

HISTORY
OF THE
KINGS & QUEENS OF ENGLAND:

FROM
THE REIGN OF WILLIAM THE CONQUEROR
TO VICTORIA THE FIRST.

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**PART I.**  
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WILLIAM THE CONQUEROR.

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HISTORY
OF THE
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WILLIAM THE CONQUEROR



Born
1024.

Died
Septem. 9,
1087.

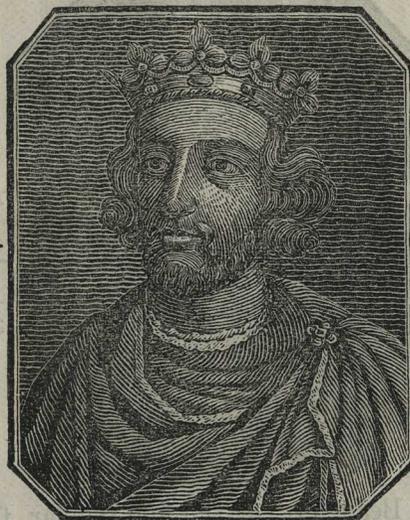
Began to
Reign
Decem. 25,
1066.

Reigned
21 Years.

Was natural son of Robert, Duke of Normandy, and was called the *Conqueror* because he conquered Harold the Dauntless, and overthrew the Saxon dynasty in this country. He gave out that Edward the Confessor left him the crown of England by will, and determining to assert his right to it, landed in England with an army of 60,000 men, and gave battle at Hastings, where Harold was killed, and his army defeated; after which William became King of England. He was above eight feet high, strong built, and well proportioned.

Eminent men in this reign:—Edwin and Morcar, Earls of Northumberland and Mercia; Stigand and Lanfranc, Archbishops of Canterbury; Prince Edgar Atheling.

WILLIAM II.



Born
1060.

Died
August 2,
1100.

Began to
Reign
Sept. 19,
1087.

Reigned
12½ Years.

Surnamed Rufus, from his red hair and florid complexion, was the second surviving son to the Conqueror, and was by his father's will appointed his successor. The Norman barons being displeased with this, and looking on his brother Robert as the proper owner, a powerful conspiracy was therefore formed against William by his uncle Odo. William, sensible of his danger, was soon in the field at the head of a powerful army. Robert lost his opportunity by not assisting his friends, who had taken fortresses on the hopes of his assurances, and who, when William appeared before them, had to implore his mercy. He was accidentally shot through the heart with an arrow, by Sir Walter Tyrrel, a French knight, while shooting at a deer.

Eminent men in this reign:—Odo, bishop of Bayeux; **Flam-** lards, bishop of Durham.

HENRY I.



Born
1068.

Died
Decem. 2,
1135.

Began to
Reign
August 5,
1100.

Reigned
35 Years.

Surnamed Beauclerc, or the fine scholar, from his literary talents, was younger brother to Rufus. On the death of Rufus he violently usurped the crown, to which Robert, Duke of Normandy, had undoubted claims. Having secured the royal treasures, in order to second his aims, he united the long breach betwixt the Saxon and Norman interests, by marrying Matilda, the niece of Edgar Atheling. Henry died in the sixty-seventh year of his age, at St. Denis, near Normandy, of fever, caused by eating lampreys to excess. He was cool, cautious, politic, and penetrating; of great courage, and invincible fortitude; an excellent companion, and true friend; not free from that scorn for the English which all his race acquired by their Norman descent and connexions.

Eminent men in this reign :—Randulph, Archbishop of Canterbury; Robert, Earl of Shrewsbury.

STEPHEN



Born
1104.

Died
Oct. 25,
1154

Began to
Reign,
Dec. 26,
1135.

Reigned
18½ Years.

Was third son of the Earl of Blois, and Adela, daughter of William the Conqueror. Matilda the sole heiress to the throne, of which Stephen had so perfidiously deprived her, did not delay in asserting her right to the crown. Having gained an advantage over the forces of Stephen, she soon deposed him from the throne, and was crowned in his place. The queen by her pride and haughtiness soon rendered herself odious to her subjects; and an agreement having been made bewixt Stephen and Henry, Matilda's son, it was arranged that Stephen should reign during the remainder of his life, and bequeath the crown to Henry. About twelve months after, he died at Canterbury, where he was interred. He was brave, active, and industrious; and fitted by his personal character to rule with dignity.

Eminent men in this reign :—Thurston, Archbishop of York; John of Salisbury; Roger de Hoveden, historians.

HENRY II.



Born
1132.

Died
July 6,
1189.

Began to
Reign
Dec. 8,
1154.

Reigned
34½ Years.

Was son of the Earl of Anjou, and Matilda, daughter of Henry I. On ascending the throne, Henry soon gave evident signs of his wisdom and power, in correcting those abuses, which from the weakness of his predecessors, had always been a great source of complaint. The struggles which in former times had been betwixt the king and barons, or the clergy, began now to assume a new appearance; and liberty was more equally spread throughout the nation. Thomas a' Becket, Archbishop of Canterbury, was murdered before the altar of St. Benedict at Canterbury, by some of the attendants at Henry's court. When Henry heard of this, in order to turn the attention of the people to a different object, he subdued Ireland, and annexed it to his British dominions. Henry died of a broken heart, aged 57.

Eminent men in this reign:—A' Becket, Richard, and Baldwin, Archbishops of Canterbury; Strongbow Earl of Pembroke.

RICHARD I.



Born
1157.

Died
April 6,
1199.

Began to
Reign
August 13,
1189.

Reigned
9½ Years.

Surnamed *Cœur-de-lion*, from his intrepid valour, succeeded, as the eldest son of Henry, to the English throne. Richard and the king of the French having assembled an army, amounting to 100,000 men, set sail for the Holy Land; having arrived, they immediately declared war, and gained victory after victory. Richard having gained a victory over Saladin, one of the renowned Saracen warriors, concluded a truce for three years; and returned in the disguise of a pilgrim through Germany, where he was taken prisoner by Leopold, Duke of Austria, who loaded him with shackles, and placed him in a dungeon, from which he was relieved on payment of a ransom of £100,000. His death was caused from a wound received by an arrow at the siege of Chaluz in Limousin.

Eminent men in this reign:—Robin Hood and Little John, the outlaws; Henry Fitzalwyn, first Lord Mayor of London.

JOHN,



Born
1165.

Died
Oct. 7,
1216.

Began to
Reign
April 6,
1199.

Reigned
17½ Years.

Surnamed Lackland, fourth son of Henry II., and brother to Richard I., by the will of his brother ascended the throne. By his pride and cruelty, and the putting to death of his nephew Prince Arthur of Brittany, he soon rendered himself odious to his subjects. The barons, who had all along been forming a conspiracy, at length marched to Brackley, near Oxford, where the king resided, and having chosen Robert Fitzwalter their general made war against the king, which ended in the granting of the famous Magna Charter. John, however, by the recklessness of his character, soon raised his subjects to a second rebellion. On his road to suppress the insurgents, he was seized with a fever, and died at Newark in the fifty-first year of his age.

Eminent men in this reign :—Stephen Langton, Archbishop of Canterbury ; Robert Fitzwalter, general of the Barons' army.

HENRY III.



Born
1207.

Died
Nov. 16,
1.72.

Began to
Reign
Oct. 17,
1216.

Reigned
56 Years

When only nine years of age, succeeded to the throne at the death of his father, and by the favour and support of the Earl of Pembroke, was crowned by the bishops of Bath, Gloucester, and Winchester. The early part of his reign is made memorable by the loss of the British possessions in France. He was a prince of a changeable and fanciful temper, haughty and proud ; and altogether a prince of very poor abilities ; distinguished by no virtue, except that of granting his enemies their lives, after he had pillaged them of their estates. Henry died at Westminster, in the fifty-seventh year of his reign ; being the longest met with in the chronicles of English history, till the time of George III.

Eminent men in this reign :—Monford, Earl of Leicester ; Des Roches, Bishop of Winchester, and Lord Chancellor ; Earl of Pembroke, Protector.

EDWARD I.



Born
1236.

Died
July 7,
1307.

Began to
Reign
Nov. 16,
1272.

Reigned
34 Years.

Was employed in a crusade in the Holy Land at his father's death, where he had the misfortune to be stabbed, and owed the preservation of his life to his pious wife Eleanora, who sucked the poisoned wound, at the risk of her life. Though his father's death occurred while absent at the Holy Wars, yet, on his return, he ascended the throne with the greatest tranquility. Edward having gained a decisive victory over the Welsh prince Llewelyn, annexed Wales to his English dominions; and from it the eldest son of the reigning king is named the Prince of Wales. Edward died at a small town, named Brough, in Cumberland, while on his way with an army to invade Scotland; and was buried in Westminster Abbey.

Eminent men in this reign:—Wickliffe; Roger Bacon; Humphry Bohun, Earl of Hereford; Richard, Earl of Cornwall.

EDWARD II.



Born
1284.

Died
Sep. 21,
1327.

Began to
Reign
July 7,
1307.

Reigned
20 Years.

Surnamed Caernarvon, from his birth-place, was a prince of good appearance, of an indulgent and harmless disposition, and to appearance addicted to few vices; but wanting that ability and steadiness of resolution necessary for the government of an agitated rebellious people. Edward after quelling a conspiracy amongst his English subjects, marched to Scotland with an army of 100,000 men, to oppose Bruce. He was met by him at Bannockburn, with an army of 30,000 men, and completely defeated. To add to Edward's unfortunate life, he was deposed, and the crown given to his son. Sent from prison to prison, Edward at last ended his life, by a cruel death, at the hands of his barbarous keepers, in the twentieth year of his reign.

Eminent men in this reign:—Thomas Plantagenet, Earl of Lancaster; Gavestone, and the Spencers, favorites of the king.

EDWARD III.



Born
1312.

Died
June 21,
1377.

Began to
Reign
Sep. 22,
1327.

Reigned
50 Years.

Had been placed on the throne when his father was deposed. Edward after a successful inroad into Scotland, turned his attention to France, where he urged his claims to the throne, through his mother, who was a daughter of Philip, the late king. Having landed in Flanders, he took villages and towns in his advance to Paris; after which followed the famous battle of Crescy, and the capture of Calais. The Black Prince, eldest son of Edward, gained a victory near Poitiers, where he took John, king of France, prisoner, and had him conveyed to London. The Black Prince died shortly after, in the forty-sixth year of his age. The king, who was painfully grieved at the loss of his son, did not long survive him, but died the year after at Surrey, in the fiftieth year of his reign.

Eminent men in this reign:—Edward, the Black Prince; John, Lord Chandos; Latimer, Lord Chamberlain; Roger, Lord Mortimer.

RICHARD II.



Born
1367.

Died
Jan. 10,
1400.

Began to
Reign
June 21,
1377.

Reigned
23 Years.

Son of the Black Prince, was born at Bordeaux, and succeeded his Grandfather, Edward III. at eleven years of age. He was of a handsome appearance, and lively disposition; but infirm, proud, changeable, and wanting that spirit necessary for the governing a people, poor and discontented, with nobles, haughty and rebellious. While Richard was engaged in quelling an insurrection in Ireland, the people, headed by the Duke of Hereford, had assembled to the amount of 60,000 men. Richard's forces soon began to desert him, and, with no other hopes of safety, he was obliged to throw himself on the mercy of the enemy, by whom he was deposed and sent prisoner to Pomfret Castle, where he was at last murdered by Sir Pierce Exton and other eight assassins.

Eminent men in this reign:—William of Wykeham, Founder of Winchester College, and of Merton College, Oxford; William Walworth, Lord Mayor of London.

HENRY IV.



Born
1367.

Died
March 20,
1413.

Began to
Reign
Oct. 1,
1399.

Reigned
13 Years

On the deposition of Richard, the Duke of Lancaster ascended the throne, under the title of Henry IV. During his reign, which was but short, he performed few deeds worthy of praise; and he soon found the seat of a usurper to be a bed of thorns. One conspiracy was succeeded by another. But while the king toiled to restore his lost character, his son, the Prince of Wales, by his notorious and illegal deeds seemed inclined on reviving the indignation of the people. On one occasion he struck Sir William Gascoigne in court: the worthy magistrate with becoming dignity, committed the prince to prison. Henry did not long survive this affair, but died at Westminster, of leprosy. In his countenance, he was severe, his temper of mind harsh, and discontented; but was brave, firm, and acute.

Eminent men in this reign:—Geoffrey Chaucer; Chief Justice Gascoigne; Henry Percy, surnamed Hotspur; Sir Richard Whittington, Lord Mayor of London.

HENRY V.



Born
1388.

Died
August 31,
1422.

Began to
Reign
March 29,
1413.

Reigned
9½ Years.

Eldest son of Henry IV. succeeded at his father's death to the throne. Though he had been publicly known for his dissolute and unrestrained conduct before his father's death, yet, on ascending the throne he threw off every mark of his former career, called on his late companions to follow his admonitions, and leave off their dissolute life. Sir William Gascoigne, who had imprisoned him, he treated with respect, and exhorted him to follow the same just and disinterested performance of his duty. Henry, after a successful inroad into France, married Catherine, the king's daughter, and had himself declared heir after the king's death. Henry, when in the height of his glory and prosperity, was seized with a complaint which proved fatal. He was firm, and patient; uniformly chaste and temperate.

Eminent men in this reign:—Cardinal Beaufort, Bishop of Winchester; Talbot, Earl of Shrewsbury.

HENRY VI.



Born
1421.

Died
March 21,
1471.

Began to
Reign
August 31,
1422.

Reigned
38½ Years

Succeeded his father when only about a year old, and shortly afterwards became king of France at the death of Charles VI. The Duke of Bedford was appointed regent during the minority of the young king, who was chaste, pious, merciful and kind; but unhappily he had a weakness of mind which unfitted him for governing without the assistance of others. The Duke of Bedford dying in 1443, affairs in England were in a lamentable state. After a variety of troubles Henry was deposed, though ably supported by his wife, Margaret of Anjou, who was possessed of masculine abilities and daring bravery. He was finally committed to the Tower, where he was murdered in the fiftieth year of his age; and his son was murdered by the hands of the Dukes of Gloucester and Clarence.

Eminent men in this reign:—Bishop of Winchester; Dukes of Bedford, Gloucester, and Exeter, regents and guardians to the king.

EDWARD IV.



Born
1441.

Died
April 9,
1482.

Began to
Reign
March 5,
1461.

Reigned
22 Years.

Son of Richard, Duke of York, whose father had been killed in battle while disputing the crown with Henry VI., appeared in the field at his father's death, and after a series of battles had been fought, in which torrents of blood had been shed, was placed on the throne. Edward was of an elegant appearance, and pleasing address; possessing firmness, courage and sagacity; but cruel, revengeful, lewd, and given to adultery. Among the number of his mistresses was one Jane Shore, remarkable for her beauty. She was married to a rich goldsmith in London, where Edward went in disguise, saw her, and through Lord Hastings induced her to leave her husband. Edward, while making preparations to invade France, was taken ill of a disease, of which he died.

Eminent men in this reign:—William Caxton, the first printer in England; Earl of Warwick, called the king-maker; Tiptoft, Earl of Worcester.

EDWARD V.



Born
1470.

Died
June,
1483.

Began to
Reign
April 9
1483.

Reigned
3 Months.

Son of the preceding monarch, succeeded his father when only twelve years of age. The Duke of Gloucester was nominated protector during the minority of the young king, whose reign was short. The Duke had the king and his younger brother conveyed to the Tower, under pretence of affording them greater safety, and had them suffocated while asleep with the pillows and coverings of their bed. Lord Hastings, who had a warm interest in the young king, was beheaded. Having then gained over the most powerful noblemen, he assumed to the crown, which was offered him, and which he accepted with seeming reluctance. The Duke was proclaimed king on the 20th of June, 1483, and was crowned on the 6th of July, having asserted the illegitimacy of the young king and his brother.

Eminent men in this reign :—Richard, Duke of Gloucester, Protector; Lord Hastings.

RICHARD III.



Born
1450.

Died
August 23,
1485.

Began to
Reign
June 27,
1483.

Reigned
2 Years.

Was brother of Edward IV., and found his way to the throne through crime. While the usurper endeavoured to secure his power, he received resistance from a person, from whom he least expected it. The Duke of Buckingham, who had been his abettor in his crimes, levied an army in Wales against him. A scarcity of provisions obliged Buckingham to disperse his army; in the meantime he took shelter in the house of one of his servants, who, tempted by the large reward offered for his master, betrayed him to the enemy, who had him tried, and executed. Richard was killed in the battle of Bosworth-field. He had a disagreeable countenance, and was possessed of uncommon decision, acuteness and courage, but the whole course of his life was that of a tyrant.

Eminent men in this reign :—Duke of Buckingham; Lord Stanley; Duke of Norfolk; Viscount Lovel; Sir Richard Ratcliffe; Sir William Catesby.

HENRY VII.



Born
1456.

Died
April 22,
1509.

Began to
Reign
August 23,
1485.

Reigned
23½ Years.

Earl of Richmond, of the house of Lancaster, ascended the throne on the death of Richard at the battle of Bosworth-field. He married Elizabeth, daughter of Edward IV., and heiress of the York family. This united the interests of both families, rendering the throne free from further dispute. To gain the favour and affections of his subjects, Henry granted a general pardon to all who chose to accept it. After quelling some disturbances, Henry ruled with a steady hand till his death, which happened after a reign of twenty-three years. This reign was productive of many happy results, more particularly for the benefit of the people. None of Henry's predecessors ever did more for the extension of commerce, and for the support of agricultural industry than he did.

Eminent men in this reign :—Sebastian Cabot, a great navigator; Cardinal Morton, Lord Chancellor.

HENRY VIII.



Born
1491.

Died
Jan. 28,
1547.

Began to
Reign
April 22,
1509.

Reigned
37½ Years.

Son of Henry VII. No person ever ascended the throne under more favourable circumstances. His father left the kingdom in a prosperous state; well supplied with money and soldiers, to protect its freedom and commerce. But Henry was vain, extravagant, voluptuous, over-bearing, and wasted the exchequer in frivolous pageantries. In all his excesses he was seconded by his haughty, profligate, and unprincipled minister, Wolsey; who lived the life of a mean intriguing libertine, and after forfeiting the favour of his equally unprincipled and profligate master, died in all the pangs of horror and remorse. The most important event that took place in this reign, was the Reformation. Henry's end was fast approaching, and many were put to death for prognosticating it.

Eminent men in this reign :—Bishop Cranmer; Sir Thomas Moore; Lord Cromwell; Bishop Gardiner.

EDWARD VI.



Born
1537.

Died
July 6,
1553.

Began to
Reign
Jan. 29,
1547.

Reigned
6½ Years.

Was the only son of Henry VIII. He came to the throne at nine years of age. His father had fixed his majority at eighteen, and appointed sixteen executors; the Duke of Somerset, with the title of Protector at their head. Dudley, Earl of Warwick, a crafty man, started forth as rival to Somerset. He got some others to join him, and did not rest till he accomplished the ruin of the Protector. Edward, whose health was fast declining, continued to languish; few had access to him, but the creatures of Dudley, who had, by this time, become the Duke of Northumberland. At length the young king was put into the hands of an ignorant woman, who very confidently undertook his cure. After being a short time under her treatment, he expired at Greenwich, in the sixteenth year of his age.

Eminent men in this reign :—Cranmer, Archbishop of Canterbury; Lord Seymour; Dukes of Somerset and Northumberland; Guildford, Lord Dudley.