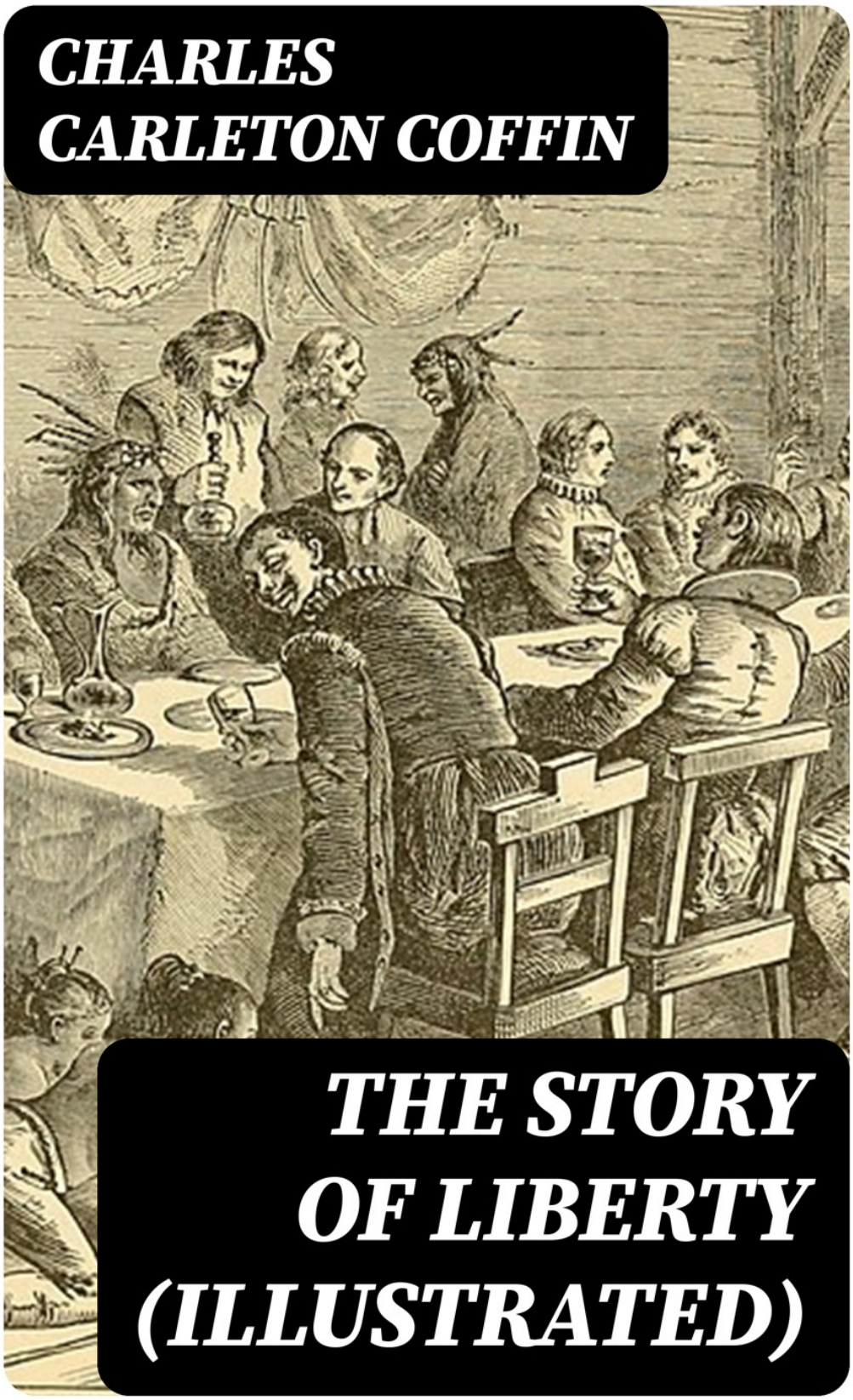
CHARLES CARLETON COFFIN



THE STORY OF LIBERTY (ILLUSTRATED)

Charles Carleton Coffin

The Story of Liberty (Illustrated)

Including "Old Times in the Colonies"

EAN 8596547386254

DigiCat, 2022
Contact: DigiCat@okpublishing.info

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The Story of Liberty

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INTRODUCTION

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This "Story of Liberty" is a true narrative. It covers a period of five hundred years, and is an outline of the march of the human race from Slavery to Freedom.

There are some points in this book to which I desire to direct your attention. You will notice that the events which have given direction to the course of history have not always been great battles, for very few of the many conflicts of arms have had any determining force; but it will be seen that insignificant events have been not unfrequently followed by momentous results: You will see that everything of the present, be it good or bad, may be traced to something in the past; that history is a chain of events. You will also notice that history is like a drama, and that there are but a few principal actors. How few there have been!

The first to appear in this "Story" is King John of England. Out of his signing his. name to the Magna Charta have come the Parliament of Great Britain and the Congress of the United States, and representative governments everywhere. The next actors were John Wicklif and Geoffrey Chaucer, who sowed seed that is now ripening in individual liberty. Then came Henry VII., Henry VIII, Katherine of Aragon, Anne Boleyn, Katherine's daughter (Mary Tudor), Cardinal Wolsey, Archbishop Cranmer, Anne Boleyn's daughter (Elizabeth), King James, John Smith, John Robinson, William Brewster, and the men and women of Austerfield and Scrooby.

In Scotland were Mary Stuart and George Buchanan; in Bohemia, Professor Faulfash and John Huss; in Germany, the boy who sung for his breakfast (Martin Luther), Duke Frederick, John Tetzel, and John Guttenberg; in Holland, Laurence Coster, Doctor Erasmus, and William the Silent; in France, Francis I., Catherine de' Medici, the Duke of Guise,

Charles IX., and Henry IV.; in Spain, Thomas de Torquemada, Isabella, Ferdinand, Christopher Columbus, Charles V., Philip II., and Loyola; in Italy, Alexander VI and Leo X. These have taken great parts in the drama: actively or passively, they have been the central figures.

One other thing: you will notice that the one question greater than all others has been in regard to the right of men to think for themselves, especially in matters pertaining to religion. Popes, archbishops, cardinals, bishops, and priests have disputed the right, to secure which hundreds of thousands of men and women have yielded their lives. You will also take special notice that nothing is said against religion — nothing against the Pope because he is Pope; nothing against a Catholic because he is a Catholic; nor against a Protestant because he protests against the authority of the Church of Rome. Facts of history only are given.' Catholics and Protestants alike have persecuted, robbed, plundered, maltreated, imprisoned, and burned men and women for not believing as they believed. Through ignorance, superstition, intolerance, and bigotry; through thinking that they alone were right, and that those who differed with them were wrong; forgetting that might never makes right; honestly thinking that they were doing God service in rooting out heretics, they filled the world with woe.

There is still another point to be noticed: that the successes of those who have struggled to keep men in slavery have often proved to be in reality failures; while the defeats of those who were fighting for freedom have often been victories. Emperors, kings, cardinals, priests, and popes have had their own way, and yet their plans have failed in the end. They plucked golden fruit, which changed to apples of Sodom. Mary Tudor resolutely set herself to root out all heretics, and yet there were more heretics in England on the day of her death than when she ascended the throne. Charles V. and Philip II. grasped at universal dominion; but

their strength became weakness, their achievements failures. On the other hand, see what has come from disaster! How bitter to John Robinson, William Brewster, and the poor people of Scrooby and Austerfield, to be driven from home, to be exiles! But out of that bitterness has come the Republic of the Western world! Who won — King James, or John Robinson and William Brewster?

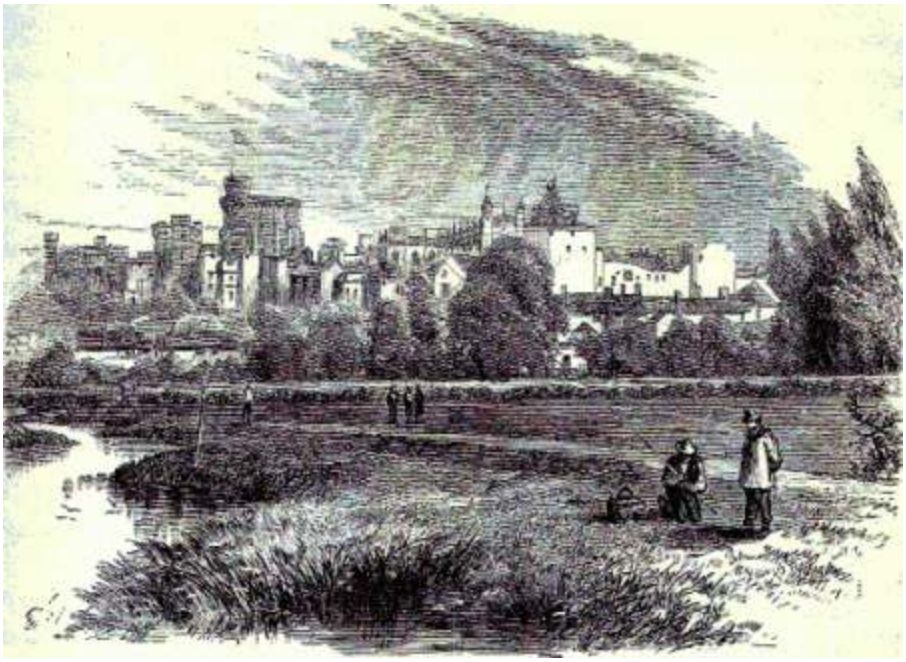
There is still one other point: you will notice that while the oppressors have carried out their plans, and had things their own way, there were other forces silently at work, which in time undermined their plans, as if a Divine hand were directing the counter-plan. Whoever peruses the "Story of Liberty" without recognizing this feature will fail of fully comprehending the meaning of history. There must be a meaning to history, or else existence is an incomprehensible enigma.

Some men assert that the marvellous events of history are only a series of coincidences; but was it by chance that the great uprising in Germany once lay enfolded, as it were, in the beckoning hand of Ursula Cotta? How happened it that behind the passion of Henry VIII. for Anne Boleyn should be the separation of England from the Church of Rome, and all the mighty results to civilization and Christianity that came from that event? How came it to pass that, when the world was ready for it, and not before, George Buchanan should teach the doctrine that the people were the only legitimate source of power? Men act freely in laying and executing their plans; but behind the turmoil and conflict of human wills there is an unseen power that shapes destiny — nations rise and fall, generations come and go; yet through the ages there has been an advancement of Justice, Truth, Right, and Liberty. To what end? Is it not the march of the human race toward an Eden of rest and peace?

If while reading this "Story" you are roused to indignation, or pained at the recital of wrong and outrage, remember that out of endurance and sacrifice has come all

that you hold most dear; so will you comprehend what Liberty has cost, and what it is worth.

Charles Carleton Coffin.



WINDSOR CASTLE, FROM THE MEADOW AT RUNNYMEDE.

CHAPTER I
JOHN LACKLAND AND THE BARONS

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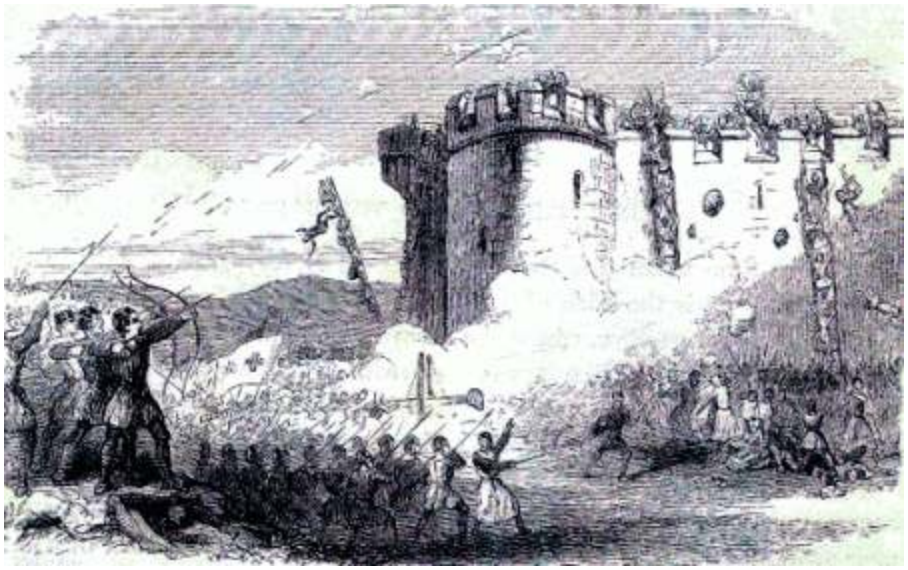
AT the time when this story begins there is very little liberty in the world. It is the 15th of June, and the grass is fresh and green in the Runnymede meadow, where the Army of God has set up its encampment. No other army like it was ever seen. All the great men of England are in its ranks — the barons and lords, the owners of castles who ride on noble horses, wear coats of mail, and are armed with swords and lances.

Pavilions and tents dot the meadow; flags and banners wave in the summer air; General Fitzwalter is commander. There is no hostile army near at hand, nor will there be any clashing of arms on this 15th of June, and yet before the sun goes down the Army of God will win a great vitory over the King of England, Jolin Lackland, who is in Windsor Castle, which overlooks the meadow from the south side of the river Thames, which comes down from the north-west and sweeps on to London.

The king is called John Lackland because his father did not deed him any land. His brother was Richard *Cœur de Lion* — the lion-hearted — who was brave, but also wicked and cruel. He commanded the Crusaders, and fought the Saraceus under Saladin, in Palestine. One day he told his cook to have some fresh pork for dinner, but the cook had no pork, nor did he know where to find a pig. He was in trouble, for if there was no pork on the table he won1d stand a chance of having his head chopped o£F. He had heard it said, however, that human fresh tasted like pork. Knowing that no pork was to be had, he killed a Saracen prisoner and cooked some of the flesh and placed it on the table.

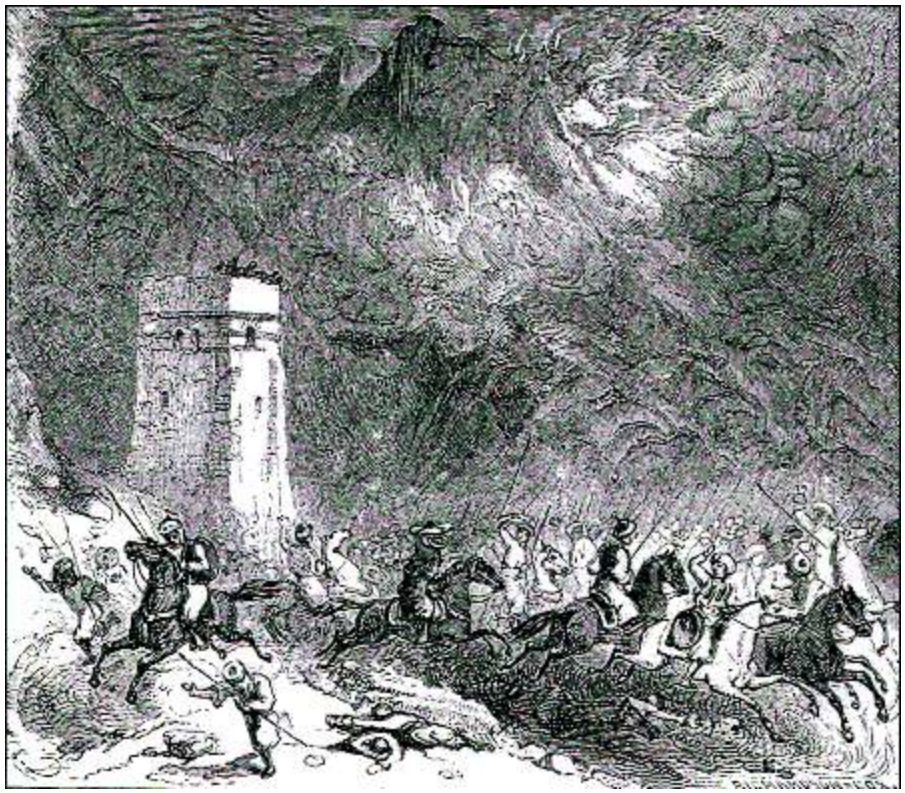
The king praised the dinner. Perhaps, however, he mistrusted that it was not pork, for, said Richard," Bring in the head of the pig, that I may see it."

The poor cook knew not what to do. Now he certainly would ha^e his head cut off. With much trembling he brought in the head of the Saracen. The king laughed when he saw it.



BATTLE OF ACRE.

"We shall not want for pork as long as we have sixty thousand prisoners," he paid, not in the least disturbed to know that he had been eating human flesh. The Saracen general — Saladin — sent thirty ambassadors to Richard beseeching him not to put the prisoners to death, Richard gave them an entertainment, and instead of ornamenting the banquet with flowers, he had thirty Saracens killed, and their heads placed on the table. Instead of acceding to the request of Saladin, he had the sixty thousand men, women, and children slaughtered out on the plain east of the city of Acre.



RICHARD SLAUGHTERING THE SARACENS.

"Tell your master that after such a fashion the Christians wage war against intidels," said Richard to the ambassadors. Kings did as they pleased, but for everybody else there was no liberty.

CRUSADERS.

When Richard died, John seized all hie money, jewels, and the throne, pretending that Richard had made a will in his favor. John's older brother, Geoffrey, who was heir to the throne, was dead; but Geoffrey had a son, Arthur, whose right to the throne was as good as John's. Arthur was a boy, while John was thirty-two years old. The uncle seized Arthur, and put him into a dungeon in the Tower in London, and ordered the keeper, Hubert de Burgh, to put Arthur's eyes out with a red-hot iron. Shakspeare has pictured the scene when Hubert entered one morning and showed Arthur his uncle's order:

"*Arth*, Must you with hot irons bum out both mine eyes?
Hub. Young boy, I must.
Arth. And will you?
Hub. And I will.
Arth. Have you the heart? When your head did but ache,
I knit my handkerchief about your brows,
(The best I had, a princess wrought it me).
And I did never ask it you again:

And with my hand at midnight held your head;
And, like the watchful minutes to the hour,
Still and anon cheer'd up the heavy time:
Saying, What lack yon? and Where lies your grief?
Or, What good love may I perform for you?
Many a poor man's son would have lain still
And ne'er have spoke a loving word to you; But you at your sick service had a prince.
Nay, you may think my love was crafty love.
And call it cunning; Do, an if you will:
If Heaven be pleased that you must use me ill,
Why, then you must. — Will you put out mine eyes?
These eyes that never did, nor never shall,
So much as frown on you?
Hub. I have sworn to do it,
And with hot irons must I burn them out."

But he did not. Arthur was so affectionate and kind that Hubert had not the heart to do it. It is not certainly known what became of Arthur, but that John had him murdered is most probable.

Before John seized the throne, he married a girl named Avisa, daughter of the Duke of Gloucester; but afterward he saw Isabella, wife of Count La Marche, in Normandy, and deserting Avisa, persuaded the foolish woman to leave her husband and marry him. When the count and his friends flew to arms, he seized them, took them over to England, thrust them into loathsome dungeons, and starved them to death, while he lived in affluence in the castle at Windsor.

There were rich Jews in London and Bristol, and John coveted their money. He seized them.

" Give up your money, or I will have your teeth pulled, every one of them," said he. Most of them gave up their money; but one man resisted.

"Pull a tooth," said the king. The tooth was pulled.

"Will you give up your money?"

"No."

"Pull another." Out came another tooth.

"Will you comply with the king's demands!"

"No."

"Pull 'em all out" Out they came.

"Will you hand over your money?

"No."

"Then seize it; take all." So the poor man lost his teeth, and his money also.

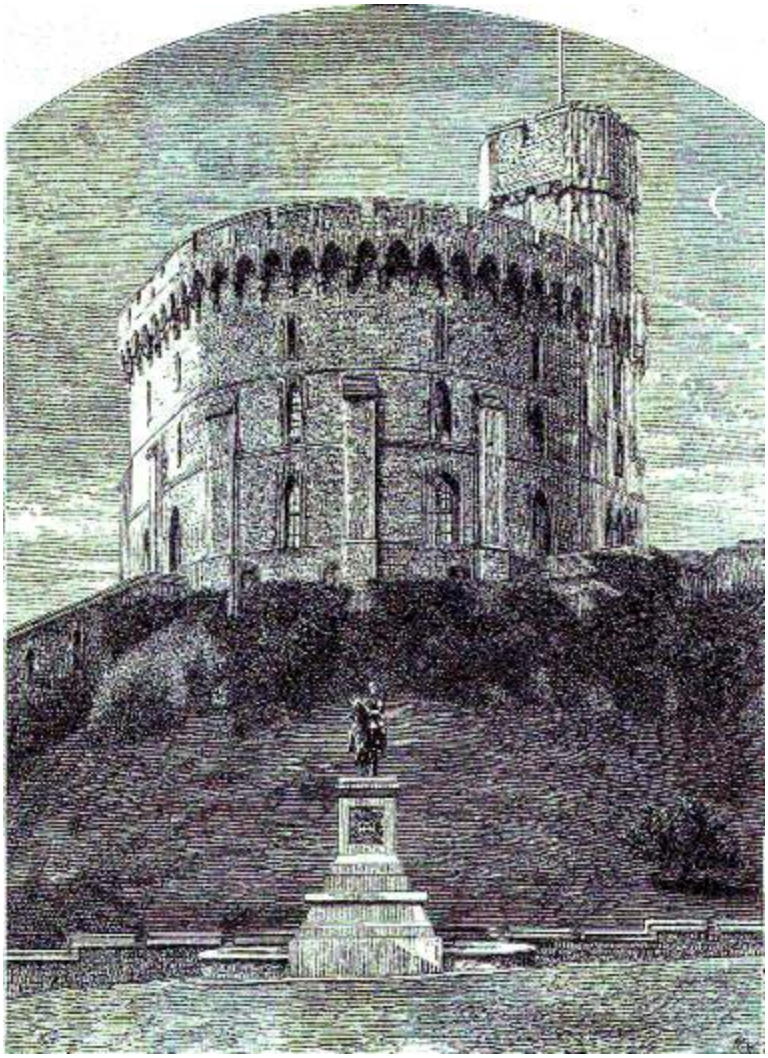
John commanded the country people to drive their cattle into camp, and supply his soldiers with food. The people in Wales, however, would not obey, whereupon he seized twenty-eight sons of the chief families, and shut them up in prison. That stirred the Welshmen's blood, and they flew to arms; but John, instead of giving up the young men, put them to death. He is a tyrant. The barons and lords have resolved that they will no longer submit to his tyranny. They have organized themselves into an army, calling themselves the "Army of God." A few months ago, they sent a deputation to the king, stating their demands.

"I will not grant them liberties which will make me a slave," he said, swearing terrible oaths.

There is no liberty for anybody, except for this wicked and cruel tyrant. But his answer only makes the barons more determined. They resolve that if the king will not grant what they ask, they will secure it by the sword.

John can swear terrible oaths, and make a great bluster; but he is a coward, as all blusterers are, and turns pale when he finds that the Army of God is marching to seize him. He sends word to the barons that he will meet them at Runnymede on the 15th of June, and grant what they desire. The barons have written out their demands on parchment

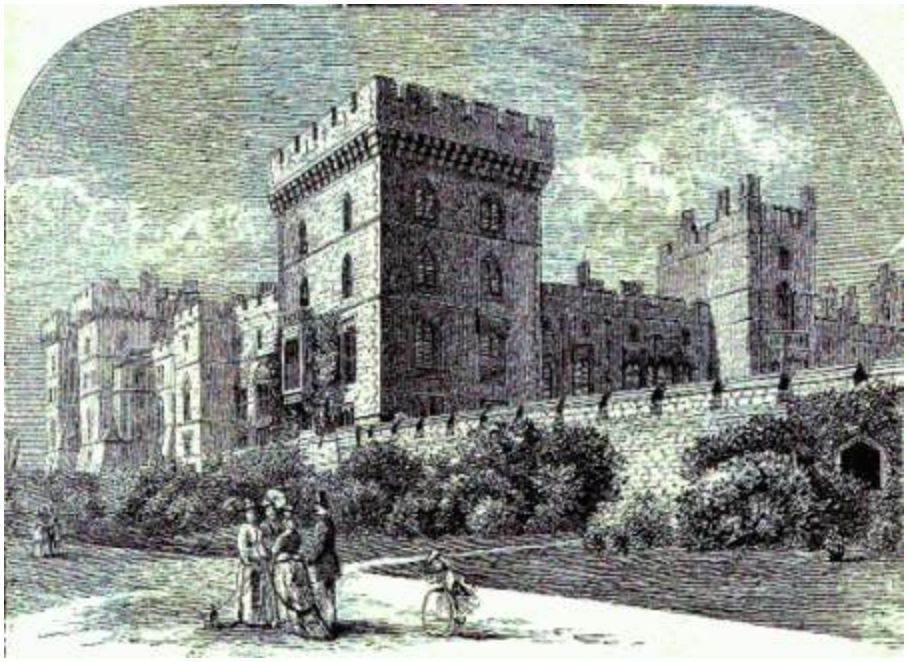
They will have them in writing, and the agreement shall be the law of the land.



ROUND TOWER OF WINDSOR CASTLE

John rides down from the Castle, accompanied by a cavalcade, through Windsor forest, where the deer are feeding, and where pheasants are building their nests, and meets the barons on an island in the river. He is so frightened that he does not ask the barons to make any modification of their demands, but grants what they desire. A great piece of beeswax, as large as a saucer, and an inch thick, is stamped with John's seal, and attached to the parchment; then the king rides back to the Castle, moody and gloomy; but as soon as he gets inside the fortress, he

rages like a madman, walks the hall, smiting his fists, rolling his eyes, gnashing his teeth, biting sticks and chewing straws, cursing the barons, and swearing that he will have his revenge. What is this document to which the king's seal has been attached? It is a paper establishing a Great Council, composed of the barons, the archbishops, bishops, and earls, whom the king is to summon from time to time by name, and the lesser barons, who are to be summoned by the sheriffs of the counties. Together, they are to be a Parliament. Hereafter the king shall not levy any taxes that he may please, or compel people to drive the cattle into camp; but Parliament shall say what taxes shall be levied. The barons may choose twenty-five of their number, who shall see that the provisions of the agreement are carried out Another agreement is that no freeman shall be punished till after he has had a trial by his equals. There are other stipulations, but these are the most important The agreement is called the *Magna Charta*, or Great Charter.



WINDSOR CASTLE (SOUTH VIEW)

John Lackland plans his revenge. There is a powerful man in Home, the most powerful man on earth, who will aid him —

Pope Innocent III. He claims to be, and the barons and everybody else regard him as God's representative on earth. He has all power. The people have been taught to believe that he is the only individual in the world who has the right to say what men shall believe and what they shall do, and that he can do no wrong; that what he says is right *is* right. He is superior to all kings and emperors. Just after the great battle of Hastings, which was fought in October, 1066, Pope Gregory VII. made these declarations:

"To the Pope belongs the right of making new laws.

"All the princes of the earth shall kiss his feet.

"He has the right of deposing emperors.

"The sentence of the Pope can be revoked by none.

"He can be judged by none.

"None may dare to pronounce sentence upon any one who appeals to the Pope.

"He never has erred, nor can he ever err.

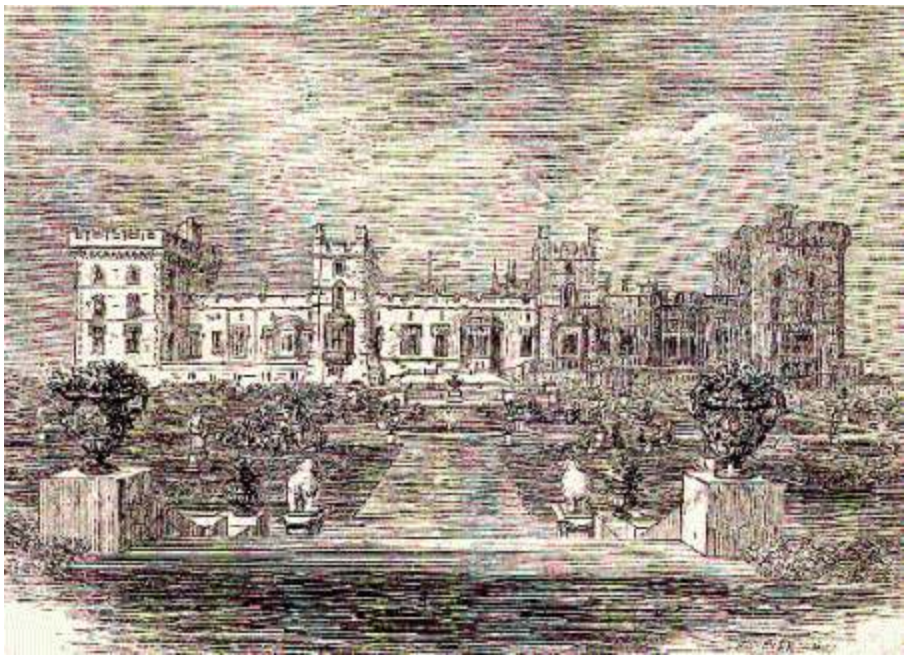
"He can loose subjects from the oath of fealty.

"The Pope is, holy. He can do no wrong."

John has already humiliated himself before the Pope, and acknowledged him as his superior in everything. He sends a copy of the Charter, that the Pope may read it, begging to be released from keeping his oath.

The Pope is very angry when he reads the Charter, for be sees that it encroaches upon his authority, taking political affairs out of his hands. He swears a terrible oath that the barons shall be punished for daring to take such liberties. He releases John from his oath, and sends word to the barons that if they do not renounce the Charter he will excommunicate them. The barons are not frightened, however, and send back this reply:

"It is not the Pope's business to meddle with the political affairs or the rights and liberties of Englishmen."



WINDSOR CASTLE (EAST VIEW).

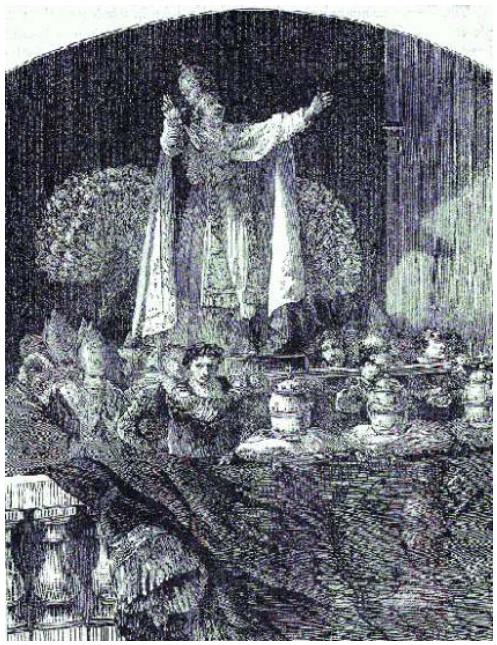
The Pope excommunicates them, and aids John in stirring up the people to fight the barons. He excommunicates the Archbishop of Canterbury, the highest prelate in England, who officiates in Canterbury Cathedral, and who sides with them. The barons, seeing that the Pope and John together are too strong for them, offer the crown to Lewis, son of the King of France. The French king is quite willing to send an army to help them. John marches along the sea-coast to prevent the landing of the French, and comes to a low place when the tide is out; but the tide comes in suddenly with a rush and roar, and he loses all his carriages, treasure, baggage, regalia, and many of his soldiers, and is obliged to flee.

THE PLACE WHERE THE MAGNA CHARTA WAS SIGNED.

A few months later, broken down by fever, by disappointment, and rage, he dies at Norwich, and his son, Henry III., comes to the throne.

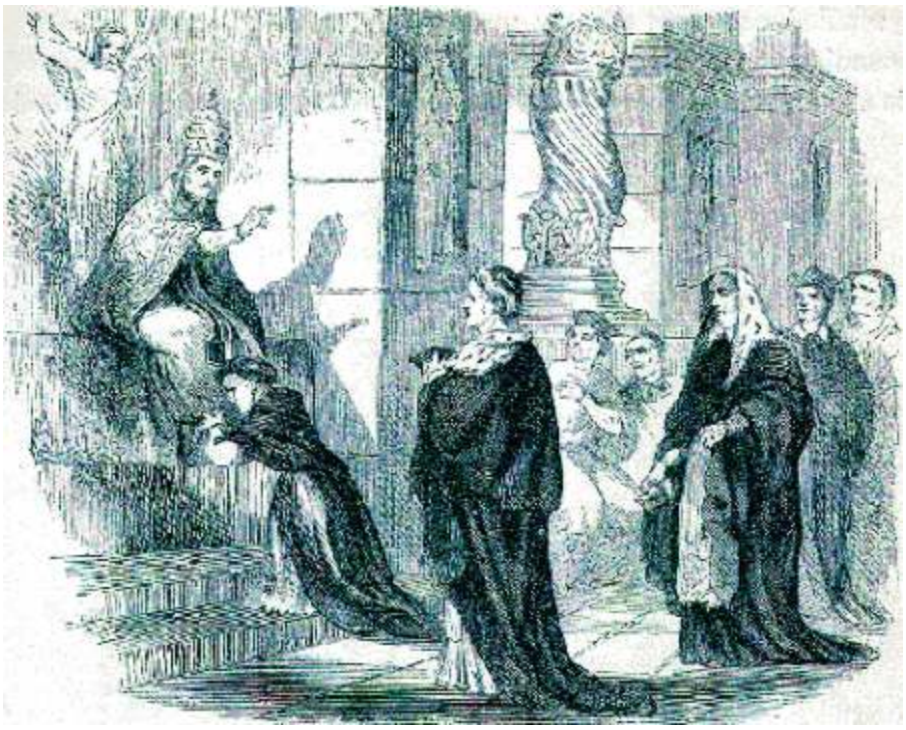
There are two classes of people in England — the upper and the lower class — the barons and the villains. A villain in the nineteenth century is a swindler, a cheat; but six hundred years ago a villain was a poor man who worked for his living. He was a serf, and owed allegiance to the barons. The villains could not own any land, nor could they own themselves. They had no rights nor liberties.

The barons are a few hundreds, the villains several millions. The barons, while demanding their own liberties, are not thinking of obtaining any liberties for the villains. It does not occur to them that a villain has any rights or liberties. Little do they know, however, of what will grow out of that parchment.



"HE HAS THE RIGHT OF DEPOSING EMPERORS."

Six centuries and a half have passed since that 15th of June, in 1315, at Runnymede; the meadows are as fresh and green as then; the river winds as peacefully as it has through all the years. England and America have become great and powerful nations; but would they have been what they are if the Army of God had not won that victory over John Lackland? No; for out of that Charter gave come the Parliament of Great Britain and the Congress of the United States, and many other things. It was the first great step of the English people toward freedom.



"ALL THE PRINCES OF THE EARTH SHALL KISS HIS FEET."

Not far from that verdant meadow where the army set up its encampment is a little old stone church, with ivy creeping over its walls and climbing its crumbling tower. One hundred and fifty years ago, Thomas Gray, a poet, who lived in a little hamlet near by, used to wander out in the evening to meditate in the old church-yard, and here ho wrote a sweet poem, beginning,

THE CHURCH.

"The curfew tolls the knell of parting day
The lowing herd winds slowly o'er the lea;

The ploughman homeward plods his weary way,
And leaves the world to darkness and to me."

CANTERBURY CATHEDRAL.

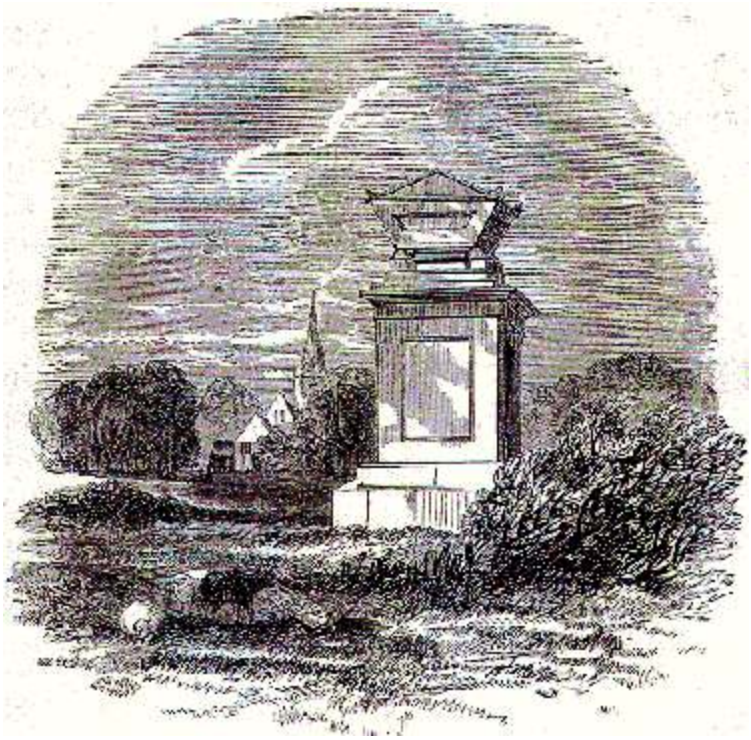
A few years after he wrote it, in 1759, one night a great fleet of English war-ships was moored in the river St. Lawrence, and an army in boats with muffled oars was silently moving along the stream. The general commanding it was James Wolfe, a young man only thirty years of age. In his army were soldiers from New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Connecticut, and New York. One of General Wolfe's officers was Colonel Israel Putnam, of Connecticut; another was Richard Montgomery, of New York. As the boats moved along the stream, the brave young general from England recited this verse of the poem :

"The boast of heraldry, the pomp of power,
And all that beauty, all that wealth, e'er gave,
Await, alike, th' inevitable hour;
The paths of glory lead but to the grave."

"I would rather be the author of that poem than take Quebec to-mor-row," said he.

But would the poem ever have been written if the Army of God had not set up its banners? Quite likely not.

In the darkness the army under General Wolfe climbed the steep bank of the St. Lawrence — so steep and so narrow the path that only one man at a time could climb it; and in the morning the whole army stood on the Plains of Abraham, behind Quebec. Before another sunset a great battle bad been fought, a great victory won. Wolfe was victor, Montcalm the vanquished; but both were dead. The flag of France, which had floated above the citadel of Quebec, the emblem of French power, disappeared forever, and the flag of England appeared in its place. From that time on there was to be another language, another literature, another religion, another civilization, in the Western World. But would the battle ever have been fought, would things in America be as they are, if the barons had not obtained that agreement in writing from John Lackland? No. That parchment, crumpled and worn and yellow with time, with the great round seal attached to it, lies in a glass case in the British Museum, London. The parchment is but a piece of sheepskin; the wax was made by the bees which hummed amidst the hawthorn hedges of old England six hundred years ago. The parchment and the wax are of very little account in themselves, but what has come from them is of infinite value. As this story goes on, it will be seen that the assembling of the Army of God in the meadow of Runnymede was the beginning of the liberty which we now enjoy.



GRAY's MONUMENT.

CHAPTER II
THE MAN WHO PREACHED AFTER HE WAS DEAD

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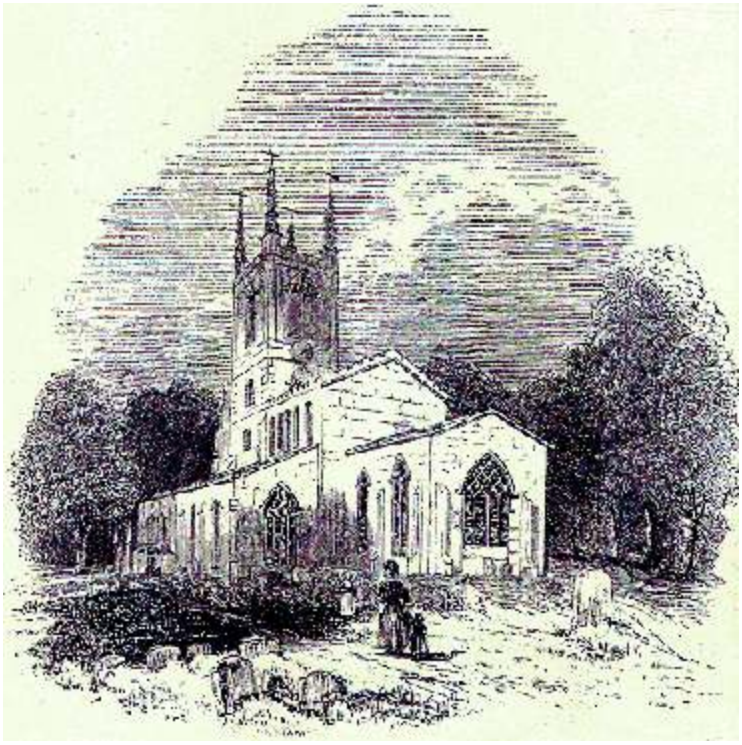
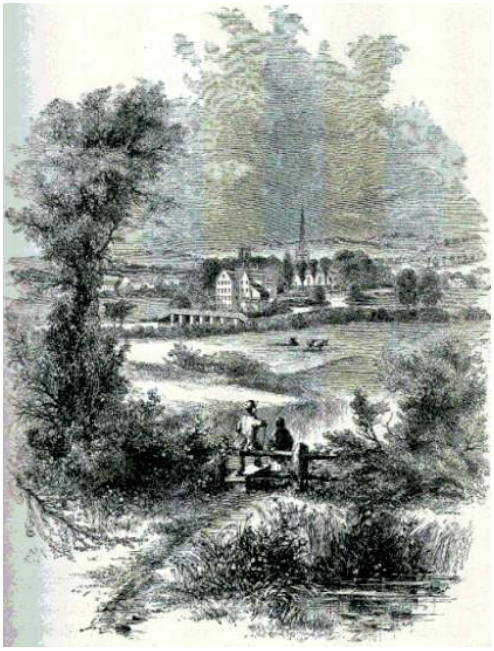
DOCTOR JOHN WICKLIF has been dead these forty years, and his bones have been lying the while in Lutterworth Church-yard; but it has been decreed by the great Council of Constance that they shall lie there no longer. A party of monks, with pick and spade, have dug them up, and now they kindle a fire, burn them to powder, and shovel the ashes into a brook which sweeps past the church-yard; and the brook bears them oil to the Avon, which, after winding through Stratford meadows, falls into the Severn, and the Severn bears them to the sea. But why are the monks so intent upon annihilating the doctor's bones? Because the doctor, who was a preacher, though he has been dead so long, still continues to preach! The monks will have no more of it; and they think that by getting rid of his bones they will put an end to his preaching. They forget that there are some things which the tire will not burn — such as liberty, truth, justice. Little do they think that the doctor will keep on preaching; that his parish will be the world, his followers citizens of every land; that his preaching, together with that parchment and the great piece of beeswax attached to it, which the barons obtained from John Lackland, will bring about a new order of things in human affairs; that thrones will be overturned; that sovereigns will become subjects, and subjects sovereigns.



LUTTERWORTH CHURCH.



STRATFORD.

A century has passed since the Magna Charta was obtained, bat not much liberty has come from that document as jet. The people are still villains. The king and the barons plunder

them; the monks, friars, bishops, and archbishops — a swarm of men live upon them. They must pay taxes to the king, to the barons, and to the priests; and they have no voice in saying what or how much the taxes shall be. They are ignorant. They have no books. Not one man in a thousand can read. The priests and the parish clerks, the bishops, rich men, and their children are the only ones who have an opportunity of obtaining an education. There are no schools for the poor.

THE MONKS.

The priests look sharply after their dues. Be it a wedding, a funeral, the saying of mass for the dead, baptizing a child, granting absolution for sin, or any other service, the priest must have his fee. The country is overrun with monks and friars — Carmelites, who wear white gowns; Franciscans, dressed in gray; Augustinians and Dominicans, who wear black. They live in monasteries and abbeys, shave their crowns, and go barefoot. They have taken solemn vows to have nothing to do with the world, to spend their time in