CHAPTER XXXI.

Death of Philip of Valois.—Renewal of the French war.—King Edward ravages Scotland. —Expedition of the Black Prince.—The Battle of Poitiers.—King John a prisoner in England.—The Jacquerie.—Invasion of France and Peace of Bretigny.—Sufferings of France.—Condition of England.—Statute of Apparel.—Social State indicated by Chaucer.—Accession to the French crown of Charles V.—The Black Prince in Spain. Bertrand du Guesclin.—War in Gascony.—Truce.—The Black Prince in England.—His death.—Death of Edward III.—State of the English Church.—Wycliffe.

PHILIP of Valois, who had held a troublesome possession of the throne of France for twenty-two years, died in August, 1350. It was a period when the war with England was suspended, without any real approach to a permanent peace. Edward had proposed to resign his pretensions to the French crown, on the condition that he should receive the absolute sovereignty of the provinces in France which had been held as fiefs by preceding English kings. This offer presented a secure basis for a friendly arrangement Philip rejected it; John, his son and successor, consented to it. After several years of negociation, the French procurators refused to agree to the terms which their king had promised. The cession of Calais, upon which Edward insisted, was probably more repugnant to the French than that of Gascony. In 1355, prince Edward led an army from the walls of Bordeaux; ravaged the country to the foot of the Pyrenees; and, taking a northward course, laid in ashes cities and towns, and filled a fertile land with desolation, which had been unvisited by war for a hundred years. In regarding such proceedings there was no shudder of humanity in those times; and ever in later periods, the ravage of populous districts, and the destruction of commercial towns, have been defended upon the principle that to weaken the resources of an enemy is to abridge the duration of a time of warfare. But we have lived to see a period when war has been conducted with as little injury as possible to the non-belligerents. The change has been produced by the same general causes which have produced a total alteration in the character of the fighting-man. "The modern soldier is not necessarily the stern bloody-handed man the ancient soldier was; there is as much difference between them as between the sportsman and the butcher."* Whilst his son was ravaging on the banks of the Garonne, king Edward was leading an army from Calais to the Somme. The want of provisions drove him back after a march of ten days. Meanwhile the Scots had surprised Berwick; and the king hastened home. In the depth of winter he marched into Scotland, having re-taken Berwick, and he carried havoc through the Lothians. His fleet, laden with provisions, could not make the port of Leith; and he re-crossed the border, leaving behind him the feeling of deadly revenge with which the Scots recorded this season of calamity as "the burnt Candlemas."

In July, 1356, prince Edward, now known as the Black Prince, marched out of Bordeaux, upon a second expedition of waste and pillage. Ascending the Garonne as high as Agen, he turned to the provinces of Querci, Limousin, and Auvergne. The time of the harvest and the vintage was at hand, but the corn was trodden under foot, and the vineyards destroyed. The little army was now in the very centre of France. King John was advancing from Chartres to drive back the marauders; and he crossed the Loire, at Blois, marching on towards Poitiers. Prince Edward was in a hostile country, and he could gain no knowledge of the line upon which the French were moving. He resolved, however, upon retreat. As the English army marched, also in the direction of Poitiers, "they wist not truly where the Frenchmen were; but they supposed that they were not far off, for they could find no more forage, whereby they had great default of victual in their host; and some of them repented that they had destroyed so much as they had done before."† On the 17th of September, being Saturday, the van of prince Edward's small band fell in with the rear of king John's army. There was a skirmish, and those English who rode a-head saw all the fields covered with men at arms. The French king entered into the city of Poitiers. The locality was full of recollections of the glory of France. Here Clovis defeated Alaric, king of the Visigoths. Here Charles Martel drove back an immense host of invading Moslems. Edward took up his quarters in a strong place, amongst hedges, vines, and bushes. On the Sunday morning, the French trumpet blew, and every man mounted on horseback, and went into the field, where the king's banner

* Napier, "War in the Peninsula."

† Froissart, Lord Berners' translation. In this narrative of the battle of Poitiers, we must use Froissart's words occasionally, without always attempting to indicate the precise quotations.

waved in the wind; and there was all the flower of France, with banners and pennons and rich armoury. Three knights went out to see the number of the English; and they reported that they estimated them at two thousand men-at-arms, and four thousand archers, and fifteen hundred other men; but that they were wisely ordered, and that they had lined the hedges and banks with archers, by a road on which four horsemen only could ride, and that at the end of that fortified way there were men at arms afoot and archers before them, so that they would not easily be discomfited. Cardinal Perigord then solicited the king that he might ride to the prince, and show him what danger he and his handful of Englishmen were in. The cardinal went, and the prince of Wales answered to his entreaties—"Sir, the honour of me and my people saved, I would gladly fall to any reasonable way." Between the armies rode the cardinal that Sunday; but could accomplish no agreement. Edward offered to surrender what he had won in that expedition, and to swear not to bear arms against the French king for seven years. But John required, finally, that the prince and a hundred knights should yield themselves prisoners. On the Monday morning, the 19th of September, the cardinal again came; but there was no remedy but to abide the battle. The French marshals approached with their battalions, and their horsemen entered the road where the great hedges were set full of archers. No bow was bent as the columns of cavalry proudly marched up that narrow way. But a command was given; and along the whole extent of that crowded lane, sudden showers of arrows turned what was a procession into a struggle of advance and retreat. At the first flight of the deadly shafts of the English archers, the horses rushed back, and flung out, and fell upon their riders. Then the Gascon men at arms went in amongst the press, and slew the knights and squires in that great disorder. The French also, who were behind, recoiled back, and came on the division of the duke of Normandy; and the men took their horses and fled, when they saw the dreaded archers coming down a little hill, on their flank and rear. Leaping on their horses, the reserve of men at arms of England now advanced; for the lord Chandos said to the prince, "Sir, take your horse and ride forth, the journey is yours." And the prince cried, "Advance banner, in the name of God and of St. George!" Then he saw the lord Robert of Duras lying dead, and he told his men to take him upon a targe to the cardinal of Perigord, whose nephew he was, and to salute him by that token; for the cardinal's men were out in the field against him, which was not pertaining to the right order of arms. Onward the little army went into the thick of their enemies; and the archers shot so wholly together, that none durst come in their danger. At last the king's division encountered the Englishmen. There was lord James Audley, always in the chief of the battle, and he was sore hurt, but as long as his breath served him he fought; and Warwick was there, and Suffolk, and many knights of Gascony. "King John was that day a full right good knight; if the fourth part of his men had done their endeavours as well as he did, the journey had been his in all likelihood." But the French fled from those fields of Beauvoir and Maupertuis, even to the gates of Poitiers. There was a great press to take the king; and he yielded to sir Dennis of Morbecque, who promised to bring him and his young son, Philip, to the prince of Wales. Where was the prince, when John of France could not go forward because of the press around him? "The prince of Wales," says Froissart, "who was courageous and cruel as a lion, took great pleasure to fight and chase his enemies." But Chandos said, "Set your banner a-high on this bush, that your people may draw hither; nor can I see banners nor pennons of the French; wherefore rest and refresh you, for ye be sore chafed." A red pavilion was set up; and the prince drunk wine; and many lords gathered around him as they came in from the chase. But shortly came up the kingly captive in great peril; for he was surrounded by English and Gascons, who had taken him out of the hands of sir Dennis Morbecque, and strove which should have him. That night the prince of Wales made a supper in his lodging to the French king, and to the great lords that were prisoners. "And always the prince served before the king, as humbly as he could, and would not sit at the king's board, for any desire that the king could make, and exhorted him not to be of heavy cheer, for that king Edward, his father, should bear him all honour and amity, and accord with him so reasonably that they should be friends ever after." And the prince praised the king's great valiantness, and said that every Englishman who saw each man's deed plainly accorded to him the prize and chaplet. This scene, so gracefully performed by him who, a few hours before, was "courageous and cruel as a lion," was in perfect accordance with the system of chivalry. It is not a feeling to be despised,—that gentleness and courtesy which prompted the words and actions of the prince, after this marvellous victory. The right hand of fellowship to a fallen

toe is, happily, a principle that has survived the feudal ages in the wars of England. When policy, as in modern instances, has compelled her government to violate it, the people feel ashamed, and the public opinion of another generation reverses the judgment of those who have played the part of the ungenerous victor. On the day after the battle, the prince of Wales marched with his royal prisoner to Bordeaux, the great bulk of captive knights having been admitted to easy ransom.

On the 24th of May, 1357, the Black Prince returned to London, in a triumphal procession, with his royal prisoner. In the pageant the captive—as if the spirit of chivalry was set in contrast with the old Roman pride of leading conquered kings in chains—was shown to the people as an honoured guest; whilst the winner of the great field of Poitiers rode humbly beside him. King John was lodged in the Savoy, a pleasant place belonging to the duke of Lancaster, king Edward's son; and in the winter following there were jousts in Smithfield, in which the kings of England, of France, and of Scotland were present to take part in the feats of arms. King John was then removed to Windsor with his son Philip. It was a festive season in England. In France there was the extremity of suffering. There were heavy sums to be raised for the ransoms engaged to be paid for the prisoners of Poitiers; and the unhappy cultivators were ground down to the lowest point of misery by the lords of the soil, who had fled in terror before the stout English bowmen. On the 21st of May, 1358, commenced that insurrection of the peasants, which was called the Jacquerie, from the nickname which the poor French villan bore of Jacques Bonhomme. Almost a hundred villagers assembled in Beauvoisin, and, without any leader, marched forward, vowing destruction on the nobles and knights of France, who, they said, shamed the realm. Destruction to the gentlemen was their cry. The horrors that followed the march of these wretched people are too awful to be described. Their numbers were soon increased to a hundred thousand. After the first terror, assistance was procured from Flanders and Hainault, and they were slain and hanged upon trees in heaps. But still they went on, destroying, in the words of the chronicler, like enraged dogs. Froissart says, "when they were demanded why they did so evil deeds, they would answer, they could not tell, but that they did as they saw others do." There was an universal movement for plunder and vengeance, at a time when communication between distant places was difficult and un

certain. It seemed as if one great passion had suddenly inspired these scattered thousands, and had swallowed up every feeling of fear or of mercy. All the peaceful population, whether of the towns or hamlets, and the women and children of the châteaux and the farms fled before them. The highways were covered with the bodies of their victims; and the wolves came out from the woods to follow their murderous track. At last a body of knights who were returning from a crusade against the pagans of Prussia, and who were headed by Gaston de Foix, one of Froissart's heroes of chivalry, and by Captal de Buche, one of Edward's Gascon knights, came to the rescue of the duchess of Normandy and the duchess of Orleans, who, with several hundred ladies had fled to the castle of Meaux. A large body of the insurgent peasantry, with many people of Paris, to the number of nine thousand, had been admitted into the city, so that all the streets were full of them. They were wretchedly armed, and worn with hunger and fatigue. Out of the castle issued the two knights and their company, with spears and swords, and slew them till they were weary. Seven thousand perished on that day. They never rallied again; and wherever a scattered party was met with, the men of war, that now scoured the country, butchered them without mercy.

France had not yet drained the cup of misery to the dregs. During the captivity of John, the government of the dauphin, Charles, was harassed by contending factions; and the kingdom was in a condition little short of anarchy. John settled with Edward the conditions of a peace, to take place upon the expiration of the truce. He consented to the hard terms which the king of England insisted upon; for a prince of the blood, Charles of Navarre, called the Bad, was adding to the distractions of the kingdom, by setting up claims to the crown. But the regency of France rejected the terms which their captive monarch had agreed to. Edward again invaded France in the autumn of 1359, with a more powerful army than he had ever before assembled; and at the end of March he was encamped before Paris. The fatigues of his winter campaign had greatly reduced his numbers; and now, beleaguering a city which was too strong for assault, he was in want of provisions, and was compelled to retire. The route towards Chartres was covered with men and horses that dropped from hunger and exhaustion; and all the superstition that in those days clung to the firmest minds, was called up by a terrible storm, which swept the camp with a deluge of rain, and which made Edward think of that

vengeance of heaven that awaited the man of blood. Thoughts of pacification entered his heart. Negociations were set on foot, and the great peace of Bretigny was concluded on the 8th of May. The king of England resigned his pretensions to the crown of France, and to the territories of Normandy, Anjou, and Maine. He restored all the conquered places, with the exception of Guisnes and Calais. He was content to be lord of Aquitaine, retaining Gascony, Poitou, and other dependencies, in full sovereignty. Three million crowns of gold were to be paid in six years for the ransom of king John. The captive king was set at liberty before the end of the year. But peace with England brought no tranquillity to France. The country was now ravaged by bands of discharged soldiers, the Free Companions, who during a twenty years war had been fighting in separate bands under their own captains. How they acted when the war was ended, Froissart has told in a few quaint words: "There were many strangers that were great captains, and great pillars (pillagers) that would not depart, as Almains (Germans), Brabanters, Flemings, Hainaulters, Gascons, and bad Frenchmen, who were but poor by reason of the war, whereby they sought to recover themselves with making of war in the realm of France. The whole people persevered still in their evil doing, and so they did often much evil in the realm." Amidst their distractions, king John went back to his wasted country. Petrarch had proceeded to Paris upon an embassy to congratulate the king upon his return to his dominions, and he thus describes the scene which met his eyes: "When I viewed this kingdom, which had been desolated by fire and sword, I could not persuade myself it was the same I had formerly beheld—fertile, rich, and flourishing. On every side it now appeared a dreadful desert; extreme poverty, lands untilled, fields laid waste, houses gone to ruin, except here and there one that was defended by some fortification, or which was enclosed within the walls; everywhere were seen the traces of the English, and the dreadful havoc they had made. Touched by such mournful effects of the rage of man, I could not withhold my tears." Petrarch might have added the ravages of the Jacquerie and of the Free Companions, who had been pillaging since the truce of 1357, to the havoc of the English. The sufferings which France endured at this season were such as could only have been recovered from by a country to which nature has been so bountiful, and whose resources always spring up to grapple with social calamities.

The condition of the people of England at the epoch of the peace of Bretigny presents a striking contrast to that of the people of France. With the exception of the miseries produced by the second pestilence of 1361, we may regard the seventh decade of the fourteenth century as a period of English prosperity. France was devoured by the companies of adventurers and brigands who obeyed no law. England was only disturbed by the transition from serfdom to free labour, in which the labourers asserted their own importance somewhat beyond the limits of discretion. France was weighed down by the oppressions through which property was extorted from the industrious classes, whether by the exactions of the nobles, or the unlimited taxation of the government; and the feudal confederacy to obtain money from a country so devastated by war was met by the Jacquerie of the peasants, and the revolts of the burgesses. England, whenever a tax was demanded for carrying on hostilities, had a parliament, which always turned round steadily upon the king, and required extension of liberties or redress of grievances. At the commencement of the war with France in 1340, before a subsidy was given, the king's commissioners had to show letters patent authorizing them "to grant some graces to the great and small of the kingdom." In 1348 the Commons granted a subsidy on condition that no illegal levying of money should take place. In 1351 a statute was passed that no one should be constrained to find men at arms, other than those who held land by such services, except by consent of parliament. There was always a struggle going forward between the king and the parliament; but it was no longer a struggle merely between the king and the nobles. The Commons had obtained an integral share in the government; and before the end of the reign they were strong enough to remove an administration, and impeach those whom they considered evil advisers of the crown. This strength of the deputies of the people is conclusive evidence that the middle classes, during nearly half a century, had attained so much wealth and consideration, that the old feudal relations of society may be deemed nearly at an end. There probably is no better evidence of the many distinctions of rank amongst the laity, which now existed, than the Statute of Apparel of 1363. It has a few words about regulating the diet of servants; but the chief clauses are intended to restrain "the outrageous and excessive apparel of divers people against their estate and degree."

The statute begins with servants, called grooms—as well ser

vants of lords as of artificers and tradesmen. They and their wives are to wear cloth of a certain low price, with no gold, or silver, or silk, or embroidery. This enactment shows that there was an amount of luxury amongst this class, which ill accords with the notion which some entertain, that below the aristocracy all was rude and miserable. The first enacting clause about dress thus comprises mechanics and commercial servants; the last relates to labourers in husbandry—carters, ploughmen, shepherds, cowherds. If they had not forty shillings of goods or chattels, they were to wear only blanket and russet, and girdles of linen, according to their estate. In these two classes must have been comprised the bulk of the population. Chaucer, the shrewdest observer and the truest painter of manners—who, although he wrote the "Canterbury Tales" twenty years after this period, would naturally in his retirement describe the social state of which he had been a busy member—has little notice of the humbler classes of the community, the peasants, the servants, and the working artisans. Chaucer's Ploughman was a man of "goods and chattels," who though he had spread many a load of dung, and would thresh and ditch, yet paid his tithes and was kind to the poor. He was the small farmer, of whom the land was full—the humble tenant, who was no longer at the bidding of his lord. He was the Parson's brother. The attendant of Chaucer's Knight was a Yeoman. The Statute of Apparel places the yeomen under the same regulations as the people of handicraft, and they were to wear no vesture of higher price than forty shillings the whole cloth, without things of gold and silver and costly fur. Chaucer's Yeoman comes in his coat and hood of green, with his sheaf of peacocks' arrows, and his mighty bow. He knows all the usage of woodcraft, for he is a forester; and in spite of statute he has a silver image of St. Christopher, the patron of field-sports, on his breast. He is a specimen of the bold race that won Cressy and Poitiers—men who were shooting at the butts on every common in England, while the French peasantry, who were not entrusted with the cross-bow till after the peace of Bretigny, and then again were forbidden their manly exercises, were playing at dice and draughts in imitation of their lords. Chaucer's men of handicraft are the Haberdasher, Carpenter, Weaver, Dyer, and Tapiser (tapestry maker). They are clothed each in the livery of his "solemn and great fraternity." Fresh and new is their gear, and the knives at their girdles are mounted with silver. They have chattels and rent enough to be aldermen,

a dignity to which their wives look forward, in the hope to be called Madàme. The Prentice to such worthies has been painted in one of the "Canterbury Tales"—a proper stout fellow, full of jollity, loving the tavern better than the shop—a dancer at bridals, and a dice-player. The Cook of Chaucer so describes the dissolute youth, probably of gentle blood, who aped the manners of the great in an age when luxurious indulgence was becoming common to al' ranks. The amount of individual wealth gave privileges which were not accorded to the mere social condition. There were degrees of permitted luxury amongst people of handicraft, citizens and burgesses, which the law recognised then, as much as individual homage does now. The tradesman who possessed five hundred pounds might wear cloth of silk, and a reasonable decoration of silver trimmings; and their wives and daughters might wear fur turned up with minever—even as gentlemen and esquires of a hundred a year. The citizens of Chaucer, who had chattels enough to be aldermen, were thus lifted out of the less wealthy class—whose wives might wear no silken veils, and must be content with catskin fur.

The gentlemen and esquires of the statute correspond with the Franklin of Chaucer—he of the beard as white as a daisy—the great householder, whose hospitality was so abundant that "it snewed in his house of meat and drink." In his hall stood his table ready covered all the long day. He gave no sanction to the recent innovation of "the privy parlour," in which the lord of the mansion sometimes now sought to evade the duties of the festive hall.* The Franklin was a public man—a sire at sessions, a knight of the shire. He was only below the knight in rank and raiment, according to the statute. The knights possessing four hundred marks by the year might wear what they pleased except ermine; and their wives might have pearls and precious stones on their heads. Chaucer's Knight comes in his soiled cassock, and his coat of mail. He had late returned from fighting in mortal battles, and was about to perform his pilgrimage. His son, the young Squire, had been warring in companionship with his father; but his locks are now curled, and his short gown, with sleeves long and

* In "The Vision of Piers Ploughman," the innovation is thus lamented:—

> "Elenge (mournful) is the hall each day in the week;
> There the ord nor the lady liketh nought to sit.
> Now hath each rich a rule to eaten by himself
> In a privy parlour."

wide, is embroidered with white and red flowers, as it were a mead. The Sergeant at Law, who no doubt takes rank with the great of the land, appears not to have been proud of his dress; for he rode but humbly in a medley coat, girt with a sash of silk, with small bars. But his deportment was far more impressive than his dress—"his words were so wise"—a busy man, and yet one that appeared busier than he was. The Physician was by his side, in his bright purple cloak and his furred hood—one who, although he talked of the ascendancy of the planets and of magic natural, was learned in Æsculapius and Galen. Of the laity of this goodly company we have not forgotten the Wife of Bath, in speaking of apparel. She was a cloth-maker, with great custom; but her cover-chiefs or head-dresses were of the finest quality, and her hosen were of scarlet. What were ordinances of apparel to her, who "husbands at the church-door had she had five?" If the statute affected her, she would despise it, as most others did—for it was repealed within a year of its enactment.

Of this company of Chaucer who travelled from the inn of Southwark to St. Thomas's shrine at Canterbury, seven of the characters belong to the ecclesiastical establishment of England—the Prioress, the Monk, the Friar, the Clerk of Oxford, the Parson, the Sumptnour (summoner), and the Pardoner. Of such individual representatives of a great class we shall have briefly to speak before we close this period of our domestic history. Looking at them generally in connection with the other classes that the Statute of Apparel indicates, and that our first great English poet describes, we cannot but be impressed with this general view of a condition of society in which the distinctions of rank are so clearly marked, but in which there is no slavish submission either to high blood, or great wealth, or outward sanctity, or professional distinction. Henry Bailey, the host of the Tabard, is the director of the pilgrimage. He presides over the supper that precedes the departure of the pilgrims, and he suggests that to shorten the journey each "should tellen tales alway." The "very perfect gentle Knight" feels no humiliation at agreeing to this proposal; and he relates his noble romance of chivalry as readily as the Miller tells his tale with its broad jests. The Prioress and the Nun have no false shame in being under the safeguard of the courtesy of the Knight, who is "meek as is a maid." The Sergeant at Law, who sits as judge at assize, and the solemn Physician, are wayside and board companions with the Haberdasher and the other worthies of the

London guilds. The lordly Monk, looking with some pity upon the meek Parson and the studious Clerk of Oxford, has no scorn of his poor unworldly brothers in their humility. The prosperous Franklin listens to the slender and choleric Reve, who might be his neighbour's steward; and the Merchant, in his Flanders hat, "sounding alway the increase of his winning," has no fear of his position being compromised by the familiarity of the rough Shipman, on his wretched hackney, dressed in his gown of faldings or coarse cloth. The Cook, and the Manciple, a provider of commons for the inns of court, make mirth for the company by their quarrels and their jokes; and the Friar tells a story of diablerie in dispraise of the Sumptnour. Surely in this fellowship, in which there is no arrogance and no servility, we may recognise a state of society where class distinctions were so marked that haughtiness and reserve were not thought necessary for the assertion of individual dignity; but in which there was a natural respect of man for his fellows,—the spirit which had made England great, and which may yet survive the modern tendency to a grovelling prostration before rank and riches.

England was not permitted to remain many years at peace. If the chivalrous king John had lived—he who, when the treaty of Bretigny was not faithfully kept by the French, came again to England, and yielded himself prisoner—it is probable that the high regard of the two kings for the courage and courtesy of each other, might have cemented a friendship which would have extended to the people of each realm. John returned to England in 1363, leaving France under the government of the Dauphin. He died in 1364, at the Savoy; and the Dauphin became king of France, as Charles V. Without the chivalrous qualities of his father,—for his prudence had been too conspicuous at Poitiers, where he left his young brother, Philip, to fight alone by the side of the king—he possessed a sagacity of more practical value in a sovereign than personal bravery. "There never was a king," said Edward III., "who cared so little about arming himself, and yet gave me so much to do as this Charles." The prince of Wales, with the title of prince of Aquitaine, was appointed to the possession and government of the southern provinces which had been ceded to Edward at the peace of Bretigny; and with all the splendour of his reputation, and the high qualities which he really possessed, he digusted the nobles of Gascony by his haughty bearing. The people of the ceded provinces were indignant that they should have

been transferred in complete sovereignty to England. They clung as Frenchmen, to the feudal superiority of France; and they resolved to obey the English king with their lips, but never to forget their allegiance to the crown of which English kings had been the vassals. Their discontent was smouldering, when the prince of Wales took up the cause of Peter I., king of Castile and Leon, who had been driven from his throne by his half-brother, Henry, assisted by a strong band of free companions, under the command of the great adventurer, Du Guesclin. Peter has been branded with the name of "the Cruel." His private history is so complicated with his public character, that we must content ourselves with stating that his imprisonment, and supposed murder of his wife, Blanche of Bourbon, provoked the invasion of Castile by the French forces in 1366, and the dethronement of the unpopular king. Peter had previously made an alliance with Edward III., and he now fled to the court of the Black Prince at Bordeaux. It is difficult to understand the motive which induced the policy of attempting the restoration of Peter to his throne, beyond hostility to a cause which Charles of France had espoused. In 1367, the Black Prince led a great army of English, Gascons, and Normans from Bordeaux; and entering Navarre, by the pass of Roncesvalles, met the army of Henry in Castile, near the right bank of the Ebro. The battle of Najara was a complete victory, in which the Black Prince displayed the resources of a great commander even more remarkably than in his previous successes. This was not a battle in which the proud and pampered nobles of France were intoxicated by their own superiority of numbers, as at Cressy and Poitiers. It was a battle of real soldiery on both sides—the English yeomen against the Free Companions—Chandos against Du Guesclin. It was a victory not only useless to the prince of Wales, but injurious in many ways to himself and his country. The faithless Peter, when he had been restored, refused to abide by his promise of paying the cost of the war. Edward's army was reduced to the utmost misery by the want of provisions; and the prince had contracted a fatal malady which in a few years terminated his career of glory. He hastily returned to Gascony. The ingrate king was in six months hurled from his throne, and murdered by his half-brother. The greatest trophy of this campaign was the capture of Du Guesclin. An old writer has related a scene at Bordeaux singularly illustrative of the manners of this age. The prince of Wales sits with his barons after dinner, served with wine and

spices, and talking of deeds of arms, of love passages, and of ransoms. The sire de Lebret ventures to say that men report that there is a prisoner whom the prince dare not deliver; and the prince swears that he knew no knight in the world whom, being his prisoner, he would not deliver for a fair ransom. De Lebret asks the prince if he forgets Bertrand du Guesclin. His colour changes, and he commands Bertrand to be brought before him. And certain knights go to Bertrand, who orders wine for them, and they tell him, that they thought he would be ransomed. "I have neither half-penny nor penny," says Bertrand, "and owe ten thousand livres which I have spent in this city. I have eaten, drunk, given, and played at dice with it." Then Bertrand goes to the prince, in the gray coat which he wears, and the prince cannot keep from laughing when he sees him, and says, "Well, Bertrand, how fare ye?" Bertrand bows a little, and replies, "Sir, when it shall please you, I may fare better; many a day have I heard the rats and mice, but the song of birds it is long since I heard. I shall hear them when it is your pleasure." The prince tells Bertrand he may go, if he will swear never to bear arms against him, or to assist Henry of Spain. Bertrand refuses, and reproaches the prince that he had gone to Spain through covetousness, and in hopes to have the throne after Peter's death: but that Peter had cheated him, for which he thanked Peter heartily. "By my soul, he is right," saith the prince. And then he tells Bertrand he shall go, but not without a good ransom. He answers that he is a poor knight, that his estate is mortgaged, that he owes ten thousand florins besides, and that the prince ought to be moderate. Edward replies that what Bertrand himself fixes he would be content with. Then Bertrand says that he ought not to value himself too low, and that he would engage to give for his freedom one hundred thousand double golden florins. "You cannot pay it," said the prince, "nor do I want it," and Bertrand protests that he would not give less than sixty thousand, and if Henry of Spain and the king of France would not lend them, all the sempstresses of France would spin the ransom for him. The prince would have quitted him for ten thousand double florins. All the barons marvel greatly, and Chandos says to Du Guesclin, "If you have need of any help, I will lend you ten thousand." "Sir," quoth Bertrand, "I thank you; but before I seek anything of you, I will try the people of my own country."*

* See the excellent translation of this passage from "Mémoires de Messire Bertrand Du Guesclin," in "Historical Parallels," vol. i.

In 1368 the Spanish campaign was producing much public evil for the prince of Wales. He imposed a heavy tax upon the people of Gascony; and the great lords carried their complaints to the throne of Charles V. The interference of France was a violation of the treaty of Bretigny; but Charles ventured to summon the prince of Aquitaine to answer the complaint, assuming the position of his feudal lord. The prince said he would come with sixty thousand lances. The great war was now renewed. Edward III. re-assumed the title of king of France. There can be no doubt that it was the settled policy of Charles to obtain possession of Gascony and the other ceded districts. King Edward was growing old. His son was in feeble health. The government of the English was a yoke of which the Gascon nobles and people were impatient. In that age of military adventurers, the leaders changed their sides without much scruple, and many of the fighting Gascons went over to the banner of France. The French king adopted a bold policy, and assembled a fleet at Harfleur for the invasion of England; and Philip of Burgundy was to be its commander When he was a captive boy at Windsor, he asserted his title to the name of Le Hardi by striking the cup-bearer of Edward III. for serving his master before the king of France. But Philip gave up the attempt to invade England; and he showed no rash disposition to encounter the Duke of Lancaster, who had landed at Calais with a great army. The king of France would not allow a battle to be risked, which might terminate as other great battles had done. He suffered Lancaster to march through the northern provinces. But in 1370 the French entered Gascony. The Black Prince took the field, and the royal princes of Anjou and Berne retired before him. Limoges had been betrayed to these dukes by the inhabitants; and during a month's siege Edward, sick almost to death, was carried in a litter from one point to another of the attack. The capital of Limousin was at length taken by storm. The last warlike act of the Black Prince was one which associates his name with the infamous system of cruelty, that makes the individual bravery, endurance, and courtesy of the later feudal times look like a hollow mockery—a miserable imposture of self-glorification, trampling upon the higher principle that unites strength with mercy. Three thousand men, women, and children were butchered in cold blood when Limoges was taken. A few knights, resolved to battle to the last, placed their backs against a wall, and long fought against superior numbers. These prince Edward ordered to be received to ransom.

This was chivalry. Such contradictions show how unsafe a guide it was for the rulers of mankind; and how blessed were the people who the soonest escaped from its accursed dominion.

The Black Prince, in broken health, comes back to England. His brother John of Gaunt, the duke of Lancaster, succeeds him in the government of Gascony. Du Guesclin is now at the head of a daring band; and those of Bordeaux who said of him, whom they called an ugly fellow—which in truth he was—"There is no castle, however strong, that would not soon surrender if he went thither to assault it," were true judges of his character. Wherever the English banner was displayed, Du Guesclin was there at the head of his Adventurers. There were no great battles fought, for the French always avoided them. In vain Lancaster marched through France, from Calais to Bordeaux, in 1373. The French were ready to harass him by skirmishes, but not to fight in any general engagement. In vain Sir Robert Knowles led an army from Calais to the walls of Paris. A sagacious policy determined the French government to prolong an indecisive but most effective war. One by one the English lost many of their strong places. A truce was concluded in 1374, which lasted till 1377. The possessions which had been surrendered by the treaty of Bretigny were all lost, with the exception of Bordeaux, Bayonne, and Calais. Too much of France was surrendered by that treaty to a foreign rule; and it was in the natural course of events that the feeling of nationality, to which its provisions were repugnant, and which an unwise rule had rendered more odious, should assert itself; and, gaining strength by every small success, leave England at last a very limited dominion, as the costly purchase of the ambition of forty years.

In 1369, king Edward lost his queen, Philippa, the faithful wife of his boyhood and his age. In 1376, her first-born, the great prince of Wales, never rallying from the fever of his Spanish campaign, and worn out by the excitement of wars and conquests which had begun from his earliest years, also died. To the old king remained John of Gaunt, duke of Lancaster, his third son, (Lionel, the second, had died in 1368); Edward of Langley, duke of York; and Thomas of Woodstock, duke of Gloucester. After the death of queen Philippa, the happy fortune of the king seems to have deserted him. When the prince of Wales returned to England, he regained the popularity which he had lost in Gascony, by opposing his father's government. The expiring passions of "dotage," more miserable than its "tears," had thrown the con-

queror of France under the dominion of a mistress, Alice Ferrers. To her influence, and that of her creatures, the eldest son of the king was naturally opposed With the support of the prince of Wales, the parliament, in 1376, forced a measure upon the king, in which her name is mentioned in connexion with unlawful suits prosecuted by way of "maintenance." But it was also clear that the Black Prince looked with jealousy upon the power of John, duke of Lancaster, who was thought to aspire to the crown. Edward had the interests of his son to maintain, Richard of Bordeaux. The friends of Lancaster were accused of misdemeanours in the Parliament of 1376; but the prince of Wales died, and Lancaster regained his influence.

It would be tedious for us to follow the ill-understood contests of the remaining span of Edward's life. Richard, then ten years of age, was presented to the houses of Parliament as the successor to all the rights of his father. But the influence of the duke of Lancaster was all-powerful. The Speaker of the Commons, William de la Marc, who had led the opposition supported by the prince of Wales, was imprisoned; and William of Wykeham was deprived of his temporalities, and dismissed the court. His merits will be ever associated with his splendid educational foundations of Winchester and New College, Oxford. Lancaster took up the cause of John Wycliffe, who was under prosecution for his opinions; and when the reformer was called to defend himself at St. Paul's before the bishop of London, the duke accompanied him, and a violent quarrel ensued between the laymen and the ecclesiastics. A riot, in which the citizens of London took part against the king's powerful son, ensued. Thus were the last few months of the life of Edward disturbed. He had completed the fiftieth or jubilee year of his reign in February, 1377, and he published a general amnesty for all offences—evidently an act of the ruling power in the state, for Wykeham was excluded. He died on the 21st of June, 1377, with none to soothe his last hours but Alice Ferrers. She took the ring from his finger, and the mighty victor was alone with the all-conqueror:

> "Death came dryvinge after, and al to duste passhed
> Kynges and knyghtes, kaysers and popes." *

The state of the English Church will be more clearly developed in the next reign than in that of Edward III. During the half century in which he sate upon the throne, the outward magnificence

* "Piers Ploughman," v. 14126 in Mr. Wright's admirable new edition.

of the ecclesiastical hierarchy had reached its height. The great churches were finished with a refinement of taste which has left succeeding ages to wonder and copy. Then were completed the cathedrals of Lincoln, Wells, Peterborough, Salisbury. The abbey church of Westminster lifted up its glorious arches in rivalry with those of Winchester, which its munificent bishop, Wykeham, had remodelled. London was covered with the houses of the Mendicant Orders who have fixed their names upon the localities which they inhabited — Black-Friars, and White-Friars, and Crutched-Friars, and Austin-Friars. Parish churches were in almost every principal street of the metropolis. The rural parishes were as bountifully supplied for the ministrations of religion. But amidst all these external indications of a power which it might be supposed would never die, there was a growing conviction that this house was built upon the sands. A quarter of a century before the death of Edward III.,—in 1353,—a law had been passed against Provisors —those who obtained from the pope a reversion of benefices and church dignities. In 1356, Wycliffe began his career as an ecclesiastical reformer, by writing his treatise, called, "The last Ages of the Church." In 1365, the pope having demanded the arrears of the tribute known as "Peter's pence," it was refused by the Parliament, and Wycliffe strenuously supported this resistance to the demand. But there was something more formidable to the papal authority, and to the system which was founded upon it, than the acts of the Legislature. There was a public opinion forming, which, before the circulation of books by printing, and with the imperfect communication of one district with another, was diffused in a very remarkable way through the country. A general feeling began to spread that the church dignitaries and the religious orders, were more intent upon their own aggrandisement, and the gratification of their own luxury, than the upholding of the faith and duties of the Gospel. The mass of the people were ignorant of the essentials of religion, though they bowed before its forms. In the universities there were young men who were like Chaucer's clerk:

> "Sounding in moral virtue was his speech,
> And gladly would he learn and gladly teach."

To such the covert licentiousness of the monks, and the open profligacy of the mendicant orders, was a deep humiliation. They went forth, each to his small country cure, to speak of a holier religion than belonged to the worship of relics, or the purchase of indul-

gences. The Sumptnours, who were the ministers of the extortions of the ecclesiastical courts, and the Pardoners, who hawked about dispensations for sin, were their especial aversion. The satire of Chaucer was a reflection of the prevailing estimate of the Monk, "full, fat, and in good point;" of the Friar, "a wanton and a merry;" of the Sumptnour, who thought "a man's soul was in his purse;" and of the Pardoner, with his wallet "full of pardon come from Rome all hot." In their sermons, secular priests now freely quoted the holy scriptures, in the common tongue; and they looked forward to the work which their great leader Wycliffe, the honoured professor of theology at Oxford, was preparing—the translation into English of Christ's Testament. His citation for heresy in the last year of Edward III. was the tribute to his importance. In a few years the preaching of Wycliffe and his disciples would go through the land, scattering the corruptions of the Church with a power that for a time seemed likely to shake the whole fabric of society. The age was not ripe for the great Reformation that then seemed impending. But out of Wycliffe's rectory of Lutterworth seeds were to be borne upon the wind, which would abide in the earth till they sprang up into the stately growth of other centuries.

CHAPTER XXXII.

Constitutional principles developed in the reign of Richard II.—Coronation of Richard.—Council of Regency.—Wars with France and Scotland.—Capitation Tax.—Poll Tax.—Insurrection of 1381.—The insurgents in London.—Suppression of the insurrection.—Wycliffe's opinions coincident with the insurrection.—Preachers of heresies.—Translation of the Bible into English.—Contest with the Pope.—English literature and language.—Statutes of Wages.—Labourers in husbandry.—Games.—Sanitary Laws.—State interference in social affairs.

RYMER, our laborious historiographer, describes the reign of Richard II. as "a reign which affords but little matter that may shine in history, and cannot boast of any one great and distinguished captain, any one memorable battle, nor one important siege; no proceeding to St. Paul's, no Te Deum for victory." * To us, who regard battles, and sieges, and processions, and Te Deums, as less important matter for history than the progress of the people, the reign of Richard II. is one of the most interesting in our annals. In this reign, the great constitutional principles of our government were most strikingly exhibited in their practical efficiency. In this reign the power of the Commons was more signally displayed than at any previous period, in demanding administrative reform as the condition of voting supplies; in the impeachment of those who were considered as the evil advisers of the crown; and in strenuously insisting that the public liberties, secured by statutes and charters, should not be infringed upon by a king who had manifest tendencies towards despotism. At one period, this despotism was nearly successful. For two years Richard was an uncontrolled tyrant. By what was unquestionably a national act, however accompanied by treachery and violence, the despot was deposed. In this deposition, all the forms which might appear to belong to a more advanced state of society were most carefully observed. The king, who neglected the duties of his station, and aimed at arbitrary power, was treated as a public delinquent; and the general good was set forth as the ultimate end of all government. But this reign is also remarkable for the great

* Dedication to Queen Anne of vol. vii. of the Fœdera