

great churchman, as able as he was pious, Stephen Langton, to whom the British owe the cornerstone of their liberties, the Magna Charta. In England again, was Simon de Montfort, warrior and statesman, the father of English representative government. In Germany there ruled the simple but heroic Rudolph of Hapsburg. In France, Philip Augustus, soldier and legislator, left to his heir a kingdom triple the size of what he had inherited. It was truly an age when statesmen worked only for the nation's advantage, and kings did more than wear a crown and enjoy the emoluments of their office.

But of all the rulers of that time there stands out pre-eminently one character, which alone would suffice to shed surpassing lustre on any time—Louis the Saint of France. To my mind St. Louis is the most perfect ruler that the world has ever seen. He is the king ideal. In him is found the most notable example in all human experience of the blending of a natural with a supernatural heroism, a union of the most robust martial spirit with a robust virtue and a robust spirit of faith. Historians one and all speak of him with reverent admiration, even the ribald, sneering, satanic Voltaire felt constrained to say that to every royal virtue he joined the piety of an anchorite. He was the angel of justice, righteousness and law enthroned for a time among mortals. So singular was his justice that even the meanest serf in all his realm found it sufficient check against an oppressor merely to say, "If the king but knew this, it would not go well with thee." Before his departure for the war of the Holy Sepulchre, we see him sending mendicant friars throughout his domain to find if any wrong had been done to even the lowliest of his subjects, and if so, to repair it immediately at his expense. This meets our ears like the sound of a dream or fable; but if we could only catch the informing spirit of those simple holy times, we could well appreciate its reality.

In the simplicity of his heart, says the French historian Duruy, St. Louis did more to extend the royal authority than the wisest counsellors or than ten warlike kings could have done, because after his time the king seemed to the people the incarnation of order and justice. He gave royalty a sacred character.

Among the reverent sons of France, St. Louis is still enshrined in memory as fancy pictures him wrapped in a robe of blue, sprinkled with fleur-de-lis, sitting under the oak of Vincennes, administering justice to all that came to him. If men are the mirror of their times, how great must we think the Thirteenth Century.

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