

John

We observ'd in the end of the last Reign that Richard was said to have made a Will in favour of His brother John. Hovden is the only contemporary Historian that mentions it, John never pretended to produce it, tho' of the greatest consequence to Him, but is worth observing that Richard had declar'd Arthur Duke of Britany Son of Geoffrey His next Brother Heir to all His Dominions at Mesina, & that upon this declaration a treaty of marriage had been set on foot by Richard between the young Prince & the Daughter of Tancred King of Sicily, & the whole Nobility that attended the King to the Crusade had bound themselves by an Oath to keep the Succession in that line; however setting aside this [78] dispute, John on His Brother's death sent over Hubert Archbishop of Canterbury from Normandy with full powers to act in conjunction with His friends for securing Him the Crown; this was no difficult task, for His competitor was but twelve years old, almost unknown in England; had His title been supported by a friend of virtue & dignity, such as Maud had in Robert Earl of Glocester, John's accession would not have been so easy a matter, & as it was abroad Anjou, Tourain & Main declar'd for Arthur, whom His Mother Constance deliever'd to the French King Philip, who immediately garrison'd the Towns of all these Countrys, overrun most of Normandy, & by His conquests procur'd the title of August which had Richard liv'd had never been His lot, & which He by no mean deserv'd, for soon after this He ~~sacrificed~~ ^ made a ^ treaty with John at Arthur's expence [79] by which He was forc'd to do homage to John for Britany, who perform'd the same ceremony to Philip for Normandy besides 20,000 Marks sterling that He engag'd to pay, giving up His Nephew Otho & all His French Allys; besides this John gave His Niece Blanche of Castille to the French King's Son Lewis, & a clause was inserted in the Marriage contract that in case John died without lawful issue, all His Foreign Dominions were to go to Lewis; these Matters settl'd John came over into England to raise the many He had promiss'd ~~to give~~ Philip & now secure in the possession of the Throne He follow'd nobodys opinion & the rest of His Reign becomes one scene of folly & imprudence, He had been marry'd ten years to Isabel Daughter of Robert Earl of Glocester; but got Himself divorc'd from Her by the Archbishop of Bourdeaux, who marry'd Him directly to Isabel daughter of Count [80] Anjoulesme who had been contracted to Count la Marche & with whom she actually liv'd, when John falling in love with Her prevail'd on the Father to steel Her away. [1202] The next in impious action was the murther of His Nephew Arthur whom He had taken Prisoner in a Battle in Poitou nay some Writers affirm He did this inhuman act with his own hand the consequence of which was the revolt of all His Foreign Subjects, which enabl'd Philip ~~and~~ ^ to conquer ^ most parts of His Foreign dominions & united to the Crown of France, Anjou, Maine, Touraine & Normandy; these cases furnish'd John with a pretext to load His people with Taxes, otherwise spending His whole time in feasting & Jollity & insensible to the Calamitys that came thick upon Him, despis'd by every one, the Pope join'd in the [81] Common contempt & nam'd an Italian one Langton to fill the See of Canterbury; this the King highly resented, which brought on a Papal interdict upon the Kingdom, & four years [1212] after this haughty Priest presum'd to excommunicate Him & absolve His subjects from their oath of allegiance, ~~to~~ this ^ was ^ follow'd ~~ing~~ ~~unclear~~ ^ by His ^ declaring the crown vacant & an invitation to all the Princes &c. of Europe to March under the Banner of Philip to destroy the Enemy of the Church, for which service the same indulgences were granted as for the wholly War; Such an example as this makes it doubtful ~~whether~~ ~~to~~ ^ whether our indignation ^ is more rais'd at the insolence & cruelty of this meek & humble successor of St. Peter, or at the abject conduct of the European Princes who thus stoop'd to be

trodden upon by a man sprung from the scum of the people [82] but to return to John frighten'd at the French preparations & knowing himself abhor'd & despis'd by His Subjects He meanly accepted the infamous offers made Him by the Pope whereby besides many of the most mortifying Articles, He solemnly resign'd His crown to the Pope, holding the Crown for Himself & His Successors as Vassals, in consequence of which an annual tribute was to be paid; this done the wretched King had His crown restor'd to Him, & Philip in His turn was threaten'd with the thunder of Rome if He presum'd to attack the Popes Vassal; soon after this John thinking Himself now sure of His Subjects obedience after he had receiv'd the Pope's forgiveness, propos'd invading France, & set out accordingly for Jersey, when all His Barons & Knights declar'd that their forty days being expir'd the usual time of service, they would not attend Him longer at their own expence which [83] forc'd Him to return, this soon follow'd by the insurrection of the Barrons, who coming to London [1215] boldly demanded of John the Confirmation of the Charter of Henry 1., which He absolutely refus'd, but finding Himself deserted on all hands, He was oblig'd on Jane the 15th. to sign the two famous charters we have elsewhere taken notice of Magna Charta & the Charta de Foresta besides which He was oblig'd to consent that the Barons should chuse 25. of their Number to see the Charters were observ'd, & in case they were broke, they were with the Nation to compel obedience, & Royal Writ were issu'd obliging the sheriffs to sware to the execution of them, the Barons were likewise to keep possession of London till every thing was settl'd according to the orders of the twenty five.

This was no sooner over than the King began to repent extremily & immediately began to fortify His Castles, & got the Pope to annull the [84] agreement, & as to the Barons they as is usual in such cases begun to cool, for where numbers of People unite in one common cause till thy have carry'd their point, but when once success has attended it many private differences that the Common view kept dormant begin to show themselves & a relaxation in their indevours constantly insue; accordingly John getting together a great army of Foreigners join'd with several who renounc'd the association form'd two great Armys, & drove the Barons to the infamous step of calling over Lewis Philip's Son to the Succession; Lewis accepted the invitation & coming over with an Army was join'd by the Barons, this prov'd fatal to the King, for most of His French foreigners deserted Him, which forc'd Him upon the defensive War whilst His Enemy got possession of many Castles, & march'd to London, & had He acted with prudence would in all probability have conquer'd the Kingdom [85] but fortunately for England He show'd His sentiments too soon dismissing the English from His Counsels, confiding only in the French, committing in their hands all the Castle He took determining as the Viscount de Mellune declar'd on His death bed to exterminate all the familys that had invited Him over as Traitors, to their King & Country; in this situation of things [1216] John died at Newark.

This Prince is represented of a light & trifling disposition, indolent, effeminate, & much given to Vice; of an arrogant, imperious temper, & insupportably haughty to all around Him; He had very mean parts with great deal of little cunning, consequently very false, Tyrranical to a great degree, & His Character was so bad, that the Nobility durst not trust Him even when they saw the fatal consequences of inviting over the French; He was greedy & rapacious to a great [86] degree, that all were impoveris'd in this bad Reign, & none so much as the Clergy, it is therefore no wonder that this Prince should die unpitied, & that His memory should be in detestation.