

less strifes with his old ally and enemy, Philip Augustus of France. At length, in April 1199, the chance arrow of a French soldier inflicted a fatal wound on this "hero of a thousand fights." Richard died without issue, having spent in England but six months out of his reign of ten years. He was a military adventurer rather than a King.

CHAPTER XVII.

PLANTAGENET LINE: HOUSE OF ANJOU.—JOHN.
1199 to 1216 A.D.

1. Shortly before his death, Richard had nominated as his successor his youngest and only surviving brother, John. This nomination was ratified by a great council of prelates and barons held at Northampton, and in May 1199 John was solemnly crowned at Westminster. According to the present law of succession, Richard's lineal heir was Arthur, Duke of Brittany, son of his elder brother Geoffrey. John proved to be one of the worst Kings that ever sat on a throne. Neither the life of man nor the honor of woman had any value in his eyes. He was false, cruel, and revengeful. One of his first acts was to divorce his wedded wife, Isabel (or Hawise) of Gloucester, and to marry Isabel of Angoulême, who had been solemnly betrothed to the Earl of March.

**Accession
and
character
of John.**

2. The Norman barons of Anjou, Maine, and Touraine were indisposed to acknowledge John as their ruler. The French King, Philip Augustus, also supported the claims of Prince Arthur. A temporary settlement was effected in 1200, but in 1202 open hostilities broke out, which resulted in the capture of Arthur. The young Prince dropped at once from public sight, and John was promptly, and no doubt truly, judged guilty of the crime of murder.

**Disappearance
of
Arthur.**

3. As Duke of Normandy, John was a vassal of Philip Augustus, who immediately called on him to explain the disappearance of Arthur. On his failing to do so, all his Norman possessions were declared forfeited to the French Crown. Rouen, the chief fortress of Normandy, soon surrendered; and in 1204 all of her original Norman possessions, except the Channel Islands, were permanently lost to England. Guienne and Poitou, the marriage portion of Queen Eleanor, still remained connected with the English Crown.

**Loss of
Norman
possessions.**

4. The next humiliation of England arose out of a quarrel on ecclesiastical matters. The monks of Christ Church, Canterbury, claimed the sole right of nominating the archbishop. This claim was disputed by the bishops of the province. When the matter was referred to the Pope, Innocent wisely

**The
Interdict.**