

the king's army, and by his repeated treacheries at last transferred the crown to Canute the Dane.

IT seems universally agreed by all historians, that king Alfred first settled a national militia in this kingdom, and by his prudent discipline made all the subjects of his dominion soldiers: but we are unfortunately left in the dark as to the particulars of this his so celebrated regulation; though, from what was last observed, the dukes seem to have been left in possession of too large and independent a power: which enabled duke Harold on the death of Edward the confessor, though a stranger to the royal blood, to mount for a short space the throne of this kingdom, in prejudice of Edgar Atheling the rightful heir.

UPON the Norman conquest the feudal law was introduced here in all it's rigor, the whole of which is built upon a military plan. I shall not now enter into the particulars of that constitution, which belongs more properly to the next part of our commentaries: but shall only observe, that, in consequence thereof, all the lands in the kingdom were divided into what were called knight's fees, in number above sixty thousand; and for every knight's fee a knight or soldier, *miles*, was bound to attend the king in his wars, for forty days in a year; in which space of time, before war was reduced to a science, the campaign was generally finished, and a kingdom either conquered or victorious^e. By this means the king had, without any expense, an army of sixty thousand men always ready at his command. And accordingly we find one, among the laws of William the conqueror^f, which in the king's name commands and firmly enjoins the personal attendance of all knights and others; "*quod habeant et teneant se semper in armis et equis, ut decet et oportet; et quod semper sint prompti et parati ad servitium suum integrum nobis explendum et peragendum, cum opus adfuerit, secundum quod debent de feodis et tenementis suis*

^e The Poles are, even at this day, so terrified to serve above six weeks, or forty days, in a year. Mod. Un. Hist. xxxiv. 12. their poplite, or militia, cannot be com-
^f c. 58. See Co. Litt. 75, 76.