

least wishful to compromise the Socialist aim. I don't wish Socialists to turn mere reformers, but to make reformers Socialists by showing them that they can only retain and develop in the future the good they have done in the past by coming right about of the advanced guard of the labour movement of to-day.

J. L. MASON.

FEUDAL ENGLAND.

(Continued from page 267.)

THE order and progress of Henry I.'s reign, which marks the transition from the mere military camp of the Conqueror to the Mediæval England I have to dwell upon, was followed by the period of mere confusion and misery which accompanied the accession of the princes of Anjou to the throne of England. In this period the barons widely became mere violent and illegal robbers; and the castles with which the land was dotted, and which were begun under the auspices of the Conqueror as military posts, became mere dens of strong thieves. No doubt this made the business of the next able king, Henry II., the easier. He was a staunch man of business, and turned himself with his whole soul towards the establishment of order and the consolidation of the monarchy, which accordingly took a great stride under him towards its ultimate goal of bureaucracy. He would probably have carried the business still further, since in his contest with the Church, in spite of the canonisation of Beckett and the king's formal penance at his tomb, he had really gained a victory for the Crown, which it never really lost again; but in his days England was only a part of the vast dominion of his house, which included more than half of France, and his struggle with his feudatories and the French king, which sowed the seed of the loss of that dominion to the English Crown, took up much of his life and finally beat him. His two immediate successors, Richard I. and John, were good specimens of the chiefs of their line, almost all of whom were very able men, having even a touch of genius in them, but therewithal were such wanton blackguards and scoundrels that one is almost forced to apply the theological word "wickedness" to them. Such characters belong specially to their times, fertile as they were both of great qualities and of scoundrelism, and in which our own special vice of hypocrisy was entirely lacking. John, the second of these two pests, put the coping-stone on the villainy of his family, and lost his French dominion in the lump. Under such rascals as these came the turn of the baronage, and they, led by Stephen Langton, the archbishop who had been forced on the unwilling king by the Pope, united together and forced from him his assent to Magna-charta, the great, thoroughly well-considered deed, which is conventionally called the foundation of English Liberty, but which can only claim to be so on the ground that it was the confirmation and seal of the complete feudal system in England, and put the relations between the vassals, the great feudatories, and the king, on a stable basis, since it created or at least confirmed order among these privileged classes, among whom indeed it recognised the towns to a certain extent as part of the great feudal hierarchy: they had begun to acquire status in that hierarchy.

So John passed away, and became not long after an almost mythical personage, the type of the bad king. There are still ballads and prose stories of these in existence, which tell the tale of this strange monster as the English people imagined it. As they belong to the fourteenth century, the period I have undertaken to tell you about specially, I will give you one of the latter of these concerning the death of King John, for whom the people imagined a more dramatic cause of death than mere indigestion, of which in all probability he really died; and you may take it for a specimen of popular literature of the fourteenth century. I can make bold to quote from memory, since the quaint wording of the original, and the spirit of bold and blunt heroism which it breathes, have fixed it in my mind for ever. The King, you must remember, had halted at Swinestead Abbey in Lincolnshire in his retreat from the hostile barons and their French allies, and had lost all his baggage by the surprise of the advancing tide in the Wash; so that he might well be in a somewhat sour mood. Says the tale: "So the King went to meat in the hall, and before him was a loaf, and he looked grimly on it and said, 'For how much is such a loaf sold in this realm?' 'Sir, for one penny,' said they. Then the King smote the board with his fist and said, 'By God, if I live for one year such a loaf shall be sold for twelve pence!' That heard one of the monks who stood thereby, and he thought and considered that his hour and time to die was come, and that it would be a good deed to slay so cruel a king and so evil a lord. So he went into the garden and plucked plums and took out of them the steles [stalks], and did venom in them each one; and he came before the King and sat on his knee, and said: 'Sir, by St Austin, this is the fruit of our garden.' Then the King looked evilly on him and said, 'Assay them, monk!' So the monk took and ate thereof, nor changed countenance any whit: so the King ate thereafter. But presently afterwards the monk swelled and turned blue, and fell down and died before the King: then waxed the King sick at heart, and he also swelled and died, and so he ended his days."

For a while after the death of John and accession of Henry III. the baronage, strengthened by the great Charter and with a weak and wayward king on the throne, made their step forward in power and popularity, and the first serious check to the tendency to monarchical bureaucracy, a kind of elementary aristocratic constitution, was imposed upon the weakness of Henry III. Under this movement of the barons, who in their turn had to seek for the support of the people, the towns made a fresh step in advance, and Simon de Montfort, the leader of what for want of a better word must be called the popular party, was

forced by his circumstances to summon to his parliament citizens from the boroughs. Earl Simon was one of those men that come to the front in violent times, and he added real nobility of character to strength of will and persistence. He became the hero of the people, who went near to canonising him after his death. But the monarchy was too strong for him and his really advanced projects, which by no means squared with the hopes of the baronage in general; and when Prince Edward, afterwards Edward I., grown to his full mental stature, came to the help of the Crown with his unscrupulous business ability, the struggle was soon over; and with Evesham field the monarchy began to take a new stride, and the longest yet taken, towards bureaucracy.

Edward I. is remembered by us chiefly for the struggle he carried on with the Scotch baronage for the feudal suzerainty of that kingdom, and the centuries of animosity between the two kingdoms which that struggle drew on. But he has other claims to our attention besides this. At first, and remembering the ruthlessness of many of his acts, especially in the Scotch war, one is apt to look upon him as a somewhat pedantic tyrant and a good soldier, with something like a dash of hypocrisy beyond his time added. But, like the Angevine Kings I was speaking of just now, he was a completely characteristic product of his time. He was not a hypocrite probably, after all, in spite of his tears shed after he had irretrievably lost a game, or won one by stern cruelty. There was a dash of real romance in him, which mingled curiously with certain lawyer-like qualities. He was, perhaps, the man of all men who represented most completely the finished feudal system, and who took it most to heart. His law, his romance, and his religion, his self-command, and his terrible fury were all a part of this innate feudalism, and exercised within its limits; and we must suppose that he thoroughly felt his responsibility as the chief of his feudatories, while at the same time he had no idea of his having any responsibilities towards the lower part of his subjects. Such a man was specially suited to carrying on the tendency to bureaucratic centralisation, which culminated in the Tudor monarchy. He had his struggle with the baronage, but hard as it was he was sure not to carry it beyond the due limits of feudalism; to that he was always loyal. He had slain Earl Simon before he was king, while he was but his father's general; but Earl Simon's work did not die with him, and henceforward while the Middle Ages and their feudal hierarchy lasted, it was impossible for either king or barons to do anything which would seriously injure each other's position; the struggle ended in his reign in a balance of power in England which, on the one hand, prevented any great feudatory becoming a rival of the king, as happened in several instances in France, and on the other hand prevented the king lapsing into a mere despotic monarch. I have said that bureaucracy took a great stride in Edward's reign, but it reached its limits under feudalism as far as the nobles were concerned. Peace and order was established between the different powers of the governing classes; henceforward, the struggle is between them and the governed; that struggle was now to become obvious; the lower tribe was rising in importance, becoming richer for fleecing, but also it was beginning to have some power; this led the king first, and afterward the barons, to attack it definitely; it was rich enough to pay for the trouble of being robbed, and not yet strong enough to defend itself with open success, although the slower and less showy success of growth did not fail it. The instrument of attack in the hands of the barons was the ordinary feudal privilege, the logical carrying out of serfdom; but this attack took place two reigns later. We shall come to that further on. The attack on the lower tribe now growing into importance in this reign was made by the king; and his instrument was—Parliament.

I have told you that Simon de Montfort made some attempt to get the burgesses to sit in his Parliament, but it was left to Edward I. to lay the foundations firmly of Parliamentary representation, which he used for the purpose of augmenting the power of the Crown and crushing the rising liberty of the towns, though of course his direct aim was simply at—money.

WILLIAM MORRIS.

(To be continued.)

PAINFUL SEQUEL TO THE MIDLAND STRIKE.—An ex-Midland Railway driver, named Ling, drowned his three children and committed suicide near Derby last Friday. He was a leader of the recent strike and depressed by not being able to obtain employment.

METROPOLITAN AND CITY SECTION OF SHOEMAKERS.—A meeting was held at the "Cherry Tree," Kingsland Road, on Monday Aug. 22, to consider ways and means of supporting the men on strike of Cove and West's, Northampton. Two delegates from that town attended and explained the position, and a resolution pledging the meeting to support the strikers was carried unanimously.

ONLY TWO PARTIES.—Speaking at Liverpool last Sunday, Mr. Bradlaugh, after severely castigating Mr. Chamberlain and the Dissident Liberals, remarked that "as to the future there would soon only be two distinct parties, the party of the aristocracy and the party of labour and manufacturing industry." The statement might be amended by omitting the three concluding words, which if they mean anything, seem intended to cover the employing class; and the preposterous idea that the interests of Labour and Capital are identical, finds few believers nowadays. However, it remains to be seen on which side of the fence Mr. Bradlaugh intends to alight and under which flag he intends to serve. The people are preparing for a great, and it is to be hoped final struggle with their oppressors, and must needs treat as their enemies all those who stand aloof. The man whom Earl Wemyss deigns to honour can hardly be a fit and proper person to look after the interests of the workers.—T. B.