

were able to carry out the wishes of the king, collect his revenues, administer justice, gather armies, and in other ways make his rule effective to an extent unknown in the preceding period. The sheriffs, who had already existed as royal representatives in the shires in Anglo-Saxon times, now possessed far more extensive powers, and came up to Westminster to report and to present their financial accounts to the royal exchequer twice a year. Royal officials acting as judges not only settled an increasingly large number of cases that were brought before them at the king's court, but travelled through the country, trying suits and punishing criminals in the different shires. The king's income was vastly larger than that of the Anglo-Saxon monarchs had been. The old Danegeld was still collected from time to time, though under a different name, and the king's position as landlord of the men who had received the lands confiscated at the Conquest was utilized to obtain additional payments.

Perhaps the greatest proof of the power and efficiency of the government in the Norman period was the compilation of the great body of statistics known as "Domesday Book." In 1085 King William sent commissioners to every part of England to collect a variety of information about the financial conditions on which estates were held, their value, and fitness for further taxation. The information obtained from this investigation was drawn up in order and written in two large manuscript volumes which still exist in the Public Record Office at London. It is a much more extensive body of information than was collected for any other country of Europe until many centuries afterward. Yet its statements, though detailed and exact and of great interest from many points of view, are disappointing to the student of history. They were obtained for the financial purposes of government, and cannot be made to give the clear picture of the life of the people and of the relations of different classes to one another which would be so welcome, and which is so easily obtained from the great variety