FEUDAL ENGLAND.

(Continued from page 251.)

The order and progress of Henry I's reign, which marks the transition from the mere military camp of the Conqueror to the Medieval England I have to dwell upon, was followed by the period of mere confusion and anarchy and the establishment of the various dominions of the king 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 so many strongholds against the deep invasions of the Danes. Not one 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 annihilation of Becket and the king's formal penance at his touch, 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 great ambition was his French war, and the attempt which is 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 the struggle, and the one to the time. Yet so far, they were both of great qualities and of sound discretion, 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 by the avowal of the blasphemous career that he and his were to carry on. 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 him on his assent to Magna-Charters, the great foundation of English liberty, which is the beginning of the foundation of English Liberty, but which can only claim to be on the ground that it was the confirmation and seal of the complete feudal system in England, and put the relations between the vassal, 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 this hierarchy, so John passed away, and because 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 of the tale of this strange monomaniac, who ruled them.

So John passed away, and because 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 of the tale of this strange monomaniac, who ruled them.

While therefore I believe that the fourteenth century, the period I have undertaken to tell you about especially, I will give you one of the latter of these concerning the death of King John, for whom the people imagined a man whose character was that of the man of suicide, having considered that the vassals which he breeding, have fixed it in my mind for ever. The king, you must remember, had halted at Swinehead Abbey in Lincolnshire in his retreat from the hostile barons and their French allies, and had lost his baggage by the surprise of the advancing army of life in northern England, so that he might well be in a somewhat sour mood. Says the tale:

"So the King went to meet in the hall, and before him was a loaf, and he looked gravely on it and said, 'For how much is such a loaf sold in this land, Wincoc?'" 'By the King', said the barber, 'the King has put 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 was sitting with the King, and answered him that he would be the death 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 stiles [stalics], and did venime in them each one; and he laid down the King, and gave him his knee, and said: 'Sir, by Saint 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, but changed countenance any whit: so the King sat at table, and afterwards the King was sick, and the King's face was the colour of the earth, and fell down and died before the King: then waxed the King sick at heart, and he also swallowed and died, and so he ended his days."

The story is therefore one of the absurd actions of Henry II., who, though a great man, was weak and wayward king on the throne, made their step forward in power and popularity, and the first serious check to the tendency to monarchial 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 kingdom, including one or two members of the lower orders, in front of violent scenes, and the added real nobility of character to strength of will and persistence. He became the hero of the people, who went to examine him after his death. But the monarchy was for some years strong enough for his advancement and his resolutions: squab: 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, that struggle was over, and he began to take a new stride, and the longest yet taken, towards bureaucracy. And Edward I is remembered by us chiefly for the struggle he carried on with the Scotch baronage for the feudal sustenance of that kingdom, and the centuries of animosity between the two kingdoms which that struggle drew on. But he had other claims to our attention before, and amongst the many which secured to him the admiration of history, and rendered his name great, he was perhaps his treatment of Peasants' Revolt, and his campaigns in Spain. Such a man was specially suited to carrying on the tendency to bureaucratic centralisation, which culminated in the Tudor monarchy. He laid the strong foundation of the new way of thought, not to carry it beyond the due limits of feudalism; so 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 until the Middle Ages and their feudal hierarchies 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 within the different powers of the governing classes; henceforward, the struggle is between them and the barons; that struggle was now to become obvious: the lower tribes were 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 buy the ease of being nailed, and could not only 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 king was the medieval feudal system, the Southern baronage and its serfs; but this attack took place two reigns earlier. 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 produce a firm and balanced constitution which he used for the purpose of augmenting the power of the Crown and the rising liberty of the towns, though of course his direct aim was simply at money.

William Morris.

(Partly continued.)

PAVEMENT SNUCK TO THE MIDLAND SPEAKERS.—An ex-Midland Railway driver named King, drowned three children and committed suicide near Derby last Friday. He was a leader of the recent strike and depressed by the loss of his able and enthusiastic employment.

MOUTON AND CITY STREET SECTION OF SHOEMAKERS.—A meeting was held at the "Cheery Trees," Kingsland Road, on Monday Aug 23, to consider the issue of the strike of the King's Cross shoe workers, who had left their employment at the conclusion of the strike of the King's Cross shoe workers. The meeting was addressed by Mr. Bradlaugh, who said:

"I am in sympathy with the King's Cross shoe workers, and I feel that their struggle with their employers, and must now treat as their enemies all those who stand aloof. The man who will be repaid in dignity can hardly be a fit and proper person to look after the