

the Teutonic leaders became kings, but still held their power from the people, as shown in their title as kings of the English and not as kings of England. They were thus the ministers rather than the masters of the people.

Under the later Saxon kings there was a marked increase in the power of the crown and nobility, yet the government, although aristocratic in practice, still remained democratic in theory. We see the germs of representation and election in the local courts of the shire and township, while every freeman still retained the theoretical right of attending the Witenagemot or National Council. That august body, which eventually developed into the modern House of Lords, exercised those cardinal prerogatives, which has so often been the bone of contention between crown and people, viz.—council and consent in legislation, and control of taxation.

Thus having shown the origin of our constitutional rights and privileges, and the manner in which they were exercised by our Saxon ancestors, let us next consider the way in which these same principles became embodied in our modern parliamentary institutions.

Standing at the beginning of the Norman period and glancing down through English history, we can trace three distinct periods of constitutional growth.

The first and most important of the three ends with the War of the Roses in 1485. During this time the British Constitution assumed its present outward form, while all the great principles of English freedom were firmly established. It is true there were many changes after this, but they were more in the nature of assisting the practical working of the Constitution than in changing the outward form. To this period belongs the great cornerstone of English liberty, the Magna Charta. The tyranny of the Norman kings led to the union of the barons and people, and the wresting of the charter from John in 1216. The Magna Charta asserts nothing new, but merely reiterates ancient privileges and the good laws of Edward the Confessor. Its essential principles are the great framework of our Constitution and have been ratified by succeeding sovereigns nearly forty times.

Following the Magna Charta we have the growth of Parliament out of the Curia Regis or Great Council of the Norman kings. Although the knights of the shire had met with the Great Council several times previous to 1265, the House of Commons may fairly be said