ON THE LIFE AND DEATH OF EARL GODWINE.*

§ 5. BANISHMENT AND RETURN OF GODWINE.

We have now arrived at the turning-point in the history of Godwine and his family, to the event which for a moment displaced them from their power, only to return to a more sure possession of it. We all know how Eadward, the son of a Norman mother, and brought up at the Norman court, had well-nigh eschewed the feelings of an Englishman, how his court was filled with hungry foreigners, whom he quartered in the highest dignities of church and state. Against this state of things, Godwine and his sons stand forth as the representatives of the national feeling, and hence, as Malmesbury tells us, the difference of statement in the Chronicles, according as their authors were of Norman or of English descent. The one party of course represent the Normans as intruders, stirring up faction in the realm and usurping dignities to the exclusion of the natives; while the great Earl of the West-Saxons appears as the champion of justice and liberty against the encroachments of the foreigner. The Normans of course, as we have seen, recognise in him and his sons nothing but abusers of the King's simplicity to promote their own aggrandisement. That Godwine was the real champion of English liberty and nationality is clear from every statement: that he and his sons had no objection to combine their own advancement with the good of their country, is only saying that they were but men.

Origin of the quarrel. Two versions in the Chronicle.

There are several various statements as to the details of the event which first brought the Earl and the feeble King into collision; but there is no doubt as to its being entirely owing to the insolence and violence of the foreigners. Eadward's sister, Goda, had been given in succession to two French husbands, Drogo,

* Continued from vol. xi. p. 330.

Count of Mantes, and Eustace, Count of Boulogne; the son of the former had been provided by his uncle with a comfortable Earldom in England; and now Count Eustace, shortly after his marriage with the widowed princess, comes over also; Malmesbury says he does not know for what cause, but that whatever it was he wanted, he gained it of the King. That one of his party attempted to obtain lodgings in a house at Dover against the will of the owner; that the householder, resisting his entrance, was either wounded [1] or killed by the Frenchman; that the foreigner was killed in self-defence by the English; that Eustace and his party then attacked the English indiscriminately, and after murdering men, women, and children, were driven out of the town,—thus much is admitted on all hands. But the two versions of the Chronicle differ in an important respect; one represents this ebullition of French insolence as having taken place immediately on the landing of Eustace, the other on his return from the court of Eadward. The conduct of Eustace and his party was in itself equally bad in either case; but it may be observed that, if it happened immediately on their landing, it might have appeared as something more than a violation of the King's peace; it might have presented the appearance of an actual hostile invasion, no less than the proceedings at Pevensey and Senlac fifteen years later. The two versions also differ as to what immediately followed. It must be remembered that Dover was a town within Godwine's own Earldom, and that it was consequently his business to protect the innocent parties and to punish the aggressors. According to one version, Eadward, listening to Eustace's statement of the matter, without hearing the other side, commands Godwine to proceed at once to Dover, and inflict a military chastisement on the town which had so grievously failed in respect to the King's brother-in-law. Godwine refuses to perform any such office; the men of Dover are under his government, and none of his people shall, with his consent, suffer execution untried: let the magistrates of the place be summoned before the Witan,[2] and

[1] *Wounded*, according to one version of the Chronicle, followed by Malmesbury, *killed*, according to the other version, followed by Florence and most of the others.

[2] This speech is from Malmesbury, whose "Curia Regis" I suppose does mean the Witan. The Chronicle merely says that the Earl would not consent to the inroad, because he was loth to injure his own people.

abide by their judgment. The Witan are summoned to meet at Gloucester; Godwine, Swegen, and Harold, with their followers, assemble at Beverstone in that county, ready to go to the assembly, "to have the counsel of the King, and his aid, and of all these Witan, how they might avenge the King's disgrace, and the whole nation's." In the meanwhile certain foreigners possess the King's ear, and prejudice him still more against Godwine and his party: the northern Earls, Leofric and Siward, join in the cabal. Godwine's party, "on the other hand, arrayed themselves resolutely, though it were loathful to them that they should turn against their royal lord." No hostilities take place, it being agreed that the matter should be judged in another Gemot to be holden in London. This is the first version in the Chronicle, followed in its most important particulars by Malmesbury. The other story says nothing about Eadward's commands to Godwine, but states that immediately on hearing what had been done in a town within his jurisdiction, he and his sons gathered together an army, threatening to make war on the King, unless Eustace and certain other Frenchmen were given up to them. Eadward, who was at Gloucester, does not seem to summon a Witenagemot, but sends for Siward, Leofric, and Radulf, with their military forces. No battle however ensues, but hostages are mutually given, and the matter referred to a Gemot at Southwark. This was owing to the moderate counsel of Earl Leofric, who objected to fight with his countrymen, though the army was ready to do so. This account is followed by Florence.

It is not easy to reconcile these two narratives; it is not easy to account for their differences. It is plain that the first is the one most favourable to Godwine, and that a sort of apologetic tone in his behalf runs through this whole version of the Chronicle. Yet this is the version followed by Malmesbury, whose prejudices are certainly on the Norman side, while our English Florence adheres to the latter. Of modern historians, Dr. Lappenberg chiefly follows Malmesbury, Mr. Turner adheres to Florence. Thierry and Dr. Lingard draw particulars from both. Before we consider how far this may be safely done, it will be as well to examine a difficult passage which occurs in each, and which I purposely passed over in a summary way in abridging the two narratives.

In the first story I said that while Godwine was at Beverstone, "certain foreigners possessed the King's ear." The Chronicle says—"Then had the 'Wælisce menn' wrought a castle in Herefordshire among Earl Swegen's following, and wrought all the harm and besmear (disgrace) to the King's men thereabout that they might." Then, while Godwine is at Beverstone, "the Wælisce menn were beforehand with the King, and accused the Earls, that they might not come in his eyesight, for they said that they would come for the King's deceit." Now who are these "Wælisce menn?" The translation of the Chronicle has "Welshmen;" Malmesbury calls them "Walenses," but tells the story rather differently, saying that Godwine came to Beverstone with an army, and gave out as the reason for his assembling it, "ut Walenses compescerent, qui, tyrannidem in Regem meditantes, oppidum in pago Herefordensi obfirmaverant, ubi tunc Swanus, unus ex filiis Godwini, militiæ prætendebat excubias." This last clause is not easy to understand, and sounds like a misinterpretation of the words of the Chronicle, which I take to mean simply that the castle was built within the limits of Swegen's Earldom. I suspect also that the worthy monk of Malmesbury wandered slightly in his ethnology, and mistook for Welshmen people who were nearer akin to his own French friends. Certainly the proceedings attributed to these "Wælisce menn," their castle-building and their familiarity with King Eadward, are something not a little extraordinary on the part of genuine Cymry, subjects of either Gruffydd. Dr. Lingard interprets "Wælisce" here to mean simply in its original sense, "foreigners,"[3] *i.e.*, in this case, Frenchmen, and Dr. Lappenberg silently takes the same view. I do not however understand the former writer, when he says that "three armies from the three Earldoms of Godwin, Sweyn, and Harold, directed their march towards Langtree in Gloucestershire, to punish, as was pretended, the depredations committed on the lands of Harold by the French garrison of a castle in Herefordshire." Now the version which mentions the castle in Hereford, says nothing about armies at Langtree, but of a gathering

Who were the "Wælisce menn?"

[3] The word occurs in this primitive sense as late as Sir Thomas Smith, "To defend themselves yet from them which were *Walsh* and strangers." Commonwealth of England, cap. 13.

originally designed to be peaceful, at Beverstone; the pretext of punishment is from Malmesbury, while I do not know the authority for saying the incursions were made on the lands of Harold, whose Earldom was on the other side of England.

The other difficulty is in the other account: Godwine's demand in the Chronicle is for the surrender of Eustace and his men, "and the Frenchmen who were in the castle." This, in Florence and Hoveden, appears as "insuper et Normannos et Bononienses, qui castellum in Doroverniæ clivo tenuerunt." But Dr. Lappenberg interprets it to mean "all the Frenchmen who were in the castle in Herefordshire;" adding, "either Florence must have had before him a defective and unintelligible MS., or Eadward must already have entrusted the Castle of Dover to the French; a supposition which would account for the insolence of Eustace, but which is highly improbable." How "the castle" can mean "the castle in Herefordshire," I am wholly at a loss to understand, as in the version of the Chronicle which contains this passage, there is nothing at all about the Herefordshire castle. There is indeed no castle mentioned at all, and the allusion is far from clear, but I think that the authority of Florence is quite sufficient to make us interpret the "castle" of Dover Castle. Dr. Lingard infers from the passage, that while Eustace hastened to the King to complain of the insult, many of his followers obtained possession of, or admission into, the "Castle on the Cliff." This seems a very probable explanation.

French in Dover Castle.

Now which version are we to believe? It is of course our business to reconcile both as far as possible, but if this attempt fails, I think our credence is most due to the second version of the Chronicle, that followed by Florence. The other is evidently the work of a partisan of Godwine's, striving to put his conduct in the most favourable light, while this one, though not manifesting any animus against him, makes no such studious apologies. From one expression, "the people were ordered out over all this north-end and Siward's Earldom and Leofric's and elsewhere," it is clear that the account was composed out of Godwine's jurisdiction. I accept, however, the statement of the former, that the fray took place on

Harmony of the versions.

Eustace's return, because that narrative enters into some small details of his journey, which there could be no motive for inventing. I also accept its statement that chastisement was ordered by the King, and that Godwine refused to obey. But I must confess that I doubt whether Godwine went into Gloucestershire with quite such peaceable intentions as the first version represents him. He would probably go prepared for either result, with a body of followers sufficient to overawe the King and his foreign favourites, and ready to appeal to arms if necessary. This first version represents them as going peaceably to a Witenagemot, and implies that resistance only came into their heads as an afterthought.[4] I think no formal Gemot was summoned at Gloucester, for if so, why could not the matter have been judged then and there, instead of being adjourned to another assembly at Southwark? Dr. Lingard seems also to reject this first Witenagemot at Gloucester. I therefore adopt the second version, only correcting it from the first by the statement that it was on Eustace's return that the affray happened; and taking in the fact that Godwine refused obedience to Eadward's commands to chastise the people of Dover. His appeal for a juster treatment of his people having been once rejected, it would be repeated at the head of the choicest men of the three Earldoms, coupled with threats of an appeal to force if justice were any longer denied. Any wrongs committed by foreigners in Herefordshire, or elsewhere, would of course excite Godwine and his party still more. Radulf and his Frenchmen would be naturally anxious for battle; Siward and his Danes might likely enough have some grudge against Godwine and his West Saxons; Leofric of Mercia naturally steps in as mediator between the extreme parties, and counsels a peaceable settlement in the Witenagemot. This seems far more probable than the adjournment from one Gemot at Gloucester to another at Southwark, while the gathering together of so many great earls and thanes would almost present the appearance of a formal assembly of the Witan, so that it might be loosely spoken of as if it had really been one.

To the Gemot at Southwark all England seems to have

[4] Mr. Kemble in incidentally telling the story (Saxons in England, ii. 230) seems to take this view, though he does not enter at large into the question. But in his list of Gemots (ii. 260) he counts the Gloucester one.

come, ready for discussion either with words or with blows as occasion might serve. The conclusion every one knows, namely, the banishment of Godwine and his sons; Swegen was first outlawed, doubtless, professedly at least, for his old offence; Godwine, Harold, and the rest,[5] refusing to appear unless hostages were given for their safety, were banished, being allowed five days to take them out of the realm. Godwine, with Gytha, Swegen, Tostig and Judith, and Gyrth, went to Flanders—"Baldwines land," as the chroniclers call it—to the court of Tostig's father-in-law; Harold and Leofwine, for some unexplained cause, chose Ireland[6] for their refuge. No mention is made of the younger children; possibly they were not born. An act of treachery on the part of Eadward, or those who acted in his name, may be accepted without hesitation, as recorded by the chronicler less favourable to Godwine. Harold and Leofwine went to Bristol to take ship; Bishop Ealdred was sent with a force to overtake them, "but they could not, or they would not." The foreigners now have it all their own way; even Queen Eadgyth is banished to a monastery, divers bishoprics and dignities are conferred on Frenchmen; Harold's earldom, however, falls to the lot of Ælfgar, the son of Leofric.

Return of Godwine.

In the various narratives of Godwine's return, there is no important difference. But we cannot help observing the wide difference of feeling displayed by the people in different parts of the kingdom. Harold lands at Porlock as an enemy; all Somerset and Devon meet to oppose him in arms, and several men of rank are killed in open combat; whereas, as Godwine and his other sons sail along the coasts of Wight, of Sussex, and of Kent, the inhabitants everywhere flock to their standard, vowing to live and die with them. It is a glorious tale to read how England stood ready to receive her champions; how no influence could induce a single man to lift a weapon against the national chiefs; how the foreign intruders, counts, bishops, and all, fled wildly to escape in any quarter from the vengeance of the nation which they had insulted. The Somersetshire story is the only dark

[5] "They very properly declined under such circumstances to appear." (Kemble, Saxons in England, ii, 231.)

[6] It should be noticed that after the Conquest, Harold's sons take refuge in Ireland, and thence return to Somersetshire, just as their father did.

shade on the picture. My own notion is, as I have before hinted, that the government of Swegen, as might be expected from his character, had been less popular than that of Godwine and Harold, and that some old grudge may probably have led to the collision. But in any case the difference of feeling in the two districts needs explanation, and it may possibly be a stain upon Harold's character, if he, for once in his life, resorted to unnecessary violence. In either view, it is not fair in Thierry to omit all mention of Harold's Somersetshire affray; while, on the other hand, it is equally unfair in M. de Bonnechose to represent Godwine and Harold as plundering in Sussex and Kent, on the mere testimony of such a writer as Wendover, in opposition to the earlier authorities. That there was some standing feud between the men of Somerset and the house of Godwine we may infer from the fact that, when Harold's sons, after the Conquest, landed in that county, they were resisted, just as their father had been, by the people of the district headed by an English commander.

Thus was achieved the great triumph of the national party. In the words of the Chronicle, "they outlawed all the Frenchmen, who before had upreared unjust law, and judged unjust judgments, and counselled ill counsel in this land, except so many as they agreed upon, whom the King liked to have with him, who were true to him and to all his people." This was a great error, which Godwine, in some accounts, is stated to have opposed in vain; when the hour of trial came, when Godwine and Harold and Stigand were no longer at hand to maintain the cause of England, these foreign priests and knights became chief agents in carrying out her subjugation. For the present, England was England once again; Godwine the Earl, and Stigand the Archbishop, stood forth as the chiefs of the national State and the national Church; Harold returned to his old Earldom; Eadgyth to her strange and melancholy royalty; one alone of that great house appeared not to share the general joy. Swegen, touched with penitence for his crimes, had gone barefooted to Jerusalem, and died shortly after on his return, either in Lycia or at Constantinople. The latter is the statement of the Chronicle, the former of Florence and others; Malmesbury alone represents him as being slain by the Saracens, the others as

Pilgrimage of Swegen.

dying of a disorder occasioned by the extreme cold. But all seem to agree in representing this pilgrimage as an expiation voluntarily undertaken at the bidding of his own conscience. Dr. Lingard, oppressed by the seeming necessity of making something out in behalf of *Saint* Eadward, tells us, "but to Sweyn Edward was inexorable. He had been guilty of a most inhuman and perfidious murder, and seeing himself abandoned by his family, he submitted to the discipline of the ecclesiastical canons." Now, I really am quite unable to find, at any rate in the writers nearest to the time, anything at all about Eadward's inexorable justice, about Swegen's abandonment by his family, or about the discipline of the ecclesiastical canons. From the Chronicle onwards they represent Swegen as having already gone to Jerusalem, starting direct from Bruges, and as having no share in the return of his father and brothers. They say that Eadward restored their honours to Godwine and his sons, except Swegen, "who had already gone"—jam abierat. Florence, and those who copy from him, add "ductus pœnitentiâ," or, as Malmesbury phrases it, "pro conscientiâ Brunonis cognati interempti." This latter writer does not indeed directly state that Swegen was already gone, but this is because he does not follow chronological order, but gives us little separate biographies of Swegen and Tostig. The only narrative I can find at all like that of Dr. Lingard is contained in the veracious chronicle of Wendover, among all the Norman scandals against the family, which Dr. Lingard, whenever he allows himself the free use of his own clear judgment, is the first to reject. Wendover does not use the pluperfect tense, and for "pœnitentiâ ductus," says, "pœnitentiam agens." Now, while the former phrase must strictly imply "led by repentance," *i. e.* in his own mind, the latter may fairly mean "submitting to the discipline of the ecclesiastical canons." But according to the more trustworthy statements, if Swegen was indeed a great criminal, he was also, according to the ideas of those times, a great penitent, and it is rather hard to deprive him of that character, merely to exalt St. Eadward and the ecclesiastical canons. But even Wendover says nothing about the inexorableness of the King and the abandonment of Swegen by his family. Eadward had no opportunity to be inexorable, nor Godwine to abandon a son who was somewhere between Bruges and

Jerusalem. What *might* have happened, whether Swegen had abandoned the world for ever, or only for a season; whether, if he had lived to return, he would have applied for the restitution of his Earldom, or whether if he had, Eadward would have been inexorable or Swegen been abandoned by his family, are points which I cannot profess to determine; they do not belong to history, but to that philosophy of romance[7] which Dr. Lingard is generally the first to despise.

Did Godwine give hostages?

According to some Norman writers, Godwine delivered to the King, as hostages for his good behaviour, his son Wulfnoth, and his grandson Hakon,[8] the son of Swegen, and Edward committed them to the safe keeping of his cousin, the Duke of the Normans. According to one account, it was to reclaim these hostages that Harold afterwards went on his unfortunate journey into Normandy. But I must confess that I see very little reason to believe that such hostages were given at all. The story rests on the authority of Eadmer, William of Poitou, the Roman de Rou, and the later writers, Bromton and Hemingburgh. Against it is the inherent improbability of the case, the entire silence of the early English authorities, and a statement not easily reconciled with it in at least one Norman writer, Ordericus Vitalis. The Chronicle and Florence most distinctly tell us that Godwine and all his family were restored to entire favour with the King, and to all their possessions and honours, Swegen alone excepted, for the reasons before given. How can this be reconciled with the statement that a son and a grandson of Godwine were at this very moment sent into captivity in a foreign land? And when Godwine and the national party were in the full swing of triumph, when the name of Norman was almost synonymous with that of outlaw, it does seem wholly incredible that the weak monarch should have been allowed to send two Englishmen of the dominant family as hostages to the very prince whose subjects were being driven out of the kingdom.

[7] Preface, p. 25. Talking of the "philosophy of romance," I may mention that Sir E. B. Lytton has in this case gained a very impressive scene at the expense of one of his few violations of historical accuracy, by representing Swegen as returning, appearing before the Witan, and then banishing himself. Thierry relates the story in nearly the same manner.

[8] Dr. Lappenberg says that Hemingford calls the son of Sweyne, "Otherin." In the Historical Society's edition at least, he figures as "Hacus," as he does in Bromton.

Florence, in recording the death of William in 1087, tells us that, on his deathbed he released from prison, among others, "Wulfnoth, the brother of King Harold, whom he had kept in prison from his boyhood," but that the worse tyrant who succeeded him speedily remanded the unfortunate prince to a dungeon at Winchester. But he does not say that Wulfnoth was a hostage; he might have been imprisoned after William's conquest of England; in which case he must certainly have been the youngest of the brothers. Ordericus, as we have also seen, says nothing of Wulfnoth's being either a hostage or a prisoner, but represents him as living piously, and apparently peaceably, as a monk at Salisbury.[9] On the whole I incline to believe that this story of the hostages is simply one of the many fictions of the Norman party. The mode in which it probably arose I shall have to discuss when I come to treat of the life of Harold.

The later writers generally afford less entertainment in their narration of these events than might perhaps have been expected: but I cannot resist the temptation of inserting the inimitable, though not over-historical, relation of them to be found in good Bishop Godwin, in the life of Archbishop Robert. "He [Robert] began, therefore, to beat into the King's head (that was a mild and soft-natured gentleman) how hard a hand his mother held upon him when he lived in Normandy: how likely it was that his brother came to his death by the practise of her and Earle Godwyn: and lastly, that she used the company of Alwyn, Bishop of Winchester, somewhat more familiarly than an honest woman needed. The King somewhat too rashly crediting these tales, without any further examination or debating of the matter, seased upon all his mother's goods, and committed her to prison in the Nunry of Warwell; banished Earl Godwyn and his sonnes, and commanded Alwyn, upon pain of death, not to come forth of Winchester." Then follows the story of the ploughshares.

[9] Dr. Lingard quoting the passage of Ordericus says, "Alfgar, after the conquest, became a monk at Rheims, in Champagne. Wulfnoth, so long the prisoner of William, only obtained his liberty to embrace the same profession at Salisbury." i. 446. But when did Wulfnoth obtain his liberty after the second capture mentioned by Florence and by Dr. Lingard himself in p. 515? I do not see how the statements of Florence and Ordericus can be reconciled, and I somewhat doubt the existence of this Ælfgar.

§ 6. DEATH AND CHARACTER OF GODWINE.

Godwine's death. Progress. Inventions.

The great Earl of the West-Saxons did not long enjoy his restored ascendancy. In 1053, the year after his return, he died. The Chronicle informs us only that he was taken ill, while dining with the King at Winchester, "on the second day of Easter," when he fell down suddenly in a fit, was carried out into the King's chamber in the expectation of his recovery, but that he never recovered, and died on the next Thursday.[1] Florence adds, that his sons, Harold, Tostig, and Gyrth, carried him out. On this the Norman fabulists have built up, as might have been expected, a marvellous superstructure. Such a death of their great enemy might by itself have been represented as a manifest judgment on the traitor; but this would hardly have been enough. We are told, therefore, by Ingulf, or pseudo-Ingulf—I will not enter into that question—and by Malmesbury, that as Eadward and Godwine were sitting at table, discoursing about the King's late brother Ælfred, Godwine said that he believed the King still suspected him of having a hand in his death, but that he prayed his next morsel might choke him if he were guilty of any share in it. Of course his next morsel did choke him; he died then and there, and was carried out by Harold. Now it perhaps occurred to the next generation, that, under the circumstances as imagined by them, the deceased Ælfred was a rather extraordinary subject of discourse to arise between Eadward and Godwine. Henry of Huntingdon, gifted, it may be, with less power of invention than some others, makes the conversation take a somewhat different turn, and a hardly more probable one. Godwine, "*gener*[2] suus et proditor," is reclining by King Eadward at Windsor, when he apparently volunteers the remark, that he has been often falsely accused of plotting against the King, but that he trusts, if there be a true and just God in heaven, he will make the piece of bread choke him if he ever did so plot. The true and just God, we are told, heard the voice

[1] Oð pone þunresdæg. Quintâ post hæc feria, Flor. Dr. Lappenberg says, "On the fifth day," as if Godwine survived four days. But Florence means the fifth day of the week, the *Thunresdæg* of the Chronicle. Hoveden copies Florence.

[2] *Gener* seems, in mediæval Latin, to have acquired the more general sense of *affinis*, like γαμβρός. See Ducange *in voc.*

of the traitor, who, as the chronicler charitably adds, "eodem pane strangulatus mortem prægustavit æternam." But this was a very lame story. The conversation about Ælfred was too good to be lost, so some means must be found to account for the introduction of a topic which one would have expected both parties to avoid. Some ingenious person hit upon an ancient legend which Malmesbury had indeed recorded in its proper place, but had not thought of transferring to this. There was an old scandal against Æthelstan, otherwise one of our noblest monarchs, to the effect that he exposed his brother Eadwine at sea, on a false charge of conspiracy, brought by his cup-bearer. Seven years after, the cup-bearer, handing wine to the King, slips with one foot, recovers himself with the other, and adds the facetious remark, "So brother helps brother." But King Æthelstan is thereby reminded how this same man had made him deprive himself of the help of *his* brother, and takes care that, however strong he may be on his feet, he shall presently be shorter by the head, which had no brother to help it. Thus in Æthelred of Rievaux, in Wendover, in Bromton and Knighton, we read how, as Eadward and Godwine are at table, the cup-bearer slips and recovers himself, how Godwine says, "So brother helps brother," how Eadward answers, "So might my brother Ælfred have helped me, but for the treason of Godwine." Then, of course, Godwine curses himself and dies. One or two little improvements are to be found in different writers. Thus Bromton makes Harold appear as the cup-bearer, and his father's remark is addressed to him. One only wonders that the disputes between Harold and Tostig were not somehow lugged in here also. The same Bromton puts into the royal saint's mouth, on seeing Godwine's fall, the brief and polite remark, "Drag out the dog!" Wendover, who says that Eadward blessed the morsel before Godwine swallowed it, expands this laconic terseness into, "Drag out that dog, and bury him in the highway, for he is unworthy of Christian burial." On this his sons carry out the corpse, and bury it in the Old Minster,[3] without the King's knowledge.

[3] *I.e.* the Cathedral ("in episcopatu Wintoniæ," as Malmesbury has it), as opposed to the "new minster" founded by Ælfred the Great, afterwards called Hyde Abbey.

Character of Godwine.

Such was, as Dr. Lappenberg truly observes, "the last attempt of the Norman party to avenge themselves upon the lion's skin of their deadliest enemy." We have seen how simple and natural the tale is in its first estate, and how it has gradually grown into the full dimensions bestowed upon it by Norman calumny. Each passer-by has deemed it his duty to throw an additional stone upon the corpse of the dead traitor. We, at this distance of time, may be allowed to cast their fables aside, and to draw our information from the more trustworthy records of his own time and nation. The impression conveyed by them is that the great Earl was a man, in his own age, of unrivalled natural ability, and of unrivalled acquired experience, who devoted the whole of his mighty powers to the genuine service of his country, but around whom there hung the dark suspicion [4] of one foul crime, never indeed proved, but on the other hand never fully disproved. That Godwine was innocent is the conclusion to which the weight of evidence inclines, but that he should have been even suspected tells against his general character. When the Ætheling Eadward at a later period died suddenly at the court of his uncle, and opened the way for the succession of Harold, the advantage to the latter was so palpable that one only wonders that he was never accused of a hand in his death.[5] Yet I am not aware that even Norman enmity ever ventured upon such a calumny, while English writers have at least suspected Godwine of the murder of Ælfred under far more aggravated circumstances. We may therefore fairly conclude that the charge which would have been at once felt as carrying its own refutation with it in the case of the son, had not the same intrinsic improbability when applied to the father. Godwine was a bold, far-seeing, unscrupulous politician, seeking the good of

[4] Godwine indeed appears also concerned in two or three other pieces of work repugnant to the feelings of our age. Such are the disinterment of Harold the First, the burning of Worcester, and the spoliation of Queen Emma by her son Eadward. But in none of these is Godwine introduced as the sole or the prime mover; they are all done by the command of the king for the time being, and Godwine always appears in company with some of the other great men of the realm; in the two former cases with Archbishop Ælfric, in the two latter with his great rivals Siward and Leofric. Bromton indeed insinuates that Emma was spoiled "Godwini consiliis," but it is clear that it was done by Eadward's mere motion, and Dr. Lappenberg has made out a tolerably plausible case in the King's justification.

[5] Palgrave and one or two other modern writers hint at it, but I remember nothing of the sort in the old authors, though Saxo does make Harold murder an Eadward, even the holy king himself.

his country, but not neglecting his own or that of his family. Like nearly every other exalted person of his time, he did not scruple to enrich himself at the expense of the monastic orders,[6] and he showed more regard to political than to ecclesiastical propriety in the promotion of Stigand to the highest place in the English Church. His own family he loaded with the honours of the state; in promoting such a son as Harold, he consulted the good of his country as much as his own paternal feelings; but it was an unworthy nepotism which led to the restitution of the murderer Swegen. The distinguishing point in Godwine's character among the Danes and English who surround him, is his being so eminently and strictly a politician. He stands out as something quite unlike the fierce, violent, generous, openhearted, bloody-handed chief of vikings or bandits which one regards as the type of the half-civilised leader of his day. He was indeed a brave warrior, and owed his first promotion in a great measure to his military capacity; but the character of the warrior is with him something altogether secondary. His special home is not the battle-field, but the Witenagemot: friends and enemies alike extol his eloquence, his power of persuasion, which could sway his auditors in what direction he pleased. His foes insinuate that while thus gifted with the nobler, he did not altogether eschew the baser arts which have been familiar to the politicians of all ages. Bribes and promises, favour and disfavour discreetly apportioned, are mentioned among the engines of his policy. He is the minister, the parliamentary leader; Eorl and Ceorl, Dane and Saxon, alike submit to his influence, but it is always influence, never violence; he is often accused of fraud, never of force:[7] with any man of Teutonic speech his controversy is always one of words and policy; it is against the Norman alone that he resorts to the spear and the battle-axe. A true politician, he knew how to bide his time and adapt himself to circumstances; an Englishman,

[6] This accusation, as regards Godwine, rests on the very unsuspicious testimony of the Chronicle; as regards Harold, on the very suspicious one of Domesday. (See Ellis's Introduction, i. 313. ii. 142.)

[7] Archdeacon Mapes, more familiarly known by his Christian name, has transmitted a strange story of the nefarious trick by which Godwine is said to have got possession of the nunnery of Berkeley. (See Fosbroke's History of Berkeley, p. 7.) No one can doubt that the story is the merest fable, but it marks the estimate of the man. Godwine is represented as gaining his point by art, Leofric or Siward would probably have been introduced expelling the inmates vi et armis.

the future chief of the English party, he knew how to submit to the Danish rule, and how to rise to greatness under it; he knew also how long that rule was to be borne, and when it was to be broken off. When first standing forth as the champion of the sons of Emma, he yielded, because he saw resistance was vain, to the succession of the first Harold. When the male line of the great Cnut was extinct, he saw that the moment was come to raise up again the throne of Cerdic and Ælfred, and for England to have once more a King of her own blood. The pretensions of Svend and of Magnus he entirely casts aside: perhaps, as Thierry imagines, he might have secured his own election when Eadward was unwilling to accept the proffered crown; but his ambition was of a cautious and practical kind; he knew that to rule in the name of a weak sovereign was a less invidious position than himself to wear a disputed diadem. According to a refined political creed of which his times had no notion, he may have earned the names of rebel and traitor by an armed opposition to his sovereign, by returning like a conqueror from the banishment to which King and Witan had sentenced him. Godwine's guilt or innocence in the matter simply turns upon the old question of non-resistance to authority in any case. This I will not enter upon here. But undoubtedly many Englishmen reverence the names of Hampden and Sidney; all, I believe, unite in homage to those of Langton and Fitzwalter, and to the Great Charter which they wrung by open rebellion from the despot of their times. When Godwine appealed to arms against foreign domination, he at least did no more than they. An atrocious deed of blood is perpetrated by the King's foreign favourites within Godwine's own earldom; in any case the King protects the guilty, most probably he requires Godwine himself to punish the innocent. If a subject may in any case draw his sword against his sovereign, surely he may in such a case as this. Unquestionably most men of the eleventh century allowed themselves that liberty on far slighter provocations. He is banished, the guilty remain unpunished, the foreign influence is predominant. He returns, prepared for battle indeed, but no battle is needed; everywhere he comes with a friendly greeting, everywhere he is received as a friend. The voice of an injured people demand his restoration; placed again in his old honours, there is not the slightest sign of any

deviation from his old politic moderation; not an Englishman is harmed in life, limb, or estate; of the foreigners themselves not a man is personally injured, even banishment is confined to those who had wrought injustice in the realm. Whatever his birth and parentage, whether the son of the South-Saxon captain or of the western peasant, he had won his greatness for himself; he died the virtual sovereign of England, and transmitted his power to a nobler, hardly a greater, successor. Between him and his son there is the same sort of difference as between the great father and son of Macedonian history. Godwine is the Philip, Harold the Alexander, of his house. Harold appears as a hero, with all the virtues and the faults of the heroic character; Godwine is as far from a hero as any man on record; a cool, crafty, deliberate politician; moderate, conciliatory, persuasive, not clear perhaps from fraud and corruption, but never tempted into violence or insolence. Traitor or no traitor, he was at least England's chosen leader; he ruled her well, and she mourned his loss. We have seen his character as drawn by his enemies, let us conclude with the picture as transmitted by admiring and lamenting friends. The old biographer of Eadward, quoted by Stow,[8] knows not, or regards not, the accusations of perfidy against the father, of violence against the son. In his eyes Godwine and Harold stand forth as the pattern of every princely virtue.

"Duke Godwine (saith he) and his sonnes being reconciled to the King, and the country being quiet, in the second yeere after died the said duke of happie memorie, whose death was the sorrow of the people; him their father, him the nourisher of them and the kingdome with continuall weeping they bewailed; he was buried with worthie honor in the old Monasterie of Winchester, giving to the same church gifts, ornaments, and rentes of lands. Harold succeeded in his

[8] Stow quotes from what he calls "Vita Edwardi;" now the only "Vita Edwardi" I know is that of Æthelred of Rievaux, who certainly speaks in a widely different strain. I perceive that Dr. Lingard (i. 344) quotes second-hand from Stow, and Mr. Thorpe (Lappenberg, ii. 250) and M. de Bonnechose (ii. 92) third-hand from Dr. Lingard. But Stow cannot have invented the biography, and I trust that some one versed in MSS. and early printed books may discover the original which he employed. If anyone should object, with M. de Bonnechose (ii. 100), to its authority, that an author who dedicates his work to Queen Eadgyth is not altogether an unprejudiced witness as to the character of her father and brother, it is easy to place him in a dilemma; as those who give the worst character of Godwine and Harold add that Eadgyth did not at all resemble them, and even took the Norman side against the latter.

Dukedome, which was a great comfort to the whole English nation, for in vertue both of bodie and minde he excelled all people as another Judas Macchabeus, and was a friende to his countrie, diligently supplying his father's place, and walking in his steppes, that is to say, in patience, mercie, and affabilitie to well willers, but to disquiet persons, theeves, and robbers, with a lyon's countenance he threatened his just severitie."

EDWARD A. FREEMAN.

When originally writing the present essay, I was not aware that the Chronicle of Radulphus Niger, referred to by Sharon Turner in support of Godwine's peasant origin, existed in print. I have since found that it was published in 1851 by the Caxton Society, and I have accordingly referred to the passage. He gives us the following account of Godwine :—

"Anno ab incarnatione Domini MLXII Edwardus filius Ethelredi, frater Edmundi Irenside ex patre, frater et Hardecnuti ex Emmâ matre, suscepit regnum Anglorum, auxilio Godwini comitis cujus filiam duxit, sed eam minimè cognovit, unde ambo in cœlibatu permanserunt. Hic rex Westmonasterium fecit et ditavit, multaque miracula egit. *Godwinus comes filius bubulci fuit;* in mensâ regis Edwardi offâ suffocatus est, et ab Haraldo filio sub mensâ extractus. Hic Godwinus a rege Cnutone nutritus, processu temporis in Daciam cum breve regius transmissus, callidè duxit sororem Cnutonis." P. 160.

The last paragraph I have already referred to. In an earlier portion, under the reign of Harthacnut, he gives his version of the death of Ælfred, which is somewhat strange :—

"Edwardum fratrem suum a Normannis revocans, secum pacificè aliquamdiu habuit. Nam alter frater, Aluredus scilicet, ad stipitem ligatus a Godwino in Hely peremptus est, ter decimatis commilitonibus apud Guldedune, post mortem Haroldi, antequam regnaret Hardecnutus consilio Stigandi archiepiscopi." P. 157.

The testimony of this Chronicle, though somewhat late, is not without its value. It clearly points to an independent English tradition as to Godwine's peasant origin, as it is impossible to suppose that Radulphus Niger borrowed his information from the Knytlinga Saga.