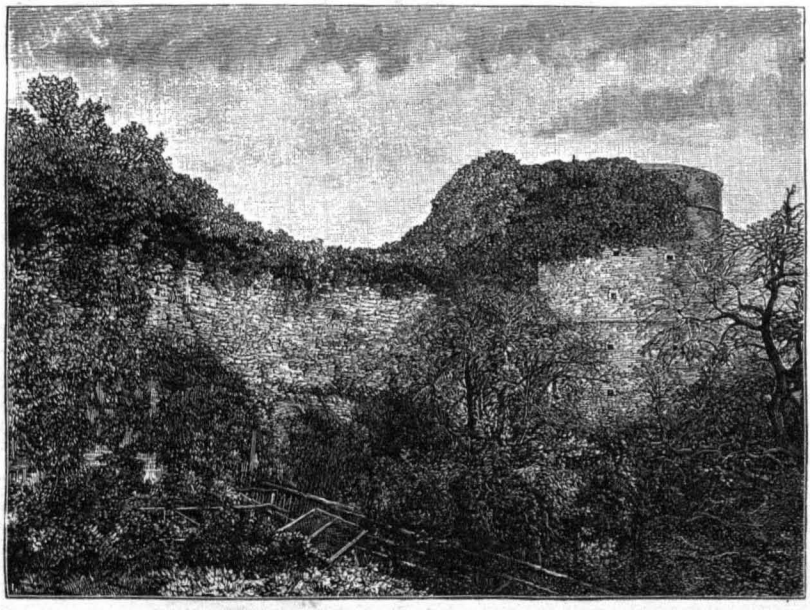
Essex and John Hales of Malling. In the eastern counties the levy of the poll-tax had already gathered crowds of peasants together, armed with clubs, rusty swords, and bows, and the royal commissioners sent to repress the tumult were driven from the field. While the Essex-men marched upon London on one side of the river, the Kentish-men marched on the other. Their grievance was mainly political, for villeinage was unknown in Kent; but as they poured on to Blackheath, every lawyer who



TOWN-WALL, CANTERBURY.
Built c. 1375—1380.

fell into their hands was put to death; "not till all these were killed would the land enjoy its old freedom again," the peasants shouted as they fired the houses of the stewards and flung the records of the manor-courts into the flames. The whole population joined them as they marched along, while the nobles were paralyzed with fear. The young King—he was but a boy of fifteen—addressed them from a boat on the river; but the refusal of his Council under the guidance of Archbishop Sudbury to allow him to land kindled the peasants to fury, and with cries of *June* 13

SEC. IV
THE PEASANT REVOLT
1377 TO 1381

"Treason" the great mass rushed on London. Its gates were flung open by the poorer artizans within the city, and the stately palace of John of Gaunt at the Savoy, the new inn of the lawyers at the Temple, the houses of the foreign merchants, were soon in a blaze. But the insurgents, as they proudly boasted, were "seekers of truth and justice, not thieves or robbers," and a plunderer found carrying off a silver vessel from the sack of the Savoy was flung with his spoil into the flames. The general terror was shown ludicrously enough on the following day, when a daring band of peasants, under Tyler himself, forced their way into the Tower, and taking the panic-stricken knights of the royal household in rough horse-play by the beard, promised to be their equals and good comrades in the time to come. But the horse-play changed into dreadful earnest when they found the King had escaped their grasp, and when Archbishop Sudbury and the Prior of St. John were discovered in the chapel; the primate was dragged from his sanctuary and beheaded, and the same vengeance was wreaked on the Treasurer and the Chief Commissioner for the levy of the hated poll-tax. Meanwhile the King had ridden from the Tower to meet the mass of the Essex-men, who had encamped without the city at Mile-end, while the men of Hertfordshire and St. Albans occupied Highbury. "I am your King and Lord, good people," the boy began with a fearlessness which marked his bearing throughout the crisis; "what will ye?" "We will that you free us for ever," shouted the peasants, "us and our lands; and that we be never named nor held for serfs." "I grant it," replied Richard; and he bade them go home, pledging himself at once to issue charters of freedom and amnesty. A shout of joy welcomed the promise. Throughout the day more than thirty clerks were busied writing letters of pardon and emancipation, and with these the mass of the Essex and Hertfordshire men withdrew quietly to their homes. It was with such a charter that William Grindecobbe returned to St. Albans, and breaking at the head of the burghers into the abbey precincts, summoned the abbot to deliver up the charters which bound the town in bondage to his house. But a more striking proof of servitude remained in the millstones, which after a long suit at law had been adjudged to the abbey, and placed within its cloister as a triumphant

witness that no townsman might grind corn within the domain of the abbey save at the abbot's will. Bursting into the cloister the burghers now tore the millstones from the floor, and broke them into small pieces, "like blessed bread in church," so that

QUERN.
Primitive Type.

NETHER STONE OF POT-QUERN.
Thirteenth Century.
*Journal of the Archæological Association.*

each might have something to show of the day when their freedom was won again.

Many of the Kentish-men dispersed at the news of the King's pledge to the men of Essex, but thirty thousand men still surrounded Wat Tyler when Richard by a mere chance encountered

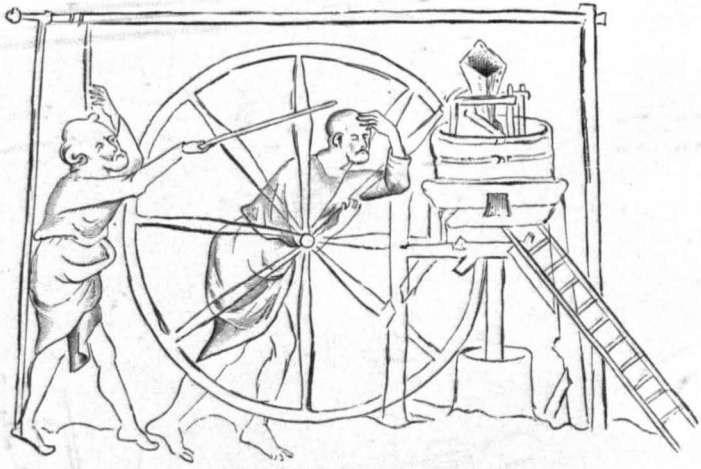
**Suppression of the Revolt**

GRINDING AT A HANDMILL.
Early Fourteenth Century.
*MS. Roy.* 10 *E. iv.*

him the next morning at Smithfield. Hot words passed between his train and the peasant leader, who advanced to confer with the King; and a threat from Tyler brought on a brief struggle in which

Sec. IV
The Peasant Revolt
1377 to 1381
*June* 15

the Mayor of London, William Walworth, struck him with his dagger to the ground. "Kill, kill," shouted the crowd, "they have slain our captain." "What need ye, my masters?" cried the boy-king, as he rode boldly to the front, "I am your Captain and your King! Follow me." The hopes of the peasants centred in the young sovereign: one aim of their rising had been to free him from the evil counsellors who, as they believed, abused his youth, and they now followed him with a touching loyalty and trust till he entered the Tower. His mother welcomed him with tears of joy. "Rejoice and praise God," the boy answered, "for I have recovered



SAMSON GRINDING AT THE MILL.
Fourteenth Century.
*MS. Roy.* 2 *B. vii.*

to-day my heritage which was lost, and the realm of England." But he was compelled to give the same pledge of freedom as at Mile-end, and it was only after receiving his letters of pardon and emancipation that the Kentish-men dispersed to their homes. The revolt, indeed, was far from being at an end. South of the Thames it spread as far as Devonshire; there were outbreaks in the north; the eastern counties were in one wild turmoil of revolt. A body of peasants occupied St. Albans. A maddened crowd forced the gates of St. Edmundsbury and wrested from the trembling monks pledges for the confirmation of the liberties of the town. John the

Litster, a dyer of Norwich, headed a mass of peasants, under the title of King of the Commons, and compelled the nobles he captured to act as his meat-tasters and to serve him on their knees during his repast. But the withdrawal of the peasant armies with their letters of emancipation gave courage to the nobles. The warlike Bishop of Norwich fell lance in hand on Litster's camp, and scattered the peasants of Norfolk at the first shock: while the King, with an army of 40,000 men, spread terror by the ruthlessness of his executions as he marched in triumph through Kent and Essex. At Waltham he was met by the display of his own recent charters and a protest from the Essex-men that "they were so far as freedom went the peers of their lords." But they were to learn the worth of a king's word. "Villeins you were," answered Richard, "and villeins you are. In bondage you shall abide, and that not your old bondage, but a worse!" But the stubborn resistance which he met showed the temper of the people. The villagers of Billericay threw themselves into the woods and fought two hard fights before they were reduced to submission. It was only by threats of death that verdicts of guilty could be wrung from the Essex jurors when the leaders of the revolt were brought before them. Grindecobbe was offered his life if he would persuade his followers at St. Albans to restore the charters they had wrung from the monks. He turned bravely to his fellow-townsmen and bade them take no thought for his trouble. "If I die," he said, "I shall die for the cause of the freedom we have won, counting myself happy to end my life by such a martyrdom. Do then to-day as you would have done had I been killed yesterday." But the stubborn will of the conquered was met by as stubborn a will in their conquerors. Through the summer and autumn seven thousand men are said to have perished on the gallows or the field. The royal council indeed showed its sense of the danger of a mere policy *Nov.* 1381 of resistance by submitting the question of enfranchisement to the Parliament which assembled on the suppression of the revolt, with words which suggested a compromise. "If you desire to enfranchise and set at liberty the said serfs," ran the royal message, "by your common assent, as the King has been informed that some of you desire, he will consent to your prayer." But no thoughts of compromise influenced the landowners in their reply. The King's

SEC. IV
THE PEASANT REVOLT
1377 TO 1381

grant and letters, the Parliament answered with perfect truth, were legally null and void: their serfs were their goods, and the King could not take their goods from them but by their own consent. "And this consent," they ended, "we have never given and never will give, were we all to die in one day."

SEAL OF CITY OF CANTERBURY.
Fourteenth Century.
*Collection of Society of Antiquaries.*

## Section V.—Richard the Second, 1381—1399

[*Authorities.*—The "Annales Ricardi Secundi et Henrici Quarti," published by the Master of the Rolls, are our main authority. They form the basis of the St. Albans compilation which bears the name of Walsingham, and from which the Life of Richard by a monk of Evesham is for the most part derived. The same violent Lancastrian sympathy runs through Walsingham and the fifth book of Knyghton's Chronicle. The French authorities, on the other hand, are vehemently on Richard's side. Froissart, who ends at this time, is supplemented by the metrical history of Creton ("Archæologia," vol. xx.) and the "Chronique de la Traïson et Mort de Richart" (English Historical Society), both the works of French authors, and published in France in the time of Henry the Fourth, probably with the aim of arousing French feeling against the House of Lancaster and the war-policy it had revived. The popular feeling in England may be seen in "Political Songs from Edward III. to Richard III." (Rolls Series). The "Fœdera" and Rolls of Parliament are indispensable for this period: its constitutional importance has been ably illustrated by Mr. Hallam ("Middle Ages"). William Longland's poem, the "Complaint of Piers the Ploughman" (edited by Mr. Skeat for the Early English Text Society), throws a flood of light on the social condition of England at the time; a poem on "The Deposition of Richard II.," which has been published by the Camden Society, is now ascribed to the same author. The best modern work on Richard II. is that of M. Wallon ("Richard II." Paris, 1864).]

**Piers the Ploughman**

All the darker and sterner aspects of the age which we have been viewing, its social revolt, its moral and religious awakening, the misery of the poor, the protest of the Lollard, are painted with a terrible fidelity in the poem of William Longland. Nothing brings more vividly home to us the social chasm which in the fourteenth century severed the rich from the poor than the contrast between the "Complaint of Piers the Ploughman" and the "Canterbury Tales." The world of wealth and ease and laughter through which the courtly Chaucer moves with eyes downcast as in

WAYFARERS.
Early Fourteenth Century.
*MS. Roy. 2 B. vii.*

SEC. V
RICHARD THE SECOND
1381 TO 1399

a pleasant dream is a far-off world of wrong and of ungodliness to the gaunt poet of the poor. Born probably in Shropshire, where he had been put to school and received minor orders as a clerk, "Long Will," as Longland was nicknamed for his tall stature, found his way at an early age to London, and earned a miserable livelihood there by singing "placebos" and "diriges" in the stately funerals of his day. Men took the moody clerk for a madman; his bitter poverty quickened the defiant pride that made him loth—as he tells us—to bow to the gay lords and dames who rode decked in silver and minivere along the Cheap, or to exchange a "God save you" with the law sergeants as he passed their new house in the Temple.

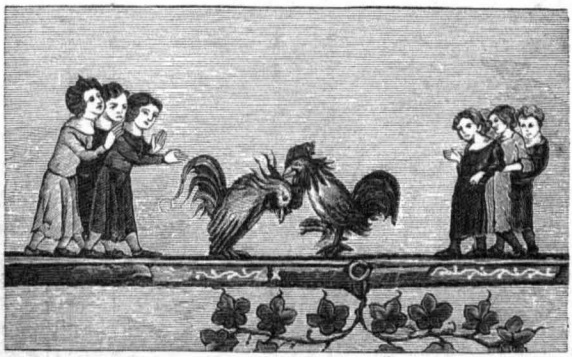
BEAR-BAITING, c. 1340.
*Loutrell Psalter.*

His world is the world of the poor: he dwells on the poor man's life, on his hunger and toil, his rough revelry and his despair, with the narrow intensity of a man who has no outlook beyond it. The narrowness, the misery, the monotony of the life he paints reflect themselves in his verse. It is only here and there that a love of nature or a grim earnestness of wrath quicken his rime into poetry; there is not a gleam of the bright human sympathy of Chaucer, of his fresh delight in the gaiety, the tenderness, the daring of the world about him, of his picturesque sense of even its coarsest contrasts, of his delicate irony, of his courtly wit. The cumbrous allegory, the tedious platitudes, the rimed texts from Scripture which form the staple of Longland's work, are only broken here

and there by phrases of a shrewd common sense, by bitter outbursts, by pictures of a broad Hogarthian humour. What chains one to the poem is its deep undertone of sadness: the world is out of joint and the gaunt rimer who stalks silently along the Strand

GAMBLERS.
Early Fourteenth Century.
*MS. Roy. 2 B. vii.*

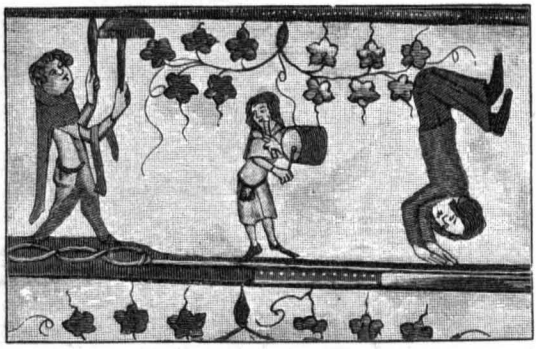
has no faith in his power to put it right. His poem covers indeed 1362–1380
an age of shame and suffering such as England had never known, for if its first brief sketch appeared two years after the peace of Brétigny its completion may be dated at the close of the reign of Edward the Third, and its final issue preceded but by a single year



COCK FIGHTING, A.D. 1338—1344.
*MS. Bodl. Misc.* 264.

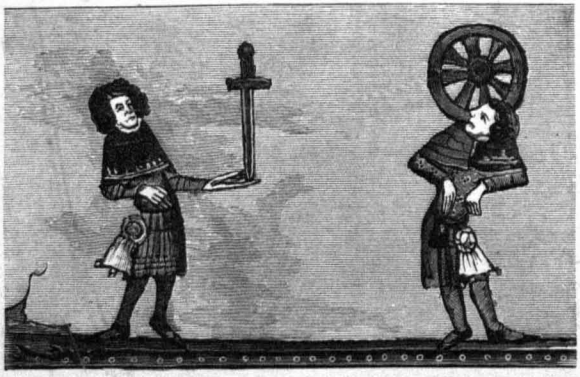
the Peasant Revolt. Londoner as he is, Will's fancy flies far from the sin and suffering of the great city to a May-morning in the Malvern Hills. "I was wery forwandered and went me to rest under a broad bank by a burn side, and as I lay and leaned and

looked in the water I slumbered in a sleeping, it sweyved (sounded) so merry." Just as Chaucer gathers the typical figures of the world he saw into his pilgrim train, so the dreamer gathers into a wide



TUMBLING, A.D. 1338—1344.
*MS. Bodl. Misc.* 264.

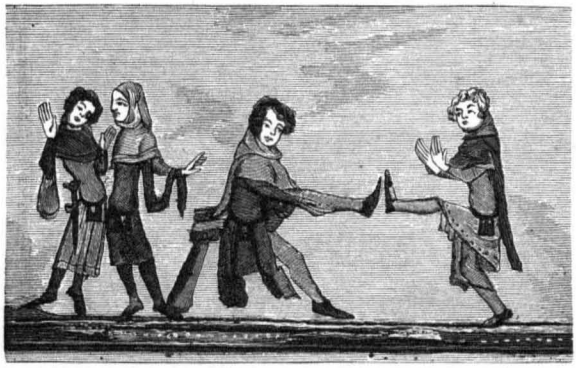
field his army of traders and chafferers, of hermits and solitaries, of minstrels, "japers and jinglers," bidders and beggars, ploughmen that "in setting and in sowing swonken (toil) full hard," pilgrims "with their wenches after," weavers and labourers, burgess and



JUGGLERS, A.D. 1338—1344.
*MS. Bodl. Misc.* 264.

bondman, lawyer and scrivener, court-haunting bishops, friars, and pardoners "parting the silver" with the parish priest. Their pilgrimage is not to Canterbury, but to Truth; their guide to Truth

neither clerk nor priest but Peterkin the Ploughman, whom they find ploughing in his field. He it is who bids the knight no more wrest gifts from his tenant nor misdo with the poor. "Though he be thine underling here, well may hap in heaven that he be worthier set and with more bliss than thou. . . . For in charnel at church churles be evil to know, or a knight from a knave there." The gospel of equality is backed by the gospel of labour. The aim of the Ploughman is to work, and to make the world work with him. He warns the labourer as he warns the knight. Hunger is God's instrument in bringing the idlest to toil, and Hunger waits to work her will on the idler and the waster. On the eve of the great

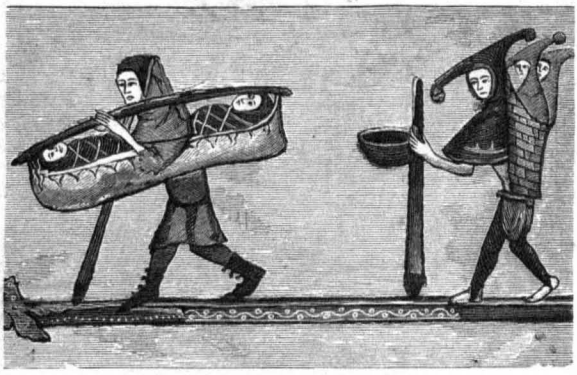


DANCING, A.D. 1338—1344.
*MS. Bodl. Misc.* 264.

struggle between wealth and labour Longland stands alone in his fairness to both, in his shrewd political and religious common sense. In the face of the popular hatred which was to gather round John of Gaunt, he paints the Duke in a famous apologue as the cat who, greedy as she might be, at any rate keeps the noble rats from utterly devouring the mice of the people. Though the poet is loyal to the Church, he proclaims a righteous life to be better than a host of indulgences, and God sends His pardon to Piers when priests dispute it. But he sings as a man conscious of his loneliness and without hope. It is only in a dream that he sees Corruption, "Lady Mede," brought to trial, and the world repenting at the preaching of Reason. In the waking life Reason finds no listeners. The poet himself is looked upon—he tells us bitterly—

SEC. V
RICHARD THE SECOND
1381 TO 1399

as a madman. There is a terrible despair in the close of his later poem, where the triumph of Christ is only followed by the reign of Antichrist; where Contrition slumbers amidst the revel of Death

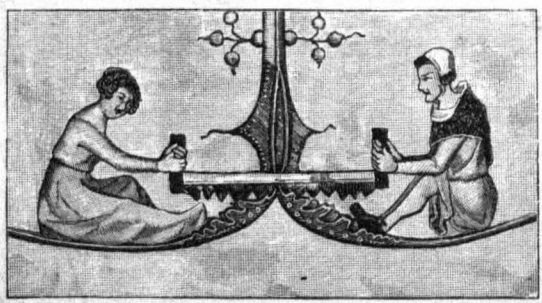


CARRYING BABIES IN DOUBLE PANNIERS, A.D. 1338—1344.
*MS. Bodl. Misc.* 264.

and Sin; and Conscience, hard beset by Pride and Sloth, rouses himself with a last effort, and seizing his pilgrim staff wanders over the world to find Piers Ploughman.

**The Social Strife**

The strife indeed which Longland would have averted raged only the fiercer after the repression of the Peasant Revolt. The



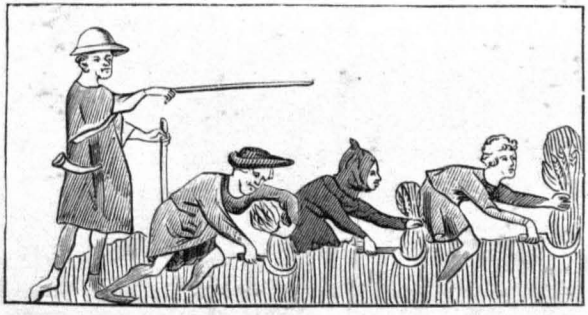
MAN AND WOMAN SAWING, A.D. 1338—1344.
*MS. Bodl. Misc.* 264.

Statutes of Labourers, effective as they proved in sowing hatred between employer and employed, between rich and poor, were powerless for their immediate ends, either in reducing the actual

rate of wages or in restricting the mass of floating labour to definite areas of employment. During the century and a half after the Peasant Revolt villeinage died out so rapidly that it became a rare and antiquated thing. A hundred years after the

CARDING AND SPINNING, c. 1340.
*Loutrell Psalter.*

Black Death the wages of an English labourer could purchase twice the amount of the necessaries of life which could have been obtained for the wages paid under Edward the Third. The statement is corroborated by the incidental descriptions of the life of the working classes which we find in Piers Ploughman. Labourers,



REAPERS AND HARVESTMAN.
Early Fourteenth Century.
*MS. Roy. 2 B. vii.*

Longland tells us, "that have no land to live on but their hands disdained to live on penny ale or bacon, but demanded fresh flesh or fish, fried or baked, and that hot and hotter for chilling of their maw." The market was still in fact in the labourer's hands, in

spite of statutes; "and but if he be highly hired else will he chide and wail the time that he was made a workman." The poet saw clearly that as population rose to its normal rate times such as these would pass away. "Whiles Hunger was their master here would none of them chide or strive against *his* statute, so sternly he looked: and I warn you, workmen, win while ye may, for Hunger hitherward hasteth him fast." But even at the time when he wrote there were seasons of the year during which employment for the floating mass of labour was hard to find. In the long interval between harvest-tide and harvest-tide, work and food were alike scarce in the mediæval homestead. "I have no penny," says Piers the Ploughman in such a season, in lines which give us the

SCYTHE AND REAPING-HOOK, A.D. 1338—1344.
*MS. Bodl. Misc.* 264.

picture of a farm of the day, "pullets for to buy, nor neither geese nor pigs, but two green cheeses, a few curds and cream, and an oaten cake, and two loaves of beans and bran baken for my children. I have no salt bacon, nor no cooked meat collops for to make, but I have parsley and leeks and many cabbage plants, and eke a cow and a calf, and a cart-mare to draw a-field my dung while the drought lasteth, and by this livelihood we must all live till Lammas-tide (August), and by that I hope to have harvest in my croft." But it was not till Lammas-tide that high wages and the new corn bade "Hunger go to sleep," and during the long spring and summer the free labourer, and the "waster that will not work but wander about, that will eat no bread but the finest wheat, nor drink but of

the best and brownest ale," was a source of social and political danger. "He grieveth him against God and grudgeth against Reason, and then curseth he the King and all his Council after such law to allow labourers to grieve." The terror of the landowners expressed itself in legislation which was a fitting

REAPERS AND GLEANER (RUTH AND BOAZ).
Early Fifteenth Century.
*MS. Harl.* 1892.

sequel to the Statutes of Labourers. They forbade the child of any tiller of the soil to be apprenticed in a town. They prayed 1381
Richard to ordain "that no bondman or bondwoman shall place their children at school, as has been done, so as to advance their children in the world by their going into the Church." The new colleges which were being founded at the two Universities at this moment closed their gates upon villeins. It was the

SEC. V
RICHARD THE SECOND
1381 TO 1399

failure of such futile efforts to effect their aim which drove the energy of the great proprietors into a new direction, and in the end revolutionized the whole agricultural system of the country. Sheep-farming required fewer hands than tillage, and the scarcity and high price of labour tended to throw more and more land into sheep-farms. In the decrease of personal service, as villeinage died away, it became the interest of the lord to diminish the number of tenants on his estate as it had been before his interest to maintain it, and he did this by massing the small allotments together into larger holdings. By this course of eviction the number of the free-labour class was enormously increased while the area of employment was diminished; and the social danger from vagabondage and the "sturdy beggar" grew every day greater till it brought about the despotism of the Tudors.

**Lollardry**

This social danger mingled with the yet more formidable religious peril which sprang from the party violence of the later Lollardry. The persecution of Courtenay had deprived the religious reform of its more learned adherents and of the support of the Universities, while Wyclif's death had robbed it of its head at a moment when little had been done save a work of destruction. From that moment Lollardry ceased to be in any sense an organized movement, and crumbled into a general spirit of revolt. All the religious and social discontent of the times floated instinctively to this new centre; the socialist dreams of the peasantry, the new and keener spirit of personal morality, the hatred of the friars, the jealousy of the great lords towards the prelacy, the fanaticism of the reforming zealot, were blended together in a common hostility to the Church and a common resolve to substitute personal religion for its dogmatic and ecclesiastical system. But it was this want of organization, this looseness and fluidity of the new movement, that made it penetrate through every class of society. Women as well as men became the preachers of the new sect. Lollardry had its own schools, its own books; its pamphlets were passed everywhere from hand to hand; scurrilous ballads which revived the old attacks of "Golias" in the Angevin times upon the wealth and luxury of the clergy were sung at every corner. Nobles, like the Earl of Salisbury, and at a later time Sir John Oldcastle, placed themselves openly at the

head of the cause and threw open their gates as a refuge for its missionaries. London in its hatred of the clergy became fiercely Lollard, and defended a Lollard preacher who had ventured to advocate the new doctrines from the pulpit of St. Paul's. One of its mayors, John of Northampton, showed the influence of the

DAVID AND HIS CHOIR.
Early Fifteenth Century.
*MS. Harl.* 1892.

new morality by the Puritan spirit in which he dealt with the morals of the city. Compelled to act, as he said, by the remissness of the clergy, who connived for money at every kind of debauchery, he arrested the loose women, cut off their hair, and carted them through the streets as an object of public scorn. But the moral spirit of the new movement, though infinitely its

SEC. V
RICHARD THE SECOND
1381 TO 1399

grander side, was less dangerous to the Church than its open repudiation of the older doctrines and systems of Christendom. Out of the floating mass of opinion which bore the name of Lollardry, one great faith gradually evolved itself, a faith in the sole authority of the Bible as a source of religious truth. The translation of Wyclif did its work. Scripture, complains a canon of Leicester, "became a vulgar thing, and more open to lay folk and women that knew how to read than it is wont to be to clerks themselves." Consequences which Wyclif had perhaps shrunk from drawing were boldly drawn by his disciples. The Church was declared to have become apostate, its priesthood was denounced as no priesthood, its sacraments as idolatry. It was in vain that the clergy attempted to stifle the new movement by their old weapon of persecution. The jealousy entertained by the baronage and gentry of every pretension of the Church to secular power foiled its efforts to make persecution effective. At the moment of the Peasant Revolt, Courtenay procured the enactment of a statute which commissioned the sheriffs to seize all persons convicted before the bishops of preaching heresy. But the statute was repealed in the next session, and the Commons added to the bitterness of the blow by their protest that they considered it "in nowise their interest to be more under the jurisdiction of the prelates or more bound by them than their ancestors had been in times past." Heresy indeed was still a felony by the common law, and if as yet we meet with no instances of the punishment of heretics by the fire it was because the threat of such a death was commonly followed by the recantation of the Lollard. But the restriction of each bishop's jurisdiction within the limits of his own diocese made it almost impossible to arrest the wandering preachers of the new doctrine, and the civil punishment—even if it had been sanctioned by public opinion—seems to have long fallen into desuetude. Experience proved to the prelates that few sheriffs would arrest on the mere warrant of an ecclesiastical officer, and that no royal court would issue the writ "for the burning of a heretic" on a bishop's requisition. But powerless as the efforts of the Church were for purposes of repression, they were effective in rousing the temper of the Lollards into a bitter fanaticism. The Lollard teachers directed their fiercest invectives against the wealth and

secularity of the great Churchmen. In a formal petition to Parliament they mingled denunciations of the riches of the clergy with an open profession of disbelief in transubstantiation, priesthood, pilgrimages, and image worship, and a demand, which illustrates the strange medley of opinions which jostled together in the new movement, that war might be declared unchristian, and that trades such as those of the goldsmith or the armourer, which were contrary to apostolical poverty, might be banished from the realm. They contended (and it is remarkable that a Parliament of the next reign adopted the statement) that from the superfluous revenues of the Church, if once they were applied to purposes of general utility, the King might maintain fifteen earls, fifteen hundred knights, and six thousand squires, besides endowing a hundred hospitals for the relief of the poor.

1395

The French Wars

The distress of the landowners, the general disorganization of the country, in every part of which bands of marauders were openly defying the law, the panic of the Church and of society at large as the projects of the Lollards shaped themselves into more daring and revolutionary forms, added a fresh keenness to the national discontent at the languid and inefficient prosecution of the war. The junction of the French and Spanish fleets had made them masters of the seas; what fragments were left of Guienne lay at their mercy, and the northern frontier of England itself was flung open to France by the alliance of the Scots. The landing of a French force in the Forth roused the whole country to a desperate effort, and a large and well-equipped army of Englishmen penetrated as far as Edinburgh in the vain hope of bringing their enemy to battle. A more terrible blow had been struck in the reduction of Ghent by the French troops, and the loss of the one remaining market for English commerce; while the forces which should have been employed in saving it, and in the protection of the English shores against the threat of invasion, were squandered by John of Gaunt on the Spanish frontier in pursuit of a visionary crown, which he claimed in his wife's right, the daughter of Pedro the Cruel. The enterprise showed that the Duke had now abandoned the hope of directing affairs at home. Robert de Vere and Michael de la Pole, the Earl of Suffolk, had stood since the suppression of the revolt at the head of the royal councils, and their

1385

Sec. V
Richard the Second 1381 to 1399

steady purpose was to drive the Duke of Lancaster from power. But the departure of John of Gaunt only called to the front his brother and his son, the Duke of Gloucester and the Earl of Derby; while the lukewarm prosecution of the war, the profuse expenditure of the Court, and above all the manifest will of the King to free himself from Parliamentary control, estranged the Lower House.

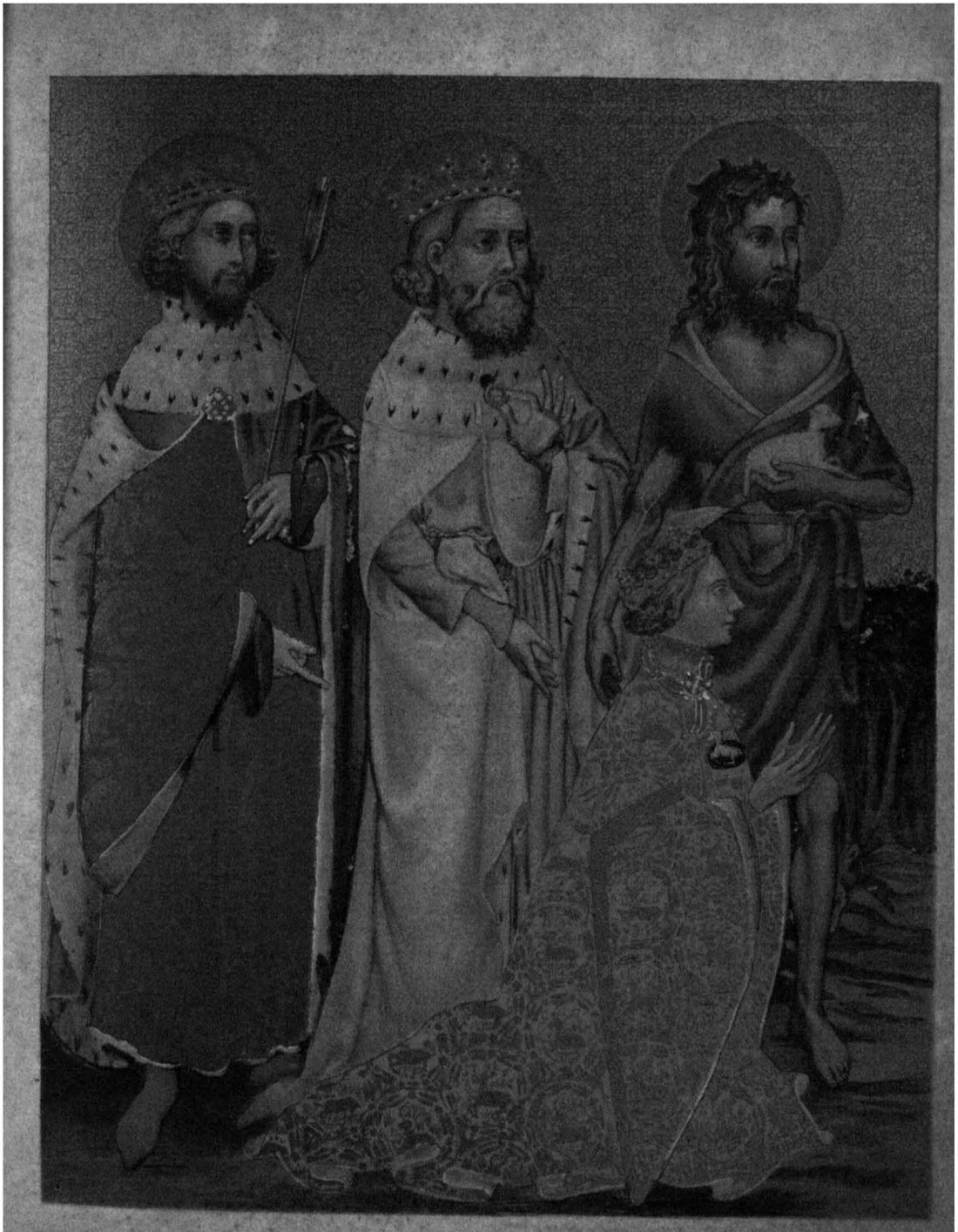
1386 The Parliament impeached Suffolk for corruption and appointed a commission of regency for a year, of which Gloucester was the leading spirit. The attempt of the young King at the close of the session to reverse these measures was crushed by the appearance of Gloucester and his friends in arms; in the Merciless Parliament a charge of high treason hurried into exile or

1388 to death Suffolk with his supporters, the five judges who had pronounced the commission to be in itself illegal were banished, and four members of the royal household sent to the block. But hardly a year had passed when Richard found himself strong enough to break down by a word the government against which he

1389 had struggled so vainly. Entering the Council he suddenly asked his uncle to tell him how old he was. "Your Highness," replied Gloucester, "is in your twenty-fourth year." "Then I am old enough to manage my own affairs," said Richard coolly. "I have been longer under guardianship than any ward in my realm. I thank you for your past services, my lords, but I need them no longer."

Richard the Second 1389-1397

For eight years the King wielded the power which thus passed quietly into his hands with singular wisdom and good fortune. On the one hand he carried his peace policy into effect by negotiations with France, which brought about a truce renewed year by year till it was prolonged in 1394 for four years, and this period of rest was lengthened for twenty-five years by a subsequent agreement on his marriage with Isabella, the daughter of Charles the Sixth. On the other he announced his resolve to rule by the advice of his Parliament, submitted to its censure, and consulted it on all matters of importance. In a short campaign he pacified Ireland; and the Lollard troubles which had threatened during his absence died away on his return. But the brilliant abilities which Richard shared with the rest of the Plantagenets were marred by a fitful inconstancy, an insane pride, and a craving for absolute power. His uncle the



RICHARD II. AND HIS PATRON SAINTS.

From the Arundel Society's reproduction of a contemporary painting at Wilton House.

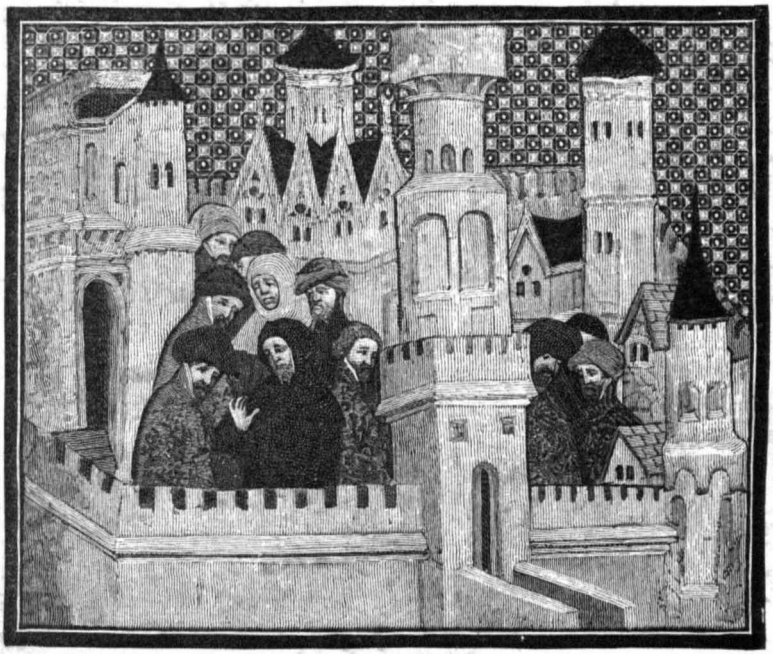
Duke of Gloucester remained at the head of the opposition; while the King had secured the friendship of John of Gaunt, and of his son Henry, Earl of Derby. The readiness with which Richard seized on an opportunity of provoking a contest shows the bitterness with which during the long years that had passed since the flight of Suffolk he had brooded over his projects of vengeance. The Duke of Gloucester and the Earls of Arundel and Warwick were arrested on a charge of conspiracy. A 1397
Parliament packed with royal partizans was used to crush Richard's opponents. The pardons granted nine years before were recalled; the commission of regency declared to have been illegal, and its promoters guilty of treason. The blow was ruthlessly followed up. The Duke was saved from a trial by a sudden death in his prison at Calais; while his chief supporter, Arundel, the Archbishop of Canterbury, was impeached and banished, and the nobles of his party condemned to death and imprisonment. The measures introduced into the Parliament of the following year showed that besides his projects of revenge Richard's designs had widened into a definite plan of absolute government. It declared null the proceedings of the Parliament of 1388. He was freed from Parliamentary control by the grant to him of a subsidy upon wool and leather for the term of his life. His next step got rid of Parliament itself. A committee of twelve peers and six commoners was appointed in Parliament, with power to continue their sittings after its dissolution and to "examine and determine all matters and subjects which had been moved in the presence of the King, with all the dependences of those not determined." The aim of Richard was to supersede by means of this permanent commission the body from which it originated: he at once employed it to determine causes and carry out his will, and forced from every tenant of the Crown an oath to recognize the validity of its acts and to oppose any attempts to alter or revoke them. With such an engine at his command the King was absolute, and with the appearance of absolutism the temper of his reign suddenly changed. A system of forced loans, the sale of charters of pardon to Gloucester's adherents, the outlawry of seven counties at once on the plea that they had supported his enemies and must purchase pardon, a reckless

Sec. V
Richard the Second
1381 to 1399
The Lancastrian Revolution

interference with the course of justice, roused into new life the social and political discontent which was threatening the very existence of the Crown.

By his good government and by his evil government alike, Richard had succeeded in alienating every class of his subjects. He had estranged the nobles by his peace policy, the landowners by his refusal to sanction the insane measures of repression they directed against the labourer, the merchant class by his illegal exactions, and the Church by his want of zeal against the Lollards. Richard himself had no sympathy with the Lollards, and the new sect as a social danger was held firmly at bay. But the royal officers showed little zeal in aiding the bishops to seize or punish the heretical teachers, and Lollardry found favour in the very precincts of the Court; it was through the patronage of Richard's first queen, Anne of Bohemia, that the tracts and Bible of the Reformer had been introduced into her native land, to give rise to the remarkable movement which found its earliest leaders in John Huss and Jerome of Prague. Richard stood almost alone in fact in his realm, but even this accumulated mass of hatred might have failed to crush him had not an act of jealousy and tyranny placed an able and unscrupulous leader at the head of the national discontent. Henry, Earl of Derby and Duke of Hereford, the eldest son of John of Gaunt, though he had taken part against his royal cousin in the earlier troubles of his reign, had loyally supported him in his recent measures against Gloucester. No sooner, however, were these measures successful than Richard turned his new power against the more dangerous House of Lancaster, and availing himself of a quarrel between the Dukes of Hereford and Norfolk, in which each party bandied accusations of treason against the other, banished both from the realm. Banishment was soon followed by the annulling of leave which had been given to Henry to receive his inheritance on John of Gaunt's death, and the King himself seized the Lancastrian estates. At the moment when he had thus driven his cousin to despair, Richard crossed into Ireland to complete the work of conquest and organization which he had begun there; and Archbishop Arundel, an exile like himself, urged the Duke to take advantage of the King's absence for the
1399 recovery of his rights. Eluding the vigilance of the French Court,

at which he had taken shelter, Henry landed with a handful of men on the coast of Yorkshire, where he was at once joined by the Earls of Northumberland and Westmoreland, the heads of the great houses of the Percies and the Nevilles; and, with an army which grew as he advanced, entered triumphantly into London. The Duke of York, whom the King had left regent, submitted, and his forces joined those of Henry; and when Richard landed at



RICHARD II. CONSULTING WITH HIS FRIENDS IN CONWAY CASTLE.
*MS. Harl.* 1319.

Milford Haven he found the kingdom lost. His own army dispersed as it landed, and the deserted King fled in disguise to North Wales, to find a second force which the Earl of Salisbury had gathered for his support already disbanded. Invited to a conference with the Duke of Lancaster at Flint, he saw himself surrounded by the rebel forces. "I am betrayed," he cried, as the view of his enemies burst on him from the hill; "there are pennons and banners in the valley." But it was too late for retreat.

SEC. V
RICHARD THE SECOND
1381 TO 1399

Richard was seized and brought before his cousin. "I am come before my time," said Lancaster, "but I will show you the reason. Your people, my lord, complain that for the space of twenty years you have ruled them harshly: however, if it please God, I will help you to rule them better." "Fair cousin," replied the King, "since it pleases you, it pleases me well." But Henry's designs went far beyond a share in the government of the realm. The Parliament which assembled in Westminster Hall received with shouts of

DUKES OF SURREY AND EXETER RIDING FROM CONWAY TO CHESTER.
*MS. Harl.* 1319

applause a formal paper in which Richard resigned the crown as one incapable of reigning and worthy for his great demerits to be deposed. The resignation was confirmed by a solemn Act of Deposition. The coronation oath was read, and a long impeachment, which stated the breach of the promises made in it, was followed by a solemn vote of both Houses which removed Richard from the state and authority of King. According to the strict rules of hereditary descent as construed by the feudal lawyers, by an assumed analogy with the descent of ordinary estates, the crown

would now have passed to a house which had at an earlier period played a leading part in the revolutions of the Edwards. The great-grandson of the Mortimer who brought about the deposition of Edward the Second had married the daughter and heiress of Lionel of Clarence, the third son of Edward the Third. The childlessness of Richard and the death of Edward's second son without issue placed Edmund, his grandson by this marriage, first

HENRY OF LANCASTER LEADING RICHARD II. INTO LONDON.
*MS. Harl.* 1319.

among the claimants of the crown ; but he was a child of six years old, the strict rule of hereditary descent had never received any formal recognition in the case of the crown, and precedent had established the right of Parliament to choose in such a case a successor among any other members of the Royal House. Only one such successor was in fact possible. Rising from his seat and crossing himself, Henry of Lancaster solemnly challenged the crown "as that I am descended by right line of blood coming from the good lord King Henry the Third, and through that right that

God of His Grace hath sent me with help of my kin and of my friends to recover it: the which realm was in point to be undone for default of governance and undoing of good laws." Whatever defects such a claim might present were more than covered by the solemn recognition of Parliament. The two Archbishops, taking the new sovereign by the hand, seated him upon the throne, and Henry in emphatic words ratified the compact between himself and his people. "Sirs," he said to the prelates, lords, knights, and

PARLIAMENT DEPOSING RICHARD II. AND ELECTING HENRY IV.
*MS. Harl.* 1319.

burgesses gathered round him, "I thank God and you, spiritual and temporal, and all estates of the land: and do you to wit it is not my will that any man think that by way of conquest I would disinherit any of his heritage, franchises, or other rights that he ought to have, nor put him out of the good that he has and has had by the good laws and customs of the realm, except those persons that have been against the good purpose and the common profit of the realm."

## Section VI.—The House of Lancaster, 1399—1422

[*Authorities.*—For Henry IV. the "Annales Henrici Quarti" and Walsingham, as before. For his successor, the "Acta Henrici Quinti" by Titus Livius, a chaplain in the royal army (English Historical Society); a life by Elmham, Prior of Lenton, simpler in style but identical in arrangement and facts with the former work; a biography by Robert Redman; a metrical Chronicle by Elmham (published in Rolls Series in "Memorials of Henry V."): and the meagre chronicles of Hardyng and Otterbourne. Monstrelet is the most important French authority for this period; for the Norman campaigns see M. Puiseux's "Siége de Rouen" (Caen, 1867). Lord Brougham has given a vigorous and, in a constitutional point of view, valuable sketch of this period in his "History of England under the House of Lancaster."]

**The Suppression of Lollardry**

Raised to the throne by a Parliamentary revolution and resting its claims on a Parliamentary title, the House of Lancaster was precluded by its very position from any resumption of the late struggle for independence on the part of the Crown which had

KING AND JESTER.
Early Fifteenth Century.
*MS. Harl.* 1892.

culminated in the bold effort of Richard the Second. During no period of our early history were the powers of the two Houses so frankly recognized. The tone of Henry the Fourth till the very close of his reign is that of humble compliance with the prayers of

SEC. VI
THE HOUSE OF LANCASTER
1399 TO 1422

the Parliament, and even his imperious successor shrank almost with timidity from any conflict with it. But the Crown had been bought by other pledges less noble than that of constitutional rule. The support of the nobles had been partly won by the hope of a renewal of the fatal war with France. The support of the Church had been purchased by the more terrible promise of persecution. The last pledge was speedily redeemed. In the first Convocation of his reign Henry declared himself the protector of the Church and ordered the prelates to take measures for the suppression of heresy and of the wandering preachers. His declaration was but a prelude to the Statute of Heresy which was passed at the opening of 1401. By the provisions of this infamous Act the hindrances which had till now neutralized the efforts of the bishops were taken away. Not only were they permitted to arrest all preachers of heresy, all schoolmasters infected with heretical teaching, all owners and writers of heretical books, and to imprison them, even if they recanted, at the King's pleasure, but a refusal to abjure or a relapse after abjuration enabled them to hand over the heretic to the civil officers, and by these—so ran the first legal enactment of religious bloodshed which defiled our Statute-book—he was to be burned on a high place before the people. The statute was hardly passed when William Sautre, a parish priest at Lynn, became its first victim. Nine years later a layman, John Badby, was committed to the flames in the presence of the Prince of Wales for a denial of transubstantiation. The groans of the sufferer were taken for a recantation, and the Prince ordered the fire to be plucked away; but the offer of life and of a pension failed to break the spirit of the Lollard, and he was hurled back to his doom. The enmity of France, and the fierce resentment of the Reformers, added danger to the incessant revolts which threatened the throne of Henry. The mere maintenance of his power through the troubled years of his reign is the best proof of the King's ability. A conspiracy of Richard's kinsmen, the Earls of Huntingdon and Kent, was suppressed, and was at once followed by Richard's death in prison. The Percies broke out in rebellion, and Hotspur, the son of the Earl of Northumberland, leagued himself with the Scots and with the insurgents of Wales. He was defeated and slain in

an obstinate battle near Shrewsbury; but two years later his father rose in a fresh insurrection, and though the seizure and execution of his fellow-conspirator Scrope, the Archbishop of York, drove Northumberland over the border, he remained till his 1403

A ROYAL BANQUET
Early Fifteenth Century.
*MS. Harl.* 1892.

death in a later inroad a peril to the throne. Encouraged meanwhile by the weakness of England, Wales, so long tranquil, shook 1400
off the yoke of her conquerors, and the whole country rose at the call of Owen Glyndwr or Glendower, a descendant of its native princes. Owen left the invaders, as of old, to contend with famine and the mountain storms; but they had no sooner retired than he

SEC. VI
THE HOUSE OF LANCASTER
1399 TO 1422

sallied out from his inaccessible fastnesses to win victories which were followed by the adhesion of all North Wales and great part of the South to his cause, while a force of French auxiliaries was despatched by Charles of France to his aid. It was only the restoration of peace in England which enabled Henry to roll back the tide of Glyndwr's success. By slow and deliberate campaigns continued through four years the Prince of Wales wrested from him the South; his subjects in the North, discouraged by successive defeats, gradually fell away from his standard; and the repulse of a bold descent upon Shropshire drove Owen at last to take refuge among the mountains of Snowdon, where he seems to have maintained the contest, single-handed, till his death. With the close of the Welsh rising the Lancastrian throne felt itself secure from without, but the danger from the Lollards remained as great as ever within. The new statute and its terrible penalties were boldly defied. The death of the Earl of Salisbury in the first of the revolts against Henry, though his gory head was welcomed into London by a procession of abbots and bishops who went out singing psalms of thanksgiving to meet it, only transferred the leadership of the party to one of the foremost warriors of the time. Sir John Oldcastle, whose marriage raised him to the title of Lord Cobham, threw open his castle of Cowling to the Lollards as their head-quarters, sheltered their preachers, and set the prohibitions and sentences of the bishops at defiance.

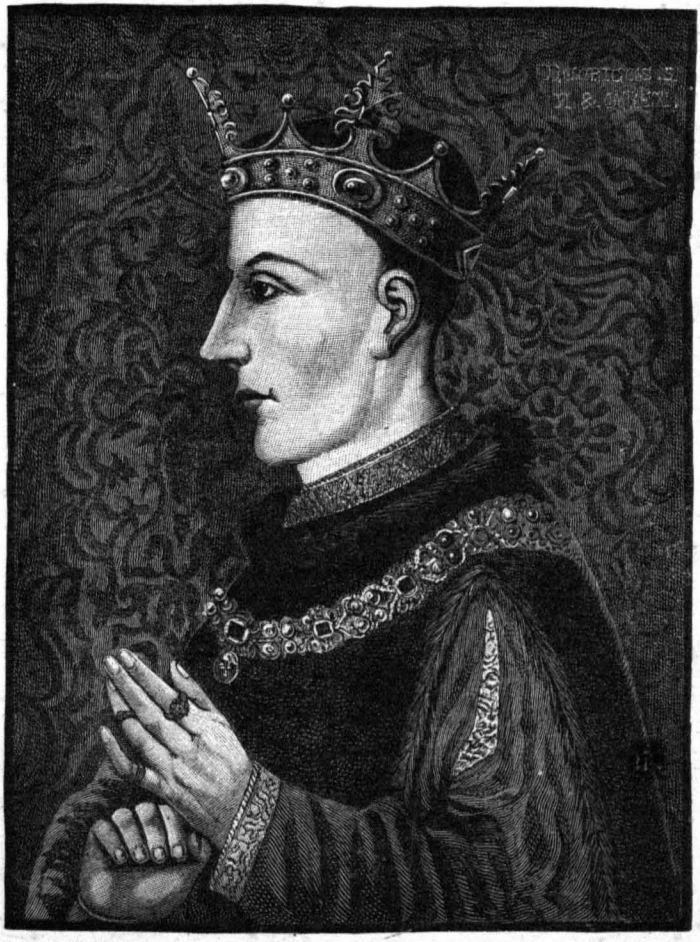
1407

1410

*Death of Henry IV*
1413

When Henry the Fourth died in 1413 worn out with the troubles of his reign, his successor was forced to deal with this formidable question. The bishops demanded that Cobham should be brought to justice, and though the King pleaded for delay in the case of one who was so close a friend, his open defiance at last forced him to act. A body of royal troops arrested Lord Cobham and carried him to the Tower. His escape was the signal for a vast revolt. A secret order summoned the Lollards to assemble in St. Giles's fields outside London. We gather, if not the real aims of the rising, at least the terror that it caused, from Henry's statement that its purpose was "to destroy himself, his brothers, and several of the spiritual and temporal lords;" but the vigilance of the young King prevented the junction of the Lollards of London with their friends in the country, and those who appeared at the place of

meeting were dispersed by the royal forces. On the failure of the rising the law was rendered more rigorous. Magistrates were directed to arrest all Lollards and hand them over to the bishops; a conviction of heresy was made to entail forfeiture of blood



HENRY THE FIFTH.
*From a Picture in the possession of Queen's College, Oxford.*

and of estate; and thirty-nine prominent Lollards were brought to execution. Cobham escaped, and for four years longer strove to rouse revolt after revolt. He was at last captured on the Welsh border and burned as a heretic. 1418

SEC. VI
THE HOUSE OF LANCASTER
1399 TO 1422
Agincourt

With the death of Oldcastle the political activity of Lollardry came suddenly to an end, while the steady persecution of the bishops, if it failed to extinguish it as a religious movement, succeeded in destroying the vigour and energy which it had shown at the outset of its career. But the House of Lancaster had, as yet, only partially accomplished the aims with which it mounted the throne. In the eyes of the nobles, one of Richard's crimes had been his policy of peace, and the aid which they gave to the revolution sprang partly from their hope of a renewal of the war. The energy of the war party was seconded by the temper of the nation at large, already forgetful of the sufferings of the past struggle and longing only to wipe out its shame. The internal calamities of France offered at this moment a tempting opportunity for aggression. Its King, Charles the Sixth, was a maniac, while its princes and nobles were divided into two great parties, the one headed by the Duke of Burgundy and bearing his name, the other by the Duke of Orleans and bearing the title of Armagnacs. The struggle had been jealously watched by Henry the Fourth, but his attempt to feed it by pushing an English force into
1412 France at once united the combatants. Their strife, however, recommenced more bitterly than ever when the claim of the French crown by Henry the Fifth on his accession declared his purpose of renewing the war. No claim could have been more utterly baseless, for the Parliamentary title by which the House of Lancaster held England could give it no right over France, and the strict law of hereditary succession which Edward asserted could be pleaded, if pleaded at all, only by the House of Mortimer. Not only the claim, indeed, but the very nature of the war itself was wholly different from that of Edward the Third. Edward had been forced into the struggle against his will by the ceaseless attacks of France, and his claim of the crown was a mere afterthought to secure the alliance of Flanders. The war of Henry, on the other hand, though in form a renewal of the earlier struggle on the expiration of the truce made by Richard the Second, was in fact a wanton aggression on the part of a nation tempted by the helplessness of its opponent and galled by the memory of former defeat. Its one excuse indeed lay in the attacks which France for the past fifteen years had directed against the

RECEPTION OF RICHARD BEAUCHAMP, EARL OF WARWICK, AS CAPTAIN OF CALAIS FOR HENRY V.

*MS. Cott. Jul. E. iv. art.* 6.

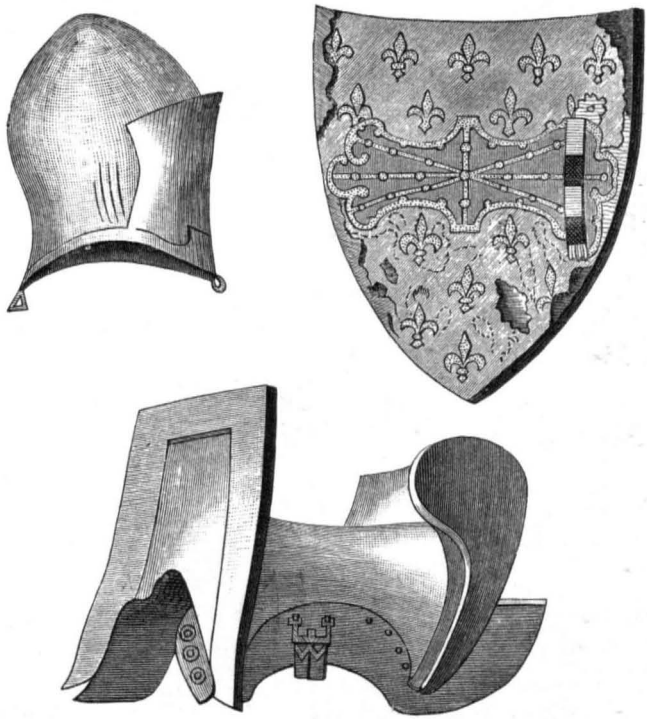
Late Fifteenth Century.

SEC. VI
THE HOUSE OF LANCASTER
1399 TO 1422

Lancastrian throne, its encouragement of every enemy without and of every traitor within. In the summer of 1415 the King sailed for the Norman coast, and his first exploit was the capture of Harfleur. Dysentery made havoc in his ranks during the siege, and it was with a mere handful of men that he resolved to insult the enemy by a daring march, like that of Edward, upon Calais. The discord, however, on which he probably reckoned for security, vanished before the actual appearance of the invaders in the heart of France; and when his weary and half-starved force succeeded in crossing the Somme, it found sixty thousand Frenchmen encamped on the field of Agincourt right across its line of march. Their position, flanked on either side by woods, but with a front so narrow that the dense masses were drawn up thirty men deep, was strong for purposes of defence but ill suited for attack; and the French leaders, warned by the experience of Crécy and Poitiers, resolved to await the English advance. Henry, on the other hand, had no choice between attack and unconditional surrender. His troops were starving, and the way to Calais lay across the French army. But the King's courage rose with the peril. A knight in his train wished that the thousands of stout warriors lying idle that night in England had been standing in his ranks. Henry answered with a burst of scorn. "I would not have a single man more," he replied. "If God give us the victory, it will be plain that we owe it to His grace. If not, the fewer we are, the less loss for England." Starving and sick as were the handful of men whom he led, they shared the spirit of their leader. As the chill rainy night passed away, his archers bared their arms and breasts to give fair play to "the crooked stick and the grey goose wing," but for which—as the rime ran—"England were but a fling," and with a great shout sprang forward to the attack. The sight of their advance roused the fiery pride of the French; the wise resolve of their leaders was forgotten, and the dense mass of men-at-arms plunged heavily forward through miry ground on the English front. But at the first sign of movement Henry had halted his line, and fixing in the ground the sharpened stakes with which each man was furnished, his archers poured their fatal arrow flights into the hostile ranks. The carnage was terrible, but the desperate charges of the French knighthood at last drove the English archers

*Agincourt Oct. 25, 1415*

to the neighbouring woods, from which they were still able to pour their shot into the enemy's flanks, while Henry, with the men-at-arms around him, flung himself on the French line. In the terrible struggle which followed the King bore off the palm of bravery: he was felled once by a blow from a French mace, and the crown on his helmet was cleft by the sword of the Duke of Alençon; but the



HELMET, SHIELD, AND SADDLE OF HENRY V.
*Westminster Abbey.*

enemy was at last broken, and the defeat of the main body of the French was followed at once by the rout of their reserve. The triumph was more complete, as the odds were even greater, than at Crécy. Eleven thousand Frenchmen lay dead on the field, and more than a hundred princes and great lords were among the fallen.

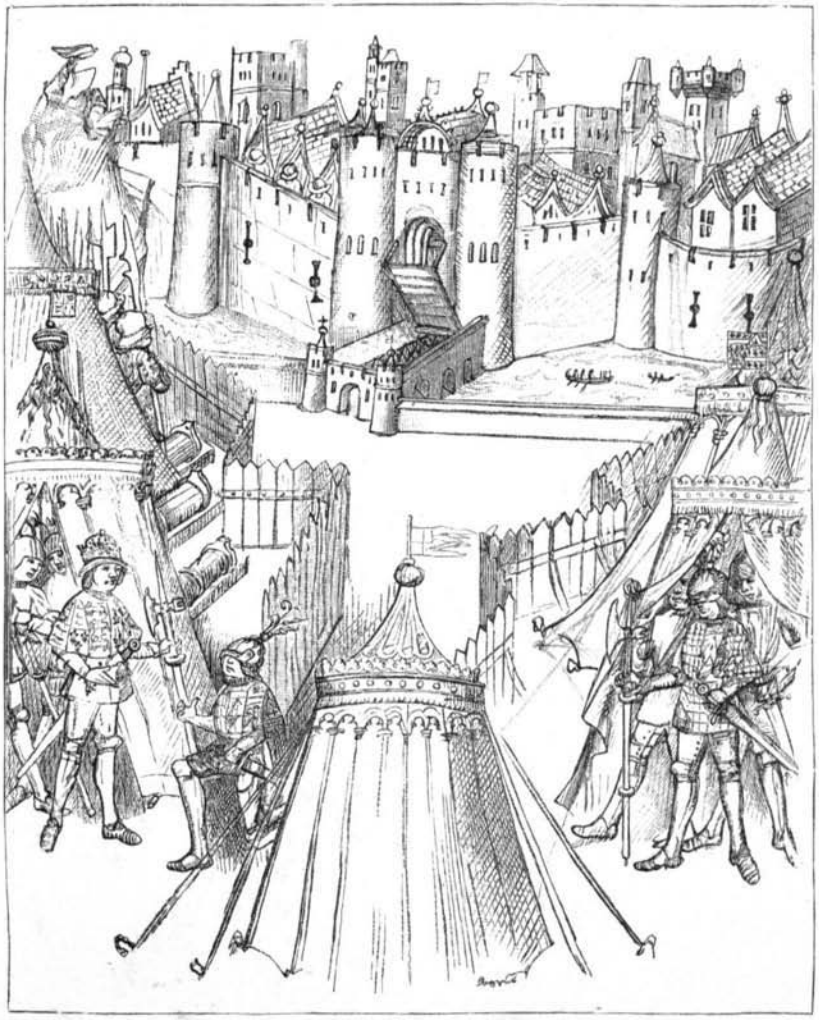
**The Conquest of Normandy**

The immediate result of the battle of Agincourt was small, for the English army was too exhausted for pursuit, and it made its way to Calais only to return to England. The war was limited to

Sec. VI
The House of Lancaster
1399 to 1422

a contest for the command of the Channel, till the increasing bitterness of the strife between the Burgundians and Armagnacs encouraged Henry to resume his attempt to recover Normandy. Whatever may have been his aim in this enterprise—whether it were, as has been suggested, to provide a refuge for his house, should its power be broken in England, or simply to acquire a command of the seas—the patience and skill with which his object was accomplished raise him high in the rank of military leaders. Disembarking with an army of 40,000 men, near the mouth of the
1417 Touque, he stormed Caen, received the surrender of Bayeux, reduced Alençon and Falaise, and detaching his brother the Duke of Gloucester to occupy the Cotentin, made himself master of Avranches and Domfront. With Lower Normandy wholly in his hands, he advanced upon Evreux, captured Louviers, and, seizing Pont-de-l'Arche, threw his troops across the Seine. The end of these masterly movements was now revealed. Rouen was at this time the largest and wealthiest of the towns of France; its walls
1418 were defended by a powerful artillery; Alan Blanchard, a brave and resolute patriot, infused the fire of his own temper into the vast population; and the garrison, already strong, was backed by fifteen thousand citizens in arms. But the genius of Henry was more than equal to the difficulties with which he had to deal. He had secured himself from an attack on his rear by the reduction of Lower Normandy, his earlier occupation of Harfleur severed the town from the sea, and his conquest of Pont-de-l'Arche cut it off from relief on the side of Paris. Slowly but steadily the King drew his lines of investment round the doomed city; a flotilla was brought up from Harfleur, a bridge of boats thrown over the Seine above the town, the deep trenches of the besiegers protected by posts, and the desperate sallies of the garrison stubbornly beaten back. For six months Rouen held resolutely out, but famine told fast on the vast throng of country folk who had taken refuge within its walls. Twelve thousand of these were at last thrust out of the city gates, but the cold policy of the conqueror refused them passage, and they perished between the trenches and the walls. In the hour of their agony women gave birth to infants, but even the new-born babes which were drawn up in baskets to receive baptism were lowered again to die on their mothers' breasts. It was little better within

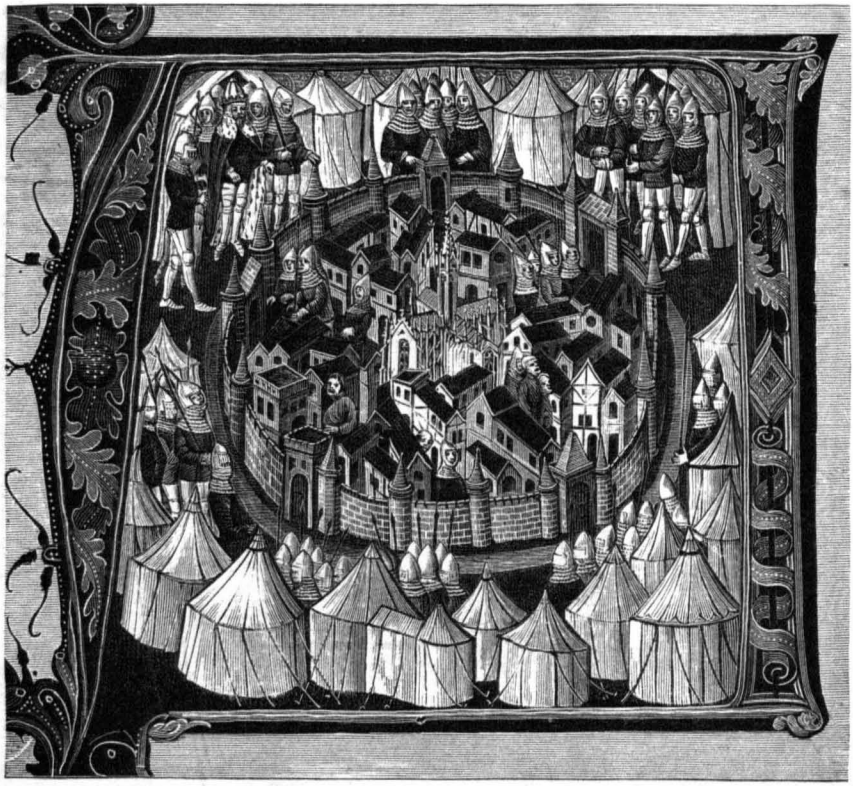
the town itself. As winter drew on one-half of the population wasted away. "War," said the terrible King, "has three hand-



SIEGE OF ROUEN, A.D. 1418.
*MS. Cott. Jul. E. iv. art. 6.*
Late Fifteenth Century.

maidens ever waiting on her, Fire, Blood, and Famine, and I have chosen the meekest maid of the three." But his demand of unconditional surrender nerved the citizens to a resolve of despair;

they determined to fire the city and fling themselves in a mass on the English lines; and Henry, fearful lest his prize should escape him at the last, was driven to offer terms. Those who rejected a foreign yoke were suffered to leave the city, but his vengeance reserved its victim in Alan Blanchard, and the brave patriot was at Henry's orders put to death in cold blood.



A BELEAGUERED CITY.
*MS. Harl.* 1892.
Early Fifteenth Century.

**The Conquest of France**

A few sieges completed the reduction of Normandy. The King's designs were still limited to the acquisition of that province; and pausing in his career of conquest, he strove to win its loyalty by a remission of taxation and a redress of grievances, and to seal its possession by a formal peace with the French Crown. The conferences, however, which were held for this purpose at Pontoise

failed through the temporary reconciliation of the French factions, while the length and expense of the war began to rouse remonstrance and discontent at home. The King's difficulties were at their height when the assassination of the Duke of Burgundy at Montereau, in the very presence of the Dauphin with whom he had come to hold conference, rekindled the fires of civil strife. The whole Burgundian party, with the new Duke, Philip the Good, at its head, flung itself in a wild thirst for revenge into Henry's hands. The mad King, Charles the Sixth, with his Queen and daughters, were in Philip's power; and in his resolve to exclude the Dauphin from the throne the Duke stooped to buy English aid by giving Catharine, the eldest of the French princesses, in marriage to Henry, by conferring on him the Regency during the life of Charles, and by recognizing his succession to the crown at that sovereign's death. The treaty was solemnly ratified by Charles himself in a conference at Troyes, and Henry, who in his new capacity of Regent had undertaken to conquer in the name of his father-in-law the territory held by the Dauphin, reduced the towns of the Upper Seine and entered Paris in triumph side by side with the King. The States-General of the realm were solemnly convened to the capital; and strange as the provisions of the Treaty of Troyes must have seemed, they were confirmed without a murmur, and Henry was formally recognized as the future sovereign of France. A defeat of his brother Clarence in Anjou called him back to the war. His reappearance in the field was marked by the capture of Dreux, and a repulse before Orleans was redeemed by his success in the long and obstinate siege of Meaux. At no time had the fortunes of Henry reached a higher pitch than at the moment when he felt the touch of death. But the rapidity of his disease baffled the skill of physicians, and with a strangely characteristic regret that he had not lived to achieve the conquest of Jerusalem, the great conqueror passed away.

1419

SEAL OF LES ANDELYS.
*Lewis Collection.*

1420

1422

# CHAPTER VI

## *THE NEW MONARCHY*

### 1422—1540

### Section I.—Joan of Arc, 1422—1451

[*Authorities.*—The "Wars of the English in France," and Blondel's work "De Reductione Normanniæ," both published by the Master of the Rolls, give ample information on the military side of this period. Monstrelet remains our chief source of knowledge on the French side. The "Procès de Jeanne d'Arc" (published by the Société de l'Histoire de France) is the only real authority for her history. For English affairs we are reduced to the meagre accounts of William of Worcester, of the Continuator of the Crowland Chronicle, and of Fabyan. Fabyan, a London alderman with a strong bias in favour of the House of Lancaster, is useful for London only. The Continuator is one of the best of his class, and though connected with the House of York, the date of his work, which appeared soon after Bosworth Field, makes him fairly impartial; but he is sketchy and deficient in actual facts. The more copious narrative of Polydore Vergil is far superior to these in literary ability, but of later date and strongly Lancastrian in tone. The Rolls of Parliament and Rymer's "Fœdera" are of high value. Among modern writers M. Michelet, in his "History of France" (vol. v.), has given a portrait of the Maid of Orleans at once exact and full of a tender poetry. Lord Brougham ("England under the House of Lancaster") is still useful on constitutional points.]

[Dr. Stubbs's "Constitutional History," vol. iii., published since these pages were written, treats of this period.—*Ed.*]

AT the moment when death so suddenly stayed his course the greatness of Henry the Fifth had reached its highest point. He had won the Church by his orthodoxy, the nobles by his warlike prowess, the whole people by his revival of the glories of Crécy and Poitiers. In France his cool policy had transformed him from a foreign conqueror into a legal heir to the crown; his title of Regent and of successor to the throne rested on the formal recognition of the estates of the realm; and his progress to the

very moment of his death promised a speedy mastery of the whole country.

SEC. I
JOAN OF ARC
1422 TO 1451

But the glory of Agincourt and the genius of Henry the Fifth hardly veiled at the close of his reign the weakness and humiliation of the Crown when the succession passed to his infant son. The long minority of Henry the Sixth, who was a boy of nine months old at his father's death, as well as the personal weakness which marked his after-rule, left the House of Lancaster at the mercy of the Parliament. But the Parliament was fast dying down into a mere representation of the baronage and the great landowners. The Commons indeed retained the right of

*Disfranchisement of the Commons*

THE MINSTRELS' GILD OF NORTHERN ENGLAND.
Sculpture on a pillar in S. Mary's Church, Beverley. Temp. Henry VI.
*Carter, "Ancient Painting."*

granting and controlling subsidies, of joining in all statutory enactments, and of impeaching ministers. But the Lower House was ceasing to be a real representative of the "Commons" whose name it bore. The borough franchise was suffering from the general tendency to restriction and privilege which in the bulk of towns was soon to reduce it to a mere mockery. Up to this time all freemen settling in a borough and paying their dues to it became by the mere settlement its burgesses; but from the reign of Henry the Sixth this largeness of borough life was roughly curtailed. The trade companies which vindicated civic freedom from the tyranny of the older merchant gilds themselves tended to become a narrow and exclusive oligarchy. Most of

*Restriction of Borough Freedom*

SEC. I
JOAN OF ARC
1422 TO 1451

the boroughs had by this time acquired civic property, and it was with the aim of securing their own enjoyment of this against any share of it by "strangers" that the existing burgesses, for the most part, procured charters of incorporation from the Crown, which turned them into a close body, and excluded from their number all who were not burgesses by birth or who failed henceforth to purchase their right of entrance by a long apprenticeship. In addition to this narrowing of the burgess-body, the internal

SEAL OF SHREWSBURY, A.D. 1425.
*Collection of Society of Antiquaries.*

government of the boroughs had almost universally passed, since the failure of the Communal movement in the thirteenth century, from the free gathering of the citizens in borough-mote into the hands of Common Councils, either self-elected or elected by the wealthier burgesses; and it was to these councils, or to a yet more restricted number of "select men" belonging to them, that clauses in the new charters generally confined the right of choosing their representatives in Parliament. It was with this restriction that the long process of degradation began which ended in reducing the representation of our boroughs to a mere mockery.

Great nobles, neighbouring landowners, the Crown itself seized on the boroughs as their prey, and dictated the choice of their representatives. Corruption did whatever force failed to do; and from the Wars of the Roses to the days of Pitt the voice of the people had to be looked for, not in the members for the towns, but in the knights of the counties. The restriction of the county franchise on the other hand was the direct work of the Parliament itself. Economic changes were fast widening the franchise in the counties. The number of freeholders increased with the subdivision of estates and the social changes which we have already examined, while the increase of independence was marked by the "riots and divisions between the gentlemen and other people," which the statesmen of the day attributed to the excessive number of the voters. In many counties the power of the great lords undoubtedly enabled them to control elections through the number of their retainers. In Cade's revolt the Kentishmen complained that "the people of the shire are not allowed to have their free elections in the choosing of knights for the shire, but letters have been sent from divers estates to the great nobles of the county, the which enforceth their tenants and other people by force to choose other persons than the common will is." It was primarily to check this abuse that a statute of the reign of Henry the Sixth restricted in 1430 the right of voting in shires to freeholders holding land worth forty shillings (a sum equal in our money to at least twenty pounds) a year, and representing a far higher proportional income at the present time. This "great disfranchising statute," as it has been justly termed, was aimed, in its own words, against voters "of no value, whereof every of them pretended to have a voice equivalent with the more worthy knights and esquires dwelling within the same counties." But in actual working the statute was interpreted in a far more destructive fashion than its words were intended to convey. Up to this time all suitors who found themselves at the Sheriff's Court had voted without question for the Knight of the Shire, but by the new statute the great bulk of the existing voters, every leaseholder and every copyholder, found themselves implicitly deprived of their franchise. A later statute, which seems, however, to have had no practical effect, showed the aristocratic temper, as well as the social changes

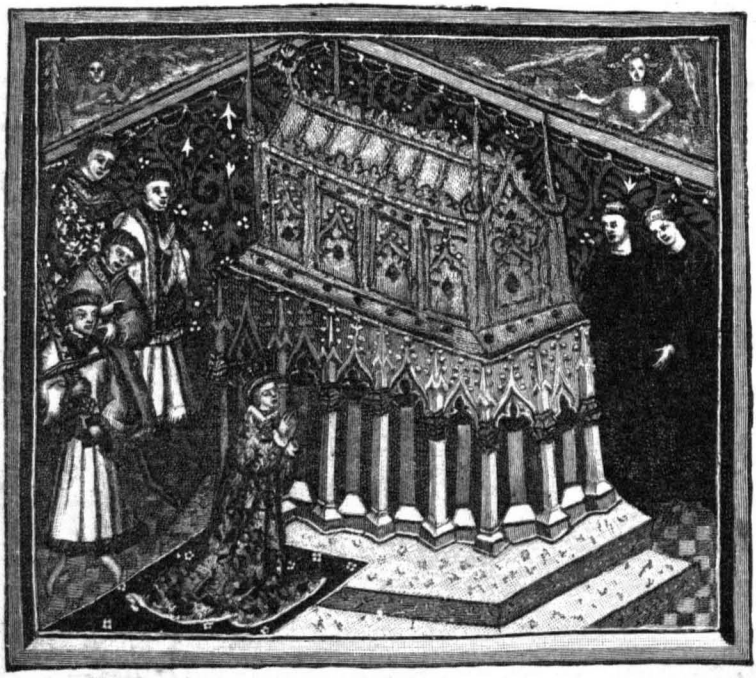
*Restriction of County Franchise*

SEC. I
JOAN OF ARC
1422 TO 1451

against which it struggled, in its requirement that every Knight of the Shire should be "a gentleman born."

**England under the Nobles**

The death of Henry the Fifth revealed in its bare reality the secret of power. The whole of the royal authority vested without a struggle in a council composed of great lords and Churchmen representing the baronage, at whose head stood Henry Beaufort, Bishop of Winchester, a legitimated son of John of Gaunt by his



HENRY VI. AT THE SHRINE OF S. EDMUND, 1433.
*Lydgate's Life of S. Edmund. MS. Harl.* 2278.

mistress Catharine Swynford. In the presence of Lollardry and socialism, the Church had at this time ceased to be a great political power and sunk into a mere section of the landed aristocracy. Its one aim was to preserve its enormous wealth, which was threatened at once by the hatred of the heretics and by the greed of the nobles. Lollardry still lived, in spite of the steady persecution, as a spirit of religious and moral revolt; and nine years
1431 after the young King's accession we find the Duke of Gloucester

traversing England with men-at-arms for the purpose of repressing its risings and hindering the circulation of its invectives against the clergy. The violence and anarchy which had always clung like a taint to the baronage had received a new impulse from the war with France. Long before the struggle was over it had done its fatal work on the mood of the English noble. His aim had become little more than a lust for gold, a longing after plunder,

HUMPHRY, DUKE OF GLOUCESTER, AND ELEANOR HIS WIFE, JOINING THE CONFRATERNITY OF S. ALBANS, A.D. 1431.
*MS. Cott. Nero D. vii.* c. 1460.

after the pillage of farms, the sack of cities, the ransom of captives. So intense was the greed of gain that only a threat of death could keep the fighting men in their ranks, and the results of victory after victory were lost by the anxiety of the conquerors to deposit their plunder and captives safely at home. The moment the firm hand of great leaders such as Henry the Fifth or Bedford was removed, the war died down into mere massacre and brigandage. "If God had been a captain now-a-days," exclaimed

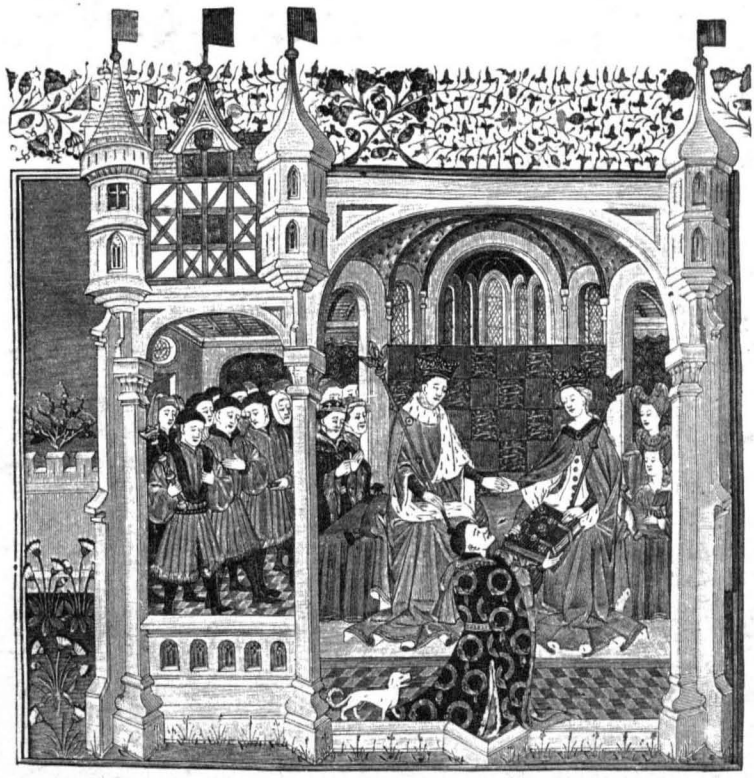
SEC. I
JOAN OF ARC
1422 TO 1451

a French general, "He would have turned marauder." The nobles were as lawless and dissolute at home as they were greedy and cruel abroad. The Parliaments, which became mere sittings of their retainers and partizans, were like armed camps to which the great lords came with small armies at their backs. That of

GROUP WITH JESTER.
*MS. Harl.* 1892.
Early Fifteenth Century.

1426 received its name of the "Club Parliament," from the fact that when arms were prohibited the retainers of the barons appeared with clubs on their shoulders. When clubs were forbidden, they hid stones and balls of lead in their clothes. The dissoluteness against which Lollardry had raised its great moral protest reigned now without a check. A gleam of intellectual light was breaking on the darkness of the time, but only to reveal its hideous combination of mental energy with moral worthlessness. The

Duke of Gloucester, whose love of letters was shown in the noble library he collected, was the most selfish and profligate prince of his day. The Earl of Worcester, a patron of Caxton, and one of the earliest scholars of the Revival of Letters, earned his title of "butcher" by the cruelty which raised him to a pre-eminence



TALBOT, EARL OF SHREWSBURY, PRESENTING A BOOK TO MARGARET OF ANJOU AND HENRY VI.
*MS. Roy. 15 E. vi.* c. 1445.

of infamy among the bloodstained leaders of the Wars of the Roses. All spiritual life seemed to have been trodden out in the ruin of the Lollards. Never had English literature fallen so low. A few tedious moralists alone preserved the name of poetry. History died down into the barest and most worthless fragments and annals. Even the religious enthusiasm of the people seemed to have spent itself, or to have been crushed out by the bishops'

SEC. I
JOAN OF ARC
1422 TO 1451

courts. The one belief of the time was in sorcery and magic. Eleanor Cobham, the wife of the Duke of Gloucester, was convicted of having practised magic against the King's life with a priest, and condemned to do penance in the streets of London. The mist which wrapped the battle-field of Barnet was attributed to the incantations of Friar Bungay. The one pure figure which rises out of the greed, the lust, the selfishness, and unbelief of the time, the figure of Joan of Arc, was regarded by the doctors and priests who judged her as that of a sorceress.

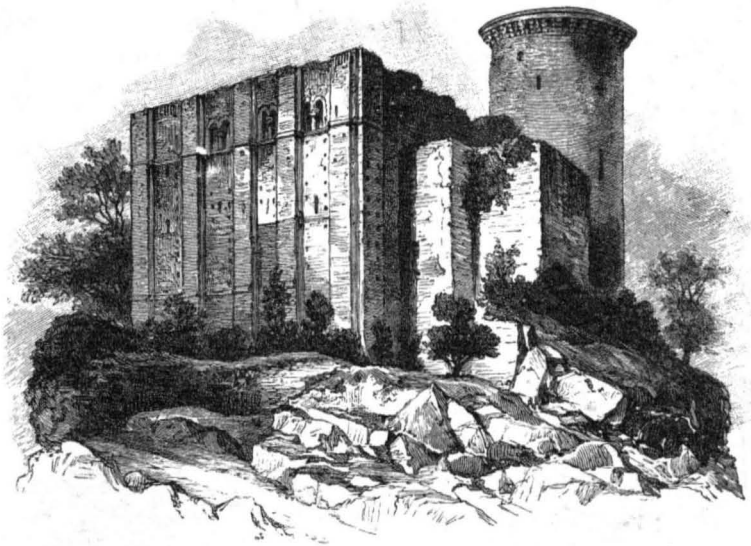
**Joan of Arc**

Jeanne d'Arc was the child of a labourer of Domrémy, a little village in the neighbourhood of Vaucouleurs on the borders of Lorraine and Champagne. Just without the cottage where she was born began the great woods of the Vosges, where the children of Domrémy drank in poetry and legend from fairy ring and haunted well, hung their flower garlands on the sacred trees, and sang songs to the "good people" who might not drink of the fountain because of their sins. Jeanne loved the forest; its birds and beasts came lovingly to her at her childish call. But at home men saw nothing in her but "a good girl, simple and pleasant in her ways," spinning and sewing by her mother's side while the other girls went to the fields, tender to the poor and sick, fond of church, and listening to the church-bell with a dreamy passion of delight which never left her. The quiet life was soon broken by the storm of war as it at last came home to Domrémy. The death of King Charles, which followed hard on that of Henry the Fifth, brought little change. The Dauphin at once proclaimed himself Charles the Seventh of France: but Henry the Sixth was owned as Sovereign over the whole of the territory which Charles had actually ruled; and the incursions which the partizans of Charles, now reinforced by Lombard soldiers from the Milanese and by four thousand Scots under the Earl of Douglas, made with fresh vigour across the Loire were easily repulsed by Duke John of Bedford, the late King's brother, who had been named in his will Regent of France. In genius for war as in political capacity John was hardly inferior to Henry himself. Drawing closer by marriage and patient diplomacy his alliances with the Dukes of Burgundy and Britanny, he completed the conquest of Northern France, secured his communications with Normandy by

*The Duke of Bedford*

the capture of Meulan, made himself master of the line of the Yonne by a victory near Auxerre, and pushed forward into the country near Mâcon. It was to arrest his progress that the Constable of Buchan advanced boldly from the Loire to the very borders of Normandy and attacked the English army at Verneuil. But a repulse hardly less disastrous than that of Agincourt left a third of the French knighthood on the field; and the Regent was preparing to cross the Loire when he was hindered by the intrigues of his brother the Duke of Gloucester. The nomination

1424



CASTLE OF FALAISE.
Square Keep built Twelfth Century; Round Tower, "Tour Talbot," added 1417—1450.

of Gloucester to the Regency in England by the will of the late King had been set aside by the Council, and sick of the powerless Protectorate with which they had invested him, the Duke sought a new opening for his restless ambition in the Netherlands, where he supported the claims of Jacqueline, the Countess in her own right of Holland and Hainault, whom he had married on her divorce from the Duke of Brabant. His enterprise roused the jealousy of the Duke of Burgundy, who regarded himself as heir to the Duke of Brabant, and the efforts of Bedford were paralyzed by the withdrawal of his Burgundian allies as they marched north-

*The Duke of Gloucester*