were fastened to a tripod over glowing coals, then plunged into icy water. "Everywhere," says the annalist of Waverly, "resounded the groans of agony and the cries of mourning."<sup>2</sup>

Parting the counties of Norfolk and Lincoln, to-day as in mediæval times, a broad inlet of the sea bears the name of "The Wash." Five rivers find outlet to the ocean through this estuary. Its vast area of sands, although passable at low tide, has been the grave of many a venturesome traveller. On the 12th of October, 1216,<sup>3</sup> a long cavalcade wound its way along the southern shores of the Wash. The steel armor of mounted knights flashed back the rays of the autumn sun. Archers and men-at-arms marched in solid phalanx. Silken banners fluttered in the breath of the sea. But, central amidst that host,

<sup>1</sup> Norgate, p. 278.

<sup>2</sup> Petit-Dutaillis, p. 127.

<sup>3</sup> Norgate, pp. 281, 282. Ramsay, p. 500.

guarded with jealous care on the front and flank and rear, rumbled a train of heavily laden wagons. In them was such freightage as no graybeard in all England had ever seen before. Money beyond all computation, wrung by torture from the high and the low; jewels which the great families had proudly kept as heirlooms, and bequeathed from generation to generation; costly garments adorned with gold and precious stones; and endless stores of gold and silver vessels and vestments stiff with embroidery, from desecrated and plundered churches;—these and other spoils of robbery made the wheels of the great wains to creak and groan under the precious load.<sup>1</sup>

The tide had only partially receded. No guide could be found to risk the leading of that host over the quicksand of the Wash.<sup>2</sup> But the furious temper of the chief would brook no delay. Leading the column, he pushed rapidly on till he reached the sands through which the river Welland winds. Suddenly the ground beneath their feet seemed to open. Whirlpools boiled with a foaming flood, and sucked down into their depths men and horses and every wagon of the priceless baggage train. A great part of the army was engulfed,

<sup>1</sup> Wendover, vol. 2, p. 378.

<sup>2</sup> Ramsay, p. 500. Norgate, p. 282.

but their lord, with those in immediate attendance upon him, reached, as by a miracle, the other shore.<sup>1</sup> As John Lackland looked back upon that frightful graveyard, no man on earth constituted a stranger picture. He was a king without a kingdom, a ruler without subjects, a leader without followers, and a robber whose booty the hand of God had snatched away.<sup>2</sup> Maddened by the disaster, the king made his way to Swineshead Abbey, where he was seized with a raging fever. Always the slave of his appetites, he gorged himself that night on the good monks' peaches and cider.<sup>3</sup> Desperately ill next morning, he persisted in pushing northward, bent on some new scheme of slaughter and devastation. No longer able to bestride his horse, he was carried for a little way upon a rude litter woven by his attendants of willow boughs cut with their

<sup>1</sup> Wendover, vol. 2, p. 378. Norgate, p. 282.

<sup>2</sup> Since this essay was completed, my friend Professor James Westfall Thompson has kindly pointed out to the writer, an article appearing recently in the Journal of the British Numismatic Society, by its Honorary Secretary, Mr. W. J. Andrew, upon the general subject of "Buried Treasure." It contains the following significant statement:—

"There is still a vast army-chest lying but a few feet below English soil, compared to which all these other discoveries pale into insignificance. This is the entire treasure of King John, including the ancient regalia of England, the jewels of the Normans, and perhaps even the crown of Alfred."

<sup>3</sup> Wendover, vol. 1, p. 378. Norgate, p. 282.

swords. But with shrieks and curses he cried out that this wicker vehicle was an instrument of torture, and once more they lifted him upon his horse. So he came to Newark.<sup>1</sup> The traveller in the north of England, visiting that ancient city, is still shown the ruined castle of the bishop of Lincoln, overlooking the waters of the Trent. In some chamber of that now crumbling edifice, at the hour of midnight on the 18th of October, 1216, John Lackland closed his career of unexampled crime. It was fitting that when such a tempestuous soul passed out of the world, the elements should be convulsed with a furious storm which shook the houses of the townsfolk, and howled like an army of demons through the turrets of the castle.<sup>2</sup> As a monk of the bishop's household entered the death-chamber with the morning light, he met the servants of the king hurrying away with such of his personal effects as had not been buried in the quicksands of the Wash. The body was found stripped even of the scanty garments in which John breathed his last.<sup>3</sup> Matthew Paris closes his estimate of this monarch's character with these words of monkish consolation:—

<sup>1</sup> Norgate, p. 282. Roger of Wendover, vol. 2, p. 378.

<sup>2</sup> Norgate, p. 285.

<sup>3</sup> Ramsay, p. 501. Norgate, p. 285.

"It is, however, to be confidently hoped that some good works which he performed may plead in his favor at the tribunal of Jesus Christ; for he founded a monastery of the Cistercian order at Beaulieu, and gave to the Abbey of Croxton lands worth ten pounds."<sup>1</sup>

Strangest of all the contradictions of history, the bells of Worcester Cathedral, tolling for the burial of John Lackland, pealed out the death-knell of the invasion led by Louis of France. Had Almighty God permitted to the English monarch a longer space in which to harry his own country, to burn the castles of the nobility and the homes and harvests of the poor, to rob the most sacred shrines, and to wring money from the helpless by inflicting agonies of torture, it is at least probable that the whole nation would have turned to Louis as their only deliverer from horrors no longer to be borne.

But when all over England flew the tidings that the tyrant had perished, new hope sprang in the breasts of the people. And when it was known that John in dying had committed the guardianship of the heir to the throne (then a child of but ten years) to the great Earl of Pembroke, Marshal of the realm,<sup>2</sup> loyalty to the Plantagenet line surged up like the floodtide of the sea. Why, it was asked, should Englishmen go pleading with

<sup>1</sup> Wendover, vol. 2 p., 379, foot-note.

<sup>2</sup> Hist. des Ducs, p. 180.

a French prince to accept the crown, when an heir of the Angevin house, whose title none could question, claimed their fealty. True, the young Henry was but a child, and with the blood of John Lackland in his veins. But the real ruler of the land would be the wisest, bravest, and best beloved of the nobles of England. William, Earl of Pembroke, had been the idol of the English people since under Henry the Second he had entered upon his chivalrous career. In him were blended a dauntless courage, a knightly generosity, and a skill as a warrior only equalled by his sagacity in counsel.<sup>1</sup> The tide of hate, which had reached its flood when John ravaged the eastern coast, suddenly turned. Its ebb was strangely rapid. Churchmen, terrified by the nearer thunders of the papal wrath, fell away from the French prince as from a leper. Only one bishop continued to stand by him.<sup>2</sup> Desertion of a "lost cause" became the order of the day. Five hundred of the English nobles who had been fighting under the banner of the invader, in one day swore allegiance to Henry.<sup>3</sup> Four times did Louis return to the siege of Dover Castle, but as vainly as the surges of the Channel beat against Dover cliffs.

Recognizing his desperate situation,

<sup>1</sup> Norgate, p. 29. Ramsay, p. 423.

<sup>2</sup> Petit-Dutaillis, p. 134.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 144. Walter of Coventry, vol. 2, p. 235.

Louis negotiated a truce (to which neither side was faithful) while he crossed to France to seek succor among his compatriots.<sup>1</sup> But wily Philippe Augustus had no welcoming hand to stretch out to the prince whom the Pope had styled the French King's "Prodigal Son." Philippe even declined to speak to Louis.<sup>2</sup> Almost a year after his first landing, the prince again disembarked at Sandwich, with some reinforcements and a little treasure borrowed from his friends.<sup>3</sup> But his return to England was the signal for a new and irreparable disaster.<sup>4</sup> For some months his forces had held the city of Lincoln, while the castle overlooking the town was flying the banner of King John, and its chatelaine, the heroic Dame de la Haye, was flinging an Englishwoman's defiance on the foreigners below. On Thursday, the 25th of May, 1217, as Louis was once more hammering ineffectually at the gates of Dover Castle, came the news that Lincoln was lost. The hold of the invasion on the north of England had been wrenched loose, and to render the defeat the more humiliating, the barons to whom the city had been intrusted and the flower of the chiv-

<sup>1</sup> Petit-Dutaillis, pp. 139, 141.

<sup>2</sup> Hist. des Ducs, p. 187. Petit-Dutaillis, p. 145.

<sup>3</sup> Petit-Dutaillis, p. 146.

<sup>4</sup> Petit-Dutaillis, p. 150-155.

alry of France were prisoners in the hands of the regent.<sup>1</sup>

In that bitter hour the devotion of Blanche of Castile led to another and supreme effort to save her husband from total shipwreck of his enterprise. When Philippe Augustus coldly refused to aid his son, the faithful Blanche swore that she would raise money by mortgaging her two children. Unwilling to face such an alternative, the king supplied secretly the treasure with which Blanche fitted out a fleet of eighty ships, bearing three hundred knights and their retainers, and carrying to the almost despairing prince gold and silver and implements of war.<sup>2</sup> On the 22d of August a powerful English fleet met the French off Dover, and in one of the most ferocious, as it was one of the most decisive, naval combats of the Middle Ages the last hope of Louis perished.<sup>3</sup>

It had taken but three months for the rising sun of French invasion to climb to the zenith of the conquest of England. But that August day when the blood of the chivalry of France dyed the waters of the Channel was the disastrous sunset of an ill-starred venture.

<sup>1</sup> Wendover, vol. 2, p. 396.

<sup>2</sup> Preface to *Histoire des Ducs*, p. xxxviii. *Petit-Dutaillis*, p. 163.

<sup>3</sup> *Hist. des Ducs*, pp. 201, 202. *Hist. de la Marine Française*, pp. 313, 314.

There is no mystery in the fact that the story here related is but little known to the average reader of history. It was but human on the part of the English historians to touch lightly upon the humiliating truth that a foreign prince had landed on their shores, gained the allegiance of the great nobles of the realm, conquered the country from the Channel to the Cheviot Hills, and held in his grasp for more than a year the ancient capital of Edward the Confessor and William the Norman. Equally did patriotic pride refuse to let the annalists of France tell in its minuter features how that bold attempt of Louis ended in defeat and shame.<sup>1</sup> The true picture of the times of John Lackland and Louis of France is a mosaic of fragments gathered here and there from the records of monkish chroniclers, and patiently put together.



It is the thirteenth day of September, in the year of grace 1217. The autumn sunshine falls in yellow light upon the grassy meadows of an islet in the river Thames.<sup>2</sup> There, prostrate on the earth, clad in a long white woollen garment, and with naked feet, Louis of France grovels in penitence for his sins committed against

<sup>1</sup> Preface to *Hist. des Ducs*, p. iv.

<sup>2</sup> *Wendover*, vol. 2, p. 402. *Petit-Dutaillis*, p. 170.

God's vicegerent in the world. High above the repentant prince, is throned the haughty Gualo, legate of the Pope. Over his head a gorgeous canopy is hung. Around him, like satellites around the sun, are mitred bishops resplendent in jewelled vestments. As if at the bar of the Eternal Judge, Louis pleads for pardon. He swears upon the crucifix to obey henceforth every decree of the Church, neither to invade England nor make war upon its king, and for two years to come to pay a tenth of all his revenues to redeem from the infidels the Sepulchre of Christ. Then—and then only—does the triumphant legate deign to lift from this penitent sinner the crushing weight of excommunication.<sup>1</sup>

Fifteen days pass by.<sup>2</sup> Two men are standing on the quay at Dover, and waving farewell to a vessel as she pushes out into the Channel. Eighty years of a stormy life have not bent the stately figure of William of Pembroke, Earl Marshal and Regent of the realm.<sup>3</sup> Nor has long residence on English soil sufficed to alter the cunning of the Italian in the shifty expression of Gualo's eyes.<sup>4</sup> But as Louis of France leans on the ship's rail, and

<sup>1</sup> Petit-Dutaillis, pp. 172, 173.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 178.

<sup>3</sup> Wendover, vol. 2, p. 403.

<sup>4</sup> Petit-Dutaillis, p. 178.

looks back at the land he has coveted, at the grim castle which has withstood his four assaults, and at the two men who have turned his victory to disaster, bitter indeed is his cup of gall. But the west wind blows, and the chalk cliffs of Dover are fading from his eyes. So in the lapse of the centuries has faded into forgetfulness the story of the second Norman Conquest of England.

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