CHAPTER XXIX.

Mortimer and Isabella in France, with Prince Edward.—They return in Arms.—Fall and Death of the Despensers.—Edward II. deposed.—Edward III. proclaimed King.—Murder of Edward II.—Invasion of the Scots.—First Campaign of Edward III.—Seizure and Execution of Mortimer.—Evil Times of Edward II.—Transition state of Feudal relations.—Sir John Froissart.—Chivalry.—Military spirit of the reign of Edward III.—Edward Balliol and the Scotch War.—Claim of Edward to the French Crown.—Naval Victory of Sluys.—James Artevelde.—Jane de Montfort.—Edward lands in Normandy.

One of the principal supporters of the earl of Lancaster, who was beheaded at Pontefract in 1322, was Roger Mortimer, lord of Wigmore. He was spared the extreme penalties of treason, but was confined in the Tower of London. In 1323 he escaped, and proceeded to France. Isabella, the queen of Edward II., was sister to Charles IV. of France; and to reconcile some differences between Edward and Charles in the affairs of Gascony, Isabella was deputed to the court of her brother, with power to conclude a treaty. This she accomplished, upon terms not very advantageous to her husband, in May 1325. In September of the same year, the king of England was induced to transfer his foreign possessions of Gascony and Ponthieu, to his son Edward, then thirteen years of age; who went to Paris, and there did homage for them to the feudal lord, Charles IV. At Paris, Roger Mortimer joined the queen, and became the chief officer of her household. The return of Isabella and her son to England, as soon as the homage was performed, was expected by Edward. But they came not. After the lapse of more than five centuries, the private remonstrances of the husband and the father are still preserved, in several letters in the French language, which are exceedingly curious. The archbishop of Canterbury had written to Isabella to exhort her to return, to which she had replied that Sir Hugh le Despenser was her enemy, and that she could not come because her life would be in danger. On the 1st of December, 1325, the king thus writes to the queen:—"Dame: Oftentimes we have commanded you, as well before the homage as since, to return to us with all haste, without any excuses. * * * Now, you have sent us word, by

the honourable father, the bishop of Winchester, that you will not come, on account of the danger and doubt of Hugh le Despenser; at which we greatly marvel: the more so, that you bore yourself so amicably towards him, and he towards you, in our presence, and even at your departure you gave him especial promises, signs, and proofs of certain friendship; and afterwards sent him very especial letters, which he has shewn to us." The husband then goes on to say that no evil or disgrace has ever befallen her, except when "we have spoken to you, as we ought, words of chastisement in secret, without any other severity." To his son, he writes, under date of the 2nd of December: "Most dear son, remember in your youth and tender age, what we charged and commanded you, when you left us at Dover, and what you said to us in answer, with which we were greatly pleased; and do not trespass or contravene what we then charged you in any point, on no account. And since your homage has been received, go to our most dear brother, the king of France, your uncle, and take your leave of him; and then come away to us in the company of our most dear companion, the queen, your mother, if she come so soon. And if she does not come, come you, in all haste without longer stay; for we have a very great desire to see you and speak with you. And hereof fail not by any means, neither for mother, nor for any other person, as you regard our blessing." * But still the wife came not, nor the son. On the 1st March, 1326, the king again writes to the young Edward, commanding him to contract no marriage without his father's consent; defending Hugh le Despenser as his dear and loyal servant; bitterly adverting to the alliance of queen Isabella with Roger Mortimer, a false traitor, and the king's mortal enemy; and ordering his son immediately to return. In a letter to the king of France, of the same date, Edward says, that he truly perceives, as all men may perceive, that the queen does not love him as she ought to love her lord.† These domestic differences were soon brought to a public issue. The king of France invaded Gascony, and Edward declared war against him. William, count of Hainault, received Isabella at his court, for the pope had exhorted Charles to dismiss her from Paris. The young Edward was contracted in marriage with Philippa, the daughter of the count. A force of two thousand men, under the command of John of Hainault, was placed at the disposal of Isabella; and on the 24th of September, the wife and the son of Edward did return to England,

* Fœdera, vol. ii. part i. p. 616. † Ibid. pp. 622, 623.

landing at Orwell in Suffolk, not as suppliants but as complainants, in arms for the redress of injuries. Isabella came surrounded by nobles who had been banished or fled when the insurrection of Lancaster failed. Powerful lords, including the brothers of the king, the earls of Kent and Suffolk; his cousin the earl of Richmond; and several bishops, joined Isabella. A proclamation was issued, stating that the queen, the prince, and the earl of Kent had come to free the nation from the tyranny of Hugh le Despenser. Edward, having appealed in vain to the citizens of London for aid, fled with the two Despensers and the chancellor Baldock. The populace rose, and murdered the bishop of Exeter, who had been sent by the king as envoy to France, to induce the queen and her son to return. The elder Despenser took refuge in the castle of Bristol. The burghers compelled him to surrender the place to the forces of Isabella; and after a brief form of trial, the old man was executed as a traitor, on the 26th of October. Edward the king had put to sea, with the intention of establishing himself in the Isle of Lundy, which had been fortified. He was unable to reach the island, and landed at Swansea, concealing himself in that neighbourhood. Meanwhile the prelates and barons who had taken part with the queen, assumed the powers of a parliament; and, having resolved that by the king's absence the realm had been left without a ruler, they appointed prince Edward guardian of the kingdom. The king at length surrendered to his cousin, the earl of Richmond; and was conducted, to the castle of Kenilworth. The younger Despenser, and the chancellor, were taken prisoners in Wales. They were carried to Hereford, where Despenser perished as "a wicked and attainted traitor," and his mutilated body was hanged on a gallows fifty feet high. The earl of Arundel and others were beheaded. Baldock died in prison.

Thus was a revolution accomplished which, of all the public iniquities of the middle ages, appears to combine the most odious and unnatural circumstances. A wife in arms against her husband; a boy employed as a tool to ruin his father; a people thirsting for revenge upon a king against whom indolence and incapacity were the principal charges. At the parliament which was summoned at Westminster, on the 7th of January, 1327, after a suspense of only one day, the young Edward was, by acclamation, declared king. On the 13th of the same month, by a bill of six articles, it was resolved that the reign of Edward of Caernarvon had ceased. The queen affected to believe that the parliament had exceeded its just power; and a deputation was accordingly sent to Edward, at Kenilworth, to bring back his resignation of the crown. The deputation returned with the extorted instrument; having gone through the ceremony of renouncing the fealty of the earls, barons, and others, by Sir William Trussel, their procurator. On the 28th of January, the heralds proclaimed the accession of Edward III.; and the young king was crowned on the 29th. In these hasty and violent proceedings, in which we cannot find that the unhappy prisoner of Kenilworth had a single friend or supporter, there is undoubtedly some dark mystery. Isabella, who was notoriously open to suspicion in her connection with Mortimer, had yet the support of the leaders of the Church and the nobles. The great body of the people were equally in her favour, and equally opposed to the continued rule of one who had not governed with wisdom, but in most instances without oppression. Let the terrible death of Edward II. atone for those faults of his conduct and character which are manifest, and for those which are unrevealed. He was murdered in Berkeley Castle, with circumstances of horrible cruelty, after having endured the most atrocious indignities. Mortimer confessed, when his own life was about to be forfeited, that he had commanded the commission of the crime; and that Thomas Gournay and William Ogle perpetrated it. The "she-wolf of France" might be privy to the wickedness; and in the forced seclusion to which, after a few years, she was condemned, "the shrieks of death" that rung "through Berkeley's roofs" might haunt her repose—

"Shrieks of an agonising king."

Of the truce with Scotland, concluded for thirteen years in 1323, scarcely four years had elapsed, when an invasion of England was determined on by King Robert Bruce. The Scottish historians justify this violation of the compact by stating that the name of Bruce, as king, was omitted in the instructions given to the English commissioners, for the conclusion of a final treaty of peace between the two kingdoms. This was a small matter upon which to ground a national quarrel. However we may sympathise with the Scottish leaders in their noble attempts to maintain the independence of their country, we must bear in mind that the wealth of England always presented a strong temptation for attack and plunder to the lords and people of the less fertile country. In June 1327, an army of twenty-four thousand Scots, under Douglas and Randolph,—for Bruce was sick,—crossed the borders, and

ravaged Cumberland. The young Edward, with a precocious heroism, put himself at the head of a great army of English knights and archers, and of foreign soldiers under John of Hainault, which had assembled at York. In the pages of Froissart, we find a vivid description, "How the king of England made his first journey against the Scots." Having marched to Durham, he followed the course of the invaders by the smoke of the desolating fires which had marked their progress. Still the Scots wasted the country around; and the large English army, encumbered with a vast camp equipage, and marching "through marishes and savage deserts, mountains and dales," followed them in vain for two days. It was then determined to leave behind them the baggage and stores of provisions, each horseman carrying a single loaf; and on the third day they crossed the Tyne. Here suffering great privations, the English host remained seven days, looking in vain for their enemy, whom they expected to cross by the same ford. At length Edward proclaimed a great reward for the man who would discover to him where he would find the Scots; and Thomas de Rokeby led him back by a march of three days to the Wear, where they were encamped in huts, on a neighbouring hill. The two armies were ranged in order of battle; and, "then some of the lords of England brought their young king on horseback, before all the battalions of the host, to give thereby the more courage to all his people." But the river was between the armies, and the hill was inaccessible. Heralds summoned the Scots to come into the plain and fight; but the Scots answered, "Here we shall abide, as long as it shall please us." For three days the armies remained in this position; but on the fourth morning, when the English looked upon the mountain, the enemy was no more seen. Edward followed, and found them in a still more formidable position, and for eighteen days, "they lodged each against other." But on the first night two hundred Scots broke into the English camp, with the cry of "Douglas! Douglas! ye shall die, thieves of England," and they nearly captured the young sleeping king, cutting asunder the cords of his tent. At last, the Scots again silently retreated by a night-march, and the English, giving up the pursuit in despair, returned to Durham, and thence to York. This was the first lesson in warfare of the great Edward. The youth was out-generalled; and it is recorded that he wept, when he was finally circumvented by the skill of an enemy so inferior in numbers.

In the ensuing spring of 1328, a peace was concluded with Scotland, by which the independence of that country, under King Robert Bruce, was fully recognised, the claim of feudal superiority being wholly renounced. It was also agreed that the Scotch regalia, as well as "the stone of destiny," should be restored. Thirty thousand marks were paid by Scotland, in compensation for the damages caused by the invasion of the previous year. Further, the sister of Edward was contracted in marriage with David, the son of Robert Bruce, who became king, upon the death of his heroic father, in 1328. The treaty with Scotland was unpopular in England; and the Londoners resisted the removal of the famous coronation-stone. The ex-Queen Isabella and Mortimer, who was created earl of March, were from this, and other causes, becoming odious. The young king was not considered responsible for this wise but unpopular settlement of the ancient dispute as to Scotland being a fief of the English crown. In 1328, a few months after his return from his northern campaign, Edward was married to Philippa, daughter of the Count of Hainault, to whom he had been contracted by his mother. He was advancing to manhood, and had shown his courage and activity in his march to the Tyne. But Mortimer and Isabella were still the ruling powers in the state. Dangers were gathering around them; and they put on a bold front to their enemies. A confederacy against them was formed between the earl of Lancaster, nominally the head of the regency, and the late king's brothers, Kent and Norfolk. These princes were irresolute, and Lancaster was visited by a heavy fine. The earl of Kent, a weak young man, was persuaded by the spies and agents of Mortimer, that Edward II. was still alive; and he was imposed upon to the extent of addressing a letter to the deposed king, under the belief that he was in captivity. The letter was conveyed to Isabella and Mortimer, who summoned a pretended parliament, composed of their partisans, which adjudged the unfortunate victim to die as a traitor; and he was accordingly beheaded on the 19th March, 1330. A little after this, queen Philippa gave birth to a son, Edward, so renowned in coming years as the Black Prince. It was time that the king should assert his own authority against his mother and her favourite. He confided his purpose to the earl of Montacute. A parliament was to assemble at Nottingham; and the ex-queen took up her residence in the castle with Edward and Mortimer. The castle was filled with guards; and the keys of its gates were taken every night to the private chamber of Isabella. But there was a subterraneous passage, leading from the west side

of the sandstone rock on which the castle stands, the entrance to which from the road is still known as Mortimer's hole. This communication was made known to Edward and Montacute by the governor. In the silent midnight hour of the 10th of October, Montacute entered, with sufficient force, and being joined by the young king, they proceeded to the rooms of the principal tower, and having seized the object of their search, by forcing his chamber door and slaying those knights who defended the entrance, they carried him off in spite of Isabella's cries of "Spare my gentle Mortimer." The next morning the king issued a proclamation, in which he announced that the affairs of the kingdom had been evil-managed, to the dishonour of the realm, and to the impoverishment of the people; that he had caused the earl of March, and others, to be arrested, as the principal movers of these ills; and that all men should know that for the future he would himself govern his people by right and reason, as became his own dignity, and with the advice of the common council of the realm.* On the 26th of November, Mortimer was condemned as a traitor, by a parliament at Westminster. The charges against him were, that he had fomented the dissensions between the late king, and his queen; that he had illegally assumed the power vested in the council of regency; that he had caused Edward II. to be put to death; that he had compelled the earl of Lancaster and others to pay excessive fines; and had instigated the plot against the earl of Kent. He was executed on the 29th of November, with four others, as his accomplices. The pope wrote to Edward not to expose the shame of his mother; and she, therefore, passed the rest of her life, twenty-eight years, in confinement at her manor of Risings.

We at length may quit this ghastly region of crime and retribution. In the annals of our country there is no era of twenty years so full of revolution and counter-revolution; of imbecile authority struggling with lawless force; of bitter hatreds and outraged affections; of proscriptions and executions and secret murders. Such a system of misrule, approaching at times to a state of anarchy, must of necessity have been accompanied by wide-spread corruption and general misery. There is a contemporary English poem, "On the evil Times of Edward II." which describes briefly, but emphatically, some of the class-iniquities and national calamities of the days of Gaveston and the Despensers. According to this picture of manners, the fiend showed his mastery, and raised such a strife,

* Fœdera, vol. ii. part ii. 799.

that every lording was busy his own life to save; each was provoked to murder the other, and would spare none for kindred.* While these great lordings were hurled on a heap, the prelates of holy Church were blinded with covetousness.† And then came a murrain of the cattle, and a dearth of corn, and poor simple men were a-hungred.‡ God was wroth with the world; for pride had driven peace and love and charity out of the land.§ This quaint old rhymer speaks as a bitter satirist; but with a circumstantial precision which shows that he wrote from his own observation. Truth, he says, is forbidden the court of Rome, and the truth dare not be seen among the cardinals. Simony and covetise have the world at their will.‖ When a church is vacant, he that gives most to patron and bishop has the preferment.¶ Abbots and priors ride with horses and hounds as if they were knights, while poor men cower at the abbey-gate all day in hunger and in cold.** Who is fatter and ruddier than monks, canons and priors? In each town, says the rhymer, I wot none easier life than is religion.†† Of sin, deans and chapters take no account, and a man who has silver may serve the fiend long enough.‡‡ As he satirises the Church so is he equally severe upon baron and knight. He accuses them even of cowardice; they are lions in hall, and hares in the field. Knightship is debased and lame of foot.§§ There is a new cut of squierie in every town—gentle men that should be, that are swollen with pride, and have cast nurture into the ditch.‖‖ Justices, sheriffs, mayors and bailiffs—they know how to make the dark night out of the fair day. If the king raises a taxation, it is so twitted away, that half is stolen ere it is accounted for—there are so many partners. The rich are spared, and the poor are robbed. Every man is ready to fill his own purse, and the king has the least part, and he hath all the curse.¶¶ The pleader at the bar takes forty pence to speak a word or two for no good; and the false attorneys make men begin a suit they never would have thought of, and they get their silver for nought.*** The assizers condemn men for money, and the rich justice will do wrong for a bribe.††† Sometime there were chapmen that truly bought and sold; traffic was once maintained with truth, but now is all turned to treachery.‡‡‡ So, concludes the

* Poem in "Political Songs," verse 423.
† *Ibid.*, v. 445.
‡ *Ibid.*, v. 415.
§ *Ibid.*, v. 460.
‖ *Ibid.*, v. 10.
¶ *Ibid.*, v. 454.
** *Ibid.*, v. 130.
†† *Ibid.*, v. 153.
‡‡ *Ibid.*, v. 192.
§§ *Ibid.*, v. 251.
‖‖ *Ibid.*, v. 283.
¶¶ *Ibid.*, v. 289, 334.
*** *Ibid.*, v. 342, 350.
††† *Ibid.*, v. 470.
‡‡‡ *Ibid.*, v. 358.

satirist, is all the world blinded. We give a specimen of this curious production of the English language of the 14th century:—

> "Pride hath in his paunter kauht the heie and the lowe,
> So that unnethe can eny man God Almihti knowe.
> Pride priketh aboute, wid nithe and wid onde;
> Pes and love and charité hien hem out of londe
> so faste,
> That God wole for-don the world we muwe be sore agaste." *

Exaggerated as this picture of society may be, there can be little doubt that, in the transition state from the feudal relations between lord and villan, to a condition in which the commons had attained a certain amount of independence, there had arisen a general desire amongst the governing classes, ecclesiastical, military, and civil, to substitute cunning for force, and extortion for open plunder; that the larger cultivators and the traders, aspiring, as they do in all times, to the luxuries of those in higher stations, ground those beneath them with slight regard to justice. The Church had lost its ancient character of the protector of the poor; and the vices and oppressions of the monks had brought religion into contempt. Amidst all this, there was a great stirring of the national intellect. The wars of the crown were now supported by taxation of the people generally, instead of being conducted under the old tenure of knight-service. When the merchant or the yeoman had to draw his purse-strings, he became critical as to the mode in which he was governed. There was small communication between one district of the country and another; and thus, what we call public opinion could only be imperfectly formed. But in market and fair, in the guild and at the assize, men conferred and disputed; and whatever oppressions they endured were referred to the king's evil advisers. Thus, there was exultation in the land, when Gaveston, Despenser, and Mortimer fell, one after the other; and their deaths were considered a just punishment for the wrongs of the commons. In that class of the commons were not included the great body of the labourers. They made themselves heard at a more distant period. Meanwhile, a new epoch had opened. A young king had ascended the throne, full of martial ardour, ambitious, graced with all chivalric accomplishments, and gifted with

* *Paunter* is pantry; *kauht*, caught; *unnethe*, scarcely; *priketh*, rideth; *nithe*, strife; *onde*, envy; *hien*, haste; *wole*, will; *for-don*, destroy; *muwe*, may; *agaste*, afraid.

many of the qualities of a sagacious ruler. His wars, however, founded on very doubtful pretensions, which appear to us of the present time manifestly unjust, were so brilliant in their success, that, in the pride of a nation that was now thoroughly English, the evils of administration, and especially the wrongs of the peasantry, were too often forgotten. Now and then a stand was made for liberty, and some just laws were enacted. But the military spirit was the pervading influence of the reign of Edward III.; and the encouragement of that national temper kept his throne secure. During this reign, chivalry put on its most attractive features of courage and courtesy; and those knightly qualities were never set forth more seductively than by the chronicler of chivalry, Sir John Froissart. The savage disregard of life—the massacres and plunderings that lie beneath this surface of romance—will display themselves as we proceed in our narrative. The condition of the general body of the people, such as it is described in the "Poem on the evil Days of Edward II.," is not so apparent in the usual historical relations.

Whatever might have been the ferocity and cruelty of the days of chivalry, whose most golden period belongs to the reign of Edward III., we may well believe that the spirit which it engendered had considerable influence in forming the character of what was now the English nation. Froissart delights in setting forth the peaceful graces of the regal and noble life; the minstrelsy and tales of glee; the dances and the carols. He goes forth to the chase with hawks and hounds. He sees the fairest maiden bestow the silken scarf upon the victor in the tournament. He hears without any shudder the cries of the herald, "The love of ladies,"—"Glory won by blood." He sees not the bleeding horse, and the gasping knight. There are death-wounds in the *melée;* but the wine-flask is in the lighted hall. In the same spirit does he describe the course of warfare—the brilliant charge of the cavalry, the unbroken ranks of the footmen, the fatal aim of the archers—the solemn confession before battle—the elation of heart at the cry of "advance banners"—the knighting in the field. The horrors are passed over in a few brief sentences, containing the emphatic words, "burnt"—"robbed"—"wasted"—"pillaged"—"slain"—"beheaded." And yet, out of all this, was engendered a better state of society, which could never have grown amongst an unchivalrous aristocracy and an unwarlike yeomanry. Out of the Norman oppressors and the Saxon serfs had arisen a great race,

whose blood having mingled with that of the first Britons and their Roman masters, had at length produced one nation "inferior to none existing in the world. . . . Every yeoman from Kent to Northumberland valued himself as one of a race born for victory and dominion, and looked down with scorn upon a nation before which his ancestors had trembled." * This was the spirit which made Cressy, the first great popular remembrance, long cherished with a defying pride; but which had a positive effect for instant good upon the Englishmen who fought by the side of Edward and his son, as well as upon all who heard of their countrymen's daring and steadiness. Politically, the French war was unjust. Morally, it elevated the whole people. The same spirit which won the great battles of the Somme and the Loire had to win many a constitutional fight against the attempted encroachments upon liberty of the powerful monarch who led the English lords and yeomen to victory. As the whole nation rose in military prowess—as the archer in his buff jacket became as important as the knight in his steel hauberk—the physical hardihood and the intellectual vigour of the people were more and more developed. The burgher became more resolved to maintain his free charters with his own right arm; and the noble found that his own security was mixed up with the liberty and happiness of the commons, and he joined with them in making redress of grievances go hand in hand with the grant of supplies. Then, too, men began to think. Miracles ceased in the presence of holy relics, and dispensations for sin came to be despised. The preaching of Wycliffe found willing hearers. The tales of Chaucer were read in the baronial hall, and in the student's chamber. The universities were filled with scholars. The laws were administered in the language of the nation. The Anglo-Norman had given place to that noble tongue upon which our literature has been built. Five centuries ago, the course upon which the English poeple had to run their race was straight before them; and however they have been assailed by tyranny, or however corrupted by prosperity, they are still marching forward on the same vantage ground.

Edward was twenty years of age in 1332. His great talents, his resolved character, and his towering ambition, were rapidly developing themselves. In him the martial spirit of his grandfather had revived with a loftier and more chivalrous generosity. His public actions were less regulated by his own arbitrary will than

* Macaulay, History, vol. i. p. 18.

those of the first Edward; and he had a more extended range of opinion to propitiate than that of a feudal aristocracy. His wars were essentially popular. When, in 1346, he resolved upon the invasion of France, he published a manifesto upon the cause of the war, which he addressed to the Provincial of the order of Preaching Friars in England, in which he exhorts him to urge his brethren to set forth this cause to their congregations in their sermons.* We shall have to advert to the subject matter of this address as we proceed; but we mention it here to shew that the great king did not manifest that indifference to the sentiments of his people, which the mere despot, and the agents of despotism, think themselves privileged to assume. His wars involved heavy charges upon the industry of the nation; but they were nevertheless invariably considered as national undertakings. If these undertakings had been regarded upon strictly reasonable principles by king and people, the young heir of Robert Bruce would not have been disturbed in his succession to the throne of Scotland; nor the right of Philip de Valois to be king of France disputed. The Scottish wars, whatever form they might assume, were unavoidable, as long as two military nations, undivided by seas or mountains, had aggressions to carry forward and injuries to revenge. The gradual interfusion of races and interests could be the only pacificator. The French wars, prolonged as they were for a hundred and twenty years, had a natural termination, when the plans of continental dominion were found to be utterly incompatible with the prosperity of our island realm. The importance of the Scottish wars passed away, for the most part, when Bruce had fought his great fight of independence. The French wars involve so many passages of the most vivid historical interest; present so many remarkable points of comparison between the two nations; and have had such an enduring effect upon the policy of both governments, that these events will require to be related with occasional detail till the extinction of the English power in France was happily accomplished.

The attempt of Edward Balliol to recover the crown of Scotland during the minority of the young king, David, arose out of the discontent of some English lords who claimed lands in that country. The king of England is supposed, with good reason, to have encouraged the attempt; but the passage of armed men through the northern counties was strictly forbidden; and Balliol sailed with his associates from the Humber, and landed in Fife, in

* Fœdera, vol. iii. part i. p. 72.

August, 1332. His success was marvellous. On the 27th of September he was crowned at Scone. But his reverse of fortune was equally rapid. On the 16th of December he was surprised at Annan, and fled to the marches. During his brief tenure of power, Balliol had acknowledged that the crown of Scotland was a fief held under the crown of England; and Edward had concluded with him a treaty of alliance. Early in 1333, the Scots, under the leaders who acted in the name of king David, invaded England; Balliol commenced the siege of Berwick; and the English king came in May to his aid. On the 19th of July was fought the great battle of Halidon Hill, in which Edward was completely victorious. Here, amidst a fearful slaughter of his countrymen, fell the regent Douglas, and many earls and barons. Berwick was surrendered to the English, and Balliol was again seated on his uneasy throne. Then, at a parliament held at Edinburgh, a large portion of the south of Scotland was annexed to England. This impolitic dismemberment of the kingdom was an outrage upon the national feeling, and Balliol was again driven forth, in 1334. Again, in 1335, Scotland was ravaged by the English forces, in concert with Balliol; and for several years a struggle was carried on, with varied success. But Edward had other objects presented to his ambition. The king of France had espoused the cause of the Scottish nation against Balliol and his powerful supporter; and Edward had now an ostensible motive for commencing a great war, for the purpose of asserting his pretensions to the crown of France. In a few years the adherents of David were the winners of fortress after fortress; and the son of Bruce, in 1341, returned to his kingdom.

In the manifesto of the 15th March, 1346, addressed to the Provincial of the Preaching Friars, king Edward states, that upon the death of his uncle, Charles, king of France, he being in his minority, by the advice of his lords spiritual and temporal, and of his most skilled councillors, sent ambassadors into France to demand the crown; and that they were compelled to return, their lives having been threatened by Philip, who had usurped the royal authority.* Charles IV., called the Fair, died early in 1328, leaving no male issue. But a posthumous daughter was born five months after his death. In the interval, Philip of Valois, who was cousin to the deceased king, had been appointed regent. Some French authorities state that Edward demanded the regency, but

* Fœdera, vol. iii. part i p. 74.

that Philip was appointed by the peers of France. But there can be no doubt that Edward put forward his pretensions in the way which he stated in his manifesto of 1346. In 1329, however, he went to France, and did homage for his lands there to his rival Philip. He was then only seventeen years of age, and was under the tutelage of Mortimer and his mother. But in 1337, after the king of France had taken part in the Scottish war, Edward boldly assumed the title of king of France, and prepared to enforce his claim at the sword's point. His claim rested upon these grounds. What is called the Salic law, by which females in France are excluded from succession to the throne, was an unwritten law; and was not even a well-defined and fixed principle in all its bearings. Although it set aside the female herself, Edward contended that it did not set aside the male heir of such female. His mother, Isabella, was sister to three successive kings; and though excluded from the throne herself, might transmit a title to her son. He was the nearest male heir through his mother. Philip of Valois, although the affinity was through his father, was not so near akin as Edward by one degree. The civilians were greatly divided upon the question, and Edward had, no doubt, abundant counsel to bring his demands to the arbitrement of warfare. In all his proceedings he seems to have conducted this great contest, as if it were a wager of battle, in which Heaven would decide the right by the issue. The waste of life, the destruction of property, never disturbed the course of feudal policy. And yet, in 1340, Edward, addressing Philip of Valois, demanded what he called his rightful inheritance; and added, "to prevent the mortality amongst Christians, since the quarrel apparently belongs to you and me, we are desirous that the controversy between us may be decided by our own persons, body to body; and in case you shall not vouchsafe this way, that then the dispute may be ended by the battle of one hundred of the most efficient persons of your party. and as many of my liege subjects." The king of France replied, that he had seen the letters addressed to one Philip of Valois, but as they did not come to him, he should return no answer, but as soon as he should think fit would drive out of his kingdom those who had presumed to enter it in arms. Edward had invaded France from Flanders, in 1339. but upon this occasion he returned to England without striking any important blow. He had depended upon foreign alliances, which had failed him in the hour of need.

In 1340, Edward, who had gone over to England. leaving the

queen at Ghent, was informed that Philip had collected a large fleet in the harbour of Sluys, at the mouth of the Schelde. He immediately resolved upon encountering his enemy at sea, and set sail from Orwell with a powerful armament. Arrived off Blankenberg, "he saw so great a number of ships, that their masts seemed to be like a great wood." * There was a mighty ship, the Christopher, which had been taken from the English the year before; and the first success in the battle of Sluys was the re-capture of this vessel. "This battle was right fierce and terrible; for the battles on the sea are more dangerous and fierce than the battles by land; for on the sea there is no recoiling nor flying—there is no remedy but to fight, and to abide fortune, and every man to show his prowess.†" This battle was indeed fierce and terrible; and the number slain and drowned amounted to many thousands. It was a hand-to-hand fight, in which the English archers did fearful execution. The victory was so complete, that the French courtiers did not dare to apprise Philip of the event which had transferred his entire fleet to his enemy. His buffoon was instructed to hint to him the issue of his great preparations to stop the passage of Edward into Flanders. The English, said the clever jester, are rank cowards, for they had not the courage to jump overboard like your Majesty's French and Normans did. The naval victory of Sluys was followed by the siege of Tournay. It was at this period that Edward challenged Philip to single combat. But that year a truce between France and England was concluded which lasted till 1342. In 1343 negociations for peace were carried on before the pope at Avignon, without any result. In 1344 the war was recommenced.

The character of Edward III. was produced by a combination of the qualities of the knight and the politician. He was ready to take the foremost place in the battle field; to run great hazards in his own person; to surround himself with all the pomp of chivalry, and to display its occasional courtesy and munificence. But he clearly understood the position of England with relation to the other European states; and he was not insensible to the advantages he possessed in the superior condition of his own people, and, what was of more importance, in their free spirit as compared with the French. France, England, and Flanders, had many points of resemblance, and were drawn closer together than any other European nations. But they had also essential points of difference

* Froissart, chap. 50. † *Ibid.*

The nobles of France did not form a strong collective body like those of England. The people had not been blended with the aristocracy in the common assertion of their liberties. True freedom—that which has been won, and can be maintained—was unknown to France. There were no institutions which could be considered established or sound. There were continual changes of principles of government; no recognised rights, amidst alternations of sudden liberty and absolute power. Thus, there was no great popular class upon whom the king and the nobility could rely, and at whose head they could confidently march to victory.* On the other hand, Flanders was essentially democratic. The burghers had accumulated riches far above those of the rest of Europe; and their corporations of trades in Ghent, Bruges, and other cities, had established a power before which their sovereign counts trembled, and their nobles scarcely exhibited their authority. The great enemy of their liberties was the king of France. He had defeated the revolted burghers at Cassel, in the first year of his reign; and the Flemings, now under their great leader, James Artevelde, were prepared for the strictest alliance with England. This extraordinary man, commonly known as "the brewer of Ghent," was a noble, allied to the first families in Flanders. He was "a brewer," as a prince in England is often "a fishmonger." He was a member of the guild of brewers.† Edward knew the value of this alliance with the Flemings and their democratic leader. "He condescended to cultivate the friendship of Artevelde, the celebrated brewer of Ghent," says Dr. Lingard. Their friendship was founded upon something higher than the patronage of the king, or the servility of the tribune of the people. Queen Philippa held the brewer's infant son, the famous Philip, at the baptismal font; and Artevelde thought to find a powerful protector for his Flemings against the tyranny of their native rulers, and the jealousy which France felt of a dangerous neighbour, by recommending that the burghers should depose Louis, the count of Flanders, and call Edward, prince of Wales, to the government. Bruges and Ypres supported the proposition. The populace of Ghent, suddenly turned against the man under whose authority they had arrived, in common with the other towns, at an unequalled height of prosperity—an authority far more potent than that

* See Barante, who expresses this judgment in his preface to his "Histoires des Ducs de Bourgogne," p. 43.

† See Barante, vol. i. p. 156.

of their sovereign count, who had removed himself for safety to France. They murdered Artevelde. At his instigation Edward had assumed the title of king of France. When the king heard of his friend's death, he put to sea in great anger, and returned to England. A deputation from all the trading towns, except Ghent, appeased his wrath, and the alliance was continued. "So, little by little," says Froissart, "the death of Jacques D'Artevelde was forgotten." This event happened in July 1345. The commercial intercourse between England and Flanders, was, at this time, of the greatest importance to both countries. France had scarcely any internal trade, and less foreign commercial intercourse. With Bruges on the north, and Bordeaux on the south, the traffic of London and Bristol and the Cinque Ports had become very large. The parliament of England willingly voted large sums for the war with France. While Edward was negociating with Artevelde, the earl of Derby was winning battles in Gascony. Our armies had also previously found an entrance to France through Brittany, in consequence of a disputed succession to the Duchy. Edward supported the claim of John de Montfort, against that of Charles of Blois, nephew of the French king. The defence of the castle of Hennebon by Jane de Montfort, during the captivity of her husband, is one of the most interesting episodes of the wars in which England was engaged. The historian and the artist have delighted to exhibit the heroic duchess, as described by Froissart with "the courage of a man, and the heart of a lion," showing to the people of Rennes her infant boy and saying, "see here my little son, who shall be the restorer of his father." They have painted her, after the old chronicler, besieged in Hennebon, and at the last extremity looking down along the sea, out of a window in the castle, and crying aloud, smiling for great joy, "I see the succours of England coming." Sir Walter Manny was her deliverer; and the road to France was open through Brittany.

All these attacks upon the French kingdom, conducted with various fortune by England, from 1338 to 1345, were but preludes to the great attempt of 1346; when Edward, relying more upon Gascon or Fleming than upon his English yeomen, landed near Cape la Hougue, on the coast of Normandy. He had with his army, his own first born son, now sixteen years of age. He had earls of famous name, barons, and knights. But his "four thousand men of arms, and ten thousand archers, besides Irishmen and Welshmen that followed the host on foot," were his main strength. They

were the despised "fantassins" of the mounted warriors. They belonged to a novel system of tactics, which the French historian, Michelet, says "arose out of a new state of society;" and the deeds which they did "revealed a secret which nobody suspected, —that of the real want of military power of the feudal world, which was believed to be the only military world." The French nobles, themselves full of courage and contempt of death, despised the infantry and archers taken from the common people. The English earls and knights led them on foot to victory. The French leaders were afraid of trusting the people with the mighty bow. The English twice conquered France with a handful of yeomen. This is the feeling with which Barante, a Frenchman, speaks of Cressy and Agincourt—and he is right.