

CHAPTER II.

News of Agincourt arrives.—Entry of Henry into London.—State of France.—Henry's Second Expedition.—Overthrow of the Armagnacs.—Siege and surrender of Rouen.—Conferences at Meulan between Henry, the Duke of Burgundy, and the Queen.—Henry first sees Katherine.—Negotiations ineffectual.—Burgundy murdered at Montreuil.—Peace of Troyes.—Marriage of Henry.—Henry and his Queen come to England.—Parliament held.—Clarence killed.—Henry returns to France.—Siege of Meaux.—Katherine and her infant son come to Paris.—Illness of Henry.—His death.—Difficulty of forming a just estimate of his character.—Duke of Gloucester Protector.—Death of Charles VI.—Regency of the Duke of Bedford.—Feuds of Gloucester and Beaufort.—Tutelage of Henry VI.

THE great victory of Agincourt was publicly known in London on the 29th of October, the same day on which king Henry reached Calais. "Early in the morning," says a contemporary chronicle, "came tidings to London while that men were in their beds, that the king had fought and had the battle and the field aforesaid. And anon as they had tidings thereof, they went to all the churches of the city of London, and rang all the bells of every church." Henry remained at Calais till the 17th of November. There was time for this news to go forth through the country before the arrival of the king; and the people warmed up into a fervour of joy which drowned the lament for the thousands that had perished during those past three months of sickness, want, and slaughter. When the king's ship, after a boisterous passage, sailed into the port of Dover, the people rushed into the sea, and bore their hero to the shore. At the royal manor of Eltham he rested on his way to London; which he entered in solemn procession on the 23rd of November. From Blackheath to Westminster he was escorted by twenty thousand of the citizens, "with devices according to their crafts." The great highway of Cheap, after the cavalcade had passed London-bridge, was so crowded by the people, that the horsemen could scarcely pass through them. The city was gorgeous with arches, and towers, and pavilions, out of which innumerable virgins and youths showered laurel boughs and leaves of gold upon the conqueror's head, and sang English anthems with melodious voices, and with organs. The busy priest, as observant of

the splendid pageant as of the terrible battle, says, "The lattices and windows on both sides were filled with the most noble ladies and women of the realm, and with honourable and honoured men, who flocked together to the pleasing sight, and were so very gracefully and elegantly dressed, in garments of gold, fine linen, and crimson, and various other apparel, that a greater assembly, or a nobler spectacle, was not recollected to have been ever before in London." He goes on to say, "The king himself, amidst these public expressions of praise, and the bravery of the citizens, passed along, clad in a purple robe, not with lofty looks, pompous horses, or great multitude, but with a solid aspect, a reverend demeanour, and a few of his faithful domestics attendant on him; the dukes, earls, and marshals, his captives, following him with a guard of soldiers."*

In 1416 Henry was continuing to cherish his ambitious projects, and was preparing for their accomplishment. The attempted mediation of the emperor Sigismund, who visited England, had been unsuccessful. The war was carried on in Normandy; and the French made descents on the English shores of the channel. Harfleur was besieged in June; and the English garrison was reduced to the greatest distress, when it was relieved from blockade by the capture of the large carracks and other vessels that kept the mouth of the Seine. Meanwhile, Henry had secured the alliance of the duke of Burgundy, who had laid aside his resentment for the death of his brother, the duke of Brabant, at Agincourt. For the death of the other brother, the count of Nevers, on the same field, he cared little. It is unnecessary for us to attempt any minute description of the distractions of France, which presented the chief encouragement to the king of England to persevere in his design to claim the crown. The feuds of the Burgundians and the Armagnacs were as violent as ever; and were accompanied by the most intolerable oppression of the people by the reigning faction under the constable, Armagnac. Foreign troops, without pay, were let loose to plunder. Brigands committed the most outrageous atrocities; and the orders of the government to pursue and destroy them, without trial or inquiry, were made a pretence for the murder of large numbers of the Burgundian party. The insane king passed his life in fatuous indifference to all around him; and the court of the queen exhibited a licentious profusion, the more disgusting from its contrast with the universal wretchedness. It is

* The Priest's Chronicle, Nicolas, p. cccxci.

recorded that Henry, after the day of Agincourt, addressing his prisoner, the duke of Orleans, disclaimed any merit in his great victory, and expressed his belief that he was the instrument of God in punishing the crimes of the French nation—the public disorders and the private wickedness. This was one of the ordinary delusions of ambition. There was no improvement in the condition of France when, on the 23rd of July, 1417, the king of England again embarked with a mighty army at Southampton. It was more numerous and more powerfully equipped than the force which, two years before, had landed in Normandy; consisting of forty thousand men, with miners and ordnance. At this crisis, the duke of Burgundy was marching upon Paris, resolved upon the extermination of the faction which held the government. Henry landed at Tonque, near Harfleur; and shortly after went on to besiege Caen, which city was taken by assault on the 4th of September. "The duke of Clarence beat down the walls with guns on his side, and first entered into the town, and cried, A Clarence! A Clarence!—A Saint George! and so was the town got."* Many other fortresses in Normandy speedily submitted; and Henry went into winter quarters. The French government, distracted with the movements of the duke of Burgundy, made no effectual resistance to the English. Henry continued to secure one fortress after another; and, holding his court at Caen, confiscated the estates of Norman lords, and bestowed them upon his English followers.

The summer of 1418 was a terrible season for France. The duke of Burgundy had retreated from before Paris in the previous year; for his partisans in the city had been expelled, and the count of Armagnac had the young dauphin, Charles, in his hands, as well as the unhappy king. The queen had been deprived of her power, as regent, and had been sent as a prisoner to Tours. Suddenly the duke of Burgundy appeared before Tours; delivered the queen from captivity; and received from her the appointment of governor-general of the kingdom. The rule of the count of Armagnac had been one of severity and terror; and Parisians had fallen off from his faction, and now anxiously desired his overthrow. At the end of May there was a fearful massacre of the Armagnacs by an infuriated Paris mob; and many of them were held as prisoners. On the 12th of June, there was a cry that the terrible duke was at the gates; but the people shouted for Burgundy; and, breaking open the prisons and private houses where the Armagnacs were

* "An English Chronicle," written before 1471. Camden Society, 1856.

confined, massacred fifteen hundred victims in one morning. Amongst them was the count of Armagnac. On the 14th of July, the queen and the duke of Burgundy entered Paris in triumph. The appetite for blood was not yet sated; and for some days the new government made a profession of stopping the murders, but contrived to remove those persons who were most obnoxious to them. The duke of Orleans, whilst these horrible butcheries were perpetrated by a fickle multitude upon the party of which he was the real head, was shut up in the castle of Pontefract. He solaced his long captivity in England by the composition of verses which entitle him to rank amongst the best French poets of his age; and he also wrote "Chansons" in English, with elegance and facility. Henry was not disposed to trust to the pacific occupations of his prisoner, as a guarantee that he would not be a troublesome enemy. There is a letter of this period in which the king enjoins his strict keeping, without going to any disport, "for it is better he lack his disport, than we be deceived."*

While these fearful scenes had been acted in Paris, king Henry sat down with the main body of his army before Rouen. In the previous winter, terms of peace had been proposed by him to the French government at Paris, and also on the part of the dauphin, afterwards Charles VII. But these negotiations were unavailing. The siege of Rouen was as prolific in horrors as any other event of that sanguinary period. The rule of Henry in Lower Normandy, which he had nearly conquered, was mild and conciliating. He abolished the odious tax on salt, and set a limit to illegal exactions. But the people of Rouen, into which city large numbers of armed men had been thrown under the command of chiefs who had retired before Henry, resolved to resist the progress of the invader. The king had crossed the Seine at Pont de l'Arche; but when he invested the city on the 30th of July, he found a garrison ready to make sorties upon his troops, and compel them to fight for every position which they took up. He set about the reduction of the place upon a system far more efficacious than any sudden assault. On the land side he dug deep ditches; and he fortified his lines with towers and artillery. The land approach was completely blockaded. The islands of the Seine above Rouen were filled by him with troops. The stream was barricaded with iron chains; and immediately above the town he formed a bridge of boats manned with archers. He soon compelled the surrender of the castle on the hill of St.

* "Original Letters on English History." Ellis, Series i. vol. i.

Catherine, now crowned with a church, with the beautiful river and the commercial city at its foot. Below Rouen he commanded the navigation of the Seine by his armed vessels; and the mouth of the river was guarded by a powerful fleet. For twenty weeks the devoted people beheld the gradual approach of famine. The population consisted of a hundred and fifty thousand souls; some chroniclers say three hundred thousand. In that city of ancient narrow streets, where still remain many gloomy houses of the period, whose quaint gables and rude carvings are dear to the artist and the antiquary, was this wretched population, with all the resources of their accustomed industry cut off, shut up to starve. "And ever they of the town hoped to have been rescued, but it would not be; and many hundreds died for hunger, for they had eaten all their cats, horses, hounds, rats, mice, and all that might be eaten; and oft times the men-at-arms driving out the poor people at the gates of the city, for spending of victual, anon our men drove them in again; and young children lay dead in the streets, hanging on the dead mothers' paps, that pity was to see."* At last the garrison surrendered on the 19th of January, 1419, and the soldiers marched forth without arms, engaging not to serve against the king for one year. One of the noblest cities of France thus came under the English rule; and here Henry built a palace, and held his court as duke of Normandy. The people of Rouen had been promised effectual relief both by the duke of Burgundy and by the dauphin; but no succour came. The French princes were more intent upon circumventing each other than of organising a national resistance; and Henry haughtily proclaimed that he was called to reign over France as a true king, and that it was a blessing of God which had inspired him to come into a distracted kingdom, that its sovereignty might be transferred into capable hands. There were two authorities in France, who refused to unite in repulsing their common enemy. The dauphin held a court and parliament at Poitiers; the duke of Burgundy ruled at Paris. In the meantime Henry continued to advance towards the capital. A truce was at length concluded by him with the duke of Burgundy; and it was agreed that the king of France and the king of England should have a meeting. In July, 1419, the queen, the princess Katherine, and the duke of Burgundy, came, without the king, to Meulan, on the Seine; and here Henry met them, with great state on either side. The queen expected that the beauty of her daughter would

* "English Chronicle," p. 47.

have disarmed the sternness of the English king; but although he professed himself anxious for an alliance with a lady so fair and gracious, he demanded the complete execution of the treaty of Bretigny, the cession of Normandy, and the absolute sovereignty of all the countries surrendered. The negotiations were again broken off. The dauphin and the duke of Burgundy now made some show of reconciliation; and within a week after the conference at Meulan, they agreed to terms of union. With the same boldness as he displayed when met by divided councils, the king marched on towards Paris, now that he was assured that the two rival powers of France were united to resist the "damnable interference of the ancient enemies of the kingdom."* The dauphin and the duke had parted with demonstrations of mutual respect; the dauphin to Touraine, the duke to join king Charles at Pontoise. On the 23d, the king, the queen, and the duke went to Paris, which was completely undefended. On the 29th, news came that the English had taken Pontoise. The court removed from Paris, to which the troops of Henry were rapidly approaching. The dauphin solicited another interview with the duke of Burgundy, on matters of importance to the welfare of the kingdom. The courtiers of the duke urged him not to go, for the dauphin was surrounded by the servants of the duke of Orleans, who had been assassinated in 1407; and by men whose friends and relations had perished in the massacre of the Armagnacs. But the duke resolved to meet his cousin at the place appointed, the bridge of Montereau. At each end of the bridge there were barriers; but there was no barrier in the centre, as was usual in these interviews of princes, who most hated and suspected each other when professions of friendship were most abundant. The dauphin was in a sort of lodge in the centre of the bridge when the duke advanced. They had each taken oaths pledging the safety of the other. The duke of Burgundy had left his attendants a little behind him; and as he bent his knee to the dauphin, he was struck down and quickly murdered; the servants of the duke being immediately surrounded by a body of armed men. The dauphin gave out that the duke offered insult and violence to him; but there can be no doubt that the treacherous murder was premeditated, and the mode of accomplishment resolved upon. The heir of the crown of France was at this time seventeen years of age.

* These words are given in the preamble to the treaty between the dauphin and Burgundy.

Philip, the son of the murdered duke of Burgundy, was at Ghent when he received the news of the tragedy at Montereau on the 12th of August. He was married to a daughter of the king of France. "Michelle," he said to his wife, "your brother has murdered my father." No time was wasted in idle complainings. Philip, known in history as "The Good," immediately, with the advice of his Flemish subjects, sought an alliance with Henry of England. The people of Paris, adverse as they were to the impending rule of the English, were still more hostile to the Armagnacs, who were desolating the country, with the dauphin at their head. The young duke of Burgundy arranged the terms of a treaty with Henry; which was finally concluded at Troyes, on the 21st of May, 1420. The king of England was to receive the hand of the princess Katherine; to be immediate regent of the kingdom; and to be recognised as successor to the crown on the death of Charles VI. When the terms of the treaty were announced to the parliament and other authorities of Paris, the highest eulogium was pronounced upon the king of England as a lover of peace and justice, a protector of the poor, a defender of the Church. The people were encouraged by these statements to hope for some happy termination of their miseries. The marriage of Henry with the princess of France was celebrated at Troyes, on the 2nd of June. The next day was one of banqueting. A tournament was proposed as a prolongation of the festivities; but Henry said, "the enemies of the king are in the city of Sens. Let us be ready to-morrow morning to march to its siege, where every knight may show his prowess in doing justice upon the wicked, that the poor people may live." He gave the nobles the most solemn assurances that he would love and honour the king of France; and that the ocean should cease to flow and the sun no more give light, before he should forget the duty which a prince owed to his subjects. The bridal month of Henry and his fair queen was passed in besieging Sens, and Montereau, and Villeneuve. When these were taken, Melun was besieged for four months. After its surrender on the 18th of November, the kings of France and England made a triumphant entry into Paris; and the three estates of the kingdom gave a solemn approval of the treaty of Troyes.

At the beginning of 1421 king Henry held a parliament at Rouen. The coinage which was then issued bore the inscription, "Heres Francia." To Rouen came many English nobles and knights, and did homage to their king for lands granted to them in

France. Immediately after, Henry and his queen went to England; and on the 23rd of February, Katherine was crowned at Westminster. The feasts and pageants that welcomed Henry and his queen were of unusual magnificence; and the chronicler Hall, in his pompous language, expresses the general sentiment of that period: "No doubt England had great cause to rejoice at the coming of such a noble prince and so mighty a conqueror, which in so small space and so brief time had brought under his obeisance the great and puissant realm and dominion of France." But there are other records which show that England herself was beginning to suffer from the operations of "so mighty a conqueror." The first statute of the parliament which the king convened in 1421 (chap. v.), referring to the statute of Edward III. that sheriffs and escheators should remain only one year in office, says: "Whereas, at the time of the making of the said statute, divers worthy and sufficient persons were in every county of England, to occupy and govern the same offices well towards the king and all his liege people; forasmuch that as well by divers pestilences within the realm of England, as by the wars without the realm, there is not now such sufficiency, it is ordained that the king, by authority of parliament, may make the sheriffs and escheators through the realm, at his will, until the end of four years." Barrington recites this statute to show that the laurels which Henry acquired were obtained at the dearest price, the depopulation of the country.* There were other causes than the waste of war to account for the deficiency of "worthy and sufficient persons in every county of England." In 1418 Henry was confiscating estates in Normandy, and bestowing them on his English followers. In 1421 he was receiving homage from English lords for the lands of France. The same temptations which led the Norman barons under the first William to desert the pleasant valleys of the Seine for the ruder abodes of the Severn and the Trent, now sent back their descendants to Normandy to make new acquisitions of the country from which the English had been dispossessed for two centuries. The evil from which England had been saved by the weakness of John was about to be renewed in the strength of Henry. Fortunate was it that the conqueror did not long remain to perpetuate his conquests; and that in the feebleness of his successor, and the distractions of a civil war, France was again lost.

The peace of Troyes was approved by the English parliament,

* "Observations on the Statutes," &c., p. 312.

and the Commons granted a subsidy of a fifteenth, "to continue the war, that the dauphin and his party, who maintained some cities and provinces against the king, being subdued, France might be entirely annexed to the English crown."* But even in this season of popular excitement there was a petition complaining of the intolerable burden of the war. In the previous year a petition had been presented to the duke of Gloucester, in a parliament which he had summoned as guardian of England, that he would move the king and queen to return, as speedily as might please them, in relief and comfort of the commons; and they also requested that their petitions might not be sent to the king beyond sea, but determined in England. They dreaded "that England might become a province of the French crown, which led them to obtain a renewal of the statute of Edward III., declaring the independence of this kingdom."† The king and his queen did not remain long, "in relief and comfort of the commons." They were making a progress through the kingdom, and had arrived at York, when news came which speedily called back Henry to France. He had left his brother, the duke of Clarence, as his lieutenant in Normandy, Anjou, which recognised the authority of the dauphin, was invaded by the duke; and at Beaujé, on the 22nd of March, he was surprised in his work of wasting the country by a great force of Anjevins, aided by several thousand Scottish auxiliaries under the earl of Buchan, the second son of the regent of Scotland. The duke was slain; and the greater number of his vanguard were killed or taken prisoners. The English archers, however, came up, and drove the French and Scots from the field. Soon, however, Scot was to be opposed to Scot in the great contest for dominion. Murdoch, the regent of Scotland, had lent assistance to the dauphin at a time of peace with England; and many of the Scottish nobles disapproved of the measure. The king of Scotland had been sixteen years a captive in Windsor Castle; and here, like that other illustrious prisoner the duke of Orleans, he found in the cultivation of literature a solace for the absence of liberty. In the garden of the keep of Windsor he first saw Jane Beaufort, walking amongst the hawthorn hedges and the juniper branches—and henceforth the cousin of king Henry was, in his mind, "the fairest and the freshest young flower." So the captive has recorded of his love in his charming poem of "The King's Quair." Jane Beaufort's widowed

* "Parliamentary History," vol. i. p. 339.

† Hallam, "Middle Ages, chap. viii. part. iii.

mother had married the duke of Clarence; and this circumstance might have been some inducement to the captive king to accept the offer of Henry to accompany him to France, to redeem the great disaster of Beaujé. Archibald, earl of Douglas, and other Scottish knights, joined Henry and their young king; and set sail from Dover, with four thousand men-at-arms and twenty-four thousand archers. Queen Katherine was left at Windsor. Henry and his army landed at Calais on the 12th of June.

After several minor successes, king Henry, at the earnest entreaty of the people of Paris, undertook the siege of the city of Meaux, about thirty miles from the capital. The commander of the place, known as the Bastard of Vaurus, was a devoted adherent of the count of Armagnac, who had been butchered by the Parisians; and in revenge of his death, he massacred every Burgundian that he could encounter in the predatory excursions which he made to the very walls of Paris. He was a public enemy, carrying on a partisan warfare with a ferocity of which even those times of bloodshed furnished few examples. Henry undertook to subdue this brigand. But Meaux was a place of remarkable strength; and it was seven months before it was wholly taken. In this siege Henry lost several of his best captains, amongst whom were the earl of Worcester and lord Clifford; and his men were swept away by an epidemic sickness. At last the garrison was starved out; and the commander was decapitated. By the surrender of Meaux the English became masters of the greater part of France to the north of the Loire. The queen of Henry had borne him a son, and she came back to France, with her infant, to join her husband in Paris. There was a short season of festivity at the Whitsuntide of 1422; and then the king set out to raise the siege of Caen. He had for some time been labouring under a disease, which he bore up against with the same iron will that made him front every danger and difficulty of warfare. At Corbeil he became too ill to proceed; and his brother, the duke of Bedford, took the command of the army, in concert with the duke of Burgundy. Henry was carried back on a litter to the Bois de Vincennes. It soon became evident that his malady, whatever it might be, was beyond the medical skill of those days to arrest or cure. The English who surrounded the bed of the dying man saw the same composure which he had always shown in the battle-field. He commended his child to the care of his brother, the duke of Bedford, desiring the earl of Warwick to be his tutor. His brother of Gloucester he wished to be guardian of

England. He advised that the regency of France should be offered to the duke of Burgundy; but in the event of his refusal to the duke of Bedford. Above all, he urged that no peace should be concluded with the dauphin, unless Normandy were ceded in absolute sovereignty to the English crown. Having delivered his last wishes, he asked the physician how long he might expect to live. They said the Almighty had power to restore him to health. He repeated the question, requiring a direct answer. The answer was, "Not more than two hours." The ministers of religion then came to his bed, and recited the penitential Psalms. At the words, "Thou shalt build up the walls of Jerusalem," he said, "If I had finished the war in France, and established peace, I would have gone to Palestine, to redeem the holy city from the Saracens." The last dream of glory was sanctified by the aspirations of religion.

Henry V. died on the 31st of August, 1422, in the tenth year of his reign, the thirty-fourth of his age. The devoted attachment to him of the English in France was expressed in funeral solemnities more than usually significant of real sorrow. Upon a car was shown a waxen figure of the king; and in a slow journey of many days a procession of heralds and priests, and knights and esquires in black armour, with all the dead king's household, traversed the country which had witnessed his painful marches—from Paris to Rouen, from Rouen to Abbeville, from Abbeville to Calais. Out of every town came the clergy and joined the cavalcade, and at night the body was placed in the principal church. The French people looked on with wonder, and even with pity, for the untimely fate of the great king; for they had seen the perfect discipline which he had preserved in his army, and how sternly he had repressed and punished the violence and exactions of their own lords. A fleet waited to convey the body and the English mourners to Dover. Slowly London was reached; and the funeral obsequies having been performed at St. Paul's in the presence of the Lords and Commons of the parliament, all that remained of the warrior and statesman was finally deposited in Westminster Abbey.

It is extremely difficult, if not impossible, to form a just estimate of the character of Henry V., in regarding it from the modern point of view. To place before our eyes the social good that might have been accomplished by a prince of such eminent talents, of such strong will, of such firm self-reliance, of such fortitude under the most appalling difficulties, of such equanimity at the height of success, of such

zealous though erring sense of religious obligation—to view him in a possible career of honest energy without the lust of conquest, and to blame him for not preferring a real usefulness to a blind ambition—this is to set aside the circumstances which gave a direction to the actions by which we must judge of his character. We can imagine a prince so endowed, despising the superstition of his times, determine to make a corrupted church tolerant, and to bestow liberty of conscience upon all his subjects. Such a conquest of bigotry would have been a wilder and a more dangerous undertaking than the conquest of France. We can imagine him looking beyond all the prejudices of his age, and discovering that a free commercial intercourse between nations is the true foundation of prosperous industry. Such a theory has not been possible to be realised in England till the very times in which we live; and is even now rejected as impossible by nations far more advanced in understanding what belongs to real civilisation than the England of the fifteenth century. We can imagine him destroying the jealous factions which disturbed his father's doubtful authority, by calling forth the love of the great body of the people, and urging forward the rights of the burgher and the labourer to control the oppressions that still clung to the decaying system of feudality. It was long before the monarchical could extinguish the aristocratic tyranny; and then the rule of the one was, in many respects, a despotism more injurious than the grasping and turbulent power of the many. England had to pass through various stages of misrule before the universal good could be received as the great end of all government. Before Henry V. there was opened the magnificent prospect of recovering the hereditary dominions of the Norman kings, which had slipped away from the feeble successors of the greatest of that valiant race; which had been partially won back by the third Edward; and which had again been surrendered to the growing power of France. His negotiations show that his real policy was to recover what had been lost after the treaty of Bretigny; and that his demand of the French crown would have been soon abandoned had not the distractions of France offered an irresistible temptation to his enthusiastic ambition. For he was an enthusiast. He had an undoubting confidence in the justice of his claim; he had no apprehensions of its impolicy. His bravery, fortitude, and perseverance won the admiration of the English people, as such qualities will always command the applause of a military nation. In England every man was trained to arms, and the brilliant

achievements of the great soldier were far more valued than the substantial merits of the just lawgiver. But the career of Henry V. was not without its national benefit. From his time there was no false estimate in Europe of the prowess of the English; from his time there was no dream that the proud island might be subjugated. Even in the civil wars of the half century which succeeded Henry, England was unmolested from without. No king of France ever thought to avenge Agincourt by wearing the crown of England in right of conquest.

When the death of Henry V. was known in London, some of the leading peers assembled, and issued writs for a new parliament. The duke of Gloucester had been named by the dying Henry as regent of England; but upon the roll of parliament it was entered that the king, considering his tender age, appoints the duke of Bedford, or, in his absence beyond sea, the duke of Gloucester, to be protector and defender of the kingdom. From subsequent proceedings recorded in the rolls of parliament it appears that Gloucester had claimed to be regent according to the desire of his brother; but that the lords had resisted that claim, saying that the king could not grant governance of the land to any person except while he lived; and that although it was agreed that Gloucester should be chief of the Council, in absence of the duke of Bedford, he was to hold his position, not under the name of tutor, lieutenant, governor, or regent, or of any name that should import governance of the land, but only bear the name of protector and defender. We thus see that the jealousies which, in a few years, broke out into open violence and hatred were existing at the very onset of the reign of him "in infant bands crowned king." But we also see how strictly a great constitutional principle was adhered to, that a king could not appoint a regent during the minority of his successor; and that no person could exercise the royal prerogative during a king's infancy, except by the choice of parliament, and under the limitations prescribed by parliament for the conduct of the executive government.*

In less than two months after the death of Henry V., Charles VI., king of France, also died. At the funeral solemnities at St. Denis, the herald cried aloud, "Long life to Henry, king of France and England, our sovereign lord." France had been for forty-two years under the nominal rule of an incapable king, subject to accessions of insanity which delivered him, powerless, to one or other

* See Hallam, "Middle Ages," chap. viii. part iii.

of the factions that distracted his kingdom. There were now two kings in France—an infant in Paris, with a regent who governed north of the Loire; and the dauphin, alike the object of party hatred and party adulation, who was crowned at Poitiers as Charles VII.; and who ruled or influenced most of the provinces south of the Loire. Brittany at first remained neutral in this great quarrel. Burgundy was with the English. When, therefore, some are accustomed to say that Henry V. conquered France, they speak with a very loose estimate of the noble territory that remained unconquered. In thirty years from the death of Henry V. all that had been surrendered to his arms or his policy was utterly lost.

To follow through the various fortunes of this war in France would, with some striking exceptions, be only to repeat the monotonous details of sieges and battle-fields—wearisome even when told with a due comprehension of their peculiar aspects. The more important of the early contests between the regent Bedford, and Charles VII., were the battle of Crevant, in 1423, where the earl of Salisbury signally defeated the earl of Buchan, commanding an allied army of French and Scots; and the battle of Verneuil, where Bedford utterly routed the French army in an engagement which was recorded in the rolls of parliament as "the greatest deed done by Englishmen in our days, save the battle of Agincourt." The duke of Bedford had military talents; and his policy sought to strengthen his faction by powerful alliances. He married the sister of the duke of Burgundy; and he negotiated a marriage between another sister of that duke, and the duke of Brittany. But these friendships were soon endangered by the rash passions of the duke of Gloucester, the protector and defender of England. The alliance with Burgundy had given stability to the power of Henry V. The personal ambition of his brother Gloucester weakened this support of the English rule. Jacqueline of Hainault was the sovereign lady of Holland, Zealand, Friesland, and Hainault. She was first married to the eldest son of Charles VI. of France, who died whilst dauphin; and she was then wedded to the duke of Brabant, kinsman to the duke of Burgundy. Eloping from her husband she went to England; and obtaining a divorce, from the anti-pope, married the duke of Gloucester, who claimed her large territorial possessions, and landed five thousand men at Calais to support his claim. Hainault became the seat of a new war. The dukes of Burgundy and Bedford endeavoured to reconcile the disputants; but Gloucester was obstinate, and bitterly quarrelled with Burgundy

It was agreed that a single combat should decide this new hostility; but Bedford at Paris, and the parliament in England, saw to what national evils this rupture might lead. Gloucester, in spite of their joint remonstrances, led an army into Holland; and the English in France began to take the side of their rash countryman. The question was finally settled by the pope declaring the marriage of Gloucester void; and he eventually consoled himself by marrying Eleanor Cobham, a lady of humble rank and spotted reputation. From that time, the duke of Burgundy cooled towards the English alliance. Gloucester, when he returned to England, engaged in a fierce quarrel with his uncle, Henry Beaufort, bishop of Winchester, and chancellor, who was one of the illegitimate brothers of Henry IV. The people of London, in 1422, had seen their king, then two years old, "borne towards his mother's chare,* and he shrieked, and cried, and sprang, and would not be carried." † In 1424, they had seen him placed before the high altar of St. Paul's, and then seated upon a horse, and paraded through the city. In 1425, with a view probably to diminish the influence of the protector, by exhibiting the child Henry as a shadow of royalty, he was brought into the house of Lords, and seated on the throne on his mother's knee. "It was a strange sight," says Speed, the chronicler, "and the first time it was ever seen in England, an infant sitting in his mother's lap, and before it could tell what English meant, to exercise the place of sovereign direction in open parliament." The people knew that the power was necessarily in other hands than those of this poor child and his mother; and they saw the natural guardians of the baby-king quarrelling for supremacy. On an October night of 1426, Gloucester sent for the mayor of London, and directed him to have the city strictly watched. The next morning Beaufort came from his palace in Southwark, with archers and men-at-arms, and assaulted by shot and missiles the gate of London-bridge, which was closed against him. The citizens were supporters of Gloucester; and "all the city of London was moved against the bishop, and would have destroyed him in his inn at Southwark, but the gates of London-bridge were so surely kept that no man might pass out, and the Thames was also kept that no man might pass over." ‡ In the dread of civil war, the duke of Bedford came over to England; and a parliament was held at Leicester, where the members were ordered to appear

* A horse litter on wheels.

† Chronicle of London.

‡ "An English Chronicle." Camden Society, p. 53.

without arms. Gloucester exhibited articles of accusation against the bishop, the principal of which were, that he wanted to seize the young king's person, and that he sought to kill the protector and to excite a rebellion. A reconciliation was enforced by appointed arbitrators, who decided that Gloucester should be "good lord to the bishop, and have him in affection and love;" and that the bishop should bear to the protector "true and sad love and affection, and be ready to do him such service as pertaineth of honesty to my lord of Winchester, and to his estate, to do." The bishop was humiliated. He resigned the chancellorship, and went abroad. But the pope bestowed upon him the red hat; and Cardinal Beaufort henceforth figures in English history,—believed by some to have been a conscientious upholder of the Church, and an encourager of learning, and by others held as an unscrupulous and grasping politician, who "dies and makes no sign" of repentance for his avarice and cruelty.

In accordance with the will of his dying father, the boy Henry, when six years old, was placed under the tutelage of the earl of Warwick. This companion in arms of Henry V. was fitted to train his son in all knightly qualities, and thus to form a character the very opposite to that of Henry VI. Warwick had fought under Henry IV. at Shrewsbury. He had been on pilgrimage to the Holy Land. He had travelled in Prussia, Poland, and Russia. He had challenged any three knights of France to joust with him at Guisnes, and on three successive days he was the victor in each encounter.* His appointment as tutor to the king was made under the authority of the Council; and he was to instruct his pupil in all things worthy to be known, nurturing him in the love and fear of his Creator, and in hatred of all vice. Warwick held this office till the king was sixteen. The system of education pursued by this chivalrous warrior might not have been the best fitted for a sensitive boy; for the tutor applied to the Council for powers, which were granted, to hold the pupil under the strictest discipline, even after he had been crowned king in 1429. He was not to be spoken to, unless in the presence of Warwick and the four knights appointed to be about his person, "as the king, by the speech of others private, has been stirred by some from his learning, and spoken to of divers matters not behoveful." The Council promised that they would firmly assist the earl in chastising the king for his defaults; and, "that for awe thereof he forbear the more

* In the Cottonian Library there is a MS. written by Rous, a priest who lived a Guy's Cliff, being a life of this Earl of Warwick, illustrated with curious drawings.

to do amiss, and intend the more busily to virtue and to learning; they should come to the king and declare their assent to his chastisement. According to this curious entry in the Rolls of Parliament,* Warwick applied for these articles as his protection against the young Henry's displeasure and indignation, "as the king is grown in years, in stature of his person, and in conceit and knowledge of his high authority." Severe corporal punishment was the accustomed instrument of good education in the fifteenth century. The scourge was recommended even by gentle mothers to be administered to their sons. One writes to beg that her son's tutor may be implored "that he will truly belash him till he will amend;" adding, "I had rather he were fairly buried than lost for default."† No doubt it was in this spirit of love that Warwick chastised the young king. At this age Henry appears not to have wanted the just sense of his own position which failed him in after life. It is difficult now distinctly to understand what were the deficiencies of his intellect. He probably inherited some portion of the malady of his maternal grandfather; but infirmity of purpose and fear of responsibility seem to have marked his character rather than that unsoundness of mind which exhibits itself in habitual delusions and fitful aberrations. His life was one long state of pupilage. All the wonderful energy of his race appears in him to have been extinguished in a calm indifference to good or evil fortune, and in patient submission to stronger wills than his own—to his uncles, to his preceptor, to his wife, to his wife's favourites. How much of the fire of the Plantagenets might have been trodden out of Henry VI. by the severities of his early discipline cannot now be estimated. He was born to a most unhappy position; and it is satisfactory to believe that his hard lot was solaced by that religious trust which lightens the burthens of the wretched, whether on a throne or in a dungeon. The earl of Warwick, who, like many other leaders of chivalry, was an enthusiastic believer in the efficacy of vows and pilgrimages, may have inspired his pupil with that strong feeling of ceremonial devotion which caused him long to be regarded as a saint. To a right direction of that piety we owe the noble foundations of Eton and King's College, Cambridge—worthy monuments which still call upon us to respect the memory of the most meek and most unfortunate of kings.

* Quoted in Mr. Sharon Turner's "History of England during the Middle Ages," and edit. vol. ii. p. 492.

† "Paston Letters," letter cvii. Ramsay's edit.

CHAPTER III.

Defeat of the English before Montargis.—Position of Charles VII.—Commencement of the siege of Orleans.—Salisbury killed.—Battle of Herrings.—Despair of the besieged.—Proclamation.—The peasant girl of Domremy.—Joan of Arc travels to the court of Charles VII.—Receives authority to relieve Orleans.—Enters the besieged city.—English belief in witchcraft.—Terrors and defeats of the English.—The siege raised.—Defeats of Jargeau and Patay.—Charles crowned at Rheims.—Joan captured at Compiègne.—Tried as a sorceress and burnt at Rouen.—French war continued.—Henry VI. crowned in Paris.—The English disgraces and losses.—Henry married to Margaret of Anjou.—Affairs in England.—The duchess of Gloucester accused of witchcraft.—Arrest of the duke of Gloucester.—Deaths of Gloucester and Beaufort.

THE war in France had been conducted without any decided success on either side, after the victory at Verneuil in 1424, till 1427, when the forces of the duke of Bedford sustained a severe defeat, and were compelled to raise the siege of Montargis. But the cause of Charles VII. was little advanced by this partial good fortune. His adherents were quarrelling amongst themselves. Many of the nobles who had supported him now deserted a prince whose treasurer declared he had only four crowns in his coffer. Nearly all the fortresses on the right bank of the Loire had been surrendered without defence. The people were enduring famine and disease. Charles, whose character was a little improved by adversity, did not lose hope amidst the evils which surrounded him. He was of an easy nature, and in proportion as his great lords were faithless he addressed himself to the affection of the common people. Gradually a personal as well as a national feeling revived the patriotism which had been almost extinguished. Charles placed his chief reliance upon the possession of Orleans. If that city fell, the provinces beyond the Loire would be open to the English, and he would have to find a shelter in the mountains of Auvergne or the more remote Dauphiné. The English, it was known, were approaching to besiege Orleans. The inhabitants prepared for its defence with unwonted zeal. They received aids of money from other cities; and a tax was voted for the same aid by the three estates assembled at Chinon. The citizens adopted