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on History

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member of it, but which bears with it its own ethics and religion and æsthetics: that is the hope and promise of a new and higher life in all ways. So that even if those unforeseen economical events above spoken of were to happen, and put off for a while the end of our Capitalist system, the latter would drag itself along as an anomaly cursed by all, a mere clog on the aspirations of humanity.

It is not likely that it will come to that: in all probability the logical outcome of the latter days of Capitalism will go step by step with its actual history: while all men, even its declared enemies, will be working to bring Socialism about, the aims of those who have learned to believe in the certainty and beneficence of its advent will become clearer, their methods for realizing it clearer also, and at last ready to hand. Then will come that open acknowledgement for the necessity of the change (an acknowledgement coming from the intelligence of civilization) which is commonly called Revolution. It is no use prophesying as to the events which will accompany that revolution, but to a reasonable man it seems unlikely to the last degree, or we will say impossible, that a moral sentiment will induce the proprietary classes—those who live by *owning* the means of production which the unprivileged classes must needs *use*—to yield up this privilege uncompelled; all one can hope is that they will see the implicit threat of compulsion in the events of the day, and so yield with a good grace to the terrible necessity of forming part of a world in which all, including themselves, will work honestly and live easily.

* I suppose he was speaking of the frame houses of Kent.

EARLY ENGLAND

1886

I am no patriot as the word is generally used; and yet I am not ashamed to say that as for the face of the land we live in I love it with something of the passion of a lover: that is to say more than its beauty or interest in relation to other parts of the earth warrants. Perhaps that is because I am in the habit of looking at things that pass before my eyes; (which I think has now ceased to be a common habit) and connecting their present outward seeming with times gone by and times to come.

Again I will not say that the past history of our country is of interest so absorbing as to make us forget that of other countries: nay I know that there is a certain want of romance about it, compared with other stories of national life, and that as it goes on it tends ever more and more to the commonplace. But to us who are come of the actors of it and live amongst the scenes where it was enacted it has a special interest which consecrates it. Egotism you will say: well so it is, but under our present conditions and perhaps for centuries to come an egotism which is natural, and if we only keep it in order by cultivating our sense of justice to other nations, and our insight and interest in the history of the whole world this affection for [our] own parish and the people of it may even [come] to [be] useful to us and others.

I make these excuses because, as you see by the title of my lecture I am going today to confine my story within the limits of our own island stowed away in an odd corner of the world. What

I want to do is to give you a picture of what has been in England dwelling almost entirely on the most characteristic periods of its history, as those which lend themselves most to such a picture; to say a few words on its present condition so familiar to us all, so misunderstood by most, so sad to some; and to finish by hazarding some guesses at what it will be like in times to come: painting a picture in the air, this last will be I know: and I ask you to receive it as such.

Now I intend to say scarcely anything about the men of the earlier times before Caesar crossed the Thames up at Walton yonder, and his dark, short, close-knit soldiers plunged into the perilous woods of Middlesex on the other side. Of those earlier days you may however remember that the records of them are chiefly to be found on the great chalk downs that run along and athwart southern England; this will help you to picture to yourselves, the lowlands covered with marsh and tangled forest, good only for hunting such beasts as could live there, badger, red deer, wild swine, wolf, squirrel, and the like; the untended rivers often spreading out in mere swamp and morass, and the parts habitable by man the year round the downs, or the slopes of the hills on which sheep could pasture: there dwelt the earlier, not earliest, inhabitants of Britain, tribe fighting with tribe doubtless, and therefore raising earthworks on the brows of the hills in which the whole tribe could gather and drive their flocks and herds for safety: several races doubtless have used these rude but effective fortresses; as for instance the great earthwork, called Uffington Castle, which from the wall of the Wiltshire downs looks over the fair rich valley of the Thames: there along the ridge of the hill behind it runs a Roman road, while a furlong from it on the hill-ridge is the tomb of some chief of the earlier people, which to our Saxon forefathers, when they first came there, seemed so remote and mysterious that they named it by one of the earliest of their Gods, the Vulcan of the North, and called it the cave of Wayland the Smith.

There also they raised holy places, concerning which endless guesses have been made, which probably must forever remain guesses; but at least one may say this of them that the earliest historical people that found them there seem little nearer to their builders than we do. Most impressive they are and also most instructive even amidst their history; the man must be hard to move indeed who is not moved who as he turns the corner of one of our commonplace English highways comes suddenly across that marvellous hedge of grey stones that our Saxon ancestors called Stonehenge: or looks from the great circular Earthwork of Avebury on the little old village that lies within it, where the cottages are cheek by jowl with the few remaining stones of the ancient temple there: lying close by the huge barrow of Silbury, the hills about all dotted with graves of the early chieftains; the mysterious Wansdike drawn across the downs at the back; wherein even now the horses are tethered when the yearly traditional horse fair takes place at 'Tan Hill.' And lastly once more the Roman road running through it all towards Bath, just swerved a little by the huge mass of Silbury: a familiar place to my boyhood; yet a holy place indeed. There is a pretty story current of Aubrey, the Wiltshire archaeologist of the 17th century, that one day as he was out on the downs hunting or coursing, he suddenly came across the Earthwork of Avebury and the Stones of the Temple, then much more numerous than they are now. He drew rein and sat there musing and at last turned and rode home soberly, and from that day foreswore hawk and hound and became a diligent and useful archaeologist.

Well, perhaps the life of these earlier peoples dwelling on the high lands amidst their flocks and herds in a very elementary society tending toward the tribal condition, and struggling slowly into a more elaborate life and greater command over the powers of nature, is easier to picture than the following periods, when there were many peoples in Britain and many different conditions of progress, the time when the Roman servitude first began:

many huge tracts of unsettled land [were] yet left; many of the tribes were still in a savage state; but there were kingdoms, probably Gaulish, on the East and Southeast which were not only clear of the savage state but could scarcely perhaps be called barbarian even; and tillage though interrupted by the wastes and forests was widely spread; the population generally was ages past the men of Avebury and Stonehenge. Into this population the Romans brought 'the blessings of civilization,' and destroyed the chances of the natural development of the British tribes, slowly hammering to pieces all resistance, till they had established the great tax-gathering machine the Roman bureaucracy, the great curse of the ancient world, as our commercial market-hunting bureaucracy is the great curse of the modern world.

On the miserable period of this Roman servitude I will not dwell: the one gift that the Imperial tax-gatherers gave to the island was roads made through it for the safe-conduct of their bum-bailiffs, which to this day are useful both to thieves, lawyers, and honest men: for the rest it was a matter of course that they should deprive the unlucky people of all character and public spirit and so make them an easy prey to the first comers who were necessitous and bold enough to take hold of the land which it was no one's business to defend.

The necessitous and bold newcomers were ready by this time: from the shores of the Baltic and the North Sea came the tribes of the English, the Jutes, and the Saxons coolly risking everything in their half-decked or undecked luggers, the men who had long been a terror to the Roman provincials, who had learned to expect them on the coast when the weather was so bad that no civilized keel could keep the sea.

These were the men that now fell upon our islands and made a new set of pictures for us to look on. And before I go further I should like to clear your minds of a misconception which some persons by a happy exercise of ignorance and cant have led us into. These men of the earlier world were rough, predatory,

cruel, or at least of ungovernable passions which led them into cruelty; but there is no parallel between them and the offscourings of our commercial civilization as certain fifth-rate romanticists are apt to try to make us believe: the ruffians who are the quite worthy pioneers of American or English colonial civilization are to the backbone commercial; they are stock-jobbers down on their luck, and only want a month or two of the ordinary varnish of civilization to become respectable members of Society; i.e. thieves under the protection and encouragement of the laws: and take note that their distinguishing characteristic is 'vulgarity' a quality which in the full signification of the very modern word is a creation of this century.

Now if you ask me how I know that these terrible sea rovers who founded the English nation amidst rapine and bloodshed in these islands were free from this foulest of qualities I can tell you, first that they bore with them a literature, unwritten of course, but fragments of which having been afterwards written down are still left us: and doubtless these early poems at least, in which language is uncorrupted and has not yet learned to speak with the double tongue, reflect the mind of the people which produced them; the epic of Beowulf is worthy of a great people for its sincerity of language and beauty of expression, and nowhere lacks the epic quality of putting clear pictures before the readers' eyes; nor is there anything in it coarse, ignoble, or degrading; on the contrary it breathes the very spirit of courageous freedom: to live is good and to die is good if you are valiant and faithful and if you reckon great deeds and the fair fame that comes of them of more account than a few more short years of a trembler's life upon the earth. This is the simple ethic of our forefathers, and in these poems is so set forth that it is clear they really believed it and that in consequence life amidst all its sufferings and hardships was a continuous poem to them. In later times it has become a commonplace and is no longer believed, therefore except for moments of spasmodic excitement life is dull [and]

shapeless, so that some in their foolish despair will ask, is it worth the living? Clearly it is not unless we can live fearlessly and confident of our immortality not as individuals but as a part of the great corporation of humanity; and that I say was the faith of our forefathers.

And this faith of which these glorious poems are the simple expression was itself bred of the conditions of life to which the race had attained: the hideous card-sharpping border ruffians of America and the colonies are terrible to friend and foe alike, pure individualists, they have nothing to do with anything except the immediate satisfaction of their own impulses; but the Teutonic tribes that followed the footsteps of the Roman tax-gatherers were corporate bodies of men united into artificial families for self-preservation and the satisfaction of the mutual needs of their members; and these families again were at the point of federating if they had not already federated into a bigger body 'the people' (*theod*). 'No rights without duties, no duties without rights' was in fact the principle which their constitution strove to illustrate within the limits of the corporation of the family the gens and the *theod*: so that within those limits it was to their foes rather than their friends that they were terrible. That limitation is necessary because outside their tribe or people it was war, and war brought prisoners sometimes and those prisoners became property and were called thralls. That is the blot on the constitution of our forefathers as it was of the ancient Greeks.

Now you must understand that the civilization of which the Roman Empire was a corruption was founded on the institution of the city: which means not the mere stones and mortar of the dwellings of the citizens, but the corporation of which they each formed a part, yet again the corporation fixed in a certain holy place: the city was the unit of civilization; outside it was nothing but confusion. The external aspect of this city-worship, for it was no less, the Roman domination had retained everywhere, even in such outlying spots as Britain. But the tribes who gradually

supplanted the Roman Empire on the contrary had no idea of a city, this of the fixed abode for the gens or tribe or *theod*, the field amidst the forest rather is the idea of the dwelling of the germanic tribe. This of course meant a lower form of the development of Society; but into the Society of the City these tribes never developed, but their tribalism melted into the society of feudalism and the Church instead. And it was only where the influence of the Roman Empire was strong that any semblance of the ancient city life lasted into the Middle Ages: in England for instance only those towns have any traces of it that were founded by the Romans: and it is interesting to note that it you come into any town which has many parishes such a town is almost certainly Roman in origin: e.g. Norwich [and] Yarmouth.

The Anglo-Saxons [who] then came to this country in the condition of barbarism [were] the most advanced toward that ancient civilization, which faded away altogether before they could develop into it. Their want of sympathy with the city life in the first years of their occupation was almost as marked as that of the gypsy or the Bedouin for house life. When they took one of the towns of the Romanized Britons they could not use it; they sacked it and burned it, and went back again to their own simpler habitations: you must think of them then at first as dwelling in farm-steads along the rivers or the sea shore, or in clearings of the woods, in that field amid the forest of which I was speaking: thus sprung up those villages with English names all over the country, each one of which was the settlement of some family or other; and curiously enough sometimes their names used for constitutional divisions have outlasted the place itself (hundred of Ossulton—where is it?) nevertheless there was, if there is not now some stead which was founded by one Oswald and was therefore called his town. That very word [town] which we now use as the generic term for a collection of houses and a biggish one at that shows by change from its original meaning how far removed the first English were from

city life: in Scotland the word is or lately was used to designate a farmstead merely or the house in it; while further north the word is still used in its original sense of the cultivated field around a dwelling as contrasted with the out-meadows or mere uncultured pasture lands.

Thus then did the tribes from the Baltic found the English nation in our island, and lived at first not so very differently from their fathers as they made their way through the great forests of mid-Europe: their history as read in the books is but a series of battles with the resisting Britons or chief with chief of their own blood; yet doubt it not that all the time their home life went on with something of dignity under the constitution of which I have hinted: in which every free man had to take his share of responsibility for carrying on the business of the Community. But as time passed and the limits of the rule of the different Chieftains got more defined, the tribal feeling waned: the Chiefs and Kings, also, as Mr. Elton says began to inhabit the towns that the Romans had founded, and the aspect of the great building works of that most solid-building of peoples struck a chord of melancholy in the hearts of their poets: here are a few lines from a poem called *The Ruin* preserved in a volume written in Athelstane's time, the sentiment of which differs little from that of our own time:—

Wondrous the wall-stone that Weird hath broken ... the roof-tree riven, the grey gates despoiled. Ofen that wall withstood Raeghar and Readfah, chieftain after chieftain rising in storm. Bright was the burgh-place many the princely halls, and high was the roof of gold... And the court is dreary, and the crowned roof lies low in the shadow of the purple arch. Princes of old time joyous and gold-bright and splendidly-decked, proud and with wine elate, in war gear shone. They looked on their treasures, on silver and gems and on stones of price, and on this bright burgh of their broad realm. The stone court stands, the hot stream hath whelmed it, there where the bath was hot on the breast.

To get done with this matter of the towns I may say also that

other towns besides these Roman cities got founded, some as the surroundings of Burgs or strong places, some as merchant towns.

But now the Feudal system which was destined to embrace the customary law of the Germanic tribes and the remains of Roman authority, mingled here perhaps with some Easternism from New Rome, began to creep over the country: I tried to put before you some time ago the way in which feudality naturally developed from the customs of the tribes [that] conquered the kindred peoples of Scandinavia, and much the same thing went on in England, so that by Athelstane's time there certainly was established a kind of feudality here; and from that time onward England was destined to be no longer isolated from the more Romanized nations of the Continent. Moreover from the time when Christianity first came amongst them some shades of Rome does as it were seem to hang over the Early English which the Scandinavian kingdoms were free from. As far as our early literature is concerned that was a great misfortune. The history and mythology of Scandinavia was enshrined in the rough casket of Iceland, and though at the time when it was written the people of that island had been converted to Christianity, yet except where the subject-matter positively demands it there is no sign of the new religion having made any practical impression on the writers, and though monks and priests took their part in this literature, works written in Latin are rare. But in England it was different; the literature was mostly in the hands of the monks, there are not many works left us in the vernacular, and of those several of the most important are paraphrases of bible stories or at least pieces founded on the Christian mythology of which we have so much in other forms. There are in Anglo-Saxon in short none of those pieces of local history told in a terse and amazingly realistic and dramatic style which bring back to us Iceland and Norway in the eleventh century: and what is still more unlucky we have lost the account of the mythology of the North from the Low German branch of the great Teutonic race: it is the feeblest

and slenderest branch of the Goths that have been the story tellers of the race and not the Germans or the English: Odin we know in his goings out and comings in, but Wotan and Woden are but names to us. And it is a pity indeed; for what there is left of the poems of the ancient English (apart from Beowulf) show[s] tokens of the highest and most elevating capacities: no lyrics in the English language are more beautiful, and few indeed as full of feeling and true poetic passion as some of those preserved in that "Exeter book" I have already mentioned.

The turning of the rude kings and chieftains of an outlying island toward what was once the centre of the civilized world, and was still the centre of Christianity, has to the mere romanticist something striking and even pathetic about it: the stream of pilgrims daring the dangers that then beset the traveller through central Europe to reach the Eternal City; the kings and queens that laid their crowns at the feet of the holy father, and died in the odour of sanctity there: an English Bishop (St. Boniface) the apostle of the heathen Wends of Prussia and their martyr. And yet all that pomp of religion does not make up to me for the loss of the stories I might have had of how the folk of Middlesex ate and drank and loved and quarrelled and met their death in the 10th century.

But once more the time was coming when England was to be a part of Europe; and meantime it seems in spite of the stout men that dwelt here, she could not hold her own before the *Furor Normanorum* that stirred up all Europe that lay anywhere near the sea. By the time the tribes were fairly settled and the development of the *theod* into a nation under a feudal king was going on, the Northmen had fallen on the island, and from that time till the Norman conquest gave it no rest except when the whole country was in their power: the English called them generically Danes but the first comers were from Norway a branch of the great stream that overran Europe: conquering Normandy, making yearly inroads right up into France, and North Germany:

the men who carved Norse kingdoms out of Ireland, settled Iceland, and upheld the throne of the Emperor of the East. Against this energy, bred doubtless of necessity, the English could make but little head: the wide extent of sea-board with its numerous harbours beat them; and you must remember that they had to meet people who were born seamen while the English of that day and for centuries afterwards were not a seafaring people. So that for a time it seemed likely that the whole of society would be broken up by these bold strong-thieves. For the invasions of this early period were not for conquest but for pillage; 'lying out' was as regular a business with the northern landholders and yeomen as their ordinary field-work: it is told of an Earl of the Orkneys that he had two regular viking cruises in the year; the first after the seed was sown which he called his spring cruise, the second after it was harvested, called his autumn cruise: some of the vikings went into partnership with the kings and shared the proceeds both of peaceful chaffer and fighting: with the most spirited, well-bred young men it was thought proper that they should go through a viking cruise for one or two summers, such as our young gentlemen and noblemen used some 100 years ago to think it necessary to do the grand tour. Once again you must not fall into the mistake of picturing the men who partly lived on this woeful industry as being either like the brigands of romance or the sordid pirates of more modern times even Captain[s] Teach and Kidd, or like the chivalry of the later Middle Ages: the greater part of the men who harried England were when they got back home respectable agriculturalists; yeomen, or at least landlords who were not ashamed to work with their own hands: Gunnar, one warrior, is represented as sowing his cornfield; Arnkel a very great man in Iceland, mending his own gate: King Sigurd the father of King Harald the Terrible who fell near York before our King Harald, is found in his hayfield helping his men get in his hay harvest: the warriors were shipwrights, house-builders and armourers, and almost every one could [s]ettle a

copy of verses on occasion. They lived under an elaborate system of laws which later on were written out at length, and doubtless had it not been for their narrow and barren lands their fierce valour would have smouldered away amidst the peaceful occupations of the land: the sea that fed them drew them on to way-laying its watery roads.

Well whatever they were at home they were a fearful visitation in the countries that they used as their hunting grounds: the first thing they did after landing on the coast was to throw themselves on any body of men that showed fight in order to get horses; for oddly enough they were as much horsemen as seamen: or they would row up the rivers, very much higher than we should expect them to have gone, and throw up an earthwork: you will read such entries in the Saxon Chronicle as 'This year the Host sailed up the Seine to Paris and sat a year there.' Another year they went up the Marne far beyond Paris. They rowed high up the Lea and entrenched themselves there against Alfred another time. Sometimes a band would ally itself with the Welsh chieftains, sometimes with the Scots. In short the host of the Heathen was a ceaseless plague in the land and [as] I said seemed about to reduce it to a state of mere confusion when there appeared on the scene a man whose pure fame no amount of legend can obscure, and the interest in whom must always win one's heart however much his name has been hackneyed, the man born at Wantage in Berkshire, Alfred the son of Aethelwulf; of whom one must say that there was one other man of genius who has sat on the throne in England and that is Oliver Cromwell, and he betrayed the cause which he had in charge and mourned by his friends rather before he died than when he died. But Alfred's fame was pure and stainless and both in his shortcomings and his successes he was human and sympathetic. Yes I think we must call him the one sole man of genius who ever held an official position among the English.

Well he began his contest with the Vikings with some hope of

success, fought nine great battles in one year says the S[axon] Ch[ronicler]: one of them in which he and his brother Aethelred defeated the heathen and slew Baeseceg and Halfdan their kings, and was fought at Ashdown some mile from that Uffington Castle I have told you of, and as his men came back from the fight, they amused themselves by cutting away the turf from the slope of the chalk hill so that the white showed on the green in the figure of a white horse, the beast of their banner done so as to satisfy their imaginations of the thing: and from that day to this it has abided there unchanged: and one day this summer I sat on him and looked down on that fair plain of the Thames, changed enough in outward seeming from the days of Alfred but how much more in the ways of life of the people who dwell there!

The battle of Ashdown was pretty much the end of the first act of Alfred's struggle; the second was a time of defeat and disaster; but he struggled out of it, and again made head against the host, defeated it over and over again, made some sort of terms with the leaders, followed up all who resisted untiringly, and at last triumphed; the date of Ashdown is 871: in 886 the Chronicler writes "In this same year Alfred restored London; and all the Anglo-race turned to him that were not in the bondage of the Danish men." Much fighting there was afterwards, but in 897 the Chronicler could write as if the war was over: "Thanks be to God the Host had not utterly broken up the Anglo Race." So that England remained England, though the Danish kingdoms of Northumbria and East Anglia were still a thorn in its side. Successful kings followed Alfred, who however had plenty of fighting with the Danes, till at last Edgar was acknowledged over-king of England, and received homage of the Welsh, Scotch, and Danish kings in England. It seems pretty clear that by his time that un-Romanized feudal system I have spoken of was fully established in the country. The king was no longer the head of a clan or even of a people or *theod*; but the master of the land

giving fiefs to his earls and thanes, who in their turn gave them to their free men. Edgar (died 975) as he was the first over-king of England, was also the last successful one: the Northmen were again at war with the English regularly and not merely spasmodically: of the year 994 the Chronicler says:—

In this year came Olaf (Anlaf) and Svein to London, on the Nativity of St. Mary (Sept. 8th), with ninety four ships, and then they were obstinately fighting against the town, and would have set it on fire. But they there sustained more harm and evil than they ever weaned that any townsmen could do to them. For the holy mother of God, on that day, manifested her mercy to the townsmen, and delivered them from their foes. And they then went thence, and wrought the greatest evil that ever any army could do, in burning, and harrying, and in man-slayings, as well by the sea-coast, as in Essex, and in Kent, and in Sussex, and in Hampshire. And at last they took their horses, and rode as far as they would, and were doing unspeakable evil. Then the king and his "witan" resolved that they should be sent to, and promised tribute and food, provided that they should cease from ravaging; and they then accepted that. And all the army then came to Southampton, and there took winter-quarters; and there they were fed from all the realm of the West Saxons, and they were paid sixteen thousand pounds of money. Then the king sent bishop Aelfeah and the alderman Aethelward after king Olaf; and the while hostages were given to the ships; and they then led Olaf with great worship to the king at Andover. And king Aethelred received him at the bishop's hand, and royally gifted him. And Olaf then promised him, as he also fulfilled, that he would never again come with hostility to England.

This Olaf was (afterwards, according to the sagas) King of Norway, and forced [Chris]tianity on his unwilling people: his history is one of the most splendid and dramatic chapters of the old Norse king-stories; but the incident has more significance as regards his fellow king Swein who was king of Denmark: he opens a new chapter in the story of the Norse invasions; the earlier ones though not altogether mere pillaging raids, since the Vikings had their wives and children, aimed rather at settlements than conquering of the whole kingdom: indeed there was then no kingdom to conquer, no centralized system of government, which as we have seen began to develop with Alfred: but now the

struggle took the form of a definite attack by the Danish king on the English kingdom; which honey-combed by towns and settlements of his own blood was not hard to conquer: and also things to judge by the Chronicler were but in a poor way and the English tendency to muddle of which we have seen so much since was being well illustrated.

An. DCCCC. XCIX. In this year the army again came about into the Thames, and then went up along the Medway, and to Rochester. And then the Kentish forces came against them, and they stoutly engaged together, but alas! that they too quickly gave way and fled; because they had not the support which they should have had. And the Danish had possession of the place of carnage; and then took horses and rode withersome they themselves would, and ruined and plundered almost all the West Kentish. Then the king with his "witen" resolved that they should be opposed with naval force, and also with a land force. But when the ships were ready, then they delayed from day to day, and harrassed the poor people who lay in the ships; and ever as it should be forwarder, so was it later, and from one time to another; and ever they let their foes' army increase, and ever they receded from the sea, and ever they went forth after them. And then in the end neither the naval force nor the land force was productive of anything but the people's distress, and a waste of money, and the emboldening of their foes.

The attempt at getting quit of the invaders by slaying all the Danes throughout England bettered matters little if at all: as the Chronicler laments they did not either pay or fight in time. In the year 1013 Swein had conquered England; and though he died soon after and his son Cnut had still a good deal of fighting to do, he soon became sole king of England.

So fell the country unto foreign kings; but the manners, laws and language of the two peoples were so much alike, that, the fighting once over, the social condition of the people was little altered and all would have gone smoothly if things could have remained thus. But England began more and more to be drawn into the European whirlpool.

There had for long been a regular intercourse with Rome; there was a School of the English there, and the Archbishop of

Canterbury had to fetch his pallium thence i.e. his investiture by the Pope. The art of the English also was necessarily under foreign influence: it was they who wedded to the strange inter-lacing ornament which the Irish developed from the natural growth of the soil and which had no power of giving even hints at the human form, the figure drawing deduced from the art of Byzantium, but which the English probably took from the Germans who had an art which was an offshoot of the Byzantine style: of the architecture of the English before the Conquest there are but few specimens left: probably because their churches were small for important places, and got rebuilt there in succeeding ages: while in unimportant places they were built of timber as the ordinary houses were and so perished by lapse of time where they were not burned down or rebuilt. Scanty however as the materials for judging of the architecture are they are enough to tell us that the English had developed a style of their own quite different from that which the Norman Conquest introduced: the difference of the styles is the more marked as there is at least one Norman church in England built before the Conquest, Waltham Abbey, and one or two Saxon ones built after it. I should mention that to my mind the Saxon[s] took their architecture from the German version of the Byzantine style: all things thus tending towards connecting England with the Continent, it was not long before the great event came which made England merely a part of the dominions of a French Duke.

Passing matters helped this forward: for Edward the Confessor rested on the foreign element as a support against the power of Earl Godwin and his sons; and gave a kind of a title to the kingdom to Duke William: discontent grew; a riot at Dover made by the French favourites was taken up by the Earl as an occasion to appeal to the people against the King: he sailed up the Thames to Southwark and lay there a tide, and shot the bridge with the flood: the king's men were drawn up to receive him on the Middlesex shore; and a great battle seemed imminent, but

the hearts of all men misgave them that they should fight Englishmen against Englishmen; truce was struck, the witan met, and Earl Godwin was reinstated in his lands and earldom with the good-will of all men; the evil customs and laws of the foreigners were done away with, and all looked hopeful. I have mentioned this passage about Godwin to show that the Danish blood was by this time scarcely looked on as alien, since Godwin the popular hero and supporter of the English customs was in fact a Northman.

Well Edward died amidst these things, but a little after Godwin and who but Godwin's son could be king after him; so Harald, called says one chronicler Harald the Hapless on his tombstone, became the last king of Early England. I have said that a[n] English History is apt to lack romance; yet the history of the great change for good and for evil which connected England forever with the continent could scarcely be more romantic. And here above all times does one regret that subjection of the native writers to monkish Latin, and longs for the story now never to be written which the English sagaman might have given us of that field of Hastings. And this all the more as one part of the story and that the least important part has been told dramatically enough by an Icelander. For Tostig Harald's brother having quarrelled with him and being dispossessed in consequence, sailed away north and tried to get Swein the Dane-king to fall on England; and getting the cold shoulder from him went to Harald the Terrible, king of Norway, a redoubted warrior, once captain of the guard of the Greek emperor, whom he enticed into the expedition: the story teller gives us all the usual preliminaries of a great tragedy in the tales of the north; pithy warnings of wise men; omens of seers, and the like; and dwells at length on the victories won by the Norse Harald before the English king caught him unawares, his army without their mail coats six miles from York: the fight that follows and the parley before it are given in the usual dramatic

and generous manner of the north, and makes one long that such a story teller should have told us what followed. The news of Duke William's landing on Michaelmas-day; the hasty march south of King Harald and his house-carls, and his muster of an army at the 'Hoar Apple-tree'; the wedge array drawn up round the king and his brothers round the Banner of the fighting-man: the oft repulsed charges of French Horsemen; the breaking up of the wedge-array in pursuit, and the battle lost but the men still fighting; the arrow shot at a venture and the death of Harald and his brethren and England lost and won once more. All this was worthy of being told in more words than the brief despair of the Chronicler, and in more life-like manner than the Latin scribbling Monk could compass.

So England fell, and it seems that the people of the country were not at first conscious of what had happened; but thought of it as they would of the last fight of Cnut with Edmund Ironside, which simply put a Danish king over them instead of an English one without changing their social condition: you must remember that though there was more national feeling then than later on under the Plantagenets still there was but little. The national patriotism we are so noisy about now was born much later when the Middle Ages were ending.

What had happened was serious enough: England had fallen into the hands of a Romanized landlord and from henceforth was a part of the great European Feudal System: its development as a pure branch of the Teutonic family was stopped forever; because the countries to whom it was now to be bound were, whatever their blood was, developed from Roman provincials, and had not even a language of their own, but were compelled to speak a dialect of Latin.

What might else have happened in the social and political development of England, if the Frenchmen had been driven out by Harald, who can say. For my part I doubt if the difference would have been great. In the next two hundred years the real

popular history of Europe is comprised in that of the guilds, which after a long struggle established their control over all industry, yet in the end too late to prevent their falling in their turn under the double curse of bureaucracy and commercialism, which grew to be ruling powers as feudalism or the society of status waned into capitalism or the society of contract. In this history England took a fair share, and could hardly have done otherwise considering her position and importance, even had there been no Duke William and no Hastings; and in these matters England remained England at all events—with her art and literature it is different. She almost immediately received a new architecture, which developing slight differences nevertheless clung close to that of France, and produced such glorious and beautiful [buildings] that there is no room for regret left—literature also became Frenchified and here to its great misfortune as I think. The great works of the English poets ever since Chaucer's time have had to be written in what is little more than a dialect of French and I cannot help looking on that as a mishap. If we could only have preserved our language as the Germans have theirs, I think we with our mingled blood would have made the world richer than it is now—but these are vain regrets: it is all whistled down the wind with the last shout of the axes at Senlac: nor do I ask you to look on it now except as on a series of pictures of the past.

This was what the axes of Hastings resisted had they known it: but if they had, and whatever resistance had been attempted the result would have been the same. The day of centralization and bureaucracy had to be prepared for: the remains of the tribal custom of the English supported by a loose approximation to the Romanized feudality made our forefathers too weak to resist the shadow of Rome now rising again from the dead in the wrappings of feudality. Moreover stout-hearted and valiant as they were they seem to have had a good share of that stupid wastefulness of which many Englishmen are still proud: to burn

the house down that our Sunday's beef may be cooked; to lose ten men in a battle where one would be enough; in fine to reduce ten counties to the condition of filthy cinder-heaps in order that ten thousand men may have ten thousand a year each (at other people's expense in all ways) this is the sort of wastefulness which we have grown fools enough to be proud of, but which the old Saxon Chronicler lamented, not without reason: since surely it was one of the causes that made the brilliant victory at Stamford Bridge of no account; that broke the wedge-array at Hastings, and laid Harald the Hapless the last king of the English in a forgotten grave at Waltham Abbey amidst the streams of Lea River.

FEUDAL ENGLAND

1887

The Norman Conquest found a certain kind of feudality in existence in England; a feudality which was developed from the customs of the tribes with little or no admixture of Roman law; and also even before the Conquest this country was slowly beginning to be mixed up with the affairs of the Continent of Europe, and that not only with the kindred nations of Scandinavia, but with the Romanised countries also. But the Conquest of Duke William did introduce the complete or Romanised Feudal system into the country; and it also connected it by strong bonds to the Romanised countries, but thereby laid the first foundations of national feeling in England. The English felt their kinship with the Norsemen or the Danes, and did not feel their conquests when they had become complete, and consequently mere immediate violence had disappeared from them; their feeling was tribal rather than national; but they could have no sense of co-nationality with the varied populations of the provinces which mere dynastical events had strung together into the dominion, the manor, one may say, of the foreign princes of Normandy and Anjou; and as the kings who ruled them gradually got pushed out of their French possessions, England became conscious of her separate nationality, though still only in a fashion, as the manor of an *English* lord.

It is beyond the scope of this article to give anything like a connected story, even of the slightest, of the course of events