

tory; that in his feuds with the Barons he always received the support of the lower classes, and we can form some idea of the immense power of the early Anglo-Norman Kings.

So long as this system of despotism was upheld by the kings of high intellectual capacity, as indeed were all the predecessors of John and as long as their power was exercised moderately, the people bore their lot with resignation if not with indifference. But now we come to a time when the patience of the nation could no longer brook the regal violence and rapacity; when the badge of sufrance ceased to be borne in silence; when their consecrated but forsworn King by his indiscriminate persecution of all classes high and low arrayed against him a nation resolute, steadfast, determined to resist.

Circumstances conspired to render a permanent union among the people more certain. John by his offenses against the French King, his over-lord, had lost Normandy. Henceforth the Barons no longer held Normandy as their proper home. Henceforth the name of Englishman, what once had been to them a deadly insult, became a national and glorious name. They felt that they held a common interest with the Saxon in asserting their rights and those of their country.

We shall not allude to any of the multitudinous acts of injustice of which King John was guilty. Enough to give a general idea. Says Dr. Lingard,—“He stands before us polluted with meanness, cruelty, perjury and murder; uniting with an ambition which rushed through every crime to the attainment of its object, a pusillanimity which often, at the sole appearance of opposition, sank into despondency. Arrogant in prosperity, abject in adversity, he neither conciliated affection in the one nor esteem in the other. His dissimulation was so well known that it seldom deceived; his suspicion served but to multiply his enemies, and the knowledge of his vindictive temper contributed to keep open the breach betwixt him and those who had incurred his displeasure.”

Thus, as Hallam has well said, “all the rapacious actions usual to the Norman Kings were not only redoubled but mingled with outrages still more intolerable”—and this at the hands of a man utterly contemptible for his folly and cowardice. These very qualities however contributed largely to the great results which followed, for had he been less vicious the Barons would probably never have united with the freemen against the common