

37. The death of William.—After a hunt in the New Forest, William was found dead, with an arrow in his breast. It was never known who shot the arrow. Some said it was shot at a stag and struck the king by accident. Others whispered that the king had been murdered by some revengeful Englishman, whose home had been destroyed in the making of the New Forest.

SUMMARY

William Rufus became king and was supported by the English and the clergy, though opposed by the barons. Fearing rebellions, he robbed the barons, plundered the church, and oppressed the people in order to maintain a large standing army. He advanced money for Duke Robert's crusade, and received in return the taxes of Normandy for five years. He was killed in the New Forest.

3. HENRY I. 1100-1135

38. Henry I becomes king.—When William Rufus was shot in the New Forest, his brother Henry, who seems to have been one of the hunting party, galloped away to Winchester, as fast as his horse could carry him, in order to secure the royal treasury. If Robert had been on the spot, it is probable that the Norman barons would have stood by him, and that there might have been much trouble; but Robert had not yet returned from his crusade, and in a few days Henry was crowned. The English were glad to have him for king rather than his brother, for Henry was born in England, and had learned to speak English. Then, too, whenever they thought of Robert, they remembered that he was Duke of Normandy, and a friend of the Norman barons who had oppressed them.

In order to secure the support of the nation for himself and to prevent any attempt to place Robert on the throne, Henry issued a "Charter of Liberties." In this charter the king bound himself to respect the property of the church. He promised not to abuse his feudal rights over the barons, and in turn forbade the barons to extort money from their