

consul for the English merchants at Bruges. The sister of Edward IV. was married to the duke of Burgundy; and the merchant, who had a turn for letters, translated for her a French work in general esteem. Leaving his mercantile functions for a season, he was absent for two years in Germany. An invention, so simple that it appears wonderful that what affected mankind so nearly should have remained so long undiscovered—the art of printing from moveable types—was the wonder of Germany. Books were then to be produced at a tenth of the price of manuscripts. The English merchant saw the importance of the new art; he penetrated the mystery; and bestowed Printing upon England. William Caxton came, to render the ignorance of any large portion of society thenceforward impossible. He came, to be the forerunner of that great Reformation which was impracticable for Wycliffe, even with his Manuscript Bible in his hand. He came, to render Bibles and other books the common property of the great and the mean. He came, to make tyranny an impossible thing in England, when his art should have grown, like every other great institution which we have nourished, century after century, to be the chief safeguard against every form of oppression and corruption—the best upholder of just law and government. Slowly did the dissemination of knowledge by printed books change the condition of society; but henceforth we can never speak of that condition without regarding the influences of the printing press.

## CHAPTER VI.

Death-struggle of the feudal power.—The House of York.—Banishment and murder of Suffolk.—Insurrection of Cade.—He enters London.—His death.—Spirit of revolt in England.—York in arms against Somerset.—Incapacity of the king.—York Protector.—The king recovers.—York superseded.—First battle of St. Alban's.—Triumph of the Yorkists.—York's second protectorate ended.—Reconciliation of the two factions.—Commencement of the Civil War.—Battle of Blore Heath.—Parliament of Coventry.—Battle of Northampton.—The Duke of York claims the crown.—Battle of Wakefield.—Death of York.—His son, Edward, wins the battle of Mortimer's Cross.—Second battle of St. Alban's.—Edward proclaimed king.—Edward and Warwick march from London.—Battle of Towton.

"THE convulsive and bleeding agony of the feudal power" \* is the great story which we have to trace during the second half of the fifteenth century. We have seen the building up of the Constitution during seven centuries, when the men of England, from whatever stock derived, were working, like the builders of the second Temple, with their swords ever in their hands. We have seen the representative principle gradually asserting itself against despotic power, whether of the crown, the aristocracy, or the church, till it finally raised up the stronghold which assault or sap could never destroy. But "the troubled birth of constitutional monarchy," † succeeding to that feudal death-struggle, might have given us a dwarfed and puny Charter of Rights, but for the peculiarities of race and nurture of the great body of the people. We have seen this people, prepared by hundreds of years of discipline for the development of freedom under its changed aspects, when the reign of feudality was coming to its close. Whatever were the defects of the various states of society which we have endeavoured to exhibit, we have seen, in the aggregate national character, the elements of future greatness and prosperity. Whatever the disturbances of foreign or internal war, as we approach nearer the line which separates ancient and modern manners we have seen a people active, enterprising, trained to individual exertion, patriotic, class mingling with class, and no class ever losing sight of the grand national foundation of individual freedom.

\* Barante; article in "Revue Française," March, 1829. † *Ibid.*

We have seen a self-taxing people, always resisting every attempt of the monarch to make himself independent of their representatives, and whose nobles would, for the most part, rather pull down their castles than they "should be in the governance of any sovereign that would oppress the country."\* We have seen a people in their habits not servile; or, on the other hand, anarchical, though designated in other countries "the fiercest nation in Europe;" a people never wholly relying upon administrative direction, but long trained to independent exertion in small communities; adapting themselves to changing circumstances, but always cleaving to their great principle of continuity; incessantly repairing, never destroying and building up anew: a people holding a great place in the world's estimation, because essentially brave and persevering; proud, but not tyrannous or habitually cruel; full of self-love and obstinacy, but never pursuing the impracticable for any long period, and swayed more than any other nation by the power of collective opinion, when fairly educated and fearlessly expressed. The whole character of this people had a solid foundation in the family ties. In the Home was the nursing-place of Liberty. In the Home was fostered and strengthened, in companionship with a more equal freedom, a purer Religion than that of mere ceremonial observance—the religion of the Book of Life, opened at last to every man who would "read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest" the words of Truth.

Richard, duke of York, was the son of Richard, earl of Cambridge; and when his father was beheaded, in 1415, he was about five years old. Upon the death of Edmund Mortimer, in 1424, he was the representative of the posterity of two sons of Edward III.—of Lionel, the third son, and of Edmund, the fifth son. The revolution of 1399, which placed the issue of John of Gaunt, the fourth son, upon the throne, had remained undisturbed for half-a-century. † Richard had advanced no pretensions to a higher dignity than he obtained when, in 1425, he succeeded to the titles and possessions of his uncles, Edward, duke of York, and Edmund, earl of March, having been relieved from the corruption of blood consequent upon the alleged treason of his father. He was employed in high offices in France, until 1444, when he was recalled, and the peace was concluded which destroyed the power of the English.

\* The words of William Worcester, of his master, Sir John Fastolf.

† See vol. i. p. 588. In that place we called Lionel the *second* son, because William whose birth followed that of the Black Prince, died in childhood.

York became necessarily opposed to the government whose policy had been so disastrous and unpopular; and an opportunity was taken to remove him to a distant scene of action. He was sent, as lieutenant of Ireland, to quell a rebellion in 1449. His excellent qualities—his firmness, justice, and moderation—so assuaged the fury of the wild and savage people there, that he won such favour among them as could never be separated from him and his lineage.\* During his absence from England, in 1449, till the autumn of 1450, great events had occurred, which were the natural sequel of the intrigues which had destroyed Humphrey of Gloucester in 1447. The loss of France was a main cause of the distractions of England. Comines, with his wonted sagacity, has observed, that upon their return to their own country from the foreign land which had afforded them such means of enrichment, "not one of the English lords thought of lessening his state, or retrenching his expenses; and the whole revenue of the kingdom being insufficient to satisfy the insatiable ambition of them all, dissensions and wars immediately arose amongst them for command and authority." †

The duke of Suffolk, who had effected the marriage of Henry VI., with Margaret of Anjou, had become the real ruler of England as the head of the queen's party. He is described by contemporary historians as crafty, avaricious, and despotic; surrounding the king with his own creatures, and irritating the people by inordinate exactions. The duke, in a parliament held in January, 1450, proclaimed his own unpopularity, by requesting the Lords "to admit his supplication and desire that he might make his declaration of the great infamy and defamation which was said upon him, by many of the people of this land." Within a few days, the Commons requested his committal to the Tower, and subsequently exhibited a bill of impeachment against him. It was a time of serious alarm from the temper of the people. Moleyn, the bishop of Chichester, who had been associated in the government with Suffolk—and whom that minister had accused of advising the surrender of the French provinces—was murdered by some shipmen at Portsmouth at the beginning of this January. Insurrections at the same time took place in various parts of the country, of which the alleged object was the punishment of the obnoxious favourite of the queen. The Commons appear to have proceeded against this powerful minister in the same spirit of determined animosity

\* Stow.

† Book i. chap. vii.

They accused him of traitorous intercourse with France, through which Normandy had been lost; of making corrupt grants to enrich his own family; of misemploying subsidies for his private advantage; of appointing high officers for lucre. On the 17th of March he was brought before the king at Westminster, many lords being present; and there, denying the truth of the charges against him, he knelt down and submitted himself to the king's rule and governance, to do with him according to his pleasure. The result of this concerted scheme was the banishment of Suffolk for five years; in this way avoiding the impeachment of the Commons. The duke hastened from London; and thus escaped the popular fury in the capital. He remained in Suffolk till the end of April; and then sailed from Ipswich, with two ships, and "a little spinner" which he sent forward to Calais. On the 2nd of May, a large vessel, called Nicholas of the Tower, came in sight; and upon the summons of its commander the duke went on board her. We have a circumstantial relation of the fate of this unfortunate nobleman, in a letter written from London on the 5th of May.\* When he came on board the Nicholas, the master saluted him with "Welcome traitor." He was then "arraigned in the ship on their manner, upon the impeachments, and found guilty. And in the sight of all his men he was drawn out of the great ship into the boat, and there was an axe and a stock, and one of the lewdest (meanest) of the ship bade him lay down his head, and he should be fairly ferd (dealt) with, and die on a sword; and took a rusty sword and smote off his head within half-a-dozen strokes, and took away his gown of russet, and his doublet of velvet mailed, and laid his body on the sands of Dover; and some say his head was set on a pole by it. There is a letter from the duke of Suffolk to his son, dated April 1450, "the day of my departing from this land,"—which exhibits him in the character of a wise, pious, and affectionate father. One sentence, coming from a man whose alleged crimes were the promptings of pride, avarice, and craftiness, is very curious:—"Furthermore, as far as father may and can, I charge you in any wise to flee the company and counsel of proud men, of covetous men, and of flattering men, the more especially and mightily to withstand them, and not to draw nor to meddle with them, with all your might and power; and to draw to you and to your company good and virtuous men, and such as be of good conversation, and of truth, and by them shall ye never be deceived nor repent you

\* Paston Letters, letter xxvii.

of."\* The temper in which the news of the fall and death of Suffolk was popularly received is curiously exhibited in a song composed within a few weeks of the date of this tragedy. The duke is "Jack Napes" with his "clog and his chain" (the badge of his house), who is going over the sea "to seek more treasure;" and portions of the church-service for the dead are here put into the mouths of ecclesiastics and others who were most obnoxious, to sing "*Placebo and Dirige*" for "Jack Napes' soul" and to pray "let never such another come after this." This bitter song of triumph furnishes a curious piece of evidence that there was some powerful organisation of the discontented people in the spring and summer of 1450. One of the verses of this ballad says,

"Rise up Say: read *Parce mihi, Domine,*  
Nihil enim sunt dies mei, thou shalt sing."

Say, who was thus to sing, "Spare me, O Lord, for my days are as nothing," was murdered in Cade's insurrection on the subsequent 4th of July. "As these verses appear to have been written before his death, they are singularly prophetic of his fate."† The prophecy was no doubt delivered by those who were resolved upon instigating its fulfilment.

In the holiday week of Whitsuntide, 1450, there was a more serious game played on Blackheath than the accustomed morris-dances and bear-baitings. There was an encampment there of many thousand Kentish men, who had gathered together to demand redress of grievances. Their leader is officially described as "the false traitor John Cade, naming himself John Mortimer, late called captain of Kent."‡ He is also chronicled as "an Irishman, called John Cade, the which at beginning took on him the name of a gentleman, and called himself Mortimer, for to have the more favour of the people; and he called himself also John Amend-all."§ Upon Blackheath this assemblage kept the field for several weeks; and the city of London, at that time, was friendly towards them. Cade declared to the messengers who came from the king, that they were assembled to redress and reform the wrongs that were in the realm, and the defaults of those that were the king's chief counsellors.|| These preten-

\* Paston Letters, letter xxvi.

† Sir F. Madden, in "*Archæologia*," vol. xxix. p. 318, where this poem, and others of the reigns of Henry VI. and Edward IV., are correctly printed, and ably illustrated.

‡ Stat. 29 Henry VI. cap. i.

§ English Chronicle, published by the Camden Society, p. 64.

|| English Chronicle, p. 65.

sions were set forth in fifteen articles, addressed to the king and parliament. A considerable force was raised to disperse the insurgents, but they retreated to Sevenoaks; and there, on the 27th June, defeated a detachment that had been sent against them, killing the commander, Sir Humphrey Stafford. Their success appears to have alarmed the king's council; and Lord Say, the most obnoxious of the ministers, was sent to the Tower. Henry himself removed to Kenilworth. Two days after, Cade resumed his camp at Blackheath, the king's forces having dispersed. One chronicle says that the men of certain lords "would not fight against them that laboured for to amend and reform the common profit."\* On the 1st of July the insurgents entered Southwark, and on the 2nd the gates of the city were opened to them. A statute of the 31st of Henry VI. describes "the most abominable tyrant, horrible, odious, and errant false traitor John Cade," as "taking upon him royal power." The contemporary English Chronicle says, "The said captain rode about the city bearing a naked sword in his hand, armed in a pair of brigandines, † wearing a pair of gilt spurs, and a gilt sallet, ‡ and a gown of blue velvet, as he had been a lord or a knight—and yet was he but a knave—and had his sword borne before him." Fabyan, then a resident in London, says, "He rode through divers streets of the city, and as he came to London-stone, he struck it with his sword, and said, 'Now is Mortimer lord of this city.'" On the 3rd, he again entered the city from Southwark. The mayor and justices were sitting at the Guildhall. Cade commanded that lord Say should be brought from the Tower, and arraigned before this court; but the nobleman demanded to be judged by his peers. Then the insurgents took the readier way to vengeance, by seizing lord Say, and at the Standard, in Cheap, striking off his head. This, and other horrible deeds, as well as the plunder of some houses, disabused the citizens of their belief that grievances were to be redressed by lawless tumults. Cade was in his old quarters at Southwark, when it was resolved to defend London-bridge against his further entrance into the city. During the whole night of Sunday, the 5th of July, the citizens, assisted by soldiers from the Tower, fought against the insurgents upon the bridge. A truce was at last agreed upon; and the men of Kent and their captain withdrew, upon a promise from the archbishop of Canterbury of a general pardon. A procla-

\* English Chronicle, p. 65.

† A species of armour worn by foot-soldiers.

‡ Helmet.

mation was, however, issued, offering the reward of a thousand marks for the apprehension of Cade, alive or dead; and "anon he fled into the wood country beside Lewes; and the sheriff of Kent him pursued; and there he was wounded unto the death, and taken and carried in a cart toward London, and by the way he died."\* There is a petition of the sheriffs of London to the king, praying remuneration of their expenses in drawing "the body of a great traitor, naming himself Mortimer, upon an hurdle by the streets of your city of London, and his head to be set upon London-bridge." Also for delivering, under the king's writ, the one quarter of the said traitor to the constables of the hundred of Blackheath; another quarter to the mayor of Norwich; another to the mayor of Salisbury; and another to the bailiffs of Gloucester. The sheriffs allege that their expenses were very great, especially by their carriages of the quarters aforesaid, with the head of one Thomas Cheyney, "for and by cause that unneth (scarcely) any persons durst nor would take upon them the carriage of the said head and quarters for doubt of their lives." † Thomas Cheyney, called Bluebeard, had headed an insurrection near Canterbury in the preceding February.

The spirit of revolt was widely spread in England in this year, when the weakness and corruption of the government had roused the indignation of a people who were rarely incited to any acts of rebellion. The insurrections extended to Essex, Sussex, and Wiltshire, as well as Kent. Whatever grievances the commons had to complain of at home, the disasters of the English in France appear to have caused much of their hatred of the party in power. A servant of Sir John Fastolf fell into the hands of the insurgents at Blackheath; and when it was known to whom he belonged, as the servant records, "the captain let cry Treason upon me throughout all the field;" causing a herald to proclaim, "that I was sent thither to espy their puissance and their habiliments of war, from the greatest traitor that was in England or in France," from one sir John Fastolf, knight, who had diminished all the garrisons, "which was the cause of the losing of all the king's title and right of an heritage that he had beyond sea." ‡ As the nobles felt their means of enrichment diminished by the loss of the French provinces, so needy adventurers, who had gone to France for pay

\* English Chronicle, p. 68.

† Ellis; "Original Letters," 2nd Series, vol. i. p. 112.

‡ Paston Letters, letter xxx.

and plunder, were now thrown upon their own country, and contributed to the discontents of the kingdom. All these circumstances enhanced the popularity of the duke of York, with whose house the rebels associated the name of their leader, Mortimer. Whether these revolts were prompted by the Nevilles and others who were hostile to the government, and seriously looked to a change of dynasty as the remedy for public evils, is a matter only of conjecture. The governor of Normandy, the duke of Somerset, to whom the more recent losses in France were attributed, now arrived in England, and took the management of affairs. For four years there was a contest for life and death between two great parties in the State,—a contest characterised by that bitter hostility which was the natural prelude to civil war. Upon the return of Somerset the Commons petitioned the king to send him to the Tower; but he was soon released. There has been preserved a speech in the House of Lords of the duke of Norfolk against this powerful nobleman, in which he accuses Somerset as one of those who have been guilty of bringing about “the over great dishonours and losses that be come to this full noble realm of England.” But Somerset, nearly connected in blood with the house of Lancaster, and supported by the queen, defied his assailants; and in February, 1452, the duke of York took up arms, declaring in a proclamation to the citizens of Shrewsbury, that the duke of Somerset having laboured his destruction by envy, malice, and untruth, “I, Richard of York, seeing that the said duke ever prevaieth and ruleth about the king’s person, that by this means the land is likely to be destroyed, am fully concluded to proceed in all haste against him, with the help of my kinsmen and friends, in such wise that it shall prove to promote ease, peace, tranquillity, and safeguard of all this land.”\* The “all haste” with which York proceeded was not successful. He professed, in his attempt to overthrow Somerset, to keep within the bounds of his liegance, and with no intent to displease his sovereign lord. But he advanced towards London with his forces; and, after much negotiation, Somerset was ordered into custody. York then disbanded his army, and went to Henry’s tent unarmed. As he left the king he was arrested; and would probably have been executed had the wishes of Somerset and the queen wholly prevailed. York finally swore fealty to the reigning sovereign, and retired to Wigmore, one of his castles.

In October, 1453, king Henry became totally incapacitated for

\* Ellis; “Original Letters,” 1st Series, vol. i. p. 12.

taking any share in that government of which he had long been only the nominal head. In the same month, his only son was born at Westminster, “whose noble mother sustained not a little slander and obloquy of the common people saying that he was not the natural son of king Henry, but changed in the cradle.”\* The unhappy king remained at Windsor for many months, in a condition of total unconsciousness. In a most interesting letter of the 19th January, 1454, written to John Mowbray, duke of Norfolk, by some persons of his household, we have the following passage: “As touching tidings, please it you to wit, that at the prince’s coming to Windsor, the duke of Buckingham took him in his arms, and presented him to the king in goodly wise, beseeching the king to bless him; and the king gave no manner answer. Nathless the duke abode still with the prince by the king; and when he could no manner answer have, the queen came in, and took the prince in her arms, and presented him in like form as the duke had done, desiring that he should bless it; but all their labour was in vain, for they departed thence without any answer or countenance, saving only that once he looked on the prince, and cast down his eyes again, without any more.” †

In the letter from which this touching account of the helpless state of king Henry is quoted, we have a vivid picture of the disquiet, suspicion, and preparation for warfare which marked this crisis, when the government of the kingdom was to be contended for by two ambitious factions. The duke of Somerset was under arrest; but his influence was still powerful, and the efforts of his party unremitting. The writers of the “tidings” say that he hath spies in every lord’s house of this land,—some as friars, some as shipmen taken on the sea. They are of opinion that he is making himself ready to be as strong as he can make him; and therefore it is necessary that the duke of Norfolk should look well to himself, “lest bushments should be laid for him.” The cardinal, Kempe, chancellor and archbishop of Canterbury, the great supporter with Somerset of the queen’s party, hath armed all his servants with bow and arrows, sword and buckler. The duke of Exeter and the earl of Egremont have been in the north country, confederating with other Lancastrian lords, to make all the puissance they can, to come to London. The duke of Buckingham,

\* Fabyan, p. 628, ed. 1811.

† “Archæologia,” vol. xxix. p. 305: “Letter of Intelligence, January, 1454:” from the Egerton MSS. in the British Museum.

Humphrey Stafford,—whose rent-roll amounted to six thousand three hundred pounds, derived from estates in twenty-seven counties,\*—is at this period waiting upon events to decide his course; but he has ordered two thousand scarfs with the Stafford knot as badges for his retainers. According to this letter the queen had made a bill of articles, desiring to have the whole rule of the land; to appoint all the officers of the government; and fill up all the benefices of the church. It was a contest for power between Margaret of Anjou and Richard of York. How York and his partisans were preparing for the struggle is indicated in this remarkable letter. The duke, and the earl of March, are coming to London with a fellowship of good men, and their helmets and other harness are coming in carts. Salisbury, Warwick, Richmond, and Pembroke are coming with the duke of York, each of them with a goodly fellowship. The earl of Warwick will have a thousand men awaiting on him. The duke of Norfolk is advised, therefore, to come with such a fellowship as he ought to have about him; and to summon his tenants and servants to meet him in London. It is in such indirect revelations as these that we learn how earnest was the struggle for supremacy between these feudal lords; and upon what slippery ground those stood who held the reins of government. Death in the battle-field, and “the axe upon the block, very ready,” were the natural results of such note of preparation.

In the parliament which met on the 14th of February, to which the great nobles had come with such overwhelming array, the proceedings were conducted in a peaceful and constitutional spirit. A deputation of peers was appointed to wait upon the king at Windsor, and inform him of the death of Cardinal Kempe, his chancellor, and of other important matters. They reported that they “could get no answer or sign” in reply to their prayer, at three several interviews. The peers, being thus satisfied of the king’s incapacity, elected the duke of York to be “protector and defender of the realm of England during the king’s pleasure.” The duke held this office till the beginning of 1455, during which period Somerset remained in confinement. But in February of that year it was announced that the king was recovered. The only circumstances we learn of the character of his recovery are detailed in a private letter from an officer of the court, dated the 10th of January. He began to amend on the Christmas-day; and the queen took the infant prince to him, and he asked what his name

\* See “Archæological Journal,” No. 31.

was, and the queen told him Edward; and then he held up his hands and thanked God thereof. Further he said he never knew him till that time, nor wist what was said to him, nor where he had been whilst he was sick. “And he saith he is in charity with all the world, and so he would all the lords were.”\*

Very few of the lords, if we may judge by their actions, were like poor king Henry, at charity with all the world. They were all thinking of themselves; all hating and fearing rivals; all coveting some place of profit and honour; all looking to the supremacy of their own faction for the gratification of their personal avarice or ambition. This is a hard thing to say of the great ones of a great nation; but in the private and public records of these evil times we can discover only a very feeble regard for the public good, with a very passionate striving after private advantage. It is in the intensity of the selfishness, and the wilfulness of the pride of these lords—who brought the hundreds and thousands of their retainers into the field to destroy their fellow-men for a cause in which the principles at issue were to them of far less importance than the heraldic badges of the two houses—that we must look for an explanation of the alternations of timidity and rashness, of faith and treachery, of lenity and cruelty, with which this contest was carried on at intervals for so many years; whilst those who were children in its beginning grew up into violent and cruel men, amidst the corrupting influences of family feuds, through which the second generation seemed only born to carry forward the evil deeds of the first.

The recovery, as it was called, of king Henry produced another signal change in affairs. Somerset was released. The protectorate of York was necessarily superseded; and he was also removed from his important office of captain of Calais. The hostility between the two great dukes was attempted to be compromised by arbitration; but their animosities were too deadly to be settled by the formal award of bishops and earls. York had retired to his estates in the north; but in the spring he marched towards London. The king was now again capable of taking an ostensible direction in the conduct of the government; and he left Westminster, on the 20th of May, with Somerset and other nobles, to meet York in arms before he reached the capital. The professions of loyalty to the king which York had always employed were still observed. In letters which he was subsequently stated to have written from Royston to

\* Paston Letters, letter lxxij.

the chancellor, and from Ware to Henry, he protested that he marched in military array only to defend himself from the violence of his enemies. These letters were concealed from the king; who had reached St. Alban's, with a force of about two thousand men, on the 22nd of May. On the same day York encamped in the fields near the town, with three thousand men. The Yorkists sent to demand that Edmund, duke of Somerset, "enemy to all the realm," should be given up to them. The king replied that by advice of his council he would not deliver him. The king's forces were within the town, which was defended by strong barriers. The defences were again and again assaulted by the Yorkists; but they were driven back. At length Warwick brought up a strong force on the east side; and broke down the barriers and the slight houses, and entered St. Peter's Street. The royal banner was erected in that street, and there stood the passive king, whilst the deadly fight was raging in the narrow ways, and his counsellors and friends were fighting around him hand-to-hand with their rivals. The Lancastrian leaders, Somerset, Northumberland, and Clifford, at length were slain. Henry, as he stood beside his banner, was wounded in the neck with an arrow. Buckingham and Sudeley were also wounded by the shafts of the archers of the north. Sir Philip Wentworth cast down the royal standard, and sought safety in flight; for which unchivalrous deed, Norfolk, who was of the opposite party, threatened that he should be hanged. All those who fell were buried beneath the roof of the noble abbey, which was in a few years more to be again associated with the memory of this fatal time. Whethamstede, the abbot of St. Alban's, describes the fury of the street battle of the 22nd of May. He heard sword clashing with sword, and shield striking shield. He saw the wounded with the arrows in their throats, and the dead with their cloven skulls. But the number slain was very small. A letter within three days afterwards says, "As for any great multitude of people that there was, as far as we can tell, there was at most slain six score."\* Hall exaggerates the number killed, of the king's party alone, to eight thousand. This affair of St. Alban's was, however, important in the quality of the leaders who fell on the side of the Lancastrians. The king sought shelter in the house of a tanner; and there York waited upon him, exhibiting profound respect, and conducted him next day to London, with the same outward marks of reverence. The fall of Somerset did not, however

\* Paston Letters, letter lxxxii.

restore confidence. The parliament met in July; and a general pardon was declared by statute for all those who had taken arms, and all the blame of the "journey" of St. Alban's was thrown upon Somerset and his adherents. But, as we learn from that invaluable correspondence which Mr. Hallam calls "my faithful guide," in that middle of July, 1455, "all my lord of Warwick's men, my lord of York's men, and also my lord of Salisbury's men, go with harness and in harness, with strange weapons; and have stuffed their lords' barges full of weapons daily unto Westminster."\* In the summons to this parliament there was no attempt on the part of the Yorkists to exclude their rival peers. None were omitted, of either party. There were the same names as in the previous parliament, with the exception of those who had fallen on the 22nd of May. The composition of the House of Commons appears, however, to have been a matter of anxiety to the great nobles. The duchess of Norfolk writes to John Paston, to exert his influence in procuring the return of two of their household to be knights of the shire; "forasmuch as it is thought right necessary for divers causes that my lord have at this time in the parliament such persons as belong to him, and be of his menial servants."† The influence of the Yorkist Peers, of whom Norfolk was one, was probably the moving cause of that determined action of the Commons at this time, which is a remarkable circumstance in our constitutional history. The duke of York had been appointed the king's commissioner to proceed in the parliament; but after a prorogation to November, the Commons proposed that "if the king hereafter could not attend to the protection of the country, an able person should be appointed protector, to whom they might have recourse for redress of injuries."‡ They urged this upon the Peers a second and a third time; and then "the king, our said sovereign lord, by the advice and assent of his lords spiritual and temporal being in this present parliament, had named and desired the duke of York to be protector and defender of this land."§ Mr. Hallam has pointed out, "that whatever passed as to this second protectorate of the duke of York was altogether of a revolutionary complexion."¶ The majority of the Lords were Lancastrian. The house of York had its chief supporters amongst the Commons; who may be held to have represented the popular feeling. If we may form a judgment of the opinions of the people as derived from very slight indications,

\* Paston Letters, letter lxxxiv.

† *Ibid.*, letter lxxxix.

‡ "Middle Ages," chap. viii. p. 111.

we should say that they were not anxious for a revolutionary crisis in the government out of any affection for the superior pretensions to legitimacy of the house of York. There had been sixty years of possession by the reigning family. Henry IV. had taken the crown after a solemn deposition of an unwise ruler, and by that ancient form of national consent which had so often disregarded the direct claims to succession. The "mere defect in their genealogy" \* of the house of Lancaster would not have led to their overthrow, had not the prudence of Henry IV., and the glory of Henry V., been succeeded by the distractions of the long minority of Henry VI., and by the inevitable misgovernment which ensued from his imbecility, when he became a puppet in the hands of the grasping favourites of an unscrupulous queen. The people complained that the possessions of the crown were squandered upon the queen's creatures, "who ruled the realm as they liked, gathering riches innumerable,"—that they were grievously taxed, but that all that came from them was spent in vain, for the king "held no household and maintained no wars." † There is a striking illustration of the mischief of injudicious commercial taxation, in a statute of 1453, which remits a part of "a subsidy called poundage" upon exports and imports, because such poundage shall be to the merchants denizens "a very great importable (unbearable) charge, and impoverishment of a great part of the poor people of this realm." The burgesses of towns, who were thus taxed with little discretion, would naturally look with hope upon a possible change of rulers. By such considerations was the realm moved, rather than by an abstract estimate of the value of hereditary right as opposed to undisturbed possession. It was long after the beginning of these contentions that the people became familiar with the notion that the actual occupancy of the throne was to be disturbed by the claims of the house of York. When Richard was appointed vicegerent of the kingdom, in 1455, the rights of the son of Henry were especially protected. Richard was probably driven eventually to demand the throne by the violence of those to whose misgovernment he had been so long opposed. His second protectorate was very short. There was a partial recovery of the king's health at the beginning of 1456; and on the 25th of February the duke's commission was superseded, and he retired with his adherents to the privacy of his own estates. During two years the great quarrel was suspended. The intrigues of each faction were, no doubt,

\* "Middle Ages," chap. viii. p. 111. † English Chronicle, p. 79.

pursued with slight regard to the tranquillity of the country. The queen was charged with a conspiracy to destroy York and Warwick; and these nobles absented themselves from the king's councils, and maintained an armed neutrality. At this period the defence of the kingdom appears to have been utterly neglected. The coasts of the Channel were ravaged by French and Breton cruisers in 1457; and the eastern coast was equally insecure.\*

In 1458 king Henry summoned the great nobles to a meeting in London. Fabyan, the alderman, has given a minute account of this assembly, which was "called to appease the rancour and malice between the queen and the lords." Thither came the duke of York, and was lodged in his own fortified mansion of Baynard's Castle, on the bank of the Thames, below St. Paul's. Warwick came from Calais, "with a great band of men, all arrayed in red jackets with white ragged staves upon them, and was lodged at the Grey Friars." The king and queen, with a numerous retinue, were lodged in the bishop of London's palace. Many of the nobles were quartered within Temple Bar, and many without, with formidable bands of followers, each having several hundreds in his train. The mayor of London "had daily in harness five thousand citizens, and rode daily about the city and suburbs of the same, to see that the king's peace were kept. And nightly he provided for three thousand men in harness, to give attendance upon three aldermen, and they to keep the watch till seven of the clock upon the morrow, till the day watch were assembled." † The London of this period was rich and populous, full of splendid ecclesiastical buildings, and of stately mansions. From the Tower to the Palace of Westminster the Thames formed the great "silent highway." A little before this time, "upon the accustomed day when the new mayor used yearly to ride with great pomp unto Westminster to take his charge," John Norman deviated from the ancient custom, and was "rowed thither by water, for the which the watermen made of him a roundel or song to his great praise." ‡ In this feudal gathering of 1458 there must have been incessant communication between Westminster and London; and the ancient thoroughfare from Charing would have presented some of the most picturesque aspects of a city eminently beautiful from its position on the noblest of rivers—the cathedral of St. Paul's, with its lofty spire, towering up as impressively as the dome which took its place after two centuries. What the city chronicler calls "a dissimuled unity and

\* See p. 73.

† Fabyan, p. 632, ed. 1811.

‡ Fabyan, anno 1454.