EDWARD THE CONFESSOR

1041. THE ENGLISH, on the death of Hardicanute, saw a favourable opportunity for recovering their liberty, and for shaking off the Danish yoke, under which they had so long laboured. Sweyn, king of Norway, the eldest son of Canute, was absent; and as the two last kings had died without issue, none of that race presented himself, nor any whom the Danes could support as successor to the throne. Prince Edward was fortunately at court on his brother's demise; and though the descendants of Edmond Ironside were the true heirs of the Saxon family, yet their absence in so remote a country as Hungary, appeared a sufficient reason for their exclusion, to a people like the English, so little accustomed to observe a regular order in the succession of their monarchs. All delays might be dangerous; and the present occasion must hastily be embraced; while the Danes, without concert, without a leader, astonished at the present incident, and anxious only for their personal safety, durst not oppose the united voice of the nation.

But this concurrence of circumstances in favour of Edward, might have failed of its effect, had his succession been opposed by Godwin, whose power, alliances, and abilities gave him a great influence at all times, especially amidst those sudden opportunities, which always attend a revolution of government, and which, either seized or neglected, commonly prove decisive. There were opposite reasons, which divided men's hopes and fears with regard to Godwin's conduct. On the one hand, the credit of that nobleman lay chiefly in Wessex, which was almost entirely inhabited by English: It was therefore presumed, that he would second the wishes of that people, in restoring the Saxon line, and in humbling the Danes, from whom he, as well as they, had reason to dread, as they had already felt, the most grievous oppressions. On the other hand, there subsisted a declared animosity between Edward and Godwin, on account of Alfred's murder; of which the latter had publicly been accused by the prince, and which he might believe so deep an offence, as could never, on account of any subsequent merits, be sincerely pardoned. But their common friends here interposed; and representing the necessity of their good correspondence, obliged them to lay aside all jealousy and rancour, and concur in restoring liberty to their native country. Godwin only stipulated, that Edward, as a pledge of his sincere reconciliation, should promise to marry his daughter Editha; and having fortified himself by this alliance, he summoned a general council at Gillingham, and prepared every measure for securing the succession to Edward. The English were unanimous and zealous in their resolutions; the Danes were divided and dispirited: Any small opposition, which appeared in this assembly, was brow-beaten

and suppressed; and Edward was crowned king, with every demonstration of duty and affection.

The triumph of the English, upon this signal and decisive advantage, was at first attended with some insult and violence against the Danes; but the king, by the mildness of his character, soon reconciled the latter to his administration, and the distinction between the two nations gradually disappeared. The Danes were interspersed with the English in most of the provinces; they spoke nearly the same language; they differed little in their manners and laws; domestic dissentions in Denmark prevented, for some years, any powerful invasion from thence, which might awaken past animosities; and as the Norman conquest, which ensued soon after, reduced both nations to equal subjection, there is no farther mention in history of any difference between them. The joy, however, of their present deliverance made such impression on the minds of the English, that they instituted an annual festival for celebrating that great event; and it was observed in some counties, even to the time of Spellman.[w]

The popularity, which Edward enjoyed on his accession, was not destroyed by the first act of his administration, his resuming all the grants of his immediate predecessors; an attempt, which is commonly attended with the most dangerous consequences. The poverty of the crown convinced the nation, that this act of violence was become absolutely necessary; and as the loss fell chiefly on the Danes, who had obtained large grants from the late kings, their countrymen, on account of their services in subduing the kingdom, the English were rather pleased to see them reduced to their primitive poverty. The king's severity also towards his mother, the queen-dowager, though exposed to some more censure, met not with very general disapprobation. He had hitherto lived on indifferent terms with that princess: He accused her of neglecting him and his brother during their adverse fortune;[x] He remarked, that, as the superior qualities of Canute, and his better treatment of her, had made her entirely indifferent to the memory of Ethelred, she also gave the preference to her children of the second bed, and always regarded Hardicanute as her favourite. The same reasons had probably made her unpopular in England; and though her benefactions to the monks obtained her the favour of that order, the nation was not, in general, displeased to see her stripped by Edward of immense treasures which she had amassed. He confined her, during the remainder of her life, in a monastery at Winchester; but carried his rigour against her no farther. The stories of his accusing her of a participation in her son Alfred's murder, and of a criminal correspondence with the bishop of Winchester, and also of her justifying herself by treading barefoot, without receiving any hurt, over nine burning plough-shares, were the inventions of the monkish historians, and were propagated and believed from the silly wonder of posterity.[y]

The English flattered themselves, that, by the accession of Edward, they were delivered for ever from the dominion of foreigners; but they soon found, that this evil was not yet entirely removed. The king had been educated in Normandy; and had contracted many intimacies with the natives of that country, as well as an affection for their manners.[z] The court of England was soon filled with Normans, who, being distinguished both by the favour of Edward, and by a degree of cultivation superior to that which was attained by the English in those ages, soon rendered their language, customs, and laws fashionable in the kingdom. The study of the French tongue became general among the people. The courtiers affected to imitate that nation in their dress, equipage, and entertainments: Even the lawyers employed a foreign language in their deeds and papers:[a] But above all, the church felt the influence and dominion of those strangers: Ulf and William, two Normans, who had formerly been the king's chaplains, were created bishops of Dorchester and London. Robert, a Norman also, was promoted to the see of Canterbury,[b] and always enjoyed the highest favour of his master, of which his abilities rendered him not unworthy. And though the king's prudence, or his want of authority, made him confer almost all the civil and military employments on the natives, the ecclesiastical preferments fell often to the share of the Normans; and as the latter possessed Edward's confidence, they had secretly a great influence on public affairs, and excited the jealousy of the English, particularly of earl Godwin.[c]

This powerful nobleman, besides being duke or earl of Wessex, had the counties of Kent and Sussex annexed to his government. His eldest son, Sweyn, possessed the same authority in the counties of Oxford, Berks, Glocester, and Hereford: And Harold, his second son, was duke of East-Anglia, and at the same time governor of Essex. The great authority of this family was supported by immense possessions and powerful alliances; and the abilities, as well as ambition, of Godwin himself, contributed to render it still more dangerous. A prince of greater capacity and vigour than Edward, would have found it difficult to support the dignity of the crown under such circumstances; and as the haughty temper of Godwin made him often forget the respect due to his prince, Edward's animosity against him was grounded on personal as well as political considerations, on recent as well as more ancient injuries. The king, in pursuance of his engagements, had indeed married Editha, the daughter of Godwin;[d] but this alliance became a fresh source of enmity between them. Edward's hatred of the father was transferred to that princess; and Editha, though possessed of many amiable accomplishments, could never acquire the confidence and affection of her husband. It is even pretended, that, during the whole course of her life, he abstained from all commerce of love with her; and such was the absurd

admiration paid to an inviolable chastity during those ages,1048. that his conduct in this particular is highly celebrated by the monkish historians, and greatly contributed to his acquiring the title of saint and confessor.[e]

The most popular pretence on which Godwin could ground his disaffection to the king and his administration, was to complain of the influence of the Normans in the government; and a declared opposition had thence arisen between him and these favourites. It was not long before this animosity broke into action. Eustace, count of Bologne, having paid a visit to the king, passed by Dover in his return: One of his train, being refused entrance to a lodging, which had been assigned him, attempted to make his way by force, and in the contest he wounded the master of the house. The inhabitants revenged this insult by the death of the stranger; the count and his train took arms, and murdered the wounded townsman; a tumult ensued; near twenty persons were killed on each side; and Eustace, being overpowered by numbers, was obliged to save his life by flight from the fury of the populace. He hurried immediately to court and complained of the usage he had met with: The king entered zealously into the quarrel, and was highly displeased that a stranger of such distinction, whom he had invited over to his court, should, without any just cause, as he believed, have felt so sensibly the insolence and animosity of his people. He gave orders to Godwin, in whose government Dover lay, to repair immediately to the place, and to punish the inhabitants for the crime: But Godwin, who desired rather to encourage, than repress, the popular discontents against foreigners, refused obedience, and endeavoured to throw the whole blame of the riot on the count of Bologne, and his retinue.[f] Edward, touched in so sensible a point, saw the necessity of exerting the royal authority, and he threatened Godwin, if he persisted in his disobedience to make him feel the utmost effects of his resentment.

The earl, perceiving a rupture to be unavoidable, and pleased to embark in a cause, where, it was likely, he should be supported by his countrymen, made preparations for his own defence, or rather for an attack on Edward. Under pretence of repressing some disorders on the Welsh frontier, he secretly assembled a great army, and was approaching the king, who resided, without any military force, and without suspicion, at Glocester.[g] Edward applied for protection to Siward, duke of Northumberland, and Leofric, duke of Mercia, two powerful noblemen, whose jealousy of Godwin's greatness, as well as their duty to the crown, engaged them to defend the king in this extremity. They hastened to him with such of their followers as they could assemble on a sudden; and finding the danger much greater than they had at first apprehended, they issued orders for mustering all the forces within their respective governments, and for marching them without delay to the defence of the king's person and authority. Edward,

meanwhile, endeavoured to gain time by negociation; while Godwin, who thought the king entirely in his power, and who was willing to save appearances, fell into the snare; and not sensible, that he ought to have no farther reserve after he had proceeded so far, he lost the favourable opportunity of rendering himself master of the government.

The English, though they had no high idea of Edward's vigour and capacity, bore him great affection on account of his humanity, justice, and piety, as well as the long race of their native kings, from whom he was descended; and they hastened from all quarters to defend him from the present danger. His army was now so considerable, that he ventured to take the field; and marching to London, he summoned a great council to judge of the rebellion of Godwin and his sons. These noblemen pretended at first that they were willing to stand their trial; but having in vain endeavoured to make their adherents persist in rebellion, they offered to come to London, provided they might receive hostages for their safety: This proposal being rejected, they were obliged to disband the remains of their forces, and have recourse to flight. Baldwin, earl of Flanders, gave protection to Godwin and his three sons, Gurth, Sweyn, and Tosti; the latter of whom had married the daughter of that prince: Harold and Leofwin, two others of his sons, took shelter in Ireland. The estates of the father and sons were confiscated: Their governments were given to others: Queen Editha was confined in a monastery at Warewel: And the greatness of this family, once so formidable, seemed now to be totally supplanted and overthrown.

But Godwin had fixed his authority on too firm a basis, and he was too strongly supported by alliances both foreign and domestic, not to occasion farther disturbances, and make new efforts for his re-establishment. The earl of Flanders permitted him to purchase and hire ships within his harbours; and Godwin, having manned them with his followers, and with free-booters of all nations, put to sea, and attempted to make a descent at Sandwich. The king, informed of his preparations, had equipped a considerable fleet, much superior to that of the enemy; and the earl hastily, before their appearance, made his retreat into the Flemish harbours.[h] The English court, allured by the present security, and destitute of all vigorous counsels, allowed the seamen to disband, and the fleet to go to decay;[i] while Godwin, expecting this event, kept his men in readiness for action. He put to sea immediately, and sailed to the Isle of Wight, where he was joined by Harold with a squadron, which that nobleman had collected in Ireland. He was now master of the sea; and entering every harbour in the southern coast, he seized all the ships,[k] and summoned his followers in those counties, which had so long been subject to his government, to assist him in procuring justice to himself, his family, and his country, against the tyranny of foreigners. Reinforced by great numbers from all quarters, he entered the

Thames; and appearing before London, threw every thing into confusion. The king alone seemed resolute to defend himself to the last extremity; but the interposition of the English nobility, many of whom favoured Godwin's pretensions, made Edward hearken to terms of accommodation; and the feigned humility of the earl, who disclaimed all intentions of offering violence to his sovereign, and desired only to justify himself by a fair and open trial, paved the way for his more easy admission. It was stipulated, that he should give hostages for his good behaviour, and that the primate and all the foreigners should be banished: By this treaty, the present danger of a civil war was obviated, but the authority of the crown was considerably impaired or rather entirely annihilated. Edward, sensible that he had not power sufficient to secure Godwin's hostages in England, sent them over to his kinsman, the young duke of Normandy.

Godwin's death, which happened soon after, while he was sitting at table with the king, prevented him from farther establishing the authority which he had acquired, and from reducing Edward to still greater subjection.[NOTE [E]] He was succeeded in the government of Wessex, Sussex, Kent, and Essex, and in the office of steward of the household, a place of great power, by his son, Harold, who was actuated by an ambition equal to that of his father, and was superior to him in address, in insinuation, and in virtue. By a modest and gentle demeanor, he acquired the good-will of Edward; at least, softened that hatred which the prince had so long borne his family;[l] and gaining every day new partizans by his bounty and affability, he proceeded, in a more silent, and therefore a more dangerous manner, to the encrease of his authority. The king, who had not sufficient vigour directly to oppose his progress, knew of no other expedient than that hazardous one, of raising him a rival in the family of Leofric, duke of Mercia, whose son, Algar, was invested with the government of East-Anglia, which, before the banishment of Harold, had belonged to the latter nobleman. But this policy, of balancing opposite parties, required a more steady hand to manage it than that of Edward, and naturally produced faction, and even civil broils, among nobles of such mighty and independant authority. Algar was soon after expelled his government by the intrigues and power of Harold; but being protected by Griffith, prince of Wales, who had married his daughter, as well as by the power of his father, Leofric, he obliged Harold to submit to an accommodation, and was reinstated in the government of East-Anglia. This peace was not of long duration: Harold, taking advantage of Leofric's death, which happened soon after, expelled Algar anew, and banished him the kingdom: And though that nobleman made a fresh irruption into East-Anglia with an army of Norwegians, and over-ran the country, his death soon freed Harold from the pretensions of so dangerous a rival. Edward, the eldest son of Algar, was indeed advanced to the government of Mercia; but the balance, which

the king desired to establish between those potent families, was wholly lost, and the influence of Harold greatly preponderated.

1055. The death of Siward, duke of Northumberland, made the way still more open to the ambition of that nobleman. Siward, besides his other merits, had acquired honour to England, by his successful conduct in the only foreign enterprize undertaken during the reign of Edward. Duncan, king of Scotland, was a prince of a gentle disposition, but possessed not the genius requisite for governing a country so turbulent, and so much infested by the intrigues and animosities of the great. Macbeth, a powerful nobleman, and nearly allied to the crown, not content with curbing the king's authority, carried still farther his pestilent ambition: He put his sovereign to death; chaced Malcolm Kenmore, his son and heir, into England; and usurped the crown. Siward, whose daughter was married to Duncan, embraced, by Edward's orders, the protection of this distressed family: He marched an army into Scotland; and having defeated and killed Macbeth in battle, he restored Malcolm to the throne of his ancestors.[m] This service, added to his former connections with the royal family of Scotland, brought a great accession to the authority of Siward in the north; but as he had lost his eldest son, Osbern, in the action with Macbeth, it proved in the issue fatal to his family. His second son, Walthoef, appeared, on his father's death, too young to be entrusted with the government of Northumberland; and Harold's influence obtained that dukedom for his own brother Tosti.

There are two circumstances related of Siward, which discover his high sense of honour, and his martial disposition. When intelligence was brought him of his son Osberne's death, he was inconsolable; till he heard, that the wound was received in the breast, and that he had behaved with great gallantry in the action. When he found his own death approaching, he ordered his servants to clothe him in a complete suit of armour; and sitting erect on the couch, with a spear in his hand, declared, that, in that posture, the only one worthy of a warrior, he would patiently await the fatal moment.

The king, now worn out with cares and infirmities, felt himself far advanced in the decline of life; and having no issue himself, began to think of appointing a successor to the kingdom. He sent a deputation to Hungary, to invite over his nephew, Edward, son of his elder brother, and the only remaining heir of the Saxon line. That prince, whose succession to the crown would have been easy and undisputed, came to England with his children, Edgar, surnamed Atheling, Margaret and Christina; but his death, which happened a few days after his arrival, threw the king into new difficulties. He saw, that the great power and

ambition of Harold had tempted him to think of obtaining possession of the throne on the first vacancy, and that Edgar, on account of his youth and inexperience, was very unfit to oppose the pretensions of so popular and enterprising a rival. The animosity, which he had long borne to earl Godwin, made him averse to the succession of his son; and he could not, without extreme reluctance, think of an encrease of grandeur to a family, which had risen on the ruins of royal authority, and which, by the murder of Alfred, his brother, had contributed so much to the weakening of the Saxon line. In this uncertainty, he secretly cast his eye towards his kinsman, William duke of Normandy, as the only person whose power, and reputation, and capacity, could support any detestation, which he might make in his favour, to the exclusion of Harold, and his family.[n]

This famous prince was natural son of Robert, duke of Normandy, by Harlotta, daughter of a tanner in Falaise,[o] and was very early established in that grandeur, from which his birth seemed to have set him at so great a distance. While he was but nine years of age, his father had resolved to undertake a pilgrimage to Jerusalem; a fashionable act of devotion, which had taken place of the pilgrimages to Rome, and which, as it was attended with more difficulty and danger, and carried those religious adventurers to the first sources of Christianity, appeared to them more meritorious. Before his departure, he assembled the states of the dutchy; and informing them of his design, he engaged them to swear allegiance to his natural son, William, whom, as he had no legitimate issue, he intended, in case he should die in the pilgrimage, to leave successor to his dominions.[p] As he was a prudent prince, he could not but foresee the great inconveniences which must attend this journey, and this settlement of his succession; arising from the perpetual turbulency of the great, the claims of other branches of the ducal family, and the power of the French monarch: But all these considerations were surmounted by the prevailing zeal for pilgrimages;[q] and probably, the more important they were, the more would Robert exult in sacrificing them to what he imagined to be his religious duty.

This prince, as he had apprehended, died in his pilgrimage; and the minority of his son was attended with all those disorders, which were almost unavoidable in that situation. The licentious nobles, freed from the awe of sovereign authority, broke out into personal animosities against each other, and made the whole country a scene of war and devastation.[r] Roger, count of Toni, and Alain, count of Britanny, advanced claims to the dominion of the state; and Henry I. king of France, thought the opportunity favourable for reducing the power of a vassal, who had originally acquired his settlement in so violent and invidious a manner, and who had long appeared formidable to his sovereign.[s] The regency

established by Robert encountered great difficulties in supporting the government under this complication of dangers; and the young prince, when he came to maturity, found himself reduced to a very low condition. But the great qualities, which he soon displayed in the field and in the cabinet, gave encouragement to his friends, and struck a terror into his enemies. He opposed himself on all sides against his rebellious subjects, and against foreign invaders; and by his valour and conduct prevailed in every action. He obliged the French king to grant him peace on reasonable terms; he expelled all pretenders to the sovereignty; and he reduced his turbulent barons to pay submission to his authority, and to suspend their mutual animosities. The natural severity of his temper appeared in a rigorous administration of justice; and having found the happy effects of this plan of government, without which the laws in those ages became totally impotent, he regarded it as a fixed maxim, that an inflexible conduct was the first duty of a sovereign.

The tranquillity, which he had established in his dominions, had given William leisure to pay a visit to the king of England during the time of Godwin's banishment; and he was received in a manner suitable to the great reputation which he had acquired, to the relation by which he was connected with Edward, and to the obligations which that prince owed to his family.[t] On the return of Godwin, and the expulsion of the Norman favourites, Robert, archbishop of Canterbury, had, before his departure, persuaded Edward to think of adopting William as his successor; a counsel, which was favoured by the king's aversion to Godwin, his prepossessions for the Normans, and his esteem of the duke. That prelate, therefore, received a commission to inform William of the king's intentions in his favour; and he was the first person that opened the mind of the prince to entertain those ambitious hopes.[u] But Edward, irresolute and feeble in his purpose, finding that the English would more easily acquiesce in that restoration of the Saxon line, had, in the mean time, invited his brother's descendants from Hungary, with a view of having them recognized heirs to the crown. The death of his nephew, and the inexperience and unpromising qualities of young Edgar, made him resume his former intentions in favour of the duke of Normandy; though his aversion to hazardous enterprizes engaged him to postpone the execution, and even to keep his purpose secret from all his ministers.

Harold, mean while, proceeded, after a more open manner, in encreasing his popularity, in establishing his power, and in preparing the way for his advancement on the first vacancy; an event which, from the age and infirmities of the king, appeared not very distant. But there was still an obstacle, which it was requisite for him previously to overcome. Earl Godwin, when restored to his power and fortune, had given

hostages for his good behaviour; and among the rest one son and one grandson, whom Edward, for greater security, as has been related, had consigned to the custody of the duke of Normandy. Harold, though not aware of the duke's being his competitor, was uneasy, that such near relations should be detained prisoners in a foreign country; and he was afraid, lest William should, in favour of Edgar, retain these pledges as a check on the ambition of any other pretender. He represented, therefore, to the king, his unfeigned submission to royal authority, his steady duty to his prince, and the little necessity there was, after such a uniform trial of his obedience, to detain any longer those hostages, who had been required on the first composing of civil discords. By these topics, enforced by his great power, he extorted the king's consent to release them; and in order to effect his purpose, he immediately proceeded, with a numerous retinue, on his journey to Normandy. A tempest drove him on the territory of Guy count of Ponthieu, who, being informed of his quality, immediately detained him prisoner, and demanded an exorbitant sum for his ransom. Harold found means to convey intelligence of his situation to the duke of Normandy; and represented, that, while he was proceeding to *his* court, in execution of a commission from the king of England, he had met with this harsh treatment from the mercenary disposition of the count of Ponthieu.

William was immediately sensible of the importance of the incident. He foresaw, that, if he could once gain Harold, either by favours or menaces, his way to the throne of England would be open, and Edward would meet with no farther obstacle in executing the favourable intentions, which he had entertained in his behalf. He sent, therefore, a messenger to Guy, in order to demand the liberty of his prisoner; and that nobleman, not daring to refuse so great a prince, put Harold into the hands of the Norman, who conducted him to Roüen. William received him with every demonstration of respect and friendship; and after showing himself disposed to comply with his desire, in delivering up the hostages, he took an opportunity of disclosing to him the great secret, of his pretensions to the crown of England, and of the will which Edward intended to make in his favour. He desired the assistance of Harold in perfecting that design; he made professions of the utmost gratitude in return for so great an obligation; he promised that the present grandeur of Harold's family, which supported itself with difficulty under the jealousy and hatred of Edward, should receive new encrease from a successor, who would be so greatly beholden to him for his advancement. Harold was surprized at this declaration of the duke; but being sensible that he should never recover his own liberty, much less that of his brother and nephew, if he refused the demand, he feigned a compliance with William, renounced all hopes of the crown for himself, and professed his sincere intention of supporting the will of Edward, and seconding the pretensions of the duke of Normandy. William,

to bind him faster to his interests, besides offering him one of his daughters in marriage, required him to take an oath, that he would fulfil his promises; and in order to render the oath more obligatory, he employed an artifice, well suited to the ignorance and superstition of the age. He secretly conveyed under the altar, on which Harold agreed to swear, the reliques of some of the most revered martyrs; and when Harold had taken the oath, he showed him the reliques, and admonished him to observe religiously an engagement, which had been ratified by so tremendous a sanction.[w] The English nobleman was astonished; but dissembling his concern, he renewed the same professions, and was dismissed with all the marks of mutual confidence by the duke of Normandy.

When Harold found himself at liberty, his ambition suggested casuistry sufficient to justify to him the violation of an oath, which had been extorted from him by fear, and which, if fulfilled, might be attended with the subjection of his native country to a foreign power. He continued still to practise every art of popularity; to encrease the number of his partizans; to reconcile the minds of the English to the idea of his succession; to revive their hatred of the Normans; and by an ostentation of his power an influence, to deter the timorous Edward from executing his intended destination in favour of William. Fortune, about this time, threw two incidents in his way, by which he was enabled to acquire general favour, and to encrease the character, which he had already attained, of virtue and abilities.

The Welsh, though a less formidable enemy than the Danes, had long been accustomed to infest the western borders; and after committing spoil on the low countries, they usually made a hasty retreat into their mountains, where they were sheltered from the pursuit of their enemies, and were ready to seize the first favourable opportunity of renewing their depredations. Griffith, the reigning prince, had greatly distinguished himself in those incursions; and his name had become so terrible to the English, that Harold found he could do nothing more acceptable to the public, and more honourable for himself, than the suppressing of so dangerous an enemy. He formed the plan of an expedition against Wales; and having prepared some light-armed foot to pursue the natives into their fastnesses, some cavalry to scour the open country, and a squadron of ships to attack the sea-coast, he employed at once all these forces against the Welsh, prosecuted his advantages with vigour, made no intermission in his assaults, and at last reduced the enemy to such distress, that, in order to prevent their total destruction, they made a sacrifice of their prince, whose head they cut off, and sent to Harold; and they were content to receive as their sovereigns two Welsh noblemen appointed by Edward to rule over them. The other incident was no less honourable to Harold.

Tosti, brother of this nobleman, who had been created duke of Northumberland, being of a violent, tyrannical temper, had acted with such cruelty and injustice, that the inhabitants rose in rebellion, and chased him from his government. Morcar and Edwin, two brothers, who possessed great power in those parts, and who were grandsons of the great duke, Leofric, concurred in the insurrection; and the former, being elected duke, advanced with an army, to oppose Harold, who was commissioned by the king to reduce and chastise the Northumbrians. Before the armies came to action, Morcar, well acquainted with the generous disposition of the English commander, endeavoured to justify his own conduct. He represented to Harold, that Tosti had behaved in a manner unworthy of the station to which he was advanced, and no one, not even a brother, could support such tyranny, without participating, in some degree, of the infamy attending it; that the Northumbrians, accustomed to a legal administration, and regarding it as their birthright, were willing to submit to the king, but required a governor who would pay regard to their rights and privileges; that they had been taught by their ancestors, that death was preferable to servitude, and had taken the field determined to perish, rather than suffer a renewal of those indignities, to which they had so long been exposed; and they trusted, that Harold, on reflection, would not defend in another that violent conduct, from which he himself, in his own government, had always kept at so great a distance. This vigorous remonstrance was accompanied with such a detail of facts, so well supported, that Harold found it prudent to abandon his brother's cause; and returning to Edward, he persuaded him to pardon the Northumbrians, and to confirm Morcar in the government. He even married the sister of that nobleman;[x] and by his interest procured Edwin, the younger brother, to be elected into the government of Mercia. Tosti in rage departed the kingdom, and took shelter in Flanders with earl Baldwin, his father-in-law.

By this marriage, Harold broke all measures with the duke of Normandy; and William clearly perceived, that he could no longer rely on the oaths and promises, which he had extorted from him. But the English nobleman was now in such a situation, that he deemed it no longer necessary to dissemble. He had, in his conduct towards the Northumbrians, given such a specimen of his moderation as had gained him the affections of his countrymen. He saw, that almost all England was engaged in his interests; while he himself possessed the government of Wessex, Morcar that of Northumberland, and Edwin that of Mercia. He now openly aspired to the succession; and insisted, that, since it was necessary, by the confession of all, to set aside the royal family, on account of the imbecility of Edgar, the sole surviving heir, there was no one so capable of filling the throne, as a nobleman, of great power, of mature age, of long experience, of approved courage and abilities, who, being a native of the kingdom,

would effectually secure it against the dominion and tyranny of foreigners. Edward, broken with age and infirmities, saw the difficulties too great for him to encounter; and though his inveterate prepossessions kept him from seconding the pretensions of Harold, he took but feeble and irresolute steps for securing the succession to the duke of Normandy. NOTE [F] While he continued in this uncertainty, he was surprised by sickness, which brought him to his grave, on the fifth of January 1066, in the sixty-fifth year of his age, and twenty-fifth of his reign.

This prince, to whom the monks give the title of saint and confessor, was the last of the Saxon line, that ruled in England. Though his reign was peaceable and fortunate, he owed his prosperity less to his own abilities than to the conjunctures of the times. The Danes, employed in other enterprizes, attempted not those incursions, which had been so troublesome to all his predecessors, and fatal to some of them. The facility of his disposition made him acquiesce under the government of Godwin, and his son Harold; and the abilities, as well as the power of these noblemen, enabled them while they were entrusted with authority, to preserve domestic peace and tranquillity. The most commendable circumstance of Edward's government was his attention to the administration of justice, and his compiling for that purpose a body of laws, which he collected from the laws of Ethelbert, Ina, and Alfred. This compilation, though now lost (for the laws that pass under Edward's name were composed afterwards[v]) was long the object of affection to the English nation.

Edward the Confessor was the first that touched for the king's evil: The opinion of his sanctity procured belief to this cure among the people: His successors regarded it as a part of their state and grandeur to uphold the same opinion. It has been continued down to our time; and the practice was first dropped by the present royal family, who observed, that it could no longer give amazement even to the populace, and was attended with ridicule in the eyes of all men of understanding.