

such is undoubtedly the case. So long as any genuine element of choice survived, the elected King felt that he had been chosen for his personal qualities; and, naturally, he exercised personal rule. When he died, there was what is called an 'interregnum,' or period between Kings; and then, as an old chronicler feelingly remarks, 'forthwith every man that could robbed another,' for the 'King's Peace,' or protection against disorder, was suspended. But, in the twelfth century, the English Kingship became definitely hereditary, largely owing to feudal ideas; and then, though it is doubtful whether the military character of the Kingship would have permitted a woman to claim the throne (at any rate there was no reigning Queen in England or Scotland till the sixteenth century) it could hardly be long before the country was faced with an infant King. This is exactly what happened on the death of King John (1215), whose eldest son, Henry III, was only nine years old when his father died. It was a 'test case,' as the lawyers say. Should the infant, who, obviously, could not personally exercise the powers of Kingship, be set aside in favour of some elected adult, or should he nominally become King, and the difficulty be got over in another way? The latter was the course chosen; and for years, all acts of State, though nominally done in the King's name, were really decided by a Council of Regency, consisting of the great officials of the Kingdom. The result was not entirely good; but it was quite as fortunate as the later part of Henry's reign, when he himself governed. And it is remarkable that it was during that reign that not only were the foundations of the future Parliament laid, but the development of that system whereby, as we have seen (p. 13), the actual administration of justice was taken out of the King's personal control, was definitely established. But the most striking proof of the change which had been wrought in the character of the King-