

have a claim to the throne were three young men, sons of one of the daughters of William the Conqueror. These young men were in Normandy, and in the midst of the general lawlessness that followed the death of Henry, Stephen, the second son, made his way to London, and was received by the Londoners as their king.

Three weeks after Henry's death Stephen was crowned, and at once he gave the people two excellent charters, promising to treat them fairly and to do his best to be a good ruler. If he had been as strong as he was agreeable, England

would have been saved many years of trouble, but his reign was nothing but turmoil from beginning to end. Matilda would not abandon her claim to the crown, and Stephen was neither powerful nor wise enough to oppose her successfully.



PORCHESTER CASTLE, BUILT  
ABOUT 1150

44. **Behaviour of the English barons.**—The barons supported now one and now the other. In fact, they did not care much who was on the throne, if they were only free to do what they chose. More and more

castles were built, as Stephen was too weak to prevent their erection. Every baron was a king over the district around him, and most of these barons were tyrants. The "Anglo-Saxon Chronicle," which stops with the reign of Stephen, says. "Every rich man built castles and defended them against all, and they filled the land with castles. They greatly oppressed the wretched people by making them work at these castles, and when the castles were finished, they filled them with devils