

campaign of 1359. But he was luckless enough to be made prisoner; and from the time of his release after the treaty of Brétigny he took no further share in the military enterprises of his time. He seems again to have returned to service about the Court, and it was now that his first poems made their appearance, and from this time John of Gaunt may be looked upon as his patron. He was employed in seven diplomatic missions which were probably connected with the financial straits

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CHAUCER.
MS. Harl. 4866.

of the Crown, and three of these, in 1372, 1374, and 1378, carried him to Italy. He visited Genoa and the brilliant court of the Visconti at Milan; at Florence, where the memory of Dante, the "great master" whom he commemorates so reverently in his verse, was still living, he may have met Boccaccio; at Padua, like his own clerk of Oxenford, he possibly caught the story of Griseldis from the lips of Petrarca. He was a busy, practical worker; Comptroller of the Customs in 1374, of the Petty Customs in 1382, a member of the Commons in the Parliament of 1386, and from 1389 to 1391 Clerk of the Royal Works, busy with building at

Westminster, Windsor, and the Tower. A single portrait has preserved for us his forked beard, his dark-coloured dress, the knife and pen-case at his girdle, and we may supplement this portrait by a few vivid touches of his own. The sly, elvish face, the quick walk, the plump figure and portly waist were those of a genial and humorous man; but men jested at his silence, his love of study. "Thou lookest as thou wouldest find an hare," laughs the Host, in the "Canterbury Tales," "and ever on the ground I see thee stare." He heard little of his neighbours' talk when office work was over. "Thou goest home to thy own house

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anon, and also dumb as any stone thou sittest at another book till fully dazed is thy look, and livest thus as an heremite, although," he adds slyly, "thy abstinence is lite" (little). But of this abstraction from his fellows there is no trace in his verse. No poetry was ever more human than Chaucer's; none ever came



CHAUCER.

Ellesmere MS. of Canterbury Tales.

more frankly and genially home to its readers. The first note of his song is a note of freshness and gladness. "Of ditties and of songes glad, the which he for my sake made, the land fulfilled is over all," Gower makes Love say in his lifetime; and the impression of gladness remains just as fresh now that four hundred years have passed away. The historical character of Chaucer's work lies on its surface. It stands out in vivid contrast with the poetic

literature from the heart of which it sprang. The long French romances were the product of an age of wealth and ease, of indolent curiosity, of a fanciful and self-indulgent sentiment. Of the great passions which gave life to the Middle Ages, that of religious enthusiasm had degenerated into the pretty conceits of Mariolatry, that of war into the extravagances of Chivalry. Love, indeed, remained; it was the one theme of troubadour and trouvère, but it was a love of refinement, of romantic follies, of scholastic discussions, of sensuous enjoyment—a plaything rather than a passion. Nature had to reflect the pleasant indolence of man; the song of the minstrel moved through a perpetual May-time; the grass was ever green; the music of the lark and the nightingale rang out from field and thicket. There was a gay avoidance of all that is serious, moral, or reflective in man's life: life was too amusing to be serious, too piquant, too sentimental, too full of interest and gaiety and chat. It was an age of talk: "mirth is none," says the Host, "to ride on by the way dumb as a stone;" and the trouvère aimed simply at being the most agreeable talker of his day. His romances, his rimes of Sir Tristram, his Romance of the Rose, are full of colour and fantasy, endless in detail, but with a sort of gorgeous idleness about their very length, the minuteness of their description of outer things, the vagueness of their touch when it passes to the subtler inner world. It was with this literature that Chaucer had till now been familiar, and it was this which he followed in his earlier work. But from the time of his visits to Milan and Genoa his sympathies drew him not to the dying verse of France, but to the new and mighty upgrowth of poetry in Italy. Dante's eagle looks at him from the sun. "Fraunces Petrark, the laureat poete," is to him one "whose rethorique sweete enlumyned al Itail of poetrie." The "Troilus" is an enlarged English version of Boccaccio's "Filostrato," the Knight's Tale bears slight traces of his Teseide. It was, indeed, the "Decameron" which suggested the very form of the "Canterbury Tales." But even while changing, as it were, the front of English poetry, Chaucer preserves his own distinct personality. If he quizzes in the rime of Sir Thopaz the wearisome idleness of the French romance, he retains all that was worth retaining of the French temper, its rapidity and agility of movement, its lightness

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and brilliancy of touch, its airy mockery, its gaiety and good humour, its critical coolness and self-control. The French wit quickens in him more than in any English writer the sturdy sense and shrewdness of our national disposition, corrects its extravagance, and relieves its somewhat ponderous morality. If, on the other hand, he echoes the joyous carelessness of the Italian tale, he tempers it with the English seriousness. As he follows Boccaccio, all his changes are on the side of purity; and when the Troilus of the Florentine ends with the old sneer at the changeableness of woman, Chaucer bids us "look Godward," and dwells on the unchangeableness of Heaven.

The
Canter-
bury
Tales

But the genius of Chaucer was neither French nor Italian, whatever element it might borrow from either literature, but English to the core, and from 1384 all trace of foreign influence dies away. The great poem on which his fame must rest, the "Canterbury Tales," was begun after his first visits to Italy, and its best tales were written between 1384 and 1391. The last ten years of his life saw a few more tales added; but his power was lessening, and in 1400 he rested from his labours in his last home, a house in the garden of St. Mary's Chapel at Westminster. The framework—that of a pilgrimage from London to Canterbury—not only enabled him to string together a number of tales, composed at different times, but lent itself admirably to the peculiar characteristics of his poetic temper, his dramatic versatility, and the universality of his sympathy. His tales cover the whole field of mediæval poetry; the legend of the priest, the knightly romance, the wonder-tale of the traveller, the broad humour of the fabliau, allegory and apologue are all there. He finds a yet wider scope for his genius in the persons who tell these stories, the thirty pilgrims who start in the May morning from the Tabard in Southwark—thirty distinct figures, representatives of every class of English society from the noble to the ploughman. We see the "verray perfight gentil knight" in cassock and coat of mail, with his curly-headed squire beside him, fresh as the May morning, and behind them the brown-faced yeoman, in his coat and hood of green, with the good bow in his hand. A group of ecclesiastics light up for us the mediæval church—the brawny hunt-loving monk, whose bridle jingles as loud and clear as the chapel-bell

—the wanton friar, first among the beggars and harpers of the country side—the poor parson, threadbare, learned, and devout (“Christ’s lore and His apostles twelve he taught, and first he followed it himself”)—the summoner with his fiery face—the pardoner with his wallet “bret-full of pardons, come from Rome all hot”—the lively prioress with her courtly French lisp, her soft little red mouth, and “Amor vincit omnia” graven on her brooch. Learning is there in the portly person of the doctor of physic, rich

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KNIGHT.



SQUIRE.

Ellesmere MS. of Canterbury Tales.

with the profits of the pestilence—the busy serjeant-of-law, “that ever seemed busier than he was”—the hollow-cheeked clerk of Oxford, with his love of books, and short sharp sentences that disguise a latent tenderness which breaks out at last in the story of Griseldis. Around them crowd types of English industry; the merchant; the franklin, in whose house “it snowed of meat and drink;” the sailor fresh from frays in the Channel; the buxom wife of Bath; the broad-shouldered miller; the haberdasher,

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carpenter, weaver, dyer, tapestry-maker, each in the livery of his craft; and last, the honest ploughman, who would dyke and delve for the poor without hire. It is the first time in English poetry



MONK AND HIS DOGS.



FRIAR.

PARSON.

Ellesmere MS. of Canterbury Tales.

that we are brought face to face not with characters or allegories or reminiscences of the past, but with living and breathing men, men distinct in temper and sentiment as in face or costume or

mode of speech ; and with this distinctness of each maintained throughout the story by a thousand shades of expression and

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SUMMONER.



PARDONER.



PRIORESS.



WIFE OF BATH.

Ellesmere MS. of Canterbury Tales.

action. It is the first time too, that we meet with the dramatic power which not only creates each character, but combines it with

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its fellows, which not only adjusts each tale or jest to the temper of the person who utters it, but fuses all into a poetic unity. It is life



MAN OF LAW.



CLERK OF OXFORD.



MERCHANT.



FRANKLIN.

Ellesmere MS. of Canterbury Tales.

in its largeness, its variety, its complexity, which surrounds us in the "Canterbury Tales." In some of the stories, indeed, composed

no doubt at an earlier time, there is the tedium of the old romance or the pedantry of the schoolman ; but taken as a whole the poem

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SHIPMAN



DOCTOR OF PHYSIC.



MILLER.



COOK.

Ellesmere MS. of Canterbury Tales.

is the work not of a man of letters, but of a man of action. Chaucer has received his training from war, courts, business,

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travel—a training not of books, but of life. And it is life that he loves—the delicacy of its sentiment, the breadth of its farce, its laughter and its tears, the tenderness of its Griseldis or the Smollett-like adventures of the miller and the clerks. It is this largeness of heart, this wide tolerance, which enables him to reflect man for us as none but Shakspeare has ever reflected him, and to do this with a pathos, a shrewd sense and kindly humour, a



CANON'S YEOMAN.
Ellesmere MS. of Canterbury Tales.

freshness and joyousness of feeling, that even Shakspeare has not surpassed.

It is strange that such a voice as this should have awakened no echo in the singers who follow ; but the first burst of English song died as suddenly and utterly with Chaucer as the hope and glory of his age. The hundred years which follow the brief sunshine of Crécy and the "Canterbury Tales" are years of the deepest



SECOND NUN.



NUN'S PRIEST.



MANCIPLE.



REEVE.

Ellesmere MS. of Canterbury Tales.

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gloom ; no age of our history is more sad and sombre than the age which we traverse from the third Edward to Joan of Arc. The throb of hope and glory which pulsed at its outset through every class of English society died at its close into inaction or despair. Material life lingered on indeed, commerce still widened, but its progress was dissociated from all the nobler elements of national well-being. The towns sank again into close oligarchies ; the bondsmen struggling forward to freedom fell back into a serfage which still leaves its trace on the soil. Literature reached its lowest ebb. The religious revival of the Lollard was trodden out in blood, while the Church shrivelled into a self-seeking secular priesthood. In the clash of civil strife political freedom was all but extinguished, and the age which began with the Good Parliament ended with the despotism of the Tudors.

England
and
France

1293

The secret of the change is to be found in the fatal war which for more than a hundred years drained the strength and corrupted the temper of the English people. We have followed the attack on Scotland to its disastrous close, but the struggle, ere it ended, had involved England in a second contest, to which we must now turn back, a contest yet more ruinous than that which Edward the First had begun. From the war with Scotland sprang the hundred years' struggle with France. From the first France had watched the successes of her rival in the north, partly with a natural jealousy, but still more as likely to afford her an opening for winning the great southern Duchy of Guienne and Gascony—the one fragment of Eleanor's inheritance which remained to her descendants. Scotland had no sooner begun to resent the claims of her over-lord, Edward the First, than a pretext for open quarrel was found by France in the rivalry between the mariners of Normandy and those of the Cinque Ports, which culminated at the moment in a great sea-fight that proved fatal to 8,000 Frenchmen. So eager was Edward to avert a quarrel with France, that his threats roused the English seamen to a characteristic defiance. "Be the King's Council well advised," ran the remonstrance of the mariners, "that if wrong or grievance be done them in any fashion against right, they will sooner forsake wives, children, and all that they have, and go seek through the seas where they shall think to make their profit." In spite, therefore, of Edward's efforts the

contest continued, and Philip found an opportunity to cite the King before his court at Paris for wrongs done to him as suzerain. Again Edward endeavoured to avert the conflict by a formal cession of Guienne into Philip's hands during forty days, but the refusal of the French sovereign to restore the province left no choice for him but war. The refusal of the Scotch barons to answer his summons to arms, and the revolt of Balliol, proved that the French outrage was but the first blow in a deliberate and long-planned scheme of attack; Edward had for a while no force to waste on France, and when the first conquest of Scotland freed his hands, his league with Flanders for the recovery of Guienne was foiled by the strife with his baronage. A truce with Philip set him free to meet new troubles in the north; but even after the victory of Falkirk Scotch independence was still saved for six years by the threats of France and the intervention of its ally, Boniface the Eighth; and it was only the quarrel of these two confederates which allowed Edward to complete its subjection. But the rising under Bruce was again backed by French aid and by the renewal of the old quarrel over Guienne—a quarrel which hampered England through the reign of Edward the Second, and which indirectly brought about his terrible fall. The accession of Edward the Third secured a momentary peace, but the fresh attack on Scotland which marked the opening of his reign kindled hostility anew; the young King David found refuge in France, and arms, money, and men were despatched from its ports to support his cause. It was this intervention of France which foiled Edward's hopes of the submission of Scotland at the very moment when success seemed in his grasp; the solemn announcement by Philip of Valois that his treaties bound him to give effective help to his old ally, and the assembly of a French fleet in the Channel drew the King from his struggle in the north to face a storm which his negotiations could no longer avert.

From the first the war took European dimensions. The weakness of the Empire, the captivity of the Papacy at Avignon, left France without a rival among European powers. In numbers, in wealth, the French people far surpassed their neighbours over the Channel. England can hardly have counted four millions of inhabitants, France boasted of twenty. Edward could only bring

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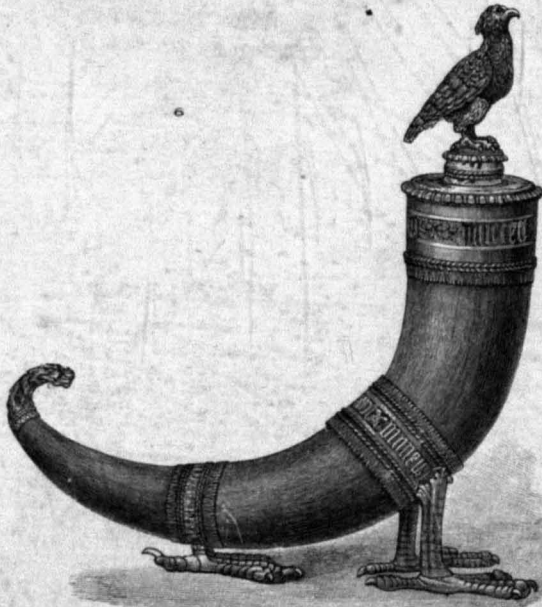
1332

1335

The
Opening
of the
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eight thousand men-at-arms into the field. Philip, while a third of his force was busy elsewhere, could appear at the head of forty thousand. Edward's whole energy was bent on meeting the strength of France by a coalition of powers against her ; and his plans were helped by the dread which the great feudatories of the Empire who lay nearest to him felt of French annexation, as well as by the quarrel of the Empire with the Papacy. Anticipating



DRINKING-HORN GIVEN BY QUEEN PHILIPPA OF HAINAULT TO QUEEN'S COLLEGE, OXFORD.

Skelton, "Oxonia Antiqua Restaurata."

the later policy of Godolphin and Pitt, Edward became the paymaster of the poorer princes of Germany ; his subsidies purchased the aid of Hainault, Gelders, and Jülich ; sixty thousand crowns went to the Duke of Brabant, while the Emperor himself was induced by a promise of three thousand gold florins to furnish two thousand men-at-arms. Negotiations and profuse expenditure, however, brought the King little fruit save the title of Vicar-General of the Empire on the left of the Rhine ; now the Emperor hung back, now the allies refused to move ; and when the host at

last crossed the border, Edward found it impossible to bring the French king to an engagement. But as hope from the Imperial alliance faded away, a fresh hope dawned on the King from another quarter. Flanders was his natural ally. England was the great wool-producing country of the west, but few woollen fabrics

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SPINNING AND BLOWING FIRE.

Early Fourteenth Century.

MS. Reg. 10 E. iv.

were woven in England. The number of weavers' guilds shows that the trade was gradually extending, and at the very outset of his reign Edward had taken steps for its encouragement. He invited Flemish weavers to settle in his country, and took the new



BOAT WITH RUDDER, A.D. 1338—1344.

MS. Bodl. Misc. 264.

immigrants, who chose the eastern counties for the seat of their trade, under his royal protection. But English manufactures were still in their infancy, and nine-tenths of the English wool went to the looms of Bruges or of Ghent. We may see the rapid growth of this export trade in the fact that the King received in a single

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year more than £30,000 from duties levied on wool alone. A stoppage of this export would throw half the population of the great Flemish towns out of work ; and Flanders was drawn to the English alliance, not only by the interest of trade, but by the democratic spirit of the towns which jostled roughly with the feudalism of France. A treaty was concluded with the Duke of Brabant and the Flemish towns, and preparations were made for a new campaign. Philip gathered a fleet of two hundred vessels at Sluys to prevent his crossing the Channel, but Edward with a far smaller force utterly destroyed the French ships, and marched to invest Tournay. Its siege however proved fruitless : his vast army broke up, and want of money forced him to a truce for a year. A quarrel of succession to the Duchy of Brittany, which broke out in



(Obverse.)



(Reverse.)

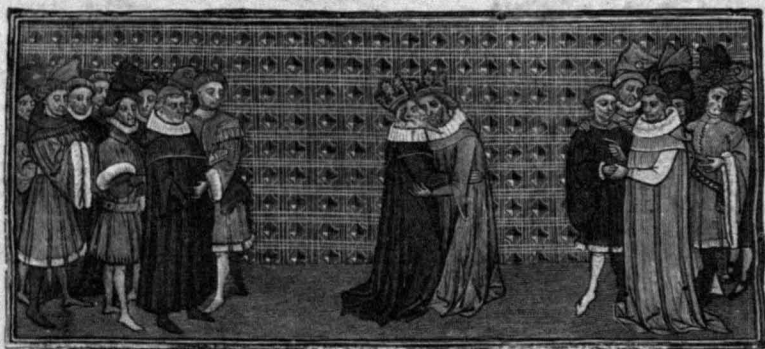
GOLD NOBLE OF EDWARD III., 1344, COMMEMORATING THE VICTORY AT SLUYS.

1341, and in which of the two rival claimants one was supported by Philip and the other by Edward, dragged on year after year. In Flanders things went ill for the English cause, and the death of the great statesman Van Arteveldt in 1345 proved a heavy blow to Edward's projects. The King's difficulties indeed had at last reached their height. His loans from the great bankers of Florence amounted to half a million of our money ; his overtures for peace were contemptuously rejected ; the claim which he advanced to the French crown found not a single adherent save among the burghers of Ghent. To establish such a claim, indeed, was difficult enough. The three sons of Philip the Fair had died without male issue, and Edward claimed as the son of Philip's daughter Isabella. But though her brothers had left no sons, they had left daughters ; and if female succession were admitted, these

daughters of Philip's sons would precede a son of Philip's daughter. Isabella met this difficulty by contending that though females could transmit the right of succession they could not themselves possess it, and that her son, as the nearest living male descendant of Philip, and born in his lifetime, could claim in preference to females who were related to Philip in as near a degree. But the bulk of French jurists asserted that only male succession gave right to the throne. On such a theory the right inheritable from Philip was exhausted; and the crown passed to the son of his brother Charles of Valois, who in fact peacefully mounted the throne as Philip the Sixth. Edward's claim seems to have been regarded on both sides as a mere formality; the King, in fact, did

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MEETING OF EDWARD III. AND PHILIP OF FRANCE, 1331.

MS. Roy. 20 C. vii.

French, late Fourteenth Century.

full and liege homage to his rival for his Duchy of Guienne; and it was not till his hopes from Germany had been exhausted, and his claim was found to be useful in securing the loyal aid of the Flemish towns, that it was brought seriously to the front.

The failure of his foreign hopes threw Edward on the resources of England itself, and it was with an army of thirty thousand men that he landed at La Hogue, and commenced a march which was to change the whole face of the war. The French forces were engaged in holding in check an English army which had landed in Guienne; and panic seized the French King as Edward now marched through Normandy, and finding the bridges on the lower Seine broken, pushed straight on Paris, rebuilt the bridge of Poissy

Crécy

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and threatened the capital. At this crisis, however, France found an unexpected help in a body of German knights. The Pope having deposed the Emperor Lewis of Bavaria, had crowned as his successor a son of King John of Bohemia, the well-known Charles IV. of the Golden Bull. But against this Papal assumption of a right to bestow the German Crown, Germany rose as one man, and Charles, driven to seek help from Philip, now found himself in France with his father and a troop of five hundred knights. Hurrying to Paris this German force formed the nucleus of an army which assembled at St. Denys ; and which was soon reinforced by 15,000 Genoese cross-bowmen who had been hired from among the soldiers of the Lord of Monaco on the sunny Riviera, and arrived at this hour of need. The French troops too were called from Guienne to the rescue. With this host rapidly gathering in his front Edward abandoned his march on Paris, and threw himself across the Seine to join a Flemish force gathered at Gravelines, and open a campaign in the north. But the rivers in his path were carefully guarded, and it was only by surprising the ford of Blanche-Taque on the Somme, that Edward escaped the necessity of surrendering to the vast host which was now hastening in pursuit. His communications, however, were no sooner secured than he halted at the village of Crécy, in Ponthieu, and resolved to give battle. Half of his army, now greatly reduced in strength by his rapid marches, consisted of the light-armed footmen of Ireland and Wales ; the bulk of the remainder was composed of English bowmen. The King ordered his men-at-arms to dismount, and drew up his forces on a low rise sloping gently to the south-east, with a windmill on its summit from which he could overlook the whole field of battle. Immediately beneath him lay his reserve, while at the base of the slope was placed the main body of the army in two divisions, that to the right commanded by the young Prince of Wales, Edward the Black Prince as he was called, that to the left by the Earl of Northampton. A small ditch protected the English front, and behind it the bowmen were drawn up "in the form of a harrow," with small bombards between them "which, with fire, threw little iron balls to frighten the horses"—the first instance of the use of artillery in field warfare. The halt of the English army took Philip by surprise, and he attempted for a time

Crécy
August 26,
1346

to check the advance of his army, but the disorderly host rolled on to the English front. The sight of his enemies, indeed, stirred the King's own blood to fury, "for he hated them," and at vespers the fight began. The Genoese crossbowmen were ordered to begin the attack, but the men were weary with the march; a sudden storm wetted and rendered useless their bowstrings; and the loud shouts with which they leapt forward to the encounter were met with dogged silence in the English ranks. Their first arrow-flight however, brought a terrible reply. So rapid was the English shot, "that it seemed as if it snowed." "Kill me these scoundrels," shouted Philip, as the Genoese fell back; and his men-at-arms plunged butchering into their broken ranks, while the Counts of Alençon and Flanders, at the head of the French knighthood, fell hotly on the Prince's line. For the instant his small force seemed lost, but Edward refused to send him aid. "Is he dead or unhorsed, or so wounded that he cannot help himself?" he asked the envoy. "No, Sir," was the reply, "but he is in a hard passage of arms, and sorely needs your help." "Return to those that sent you, Sir Thomas," said the King, "and bid them not send to me again so long as my son lives! Let the boy win his spurs; for if God so order it, I will that the day may be his, and that the honour may be with him and them to whom I have given it in charge." Edward could see, in fact, from his higher ground, that all went well. The English bowmen and men-at-arms held their ground stoutly, while the Welshmen stabbed the French horses in the *mêlée*, and brought knight after knight to the ground. Soon the French host was wavering in a fatal confusion. "You are my vassals, my friends," cried the blind King John of Bohemia, who had joined Philip's army, to the German nobles around him: "I pray and beseech you to lead me so far into the fight that I may strike one good blow with this sword of mine!" Linking their bridles together, the little company plunged into the thick of the conflict to fall as their fellows were falling. The battle went steadily against the French: at last Philip himself hurried from the field, and the defeat became a rout: 1,200 knights and 30,000 footmen—a number equal to the whole English force—lay dead upon the ground.

"God has punished us for our sins," cries the chronicler of St.

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Calais

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Denys, in a passion of bewildered grief, as he tells the rout of the great host which he had seen mustering beneath his abbey walls. But the fall of France was hardly so sudden or so incomprehensible as the ruin at a single blow of a system of warfare, and of the political and social fabric which rested on it. Feudalism depended on the superiority of the mounted noble to the unmounted churl; its fighting power lay in its knighthood. But the English yeomen and small freeholders who bore the bow in the national fyrd had raised their weapon into a terrible engine of war; in the English archers Edward carried a new class of soldiers to the fields of France. The churl had struck down the noble; the yeoman proved more than a match in sheer hard fighting for the knight.



SHOOTING AT BUTTS, C. A.D. 1340.
Luttrell Psalter.

From the day of Crécy feudalism tottered slowly but surely to its grave. To England the day was the beginning of a career of military glory, which, fatal as it was destined to prove to the higher sentiments and interests of the nation, gave it for the moment an energy such as it had never known before. Victory followed victory. A few months after Crécy a Scotch army which had burst into the north was routed at Neville's Cross, and its King, David Bruce, taken prisoner; while the withdrawal of the French from the Garonne enabled the English to recover Poitou. Edward meanwhile turned to strike at the naval superiority of France by securing the mastery of the Channel. Calais was a great pirate-haven; in one year alone, twenty-two privateers had sailed from its port; while its capture promised the King an easy base of communication with Flanders, and of operations against

*Neville's
Cross
Oct. 1346*

France. The siege lasted a year, and it was not till Philip had failed to relieve it that the town was starved into surrender. Mercy was granted to the garrison and the people on condition that six of the citizens gave themselves unconditionally into the King's hands. "On them," said Edward, with a burst of bitter hatred, "I will do my will." At the sound of the town bell, Jehan le Bel tells us, the folk of Calais gathered round the bearer of these terms, "desiring to hear their good news, for they were all mad with hunger. When the said knight told them his news, then began they to weep and cry so loudly that it was great pity. Then stood up the wealthiest burgess of the town, Master Eustache de S. Pierre by name, and spake thus before all: 'My masters, great grief and mishap it were for all to leave such a people as this is to die by famine or otherwise; and great charity and grace would he win from our Lord who could defend them from dying. For me, I have great hope in the Lord that if I can save this people by my death, I shall have pardon for my faults, wherefore will I be the first of the six, and of my own will put myself barefoot in my shirt and with a halter round my neck in the mercy of King Edward.'" The list of devoted men was soon made up, and the six victims were led before the King. "All the host assembled together; there was great press, and many bade hang them openly, and many wept for pity. The noble king came with his train of counts and barons to the place, and the Queen followed him, though great with child, to see what there would be. The six citizens knelt down at once before the King, and Master Eustache said thus: 'Gentle King, here be we six who have been of the old bourgeoisie of Calais and great merchants; we bring you the keys of the town and castle of Calais, and render them to you at your pleasure. We set ourselves in such wise as you see purely at your will, to save the remnant of the people that have suffered much pain. So may you have pity and mercy on us for your high nobleness' sake.' Certes, there was then in that place neither lord nor knight that wept not for pity, nor who could speak for pity; but the King had his heart so hardened by wrath, that for a long while he could not reply; then he commanded to cut off their heads. All the knights and lords prayed him with tears, as much as they could, to have pity on them, but he would not hear. Then

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spoke the gentle knight, Master Walter de Maunay, and said, 'Ha, gentle sire! bridle your wrath; you have the renown and good fame of all gentleness; do not a thing whereby men can speak any villany of you! If you have no pity, all men will say that you have a heart full of all cruelty to put these good citizens to death that of their own will are come to render themselves to you to save the remnant of their people.' At this point the King changed countenance with wrath, and said, 'Hold your peace, Master Walter! it shall be none otherwise. Call the headsman! They of Calais have made so many of my men die, that they must die themselves!' Then did the noble Queen of England a deed of noble lowliness, seeing she was great with child, and wept so tenderly for pity, that she could no longer stand upright; therefore she cast herself on her knees before her lord the King, and spake on this wise: 'Ah, gentle sire! from the day that I passed over sea in great peril, as you know, I have asked for nothing: now pray I and beseech you, with folded hands, for the love of our Lady's Son, to have mercy upon them.' The gentle King waited for a while before speaking, and looked on the Queen as she knelt before him bitterly weeping. Then began his heart to soften a little, and he said, 'Lady, I would rather you had been otherwise; you pray so tenderly, that I dare not refuse you; and though I do it against my will, nevertheless take them, I give them to you.' Then took he the six citizens by the halters and delivered them to the Queen, and released from death all those of Calais for the love of her; and the good lady bade them clothe the six burgesses and make them good cheer."

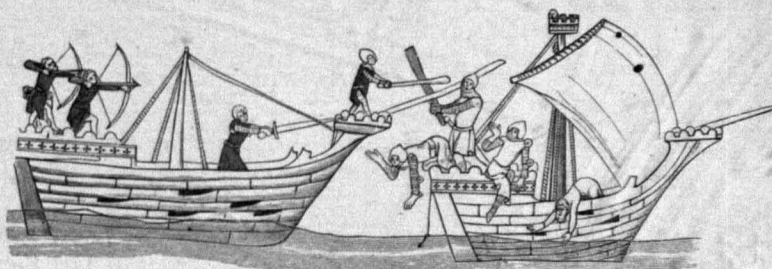
Poitiers

Edward now stood at the height of his renown. He had won the greatest victory of his age. France, till now the first of European states, was broken and dashed from her pride of place at a single blow. A naval picture of Froissart sketches Edward for us as he sailed to meet a Spanish fleet which was sweeping the narrow seas. We see the King sitting on deck in his jacket of black velvet, his head covered by a black beaver hat "which became him well," and calling on Sir John Chandos to troll out the songs he had brought with him from Germany, till the Spanish ships heave in sight and a furious fight begins which ends in a victory that leaves Edward "King of the Seas." But peace with France was as far off

1347-1355

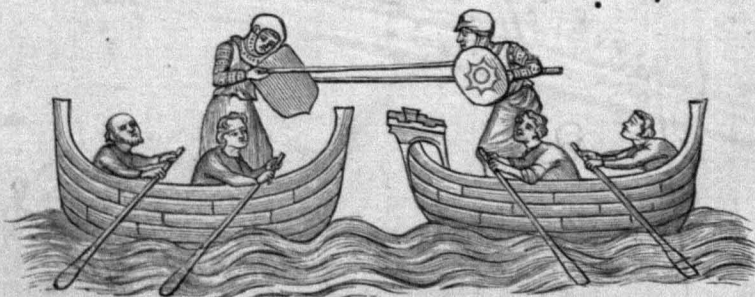
as ever. Even the truce which for seven years was forced on both countries by sheer exhaustion became at last impossible. Edward prepared three armies to act at once in Normandy, Brittany, and Guienne, but the plan of the campaign broke down. The Black

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SEA FIGHT.
Early Fourteenth Century.
MS. Roy. to E. iv.

Prince, as the hero of Crécy was called, alone won a disgraceful success. Unable to pay his troops, he staved off their demands by a campaign of sheer pillage. Northern and central France had by this time fallen into utter ruin; the royal treasury was empty, the fortresses unoccupied, the troops disbanded for want of pay, the

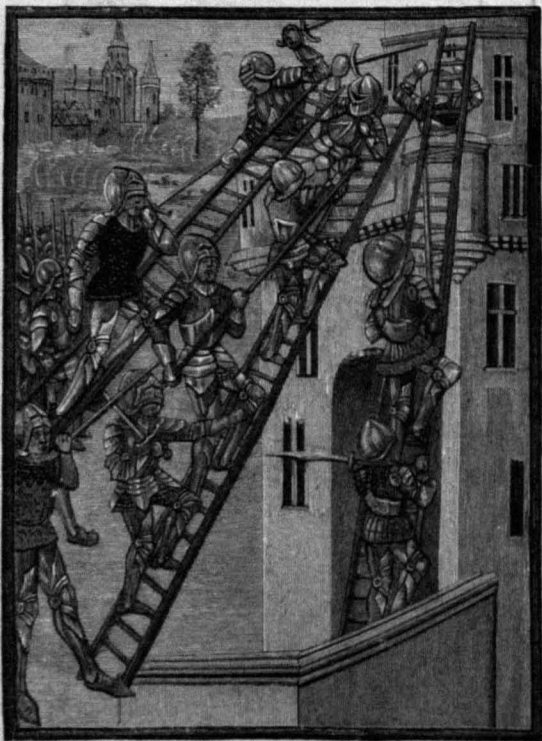


TILTING ON THE WATER.
Early Fourteenth Century.
MS. Roy. a B. vii.

country swept by bandits. Only the south remained at peace, and the young Prince led his army of freebooters up the Garonne into "what was before one of the fat countries of the world, the people good and simple, who did not know what war was; indeed, no war had been waged against them till the Prince came. The English

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and Gascons found the country full and gay, the rooms adorned with carpets and draperies, the caskets and chests full of fair jewels. But nothing was safe from these robbers. They, and especially the Gascons, who are very greedy, carried off everything." The capture of Narbonne loaded them with booty, and they fell back to Bordeaux, "their horses so laden with spoil that they could hardly



ENGLISH SOLDIERS SCALING A FORTRESS IN GASCONY.

A Fifteenth Century picture (from a Flemish MS. of Froissart's Chronicle) of the Wars of Edward III.

1356

move." The next year a march of the Prince's army on the Loire pointed straight upon Paris, and a French army under John, who had succeeded Philip of Valois on the throne, hurried to check his advance. The Prince gave orders for a retreat, but as he approached Poitiers he found the French, who now numbered 60,000 men, in his path. He at once took a strong position in the fields

Poitiers
Sept. 19,
1356

of Maupertuis, his front covered by thick hedges, and approachable only by a deep and narrow lane which ran between vineyards. The Prince lined the vineyards and hedges with bowmen, and drew up his small body of men-at-arms at the point where the lane opened upon the higher plain where he was encamped. His force numbered only 8,000 men, and the danger was great enough to force him to offer the surrender of his prisoners and of the places he had taken, and an oath not to fight against France for seven years, in exchange for a free retreat. The terms were rejected, and three hundred French knights charged up the narrow lane. It was soon choked with men and horses, while the front ranks of the advancing army fell back before a galling fire of arrows from the hedgerows. In the moment of confusion a body of English horsemen, posted on a hill to the right, charged suddenly on the French flank, and the Prince seized the opportunity to fall boldly on their front. The English archery completed the disorder produced by this sudden attack; the French King was taken, desperately fighting; and at noontide, when his army poured back in utter rout to the gates of Poitiers, 8,000 of their number had fallen on the field, 3,000 in the flight, and 2,000 men-at-arms, with a crowd of nobles, were taken prisoners. The royal captive entered London in triumph, and a truce for two years seemed to give healing-time to France. But the miserable country found no rest in itself. The routed soldiery turned into free companies of bandits, while the captive lords procured the sums needed for their ransom by extortion from the peasantry, who were driven by oppression and famine into wild insurrection, butchering their lords, and firing the castles; while Paris, impatient of the weakness and misrule of the Regency, rose in arms against the Crown. The "Jacquerie," as the peasant rising was called, had hardly been crushed, when Edward again poured ravaging over the wasted land. Famine, however, proved its best defence. "I could not believe," said Petrarch of this time, "that this was the same France which I had seen so rich and flourishing. Nothing presented itself to my eyes but a fearful solitude, an utter poverty, land uncultivated, houses in ruins. Even the neighbourhood of Paris showed everywhere marks of desolation and conflagration. The streets are deserted, the roads overgrown with weeds, the whole is a vast solitude." The misery of the land at

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*Treaty of
Brétigny
May 1360*

last bent Charles to submission, and in May a treaty was concluded at Brétigny, a small place to the eastward of Chartres. By this treaty the English King waived his claims on the crown of France and on the Duchy of Normandy. On the other hand, his Duchy of Aquitaine, which included Gascony, Poitou, and Saintonge, the Limousin and the Angoumois, Périgord and the counties of Bigorre and Rouergue, was not only restored but freed from its obligations as a French fief, and granted in full sovereignty with Ponthieu, Edward's heritage from the second wife of Edward the First, as well as with Guisnes and his new conquest of Calais.

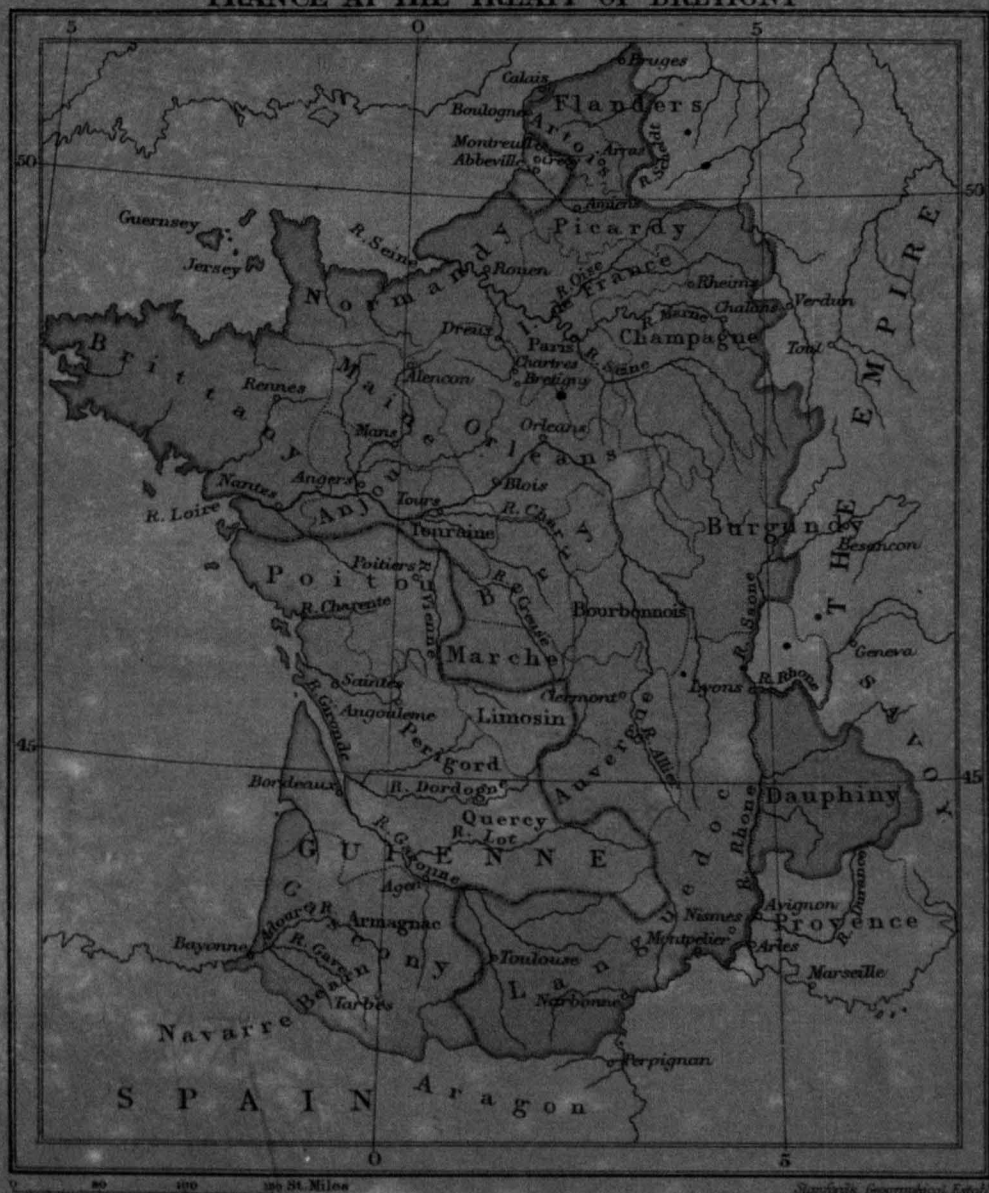
Section II.—The Good Parliament, 1360—1377

[*Authorities.*—As in the last period. An anonymous chronicler whose work is printed in the "Archæologia" (vol. 22) gives the story of the Good Parliament; another account is preserved in the "Chronica Angliæ from 1328 to 1388" (Rolls Series), and fresh light has been recently thrown on the time by the publication of a Chronicle by Adam of Usk from 1377 to 1404.]

The Two
Houses

If we turn from the stirring but barren annals of foreign warfare to the more fruitful field of constitutional progress, we are at once struck with a marked change which takes place during this period in the composition of Parliament. The division, with which we are so familiar, into a House of Lords and a House of Commons, formed no part of the original plan of Edward the First; in the earlier Parliaments, each of the four orders of clergy, barons, knights, and burgesses met, deliberated, and made their grants apart from each other. This isolation, however, of the Estates soon showed signs of breaking down. While the clergy, as we have seen, held steadily aloof from any real union with its fellow-orders, the knights of the shire were drawn by the similarity of their social position into a close connexion with the lords. They seem, in fact, to have been soon admitted by the baronage to an almost equal position with themselves, whether as legislators or counsellors of the Crown. The burgesses, on the other hand, took little part at first in Parliamentary proceedings, save in those which related to the taxation of their class. But their position was

FRANCE AT THE TREATY OF BRETAGNY



London: Macmillan & Co. Ltd.

Stanford's Geographical Estab.

raised by the strifes of the reign of Edward the Second, when their aid was needed by the baronage in its struggle with the Crown ; and their right to share fully in all legislative action was asserted in the famous statute of 1322. Gradually too, through

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THE ENGLISH HOUSE OF LORDS UNDER EDWARD I.
Pinkerton, "Iconographia Scotica;" from a drawing temp. Edward IV.

causes with which we are imperfectly acquainted, the knights of the shire drifted from their older connexion with the baronage into so close and intimate a union with the representatives of the towns that at the opening of the reign of Edward the Third the two orders are found grouped formally together, under the name of "The • 1332

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Commons"; and by 1341 the final division of Parliament into two Houses was complete. It is difficult to over-estimate the importance of this change. Had Parliament remained broken up into its four orders of clergy, barons, knights, and citizens, its power would have been neutralized at every great crisis by the jealousies and difficulty of co-operation among its component parts. A per-

manent union of the knighthood and the baronage, on the other hand, would have converted Parliament into a mere representative of an aristocratic caste, and would have robbed it of the strength which it has drawn from its connexion with the great body of the commercial classes. The new attitude of the knighthood, their social connexion as landed gentry with the baronage, their political union with the burgesses, really welded the three orders into one, and gave that unity of feeling and action to our Parliament on which its power has ever since mainly depended. From the moment of this change, indeed, we see a marked increase of parliamentary activity. The need of continual grants during the war brought about an assembly of Parliament year by year; and with each supply some step was made



BRASS OF SIR JOHN HARSYCK AND
KATHERINE, HIS WIFE, 1384.
Boutell, "Monumental Brasses."

to greater political influence. A crowd of enactments for the regulation of trade, whether wise or unwise, and for the protection of the subject against oppression or injustice, as well as the great ecclesiastical provisions of this reign, show the rapid widening of the sphere of parliamentary action. The Houses claimed an exclusive right to grant supplies, and asserted the principle of ministerial responsibility to Parliament. But the Commons long shrank from meddling with purely administrative matters. Edward in his anxiety to shift from his shoulders the responsibility

of the war with France, referred to them for counsel on the subject of one of the numerous propositions of peace. "Most dreaded lord," they replied, "as to your war and the equipment necessary for it, we are so ignorant and simple that we know not how, nor have the power, to devise : wherefore we pray your Grace to excuse us in this matter, and that it please you, with advice of the great and wise persons of your Council, to ordain what seems best to you for the honour and profit of yourself and of your kingdom ; and whatsoever shall be thus ordained by assent and agreement on the part of you and your lords we readily assent to, and will hold it firmly established." But while shrinking from so wide an extension of their responsibility, the Commons wrested from the Crown a practical reform of the highest value. As yet their petitions, if granted, were often changed or left incomplete in the statute or ordinance which professed to embody them, or were delayed till the session had closed. Thus many provisions made in Parliament had hitherto been evaded or set aside. But the Commons now met this abuse by a demand that on the royal assent being given their petitions should be turned without change into statutes of the realm, and derive force of law from their entry on the rolls of Parliament.

The political responsibility which the Commons evaded was at last forced on them by the misfortunes of the war. In spite of quarrels in Brittany and elsewhere, peace was fairly preserved in the nine years which followed the treaty of Brétigny ; but the shrewd eye of Charles the Fifth, the successor of John, was watching keenly for the moment of renewing the struggle. He had cleared his kingdom of the freebooters by despatching them into Spain, and the Black Prince had plunged into the revolutions of that country only to return from his fruitless victory of Navarete in broken health, and impoverished by the expenses of the campaign. The anger caused by the taxation which this necessitated was

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BRASS OF ROBERT
ATTELATHE, MAYOR
OF LYNN, d. 1376.
*Taylor, "Antiquities of
Lynn."*

The Loss
of Aqu-
taine
1360-1369

1366

1367

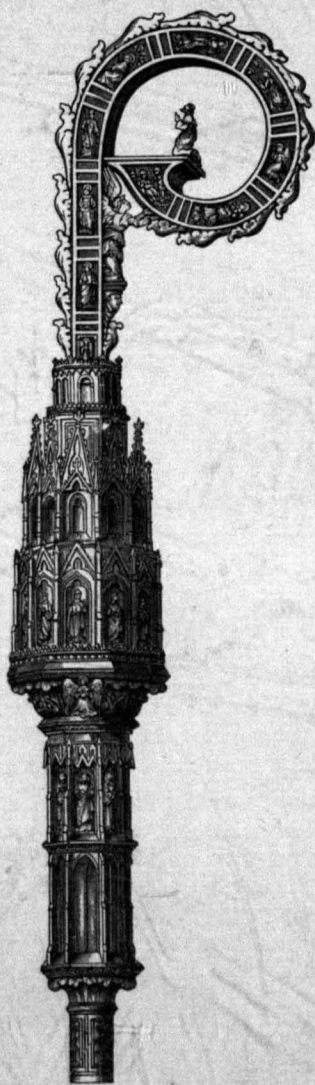
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fanned by Charles into revolt. He listened, in spite of the treaty, to an appeal from the lords of Aquitaine, and summoned the Black Prince to his Court. "I will come," replied the Prince, "but helmet on head, and with sixty thousand men at my back." War, however, had hardly been declared before the ability with which Charles had laid his plans was seen in his seizure of Ponthieu, and in a rising of the whole country south of the Garonne. The Black Prince, borne on a litter to the walls of Limoges, recovered the town, which had been surrendered to the French, and by a merciless massacre sullied the fame of his earlier exploits; but sickness recalled him home, and the war, protracted by the caution of Charles, who forbade his armies to engage, did little but exhaust the energy and treasures of England. At last, however, the error of the Prince's policy was seen in the appearance of a Spanish fleet in the Channel, and in a decisive victory which it won over an English convoy off Rochelle. The blow was in fact fatal to the English cause; it wrested from Edward the mastery of the seas, and cut off his communication with Aquitaine. Charles was roused to new exertions. Poitou, Saintonge, and the Angoumois yielded to his general Du Guesclin, and Rochelle was surrendered by its citizens. A great army under the King's third son, John of Gaunt, Duke of Lancaster, penetrated fruitlessly into the heart of France. Charles had forbidden any fighting. "If a storm rages over the land," said the King, coolly, "it disperses of itself; and so will it be with the English." Winter, in fact, overtook the Duke in the mountains of Auvergne, and a mere fragment of his host reached Bordeaux. The failure was the signal for a general defection, and ere the summer of 1374 had closed the two towns of Bordeaux and Bayonne were all that remained of the English possessions in southern France.

It was a time of shame and suffering such as England had never known. Her conquests were lost, her shores insulted, her fleets annihilated, her commerce swept from the seas; while within she was exhausted by the long and costly war, as well as by the ravages of pestilence. In the hour of distress the eyes of the hard-pressed nobles and knighthood turned greedily on the riches of the Church. Never had her spiritual or moral hold on the nation been less; never had her wealth been greater. Out of a popu-

lation of some three millions, the ecclesiastics numbered between



CROZIER OF WILLIAM OF WYKEHAM,
AT NEW COLLEGE, OXFORD.

a new stage in the character of the national opposition to the misrule of the Crown. Till now the task of resistance had

twenty and thirty thousand. Wild tales of their riches floated about. They were said to own in landed property alone more than a third of the soil, their "spiritualities" in dues and offerings amounting to twice the King's revenue. The throng of bishops round the council-board was still more galling to the feudal baronage, flushed as it was with a new pride by the victories of Crécy and Poitiers. On the renewal of the war the Parliament prayed that the chief offices of state might be placed in lay hands. William of Wykeham, Bishop of Winchester, resigned the Chancellorship, another prelate the Treasury, to lay dependents of the great nobles; and the panic of the clergy was seen in large grants which they voted in Convocation. The baronage found a leader in John of Gaunt; but even the promise to pillage the Church failed to win for the Duke and his party the goodwill of the lesser gentry and of the burgesses; while the corruption and the utter failure of the new administration and the calamities of the war left it powerless before the Parliament of 1376. The

action of this Parliament marks

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*The Good
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devolved on the baronage, and had been carried out through risings of its feudal tenantry; but the misgovernment was now

that of a main part of the baronage itself in actual conjunction with the Crown. Only in the power of the Commons lay any adequate means of peaceful redress.

The old reluctance of the Lower House to meddle with matters of State was roughly swept away therefore by the pressure of the time. The

Black Prince, sick as he was to death and anxious to secure his child's succession

by the removal of John of Gaunt, the prelates with William of Wykeham at their head, resolute again to take

their place in the royal councils and to check the projects of ecclesiastical spoliation, alike found in it a body to oppose to the Duke's administration. Backed by

powers such as these, the action of the Commons showed none of their old timidity or self-distrust. The

knights of the shire united with the burgesses in a joint attack on the royal council.

"Trusting in God, and standing with his followers before the nobles, whereof the chief



EFFIGY OF WILLIAM OF WYKEHAM ON HIS TOMB IN WINCHESTER CATHEDRAL.

was John, Duke of Lancaster, whose doings were ever contrary,"

their speaker, Sir Peter de la Mare, denounced the mismanagement

of the war, the oppressive taxation, and demanded an account of the expenditure. "What do these base and ignoble knights attempt?" cried John of Gaunt. "Do they think they be kings or princes of the land?" But even the Duke was silenced by the charges brought against the government, and the Parliament proceeded to the impeachment and condemnation of two ministers, Latimer and Lyons. The King himself had sunk into dotage, and was wholly under the influence of a mistress named Alice Perrers; she was banished, and several of the royal servants driven from the Court. One hundred and forty petitions were presented which embodied the grievances of the realm. They demanded the annual assembly of Parliament, and freedom of election for the knights of the shire, whose choice was now often tampered with by the Crown; they protested against arbitrary taxation and Papal inroads on the liberties of the Church; petitioned for the protection of trade, the enforcement of the statute of labourers, and the limitation of the powers of chartered crafts. At the death of the Black Prince his little son Richard was brought into Parliament and acknowledged as heir. But the Houses were no sooner dismissed than Lancaster resumed his power. His haughty will flung aside all restraints of law. He dismissed the new lords and prelates from the Council. He called back Alice Perrers and the disgraced ministers. He declared the Good Parliament no parliament, and did not suffer its petitions to be enrolled as statutes. He imprisoned Peter de la Mare, and confiscated the possessions of William of Wykeham. His attack on this prelate was an attack on the clergy at large. Fresh projects of spoliation were openly canvassed, and it is his support of these plans of confiscation which now brings us across the path of John Wyclif.

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June 8

July 6

SEC. III

JOHN
WYCLIF

Section III.—John Wyclif.

[*Authorities.*—The “Fasciculi Zizaniorum” in the Rolls Series, with the documents appended to it, is a work of primary authority for the history of Wyclif and his followers. A selection from his English tracts has been made by Mr. T. Arnold for the University of Oxford, which has also published his “Trias.” The version of the Bible that bears his name has been edited with a valuable preface by Rev. J. Forshall and Sir F. Madden. There are lives of Wyclif by Lewis and Vaughan; and Milman (“Latin Christianity,” vol. vi.) has given a brilliant summary of the Lollard movement.]

Wyclif Nothing is more remarkable than the contrast between the obscurity of Wyclif's earlier life and the fulness and vividness of our knowledge of him during the twenty years which preceded its close. Born in the earlier part of the fourteenth century, he had already passed middle age when he was appointed to the mastership of Balliol College in the University of Oxford, and recognized as first among the schoolmen of his day. Of all the scholastic doctors those of England had been throughout the keenest and the most daring in philosophical speculation; a reckless audacity and love of novelty was the common note of Bacon, Duns Scotus, and Ockham, as against the sober and more disciplined learning of the Parisian schoolmen, Albert and Aquinas. But the decay of the University of Paris during the English wars was transferring her intellectual supremacy to Oxford, and in Oxford Wyclif stood without a rival. From his predecessor, Bradwardine, whose work as a scholastic teacher he carried on in the speculative treatises he published during this period, he inherited the tendency to a predestinarian Augustinianism which formed the groundwork of his later theological revolt. His debt to Ockham revealed itself in his earliest efforts at Church reform. Undismayed by the thunder and excommunications of the Church, Ockham had not shrunk in his enthusiasm for the Empire from attacking the foundations of the Papal supremacy or from asserting the rights of the civil power. The spare, emaciated frame of Wyclif, weakened by study and by asceticism, hardly promised a Reformer who would carry on the stormy work of Ockham; but within this frail form lay a temper quick and restless, an immense energy, an immovable conviction, an unconquerable pride. The personal charm which ever

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accompanies real greatness only deepened the influence he derived from the spotless purity of his life. As yet indeed even Wyclif himself can hardly have suspected the immense range of his intellectual power. It was only the struggle that lay before him which revealed in the dry and subtle schoolman the founder of our later English prose, a master of popular invective, of irony, of persuasion, a dexterous politician, an audacious partisan, the organizer of

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JOHN
WYCLIF

JOHN WYCLIF.
Portrait, at K'noie.

a religious order, the unsparing assailant of abuses, the boldest and most indefatigable of controversialists, the first Reformer who dared, when deserted and alone, to question and deny the creed of the Christendom around him, to break through the tradition of the past, and with his last breath to assert the freedom of religious thought against the dogmas of the Papacy.

The attack of Wyclif began precisely at the moment when the Church of the middle ages had sunk to its lowest point of spiritual

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decay. The transfer of the papacy to Avignon robbed it of half the awe in which it had been held by Englishmen, for not only had the Popes sunk into creatures of the French King, but their greed and extortion produced almost universal revolt. The claim of first fruits and annates from rectory and bishoprick, the assumption of a right to dispose of all benefices in ecclesiastical patronage, the direct taxation of the clergy, the intrusion of foreign priests into English livings, the opening a mart for the



POPE AND CARDINALS.
Late Fourteenth Century.
MS. Add. 23923; Decretals of Boniface VIII.

disposal of pardons, dispensations, and indulgences, and the encouragement of appeals to the Papal court produced a widespread national irritation which never slept till the Reformation. The people scorned a "French Pope," and threatened his legates with stoning when they landed. The wit of Chaucer flouted the wallet of "pardons hot from Rome." Parliament vindicated the right of the State to prohibit any questioning of judgements rendered in the King's courts, or any prosecution of a suit in foreign courts, by the Statute of Præmunire; and denied the Papal claim to dispose of benefices by that of Provisors. But the effort was

practically foiled by the treacherous diplomacy of the Crown. The Pope waived indeed his alleged right to appoint foreigners; but by a compromise, in which Pope and King combined for the enslaving of the Church, bishopricks, abbacies, and livings in the gift of Churchmen still continued to receive Papal nominees who had been first chosen by the Crown, so that the treasuries of King and Pope profited by the arrangement. The protest of the Good Parliament is a record of the ill-success of its predecessors' attempts. It asserted that the taxes levied by the Pope amounted to five times the amount of those levied by the King, that by reservation during the life of actual holders the Pope disposed of the same bishoprick four or five times over, receiving each time the first fruits. "The brokers of the sinful city of Rome promote for money unlearned and unworthy caitiffs to benefices of the value of a thousand marks, while the poor and learned hardly obtain one of twenty. So decays sound learning. They present aliens who neither see nor care to see their parishioners, despise God's services, convey away the treasure of the realm, and are worse than Jews or Saracens. The Pope's revenue from England alone is larger than that of any prince in Christendom. God gave his sheep to be pastured, not to be shaven and shorn." The grievances were no trifling ones. At this very time the deaneries of Lichfield, Salisbury and York, the archdeaconry of Canterbury, which was reputed the wealthiest English benefice, together with a host of prebends and preferments, were held by Italian cardinals and priests, while the Pope's collector from his office in London sent twenty thousand marks a year to the Papal treasury.

If extortion and tyranny such as this severed the English clergy from the Papacy, their own selfishness severed them from the nation at large. Immense as was their wealth, they bore as little as they could of the common burthens of the realm. They were still resolute to assert their exemption from the common justice of the land, and the mild punishments of the ecclesiastical courts carried little dismay into the mass of disorderly clerks. Privileged as they were against all interference from the lay world without, the clergy penetrated by their control over wills, contracts, divorce, by the dues they exacted, as well as by directly

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—

religious offices, into the very heart of the social life around them. No figure was better known or more hated than the summoner who enforced the jurisdiction and levied the dues of their courts. On the other hand, their moral authority was rapidly passing away; the wealthiest churchmen, with curled hair and hanging sleeves, aped the costume of the knightly society to which they really belonged. We have already seen the general impression of their worldliness in Chaucer's picture of the hunting monk and the courtly prioress with her love-motto on her brooch. Over the vice of the higher classes they exerted no influence whatever; the King paraded his mistress as a Queen of Beauty through London, the nobles blazoned their infamy in court and tournament. "In those days," says a chronicler of the time, "arose a great rumour and clamour among the people, that wherever there was a tournament there came a great concourse of ladies of the most costly and beautiful, but not of the best in the kingdom, sometimes forty or fifty in number, as if they were a part of the tournament, in diverse and wonderful male apparel, in parti-coloured tunics, with short caps and bands wound cord-wise round their head, and girdles bound with gold and silver, and daggers in pouches across their body, and then they proceeded on chosen coursers to the place of tourney, and so expended and wasted their goods and vexed their bodies with scurrilous wantonness that the rumour of the people sounded everywhere; and thus they neither feared God nor blushed at the chaste voice of the people." They were not called on to blush at the chaste voice of the Church. The clergy were in fact rent by their own dissensions. The higher prelates were busy with the cares of political office and severed from the lower priesthood by the scandalous inequality between the revenues of the wealthier ecclesiastics and the "poor parson" of the country. A bitter hatred divided the secular clergy from the regular; and this strife went fiercely on in the Universities. Fitz-Ralf, the Chancellor of Oxford, attributed to the Friars the decline in the number of academical students, and the University checked by statute their admission of mere children into their orders. The older religious orders in fact had sunk into mere landowners, while the enthusiasm of the Friars had in great part died away and left a crowd of impudent mendicants behind it.



RIDING TO A TOURNAMENT.



A TOURNAMENT.

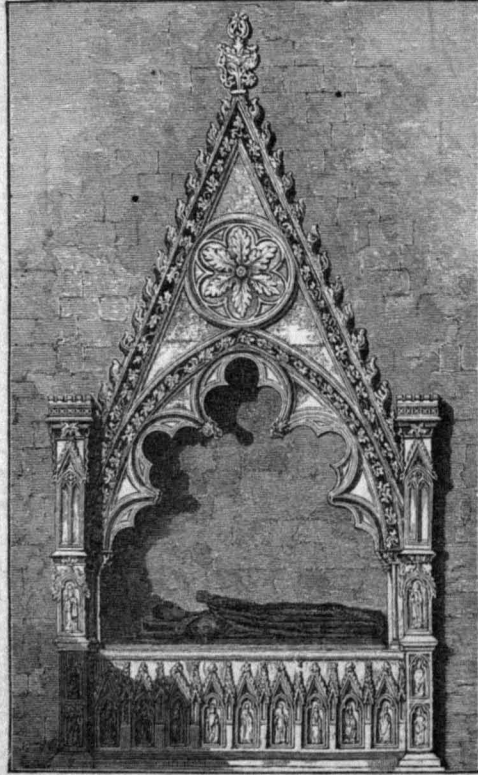
MS. Roy. 19 C. 2.
Provençal, Fourteenth Century.

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JOHN
WYCLIFWyclif
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Church
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Wyclif could soon with general applause denounce them as sturdy beggars, and declare that "the man who gives alms to a begging friar is ipso facto excommunicate."

Without the ranks of the clergy stood a world of earnest men who, like "Piers the Ploughman," denounced their worldliness and vice, sceptics like Chaucer laughing at the jingling bells of their



TOMB OF ARCHBISHOP PECKHAM (1313), IN CANTERBURY CATHEDRAL.

1366^e hunting abbots, and the brutal and greedy baronage under John of Gaunt, eager to drive the prelates from office and to seize on their wealth. Worthless as the last party seems to us, it was with John of Gaunt that Wyclif allied himself in his effort for the reform of the Church. As yet his quarrel was not with the doctrines of Rome but with its practice, and it was on the principles of Ockham that

he defended the Parliament's indignant refusal of the "tribute" which was claimed by the Papacy. But his treatise on "The Kingdom of God" (*De Dominio Divino*) shows how different his aims really were from the selfish aims of the men with whom he acted. In this, the most famous of his works, Wyclif bases his action on a distinct ideal of society. All authority, to use his own expression, is "founded in grace." Dominion in the highest sense is in God alone; it is God who, as the suzerain of the

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c. 1368



RUINS OF HALL, MAYFIELD, SUSSEX.

Built by Archbishop Islip, c. 1350.

Drawing by S. H. Grimm, 1783. MS. Add. Burrell, 5671.

universe, deals out His rule in fief to rulers in their various stations on tenure of their obedience to Himself. It was easy to object that in such a case "dominion" could never exist, since mortal sin is a breach of such a tenure, and all men sin. But, as Wyclif urged it, the theory is a purely ideal one. In actual practice he distinguishes between dominion and power, power which the wicked may have by God's permission, and to which the Christian must submit from motives of obedience to God. In his own scholastic phrase, so strangely perverted afterwards, here on earth "God"

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must obey the devil." But whether in the ideal or practical view of the matter, all power or dominion was of God. It was granted by Him not to one person, His Vicar on earth, as the Papacy alleged, but to all. The King was as truly God's Vicar as the Pope. The royal power was as sacred as the ecclesiastical, and as complete over temporal things, even the temporalities of the Church, as that of the Church over spiritual things. On the question of Church and State therefore the distinction between the ideal and practical view of "dominion" was of little account. Wyclif's application of the theory to the individual conscience was of far higher and wider importance. Obedient as each Christian might be to king or priest, he himself, as a possessor of "dominion," held immediately of God. The throne of God Himself was the tribunal of personal appeal. What the Reformers of the sixteenth century attempted to do by their theory of Justification by Faith, Wyclif attempted to do by his theory of "dominion." It was a theory which in establishing a direct relation between man and God swept away the whole basis of a mediating priesthood on which the mediæval Church was built; but for a time its real drift was hardly perceived. To Wyclif's theory of Church and State, his subjection of their temporalities to the Crown, his contention that like other property they might be seized and employed for national purposes, his wish for their voluntary abandonment and the return of the Church to its original poverty, the clergy were more sensitive. They were bitterly galled when he came forward as the theological bulwark of the Lancastrian party at a time when they were writhing under the attack on Wykeham by the nobles; and in the prosecution of Wyclif, they resolved to return blow for blow. He was summoned before Bishop Courtenay of London to answer for his heretical propositions concerning the wealth of the Church. The Duke of Lancaster accepted the challenge as really given to himself, and stood by Wyclif's side in the Consistory Court at St. Paul's. But no trial took place. Fierce words passed between the nobles and the prelate; the Duke himself was said to have threatened to drag Courtenay out of the church by the hair of his head, and at last the London populace, to whom John of Gaunt was hateful, burst in to their Bishop's rescue, and Wyclif's life was

saved with difficulty by the aid of the soldiery. But his courage only grew with the danger. A Papal bull which was procured by the bishops, directing the University to condemn and arrest him, extorted from him a bold defiance. In a defence circulated widely through the kingdom and laid before Parliament, Wyclif broadly asserted that no man could be excommunicated by the Pope "unless he were first excommunicated by himself." He denied the right of the Church to exact or defend temporal privileges by spiritual censures, declared that a Church might justly be deprived by the King or lay lords of its property for defect of duty, and defended the subjection of ecclesiastics to civil tribunals. Bold as the defiance was, it won the support of the people and of the Crown. When he appeared at the close of the year in Lambeth Chapel to answer the Archbishop's summons, a message from the Court forbade the Primate to proceed, and the Londoners broke in and dissolved the session.

Wyclif was still working hand in hand with John of Gaunt in advocating his plans of ecclesiastical reform, when the great insurrection of the peasants, which we shall soon have to describe, broke out under Wat Tyler. In a few months the whole of his work was undone. Not only was the power of the Lancastrian party on which Wyclif had relied for the moment annihilated, but the quarrel between the baronage and the Church, on which his action had hitherto been grounded, was hushed in the presence of a common danger. His "poor preachers" were looked on as missionaries of socialism. The Friars charged him with being a "sower of strife, who by his serpent-like instigation has set the serf against his lord," and though Wyclif tossed back the charge with disdain, he had to bear a suspicion which was justified by the conduct of some of his followers. John Ball, who had figured in the front rank of the revolt, was claimed as one of his adherents, and was alleged to have denounced in his last hour the conspiracy of the "Wyclifites." His most prominent scholar, Nicholas Herford, was said to have openly approved the brutal murder of Archbishop Sudbury. Whatever belief such charges might gain, it is certain that from this moment all plans for the reorganization of the Church were confounded in the general odium which attached to the projects of the peasant leaders, and that any hope of ec-

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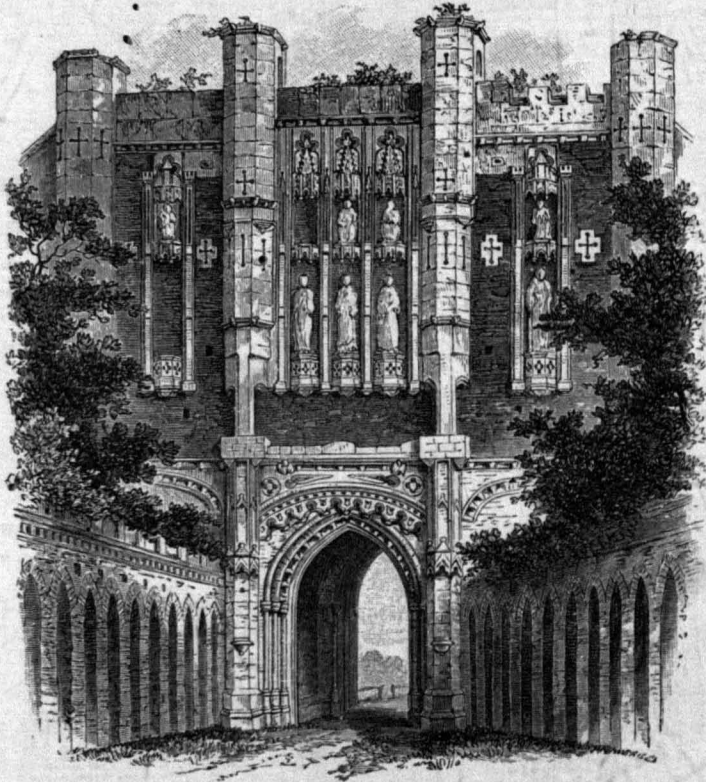
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clesiastical reform at the hands of the baronage and the Parliament was at an end. But even if the Peasant Revolt had not deprived Wyclif of the support of the aristocratic party with whom he had hitherto co-operated, their alliance must have been dissolved by the



GATEWAY OF THORNTON ABBEY, LINCOLNSHIRE.

Built c. 1382.

new theological position which he had already taken up. Some months before the outbreak of the insurrection, he had by one memorable step passed from the position of a reformer of the discipline and political relations of the Church to that of a protester against its cardinal beliefs. If there was one doctrine upon which the supremacy of the Mediæval Church rested, it was the doctrine of Transubstantiation. It was by his exclusive right to the per-

formance of the miracle which was wrought in the mass that the lowliest priest was raised high above princes. With the formal denial of the doctrine of Transubstantiation which Wyclif issued in the spring of 1381 began that great movement of revolt which ended, more than a century after, in the establishment of religious freedom, by severing the mass of the Teutonic peoples from the general body of the Catholic Church. The act was the bolder that he stood utterly alone. The University, in which his influence had been hitherto all-powerful, at once condemned him. John of Gaunt enjoined him to be silent. Wyclif was presiding as Doctor of Divinity over some disputations in the schools of the Augustinian Canons when his academical condemnation was publicly read, but though startled for the moment he at once challenged Chancellor or doctor to disprove the conclusions at which he had arrived. The prohibition of the Duke of Lancaster he met by an open avowal of his teaching, a confession which closes proudly with the quiet words, "I believe that in the end the truth will conquer." For the moment his courage dispelled the panic around him. The University responded to his appeal, and by displacing his opponents from office tacitly adopted his cause. But Wyclif no longer looked for support to the learned or wealthier classes on whom he had hitherto relied. He appealed, and the appeal is memorable as the first of such a kind in our history, to England at large. With an amazing industry he issued tract after tract in the tongue of the people itself. The dry, syllogistic Latin, the abstruse and involved argument which the great doctor had addressed to his academic hearers, were suddenly flung aside, and by a transition which marks the wonderful genius of the man the schoolman was transformed into the pamphleteer. If Chaucer is the father of our later English poetry, Wyclif is the father of our later English prose. The rough, clear, homely English of his tracts, the speech of the ploughman and the trader of the day, though coloured with the picturesque phraseology of the Bible, is in its literary use as distinctly a creation of his own as the style in which he embodied it, the terse vehement sentences, the stinging sarcasms, the hard antitheses which roused the dullest mind like a whip. Once fairly freed from the trammels of unquestioning belief, Wyclif's mind worked fast in its career of scepticism. Pardons, indulgences, absolutions, pilgrimages to the shrines of the saints, worship of their images, worship of the saints

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themselves, were successively denied. A formal appeal to the Bible as the one ground of faith, coupled with an assertion of the right of every instructed man to examine the Bible for himself, threatened the very groundwork of the older dogmatism with ruin. Nor were these daring denials confined to the small circle of the scholars who still clung to him; with the practical ability which is so marked a feature of his character, Wyclif had organized some few years before an order of poor preachers, "the Simple Priests,"



PREACHING IN THE OPEN AIR, A.D. 1338—1344.

MS. Bodl. Misc. 264.

whose coarse sermons and long russet dress moved the laughter of the clergy, but who now formed a priceless organization for the diffusion of their master's doctrines. How rapid their progress must have been we may see from the panic-struck exaggerations of their opponents. A few years later they complained that the followers of Wyclif abounded everywhere and in all classes, among the baronage, in the cities, among the peasantry of the country-side, even in the monastic cell itself. "Every second man one meets is a Lollard."

Oxford
and the
Lollards

"Lollard," a word which probably means "idle babbler," was the nickname of scorn with which the orthodox Churchmen chose to insult their assailants. But this rapid increase changed their scorn into vigorous action. Courtenay, now become Archbishop, summoned a council at Blackfriars, and formally submitted twenty-four propositions drawn from Wyclif's works. An earthquake in the midst of the proceedings terrified every prelate but the resolute Primate; the expulsion of ill humours from the earth, he said, was of good omen for the expulsion of ill humours from the Church; and the condemnation was pronounced. Then the Archbishop turned

fiercely upon Oxford as the fount and centre of the new heresies. In an English sermon at St. Frideswide's, Nicholas Herford had asserted the truth of Wyclif's doctrines, and Courtenay ordered the Chancellor to silence him and his adherents on pain of being himself treated as a heretic. The Chancellor fell back on the liberties of the University, and appointed as preacher another Wyclifite, Repyngdon, who did not hesitate to style the Lollards "holy priests," and to affirm that they were protected by John of Gaunt. Party spirit meanwhile ran high among the students; the bulk of them sided with the Lollard leaders, and a Carmelite, Peter Stokes, who had procured the Archbishop's letters, cowered panic-stricken in his chamber while the Chancellor, protected by an escort of a hundred townsmen, listened approvingly to Repyngdon's defiance. "I dare go no further," wrote the poor Friar to the Archbishop, "for fear of death;" but he soon mustered courage to descend into the schools where Repyngdon was now maintaining that the clerical order was "better when it was but nine years old than now that it has grown to a thousand years and more." The appearance, however, of scholars in arms again drove Stokes to fly in despair to Lambeth, while a new heretic in open Congregation maintained Wyclif's denial of Transubstantiation. "There is no idolatry," cried William James, "save in the Sacrament of the Altar." "You speak like a wise man," replied the Chancellor, Robert Rygge. Courtenay however was not the man to bear defiance tamely, and his summons to Lambeth wrested a submission from Rygge which was only accepted on his pledge to suppress the Lollardism of the University. "I dare not publish them, on fear of death," exclaimed the Chancellor when Courtenay handed him his letters of condemnation. "Then is your University an open *fautor* of heretics," retorted the Primate, "if it suffers not the Catholic truth to be proclaimed within its bounds." The royal council supported the Archbishop's injunction, but the publication of the decrees at once set Oxford on fire. The scholars threatened death against the Friars, "crying that they wished to destroy the University." The masters suspended Henry Crump from teaching, as a troubler of the public peace, for calling the Lollards "heretics." The Crown however at last stepped roughly in to Courtenay's aid, and a royal writ ordered the instant banishment of all favourers of Wyclif, with the seizure and destruction of all Lollard books, on pain of for-

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feiture of the University's privileges. The threat produced its effect. Herford and Repyngdon appealed in vain to John of Gaunt for protection; the Duke himself denounced them as heretics against the Sacrament of the Altar, and after much evasion they were forced to make a formal submission. Within Oxford itself the suppression of Lollardism was complete, but with the death of religious freedom all trace of intellectual life suddenly disappears. The century which followed the triumphs of Courtenay is the most barren in its annals, nor was the sleep of the University broken till the advent of the New Learning restored to it some of the life and liberty which the Primate had so roughly trodden out.

The
Death of
Wyclif

Nothing marks more strongly the grandeur of Wyclif's position as the last of the great schoolmen, than the reluctance of so bold a man as Courtenay even after his triumph over Oxford to take extreme measures against the head of Lollardry. Wyclif, though summoned, had made no appearance before the "Council of the Earthquake." "Pontius Pilate and Herod are made friends to-day," was his bitter comment on the new union which proved to have sprung up between the prelates and the monastic orders who had so long been at variance with each other; "since they have made a heretic of Christ, it is an easy inference for them to count simple Christians heretics." He seems indeed to have been sick at the moment, but the announcement of the final sentence roused him to life again. "I shall not die," he is said to have cried at an earlier time when in grievous peril, "but live and declare the works of the Friars." He petitioned the King and Parliament that he might be allowed freely to prove the doctrines he had put forth, and turning with characteristic energy to the attack of his assailants, he asked that all religious vows might be suppressed, that tithes might be diverted to the maintenance of the poor and the clergy maintained by the free alms of their flocks, that the Statutes of Provisors and Præmunire might be enforced against the Papacy, that churchmen might be declared incapable of secular offices, and imprisonment for excommunication cease. Finally, in the teeth of the council's condemnation, he demanded that the doctrine of the Eucharist which he advocated might be freely taught. If he appeared in the following year before the Convocation at Oxford, it was to perplex his opponents by a display of scholastic logic which permitted him to retire without any retraction of his sacramental heresy.



NEW COLLEGE, OXFORD, AND ITS ONE HUNDRED CLERKS, c. 1453.
MS. New Coll. Oxford, cclxxviii.

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For the time his opponents seemed satisfied with his expulsion from the University, but in his retirement at Lutterworth he was forging during these troubled years the great weapon which, wielded by other hands than his own, was to produce so terrible an effect on the triumphant hierarchy. An earlier translation of the Scriptures, in part of which he was aided by his scholar Herford, was being revised and brought to the second form, which is better known as "Wyclif's Bible," when death drew near. The appeal of the prelates to Rome was answered at last by a brief ordering him to appear at the Papal Court. His failing strength exhausted itself in the cold sarcastic reply which explained that his refusal to comply with the summons simply sprang from broken health. "I am always glad," ran the ironical answer, "to explain my faith to any one, and above all to the Bishop of Rome; for I take it for granted that if it be orthodox he will confirm it, if it be erroneous he will correct it. I assume, too, that as chief Vicar of Christ upon earth the Bishop of Rome is of all mortal men most bound to the law of Christ's Gospel, for among the disciples of Christ a majority is not reckoned by simply counting heads in the fashion of this world, but according to the imitation of Christ on either side. Now Christ during His life upon earth was of all men the poorest, casting from Him all worldly authority. I deduce from these premisses, as a simple counsel of my own, that the Pope should surrender all temporal authority to the civil power and advise his clergy to do the same." The boldness of his words sprang perhaps from a knowledge that his end was near. The terrible strain on energies enfeebled by age and study had at last brought its inevitable result, and a stroke of paralysis while Wyclif was hearing mass in his parish church of Lutterworth was followed on the next day by his death.

(7) *End.*

END OF VOL. I.

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