

EDWARD THE MARTYR

957. THE SUCCESSION of this prince, who was only fifteen years of age at his father's death, did not take place without much difficulty and opposition. Elfrida, his step-mother, had a son, Ethelred, seven years old, whom she attempted to raise to the throne: She affirmed, that Edgar's marriage with the mother of Edward was exposed to insuperable objections; and as she had possessed great credit with her husband, she had found means to acquire partizans, who seconded all her pretensions. But the title of Edward was supported by many advantages. He was appointed successor by the will of his father:^d He was approaching to man's estate, and might soon be able to take into his own hands the reins of government: The principal nobility, dreading the imperious temper of Elfrida, were averse to her son's government, which must enlarge her authority, and probably put her in possession of the regency: Above all, Dunstan, whose character of sanctity had given him the highest credit with the people, had espoused the cause of Edward, over whom he had already acquired a great ascendant;^e and he was determined to execute the will of Edgar in his favour. To cut off all opposite pretensions, Dunstan resolutely anointed and crowned the young prince at Kingston; and the whole kingdom, without farther dispute, submitted to him.^f

It was of great importance to Dunstan and the monks, to place on the throne a king favourable to their cause: The secular clergy had still partizans in England, who wished to support them in the possession of the convents, and of the ecclesiastical authority. On the first intelligence of Edgar's death, Alfere, duke of Mercia, expelled the new orders of monks from all the monasteries which lay within his jurisdiction;^g but Elfwin, duke of East-Anglia, and Brithnot, duke of the East-Saxons, protected them within their territories, and insisted upon the execution of the late laws enacted in their favour. In order to settle this controversy, there were summoned several synods, which, according to the practice of those times, consisted partly of ecclesiastical members, partly of the lay nobility. The monks were able to prevail in these assemblies; though, as it appears, contrary to the secret wishes, if not the declared inclination, of the leading men in the nation.^h They had more invention in forging miracles to support their cause; or having been so fortunate as to obtain, by their pretended austerities, the character of piety, their miracles were more credited by the populace.

In one synod, Dunstan, finding the majority of votes against him, rose up, and informed the audience, that he had that instant, received an immediate revelation in behalf of the monks: The assembly was so astonished at this intelligence, or probably so overawed by the populace, that they proceeded no

farther in their deliberations. In another synod, a voice issued from the crucifix, and informed the members, that the establishment of the monks was founded on the will of heaven, and could not be opposed without impiety.^u But the miracle performed in the third synod was still more alarming: The floor of the hall in which the assembly met, sunk of a sudden, and a great number of the members were either bruised or killed by the fall. It was remarked, that Dunstan had that day prevented the king from attending the synod, and that the beam, on which his own chair stood, was the only one that did not sink under the weight of the assembly:^w But these circumstances, instead of begetting any suspicion of contrivance, were regarded as the surest proof of the immediate interposition of providence, in behalf of those favourites of heaven.

Edward lived four years after his accession, and there passed nothing memorable during his reign. His death alone was memorable and tragical.^x This young prince was endowed with the most amiable innocence of manners; and as his own intentions were always pure, he was incapable of entertaining any suspicion against others. Though his stepmother had opposed his succession, and had raised a party in favour of her own son, he always showed her marks of regard, and even expressed on all occasions, the most tender affection towards his brother. He was hunting one day in Dorsetshire; and being led by the chase near Corse-castle, where Elfrida resided, he took the opportunity of paying her a visit, unattended by any of his retinue, and he thereby presented her with the opportunity, which she had long wished for. After he had mounted his horse, he desired some liquor to be brought him: While he was holding the cup to his head, a servant of Elfrida approached him, and gave him a stab behind. The prince, finding himself wounded, put spurs to his horse; but becoming faint by loss of blood, he fell from the saddle, his foot stuck in the stirrup, and he was dragged along by his unruly horse, till he expired. Being tracked by the blood, his body was found, and was privately interred at Wareham by his servants.

The youth and innocence of this prince, with his tragical death, begat such compassion among the people, that they believed miracles to be wrought at his tomb; and they gave him the appellation of martyr, though his murder had no connexion with any religious principle or opinion. Elfrida built monasteries, and performed many penances, in order to atone for her guilt; but could never, by all her hypocrisy or remorse, recover the good opinion of the public, though so easily deluded in those ignorant ages.

ENDNOTES

[g] Ypod. Neustria, p. 414.

[h] Chron. Sax. p. 64.

[i] Chron Sax. p. 66. Alur. Beverl. p. 108.

[k] Chron. Sax. p. 72.

[l] Ibid. Ethelward, lib. 3. cap. 2.

[m] Chron. Sax. p. 71.

[n] Wm. Malmes. lib. 2. cap. 2.

[o] Chron. Sax. p. 73. Ethelward, lib. 3. cap. 3.

[p] Chron. Sax. p. 73. H. Hunting. lib. 5.

[q] Alured Beverl. p. 108.

[r] H. Hunt. lib. 5. Ethelward, lib. 3. cap. 3. Simeon Dunelm.
p. 120.

[s] Chron. Sax. p. 74. Asserius, p. 2.

[t] Asserius, p. 2. Chron. Sax. 76. Hunt. lib. 5.

[u] A mancus was about the weight of our present half crown:
See Spelman's Glossary, in verbo Mancus.

[w] W. Malmes. lib. 2. cap. 2.

[x] Asserius, p. 3. W. Malm. lib. 2. cap. 2. Matth. West p. 1,
8.

[y] Padre Paolo, sopra beneficii ecclesiastici, p. 51, 52. edit.
Colon. 1675.

[z] Spell. Conc. vol. 1. p. 268.

[a] Padre Paolo, p. 132.

[b] Parker, p. 77.

[c] Ingulf. p. 862. Selden's Hist. of tythes, c. 8.

[d] Asserius, p. 2. Chron. Sax. p. 76. W. Malmes. lib. 2. cap.
2. Ethelward, lib. 3. cap. 3. M. West. p. 158. Ingulf. p. 17.
Ann. Beverl. p. 95.

[e] Asser. p. 6. Chron. Sax. p. 79.

[f] Asser. p. 7. W. Malm. lib. 2. cap. 3. Simeon Dunelm. p. 125. Anglia Sacra, vol. i. p. 205.

[g] Asser. p. 2. W. Malm. lib. 2. cap. 2. Ingulf, p. 869. Simeon Dunelm. p. 120, 139.

[h] Asser. p. 5. M. West. p. 167.

[i] Asser. p. 7.

[k] Ibid. p. 22. Simeon Dunelm. p. 121.

[l] Asser. p. 8. Chron. Sax. p. 82. Ethelward, lib. 4. cap. 4.

[m] Chron. Sax. p. 83.

[n] Asser. p. 8.

[o] Asser. p. 8. The Saxon Chronicle, p. 82. says nine battles.

[p] Asser. p. 9. Alur. Beverl. p. 104.

[q] Chron. Sax. p. 84. Alured Beverl. p. 105.

[r] Asser. p. 9.

[s] Asser. p. 9. M. West. p. 170.

[t] Chron. Sax. p. 85. W. Malm. lib. 2. cap. 4. Ethelward, lib. 4. cap. 4. Ingulf, p. 26.

[u] Asser. p. 10. Chron. Sax. p. 84. Abbas Rieval. p. 395. Alured Beverl. p. 105.

[w] Asser. p. 10.

[x] W. Malm. lib. 2. cap. 4.

[y] Chron. Sax. p. 85.

[z] Asser. p. 10. Chron. Sax. p. 85. Simeon Dunelm. p. 128. Alured. Beverl. p. 105. Abbas Rieval. p. 354.

[a] Chron. Sax. p. 85.

[b] Asser. p. 10. Chron. Sax. p. 90.

[c] W. Malm. lib. 2. cap. 4. Ingulf, p. 26.

[d] Asser. p. 11.

[e] Asser. p. 15. Chron. Sax. p. 88. M. West. p. 171. Simeon Dunelm. p. 131. Brompton, p. 812. Alured Beverl. ex edit. Hearne, p. 106.

[f] Asser. p. 18. Ingulf, p. 27.

[g] Chron. Sax. p. 92, 93.

[h] Spelman's life of Alfred, p. 147. edit. 1709.

[i] Asser. p. 9. M. West. p. 179.

[k] Asser. p. 11. Chron. Sax. p. 86, 87. M. West. p. 176.

[l] Asser. p. 19.

[m] Chron. Sax. p. 92.

[n] Chron. Sax. p. 93. Flor. Wigorn. p. 595.

[o] Chron. Sax. p. 93.

[p] Chron. Sax. p. 92.

[q] Chron. Sax. p. 93.

[r] Chron. Sax. p. 96. Flor. Wigorn. p. 596.

[s] Chron. Sax. p. 94. M. West. p. 178.

[t] M. West. p. 179.

[u] Chron. Sax. p. 94.

[w] Ibid. M. West. p. 179. Flor. Wigorn. p. 596.

[x] Chron. Sax. p. 95.

[y] Ibid. p. 97.

[z] Flor. Wigorn. p. 598.

[a] Asser. p. 21. Chron. Sax. p. 99.

[b] Asser. p. 13.

[c] Asser. p. 5.

[d] Leges St. Edw. cap. 20. apud Wilkins, p. 202.

[e] Leg. Edw. cap. 2.

[f] Faedus Alfred, and Gothurn, apud Wilkins, cap. 3. p. 47.
Leg. Ethelstani, cap. 2. apud Wilkins, p. 58. LL. Ethelr. § 4.
Wilkins, p. 117.

[g] Spellman in voce Wapentake.

[h] Ingulf. p. 870.

[i] Asser. p. 20.

[k] Ibid. p. 18, 21. Flor. Wigorn. p. 594. Abbas Rieval. p. 355.

[l] Flor. Wigorn. p. 594. Brompton, p. 814.

[m] Le Miroir de Justice, chap. 2.

[n] Asser. p. 20.

[o] Le Miroir de Justice.

[p] Ingulf, p. 27.

[q] W. Malmes. lib. 2. cap. 4.

[r] Asser. p. 24.

[s] A hyde contained land sufficient to employ one plough.
See H. Hunt. lib. 6. in A. D. 1008. Annal. Waverl. in A. D.
1083. Gervase of Tilbury says it commonly contained about
100 acres.

[t] Asser. p. 20. W. Malm. lib. 2. cap. 4. Ingulf, p. 870.

[u] Asser. p. 4, 12, 13, 17.

[w] W. Malm. lib. 4. cap. 4.

[x] Asser. p. 13.

[y] Spelman, p. 124. Abas. Rieval. p. 355.

[z] W. Malm. lib. 2. cap. 4. Brompton, p. 814.

[a] Asser. p. 13. Flor. Wigorn. p. 588.

[b] Asser. p. 20.

[c] Ibid. W. Malm lib. 2. cap. 4.

[d] W. Malmes. lib. 2. cap. 4.

[e] W. Malmes. lib. 2. cap. 5. Hoveden, p. 421.

[f] Chron. Sax. p. 99, 100.

[g] Ibid. p. 100. H. Hunting. lib. 5. p. 352.

[h] Chron. Sax. p. 100. H. Hunt. lib. 5. p. 352.

[i] Chron. Sax. p. 100. Chron. Abb. St. Petri de Burgo, p. 24.

[k] Chron. Sax. p. 101. Brompton, p. 832.

[l] Chron. Sax. p. 102. Brompton, p. 832. Math. West. p. 181.

[m] Chron. Sax. p. 108. Flor. Wigorn. p. 601.

[n] Chron. Sax. p. 110. Hoveden, p. 421.

[o] W. Malmes. lib. 2. cap. 5. Math. West. p. 182. Ingulf, p. 28. Higden, p. 261.

[p] Chron. Sax. p. 110. Brompton, p. 831.

[q] Page 110.

[r] W. Malmes. lib. 2. cap. 6. Spell. Conc. p. 407.

[s] W. Malmes. lib. 2. cap. 6.

[t] Chron. Sax. p. 111. Hoveden, p. 422. H. Hunting. lib. 5. p. 354.

[u] Hoveden, p. 422.

[w] W. Malmes. lib. 2. cap. 6. Anglia Sacra, vol. I. p. 212.

[x] The office of chancellor among the Anglo-Saxons resembled more that of a secretary of state, than that of our present chancellor. See Spelman in *voce Cancellarius*.

[y] W. Malmes. lib. 2. cap. 6. Higden, p. 263.

[z] Brompton, p. 859. Ingulf, p. 29.

[a] Chron. Sax. p. 114.

[b] W. Malmes. lib. 2. cap. 7. Brompton, p. 857.

[c] Osberne in Anglia Sacra, tom. 2. p. 92.

[d] Osberne, p. 91.

[e] See Wharton's notes to Anglia Sacra, tom. 2. p. 91.
Gervase, p. 1645. Chron. Wint. MS. apud Spell. Conc. p. 434.

[f] Osberne, p. 95. Matth. West. p. 187.

[g] Osberne, p. 96.

[h] Osberne, p. 97.

[i] Osberne, p. 102. Wallingford, p. 541.

[k] Spell. Conc. vol. I. p. 452.

[l] Chron. Sax. p. 115.

[m] H. Hunting. lib. 5. p. 356.

[n] W. Malmes. lib. 2. cap. 7.

[o] Ibid.

[p] Wallingford, p. 542.

[q] W. Malmes. lib. 2. cap. 7. Osberne, p. 83, 105. M. West.
p. 195, 196.

[r] Wallingford, p. 542. Alur. Beverl. p. 112.

[s] Osberne, p. 84. Gervase, p. 1644.

[t] Hoveden, p. 425.

[u] Osberne, p. 84. Gervase, p. 1645, 1646.

[w] Chron. Sax. p. 117. Flor. Wigorn. p. 605. Wallingford, p.
544.

[x] Hoveden, p. 425. Osberne, p. 109.

[y] Brompton, p. 863.

[z] Higden, p. 265.

[a] Spell. Conc. p. 432.

[b] W. Malmes. lib. 2. cap. 8. Hoveden, p. 406. H. Hunting. lib. 5. p. 356.

[c] Chron. Sax. p. 117, 118. W. Malmes. lib. 2. cap. 8. Hoveden, p. 425, 426. Osberne, p. 112.

[d] W. Malmes. lib. 2. cap. 8. Hoveden, p. 425.

[e] Gervase, p. 1616. Brompton, p. 864. Flor. Wigorn. p. 606. Chron. Abb. St. Petri de Burgo, p. 27, 28.

[f] Abbas Rieval. p. 360, 361. Spell. Conc. p. 476, 477, 478.

[g] Chron. Sax. p. 118. W. Malmes. lib. 2. cap. 8. Seldeni Spicileg. ad Eadm. p. 149, 157.

[h] W. Malmes. lib. 2. cap. 8. Osberne, p. 3. Diceto, p. 457. Higden, p. 265, 267, 268. Spell. Conc. p. 481.

[i] Osberne, p. 111.

[k] W. Malmes. lib. 2. cap. 8. Higden, p. 268.

[l] W. Malmes. lib. 2. cap. 8. Hoveden, p. 426. Brompton, p. 865, 866. Flor. Wigorn. p. 606. Higden, p. 268.

[m] Chron. Sax. p. 116. H. Hunting. lib. 5. p. 356. Brompton, p. 865.

[n] W. Malmes. lib. 2. cap. 8.

[o] W. Malmes. lib. 2. cap. 6. Brompton, p. 838.

[p] Hoveden, p. 427. Eadmer, p. 3.

[q] Eadmer, ex edit. Seldeni, p. 3.

[r] W. Malm. lib. 2. cap. 9. Hoveden, p. 427. Osberne, p. 113.

[s] Chron. Sax. p. 123. W. Malmes. lib. 2. cap. 9. Hoveden, p. 427. Brompton, p. 870. Flor. Wigorn, p. 607.

[t] W. Malmes. lib. 2. cap. 9.

[u] W. Malmes. lib. 2. cap. 9. Osberne, p. 112. Gervase, p. 1647. Brompton, p. 870. Higden, p. 269.

[\[w\]](#) Chron. Sax. p. 124. W. Malmes. lib. 2. cap. 9. Hoveden, p. 427. H. Hunting. lib. 5. p. 357. Gervase, p. 1647. Brompton, p. 870. Flor. Wigorn. p. 607. Higden, p. 269. Chron. Abb. St. Petri de Burgo, p. 29.

[\[x\]](#) Chron. Sax. p. 124.

[\[NOTE \[B\]\]](#) There is a seeming contradiction in ancient historians with regard to some circumstances in the story of Edwy and Elgiva. It is agreed, that this prince had a violent passion for his second or third cousin, Elgiva, whom he married, though within the degrees prohibited by the canons. It is also agreed, that he was dragged from a lady on the day of his coronation, and that the lady was afterwards treated with the singular barbarity above mentioned. The only difference is, that Osborne and some others call her his strumpet, not his wife, as she is said to be by Malmesbury. But this difference is easily reconciled: For if Edwy married her contrary to the canons, the monks would be sure to deny her to be his wife, and would insist that she could be nothing but his strumpet: So that, on the whole, we may esteem this representation of the matter as certain; at least, as by far the most probable. If Edwy had only kept a mistress, it is well known, that there are methods of accommodation with the church, which would have prevented the clergy from proceeding to such extremities against him: But his marriage, contrary to the canons, was an insult on their authority, and called for their highest resentment.

[\[NOTE \[C\]\]](#) Many of the English historians make Edgar's ships amount to an extravagant number, to 3000, or 3600: See Hoveden, p. 426. Flor. Wigorn. p. 607. Abbas Rieval p. 360. Brompton, p. 869, says that Edgar had 4000 vessels. How can these accounts be reconciled to probability, and to the state of the navy in the time of Alfred? W. Thorne makes the whole number amount only to 300, which is more probable. The fleet of Ethelred, Edgar's son, must have been short of 1000 ships; yet the Saxon Chronicle, p. 137, says it was the greatest navy that ever had been seen in England.