lowed in due course and these, as is well known, enervate the human mind. Hence it came about that they engaged William more with rashness and fury than with military skill, and so they doomed themselves and their country to slavery by giving him an easy victory in a single battle. For nothing is less effective than rashness; and what begins with violence is quickly checked. The English at that time wore short garments, reaching to the mid-knee; they had their hair cropped, their beards shaven, their arms laden with gold bracelets, their skin adorned with punctured designs; they were wont to eat until they became surfeited and to drink until they were sick. These latter qualities they imparted to their conquerors; as to the rest they adopted their manners. I would not, however, have these bad propensities ascribed to the English universally. I know that many of the clergy at that time trod the path of sanctity, and I know that many of the laymen of all ranks and conditions were well-pleasing to God. Far be it from me to be unjust: my accusation is not indiscriminate. But as in peace the mercy of God often cherishes both the bad and the good together, so also does his severity sometimes include them both in tribulation.

The Normans— that I may speak of them also —were at that time, as they are now, exceedingly particular in their dress, and delicate in their food, but not to excess. They are a race inured to war, and can hardly live without it; fierce in attacking their enemies, and when force fails, ready to use guile or to corrupt by bribery. As I have said, they live with economy in large houses; they envy their equals; they wish to vie with their superiors; and they plunder their subjects though they protect them from others. They are faithful to their lords, though slight offence gives them an excuse for treachery. They weigh treason by its chance of success, and change their opinions for money. They are the most polite of peoples; they consider strangers to merit the courtesy they extend to each other; and they intermarry with their subjects. After their coming to England they revived the rule of religion which had there grown lifeless. You might see churches rise in every village, and, in the towns and cities, monasteries built after a style unknown before; you could watch the country flourishing with renewed religious observance; each wealthy man counted the day lost in which he had neglected to perform some outstanding benefaction.  

(b) On the death of William Rufus

(Thid., xx 331, 332, 333)

In the thirteenth year, which was the last of his life, there were many adverse events, but the most dreadful incident was that the devil visibly appeared to men in woods and secret places, and spoke to them as they passed by. Moreover, at Finchampstead in Berkshire, a well flowed so freely with blood for fifteen whole days that it discoloured a neighbouring pool. The king heard of
scattered in the chase. The sun was now setting, and the king drawing his bow let fly an arrow which slightly wounded a stag which passed before him. He ran in pursuit, keeping his gaze rigidly fixed on the quarry, and holding up his hand to shield his eyes from the sun's rays. At this instant Walter, forming in his mind a project which seemed good to him, tried to transfix another stag which by chance came near him while the king's attention was otherwise occupied. And thus it was that unknowingly, and without power to prevent it (oh, gracious God!), he pierced the king's breast with a fatal arrow. When the king received the wound, he said not a word, but breaking off the shaft of the arrow where it stuck out of his body, he fell upon the ground and thus made more speedy his own death. Walter immediately ran up, but finding the king senseless and speechless, he leapt quickly on his horse, and escaped at full gallop. Indeed there was none to pursue him. Some convinced at his flight, others pitied him. All were intent on other matters. Some began to fortify their dwellings; others to plunder; and the rest went to look for a new king. A few countrymen recovered the body and took it on a cart to the cathedral at Winchester, the blood dripping from it all the way. Here it was committed to the ground within the tower, attended by many of the magnates, but mourned by few. Next year the tower fell, but I forbear to mention the different opinions about this lest I should seem to assent too readily to unsupported trifles, the more especially as the building might have fallen through imperfect construction even if he had not been buried there. 2 He died in the year of the Incarnation of our Lord 1100 on 2 August, aged above forty years. He formed mighty plans which he would have brought to effect, could he have spun out the tissue of fate, or broken through the violence of fortune. Such was the energy of his mind that he was bold enough to promise himself any kingdom whatsoever. Indeed the day before his death when asked where he would keep Christmas, he said "in Poitou". For the count of Poitou 3 who wished to go to Jerusalem was said to be anxious to pawn his territory to the king of England. Thus, not content with what he had inherited, he was lured on by the hope of greater glory and grasped at honours which were not his by right. He was a man much to be pitied by the clergy for throwing away a soul which they could not save. He earned the love of hired soldiers for he was lavish in his gifts to them. But by the common people he is not to be mourned because he allowed them to be plundered. I remember no council being held in his time wherein the health of the Church might be strengthened by the correction of abuses. He delayed long in appointing to ecclesiastical offices, either for the sake of the money he gained thereby, or because he wished to consider the merits of those who might be advanced. Thus on the day he died he held in his own hands three vacant bishoprics and twelve vacant abbies.

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1 The tower fell in 1107.
2 The whole tone of the foregoing description is interesting, and perhaps all the mysteries connected with the death of William Rufus have not yet been fully explained.
3 William VII

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Henry, the youngest son of William the Great, was born in England in the third year after his father's coming to this country. He was a child who enjoyed the ardent good wishes of all, for to him the kingdom seemed to pertain as of right since he was the only one of William's sons who was born when his father was a king. He was early instructed in the liberal arts, and so throughout imbied the sweets of learning that no warlike disturbance and no pressure of business could ever erase them from his noble mind. Although he never read much in public, nor displayed his attainments except sparingly, yet his learning (as I can affirm, though obtained by snatches, assisted him much in the science of government, according to the saying of Plato: "Happy would be the commonwealth if philosophers were kings or kings philosophers." Thus, considerably imbied with philosophy, he learnt by degrees how to restrain the people with lenity, and only to employ his troops when there was a pressing emergency. In this manner he was trained by learning in his early years to the hope of the kingdom, and often in his father's hearing made use of the proverb: "An unlettered king is a crowned ass." They say also that his father, observing his disposition, never omitted any means of encouraging his lively audacity; and that once when he had been ill used by one of his brothers and was in tears, he comforted him by saying: "Don't cry, my boy, you too will be a king." On the violent death of King William after the solemnisation of the royal funeral he was chosen king, though some small dissension had arisen among the magnates which was allayed mainly by the exertions of Henry, earl of Warwick, 2 a man of unblemished integrity with whom he had long been in the closest intimacy. He immediately issued an edict 3 throughout England annulling the illegal practices of his brother and of Rannulf. 4 He remitted taxes, released prisoners, drove the unnaturally vicious from the court, and restored the nightly use of lights within the palace which in his brother's time had been discontinued. He renewed the operation of the ancient laws, confirming them with his own oath, and that of the magnates so that they should not be evaded. A joyful day then seemed to dawn upon the people when the light of fair promise shone forth after such repeated clouds of distress. And, that nothing might be wanting in the universal joy, Rannulf, that sink of usury, was cast into prison and speedy messengers were sent to recall Aselm. So amid universal rejoicing Henry was crowned king at London on 5 August, that is to say, four days after his brother's death. These acts were the more carefully carried out lest the magnates should be induced to repent their choice, as a rumour prevailed that Robert, count of Normandy, 5 was about to

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2 On the exaggerated claims made for Henry I's alleged learning, see also C. W. David, in Haskin's Anniversay Essays (1929), pp. 45 and V. I. Gilbreath, Literacy of Medieval English King (1935)
3 Henry of Beaumont, son of Roger of Beaumont, became earl of Warwick in 1108 (see table 11).
4 Rannulfl Flamhard, bishop of Durham, chief minister of William Rufus
5 Also son of William the Conqueror