

concord," was accomplished in 1458. The king, and the rival nobles walking before him, hand-in-hand—the queen, led by the duke of York—went in procession to St. Paul's. And yet, in the following November, "fell a great debate between Richard, earl of Warwick, and them of the king's house, insomuch that they would have slain the earl."* He escaped to his barge, and departed for Calais. His appointment as captain of Calais was superseded by a writ of privy seal, in favour of "the young duke of Somerset." Warwick refused to resign, saying that he was appointed by authority of parliament.† The false unity and concord had come to an end. All Henry's efforts to preserve peace by acting as umpire between those who sought for revenge for the day of St. Alban's, and those who had compelled the royal pardon for the events of that day, were neutralised by the passions of those around him.

The affair of St. Alban's must be regarded rather as a contest between two ambitious factions for supremacy under the established dynasty, than as an overt act of rebellion against the crown. In 1459 the Civil War may be held to have commenced; and it assumed a character which left no doubt that the great issue to be tried was whether Henry or Richard should be king of England. The Yorkist forces were now marshalled against the royal forces. The battle of Blore Heath, in Staffordshire, in which the earl of Salisbury, the father of Warwick, defeated lord Audley, was fought on the 23rd of September. Salisbury was on his march to join the duke of York, which junction after this victory he effected near Ludlow. There Warwick also joined them; and they issued a proclamation, in which they still maintained that they were in arms to reform the government, but not to overthrow it. The king's army advanced by rapid marches; and on the 13th of October met the Yorkists, with a greatly superior force. Sir Andrew Trollope, upon the king's proclamation offering pardon, carried a large body of the Calais soldiers, whom he commanded, over to the Lancastrian camp. The army of the Yorkists immediately disbanded; and York fled to Ireland, where he received a welcome from those towards whom he had been a just governor. At a parliament held at Coventry on the 20th of November, the Yorkist lords who had not surrendered were declared traitors, and their possessions were confiscated. Salisbury and the young Edward escaped with Warwick to his stronghold of Calais, which he kept against all attacks

* English Chronicle, p. 78.

† *Ibid.*

during the spring of 1460. The proceedings of the Coventry parliament stripped off all the thin coverings of the ambition of the house of York. For Richard there was no choice between remaining an attainted outcast, or venturing for a crown. At Midsummer a large force under Warwick passed over from Calais, and landed in Kent. As this army advanced towards London its numbers were so largely increased, that Warwick entered the capital with forty thousand men. "The king's true liegemen of Kent," as they called themselves, who thus joined the banner of the White Rose, still demanded only redress of grievances, and the removal of those who told the king "that good is evil and evil is good." With these partisans, who appear thoroughly to have identified themselves with the quarrel of the great nobles, Warwick marched into the midland counties. On the 10th of July the two armies met near Northampton. The royal forces occupied an entrenched position; but the Yorkists under Warwick, Faulconbridge, and Edward, earl of March, broke into the Lancastrian camp, and the king's army was utterly routed. Alone in his tent sat the unhappy Henry, while his queen and his son had fled, and the most strenuous of his adherents, Buckingham, Egremont, Beaumont, had perished. Warwick and Edward bowed before him, and professed to hold him in all reverence. The victorious Yorkists marched to London; when the Tower was surrendered to them, and its governor lord Scales, was inhumanly slaughtered in his escape. There was a change of ministry; and the duke of York was sent for from Ireland. At this crisis, before the triumph of her husband's party was assured, we find the duchess of York taking refuge in the lodgings of a friend of her family, John Paston. A servant of the Pastons writes, on the 12th of October, to his master at Norwich, informing him that on the Monday after the nativity of the Virgin (15th of September), "there come hither to my master's place my Master Bowser, Sir Harry Ratford, John Clay, and the harbinger of my lord of March, desiring that my lady of York might be here until the coming of my lord of York, and her two sons, my lord George and my lord Richard, and my lady Margaret, her daughter, which I granted them, in your name, to lie here till Michaelmas. And she had not lain here two nights, but she had tidings of the landing of my lord at Chester. The Tuesday after my lord sent for her, that she should come to him to Hereford; and thither she is gone, and she hath left here both the sons and the daughter, and the lord of March cometh every day to

see them." Here, in these humble chambers of the Temple, we may look upon this family, whose fate is still in suspense, while their head is an attainted fugitive. The lady Cecily, duchess of York, the daughter of Ralph Neville, earl of Westmoreland, has been despoiled of her possessions in the attainder of her husband. Her second son, Edmund earl of Rutland, now seventeen years of age, has fled with his father to Ireland, having been included in the attainder of Coventry. The duchess remains in this bereaved and uncertain condition till she is sent for to join her lord at Hereford. Her two younger boys, and her daughter Margaret, are left alone in those Temple chambers. The boys will fill a large space in the annals of England; but now they are helpless children, who have been nurtured amidst the bitterness of their faction, with a precocious sense of hatreds and revenges. George, who in a short time will be duke of Clarence, is now scarcely eleven years of age; Richard, who will be duke of Gloucester, has just completed his eighth year. Margaret is the elder, being fifteen; and she, as duchess of Burgundy, will not be without her influence in her nation's fortunes. Edward, "the lord of March," who "cometh every day to see them," has not yet reached his twentieth year. With the precocity of the Plantagenets he is already a warrior, and is called, in one of the popular songs, "Thou virgin knight."* It is necessary to bear in mind the ages of this family to form a just comprehension of some of the circumstances of their eventful history.

The parliament assembled on the 7th of October. On the 9th the duke of York was in London. On the 16th he entered Westminster in royal array. Hall says, "The duke of York with a bold countenance entered into the Chamber of Peers, and sat down in the throne royal, under the cloth of estate, which is the king's peculiar seat." † Other relations state that he stood for a while with his hand on the throne. There can be no doubt, from the Rolls of Parliament, that he made a solemn claim to be king. There was a deliberate investigation of his genealogical title, which, upon the principle of direct succession, could not be disputed. But the Lords, with whom the decision appears to have rested, could not conceal from themselves that the claimant of the throne had again and again sworn fealty to the reigning sovereign, and that the violent disturbance of a dynasty which had endured for sixty years was a perilous expedient for the restoration of peace. They

* "Archæologia," vol. xxix. p. 130. † Chronicle, XXX. year of Henry VI.

resolved upon a compromise—that Henry should retain the crown for his life, and that the duke of York and his heirs should succeed to it after Henry's death. The queen was in the north, surrounded by some of the most powerful of the lords who were devoted to the interests of the Lancastrian branch. It was not likely that she would readily submit to an arrangement which set aside the claims of her son. Her proud spirit would yield to no compromise. In the confidence of success York left London; and spent his Christmas in his castle of Sandal, in Yorkshire. He had a small army in the neighbourhood, when Somerset advanced with eighteen thousand men to invest the castle. Edward was at Shrewsbury. Had York waited the arrival of succours he might have been secure. But in the spirit of chivalry he resolved to go forth from his castle to oppose a force treble the amount of his own. A solemn day of combat had been appointed by both parties. But the feudal honour was fast passing away, leaving only the feudal ferocity. York was suddenly attacked and totally defeated. The romantic circumstances of the duke being placed upon an ant-hill, while a paper crown was put upon his head, and the mocking warriors cried, "Hail, king without a kingdom," are probably the inventions of the later chroniclers. The same spirit of exaggeration may have represented Rutland as basely murdered, when found with his tutor away from the scene of conflict. Instead of being a boy of twelve, as grave historians have accepted the statement, he was born in 1443, and was seventeen years and a half old at this battle of Wakefield. The father and the son both fell on the 31st of December, 1460. Whether they were butchered in cold blood, or died on the battle-field, is of little historical import. The victory of Wakefield was followed up by the successful party with merciless executions. Salisbury and other Yorkists were beheaded at Pomfret on the first day of 1461. In another month the tide of success was turned; and Edward, now duke of York, defeated the earl of Pembroke at Mortimer's Cross, and followed up his victory by the same course of executions as those of Wakefield. After that triumph, queen Margaret had advanced towards London from the north with a great and lawless force. The terror of their march had roused the spirit of the southern counties. The people were dragged more and more into this terrible conflict. A letter from London, dated the 23rd of January, says, "In this country every man is well willing to go with my lords here; and I hope God shall help them, for the people in the north rob and steal, and be appointed to pill (pillage)

all this country, and give away men's goods and livelihoods in all the south country.* The ravaging bands under Northumberland, Westmoreland, Exeter, Somerset, Devonshire, Clifford, Roos, Dacre,—were drawing nigher and nigher to the capital. On Shrove Tuesday, the 17th of February, they had reached the neighbourhood of St. Alban's. Out of the city Warwick had marched, carrying with him the poor king Henry, in whose name all the acts most inimical to his family were now done. At Barnard's Heath, near St. Alban's, the second battle bearing that name was fought, and Warwick was utterly routed. Henry was left on the field, and now fell into the hands of the queen. The town of St. Alban's was plundered, with the same fury that had marked all the course of the northern army. The great contest would probably have been now decided but for one of those impulses of boldness which so often change the fortunes of individuals and nations. Edward, duke of York, then not twenty years old, entered London, as if the battle of St. Alban's had been a victory for his party, instead of a signal defeat. The army of the north was more intent upon plundering the country than upon seizing upon the moment of success to complete their triumph. Edward's forces had formed a junction with those of Warwick; and on the 28th of February, they marched into London. "In field and town every one called Edward king of England and France," says a contemporary MS.† A more daring spirit than that of Richard of York now represented the White Rose. Edward went straightforward to the great object of his ambition; and in an assembly of the peers, prelates, and citizens, on the 3rd of March, he demanded the crown. It was resolved at this council, that Henry, by joining the forces of the queen, had set aside the award of the preceding October, and forfeited the throne of which he had been granted the life occupancy. The accession of Edward IV. to the crown of England dates from the 4th of March, on which day, say the Rolls of Parliament, "he took upon him to use his right and title to the realm of England and lordship; and entered into the exercise of the royal estate, dignity, pre-eminence, and power of the same crown, and to the reign and governance of the said realm of England and lordship; and the same fourth day of March amoved Henry, late called king Henry the sixth, son to Henry, late Earl of Derby, son to John of Gaunt, from the occupation, usurpation, intrusion, reign, and governance of the said realm." In every statute which had refer-

* Paston Letters, letter cl.

† "Archæologia," vol. xxx. p. 130.

ence to the laws of the three regal predecessors of Edward, the same principle of legitimacy was ostentatiously asserted; and Henry IV., Henry V., and Henry VI. were denominated "late kings of England successively, in deed and not of right."* Mr. Hallam has justly said, "With us, who are to weigh these ancient factions in the balance of wisdom and justice, there should be no hesitation in deciding that the house of Lancaster were lawful sovereigns of England." The wisest statesman of that age, in the same rational spirit, declared that in his judgment, and the judgment of the world, Henry VI. was the lawful king.†

A procession to St. Paul's, a speech from the throne, a solemn recognition before the great altar of the Abbey at Westminster, were the brief ceremonies with which Edward put on the crown. It was no time for feasting and rejoicing. Norfolk is gone to his country to raise his men. Warwick has marched out of London northward on the 6th of March. A great force of foot, of which the most part were Welshmen and Kentishmen, followed him on the 10th. On the 12th Edward himself issued out of the city in goodly order at Bishopsgate, following the same northward course.‡ On the 13th, Henry, the Lancastrian king, is despatching letters under his signet from York, in which he announces that "our great traitor, the late earl of March, hath made great assemblies of riotous and mischievously-disposed people, and to stir and provoke them to draw unto him, he hath cried in his proclamation havoc upon all our true liege people and subjects, their wives, children, and goods."§ The terrible havoc which the men of the north had inflicted upon the south was now to be retaliated. At Ferrybridge the advanced columns of the Yorkists were defeated in a skirmish. On the 29th of March the main bodies of the two armies are in view of each other, at Towton, about eight miles from York. Never before or since in England was such a mighty host of the children of the soil gathered together for mutual destruction. The army of the Lancastrians has been computed at sixty thousand. They were the hardy north-men, with borderers, half English, who had dispersed to their moors and mountains after ravaging the country, for thirty miles in breadth, from York to St. Alban's. Again they were gathered under the banner of the Red Rose. They were led by the earls of

* Stat. 1 Edward IV. cap. 1., and subsequent statutes.

† Comines' Memoirs, book vi. chap. 13.

‡ Fragment of a Chronicle published by Hearne.

§ "Plumpton Correspondence," p. 1.

Northumberland, Westmoreland, Devonshire, Wiltshire, the duke of Somerset, Sir Andrew Trollope, and others, who were ready to fight to the death. Of the composition of Edward's army of nearly fifty thousand, we have a remarkable description, in "Verses on the Battle of Towton,"* which, in relating how

"There was many a fair pennon waiting on the Rose,"

recites the badges and banners that fluttered in the Yorkist ranks on that terrible eve of Palm Sunday. The house of York was represented by its badges of the Falcon and Fetterlock, the Ostrich Feather, the Black Bull, and the Boar's-head. Warwick was there, with his dreaded banner of the Ragged-Staff; Norfolk came with the timely aid of his White Lion; Fauconberg fought under his Fish-hook; Scrope displayed his Cornish Chough, Grey of Ruthyn his Black ragged-staff, Bouchier his Bridled-horse, Stanley his Greyhound and Harts'-head. But the support of the people, under their own leaders, was manifest in the banners of the towns that had gathered round Edward in his march of sixteen days. He had led from London his Welshmen, with their banner of the Dolphin, and his Kentishmen, with the Harrow of Canterbury. But in the field of Towton were the White Ship of Bristow, and the proud Libert (Leopard) of Salisbury, whose men had marched to unite with the midland people. Coventry was there with its Black Ram; Worcester with its Wolf; Gloucester with its Dragon; Leicester with its Griffin; Nottingham with its George; Northampton with its Wild Rat. It was the eve of one of the most solemn festivals of the church, in which the entry of the Prince of Peace into Jerusalem was commemorated with the strewing of the first green branches and the earliest spring flowers, and solemn hymns were sung for the victory of good over evil. On the eve of Palm Sunday began the cruel battle of Towton at four o'clock, when the armies joined. Through all that night, amidst a fall of snow, these fierce men madly fought till the afternoon of the next day. Then, thirty-three thousand men lay dead on the field of battle.

"The snow shall be their winding-sheet."

The triumph of the Yorkists was complete; but it was not signalised by the greater triumph of mercy. It is affirmed that there was no quarter given in the battle; although Comines says,

King Edward told me, that in all the battles which he had gained, his way was, when the victory was on his side, to mount on horse-

* "Archæologia," vol. xxx. p. 433.

back, and cry out to save the common soldiers, and put the gentry to the sword, by which means none, or very few, of them escaped."* Those whom the sword spared too often fell beneath the axe. On the day after the battle of Towton, the earls of Devonshire and Wiltshire, with many others, were beheaded. The queen and the hunted king fled into Scotland.

* Memoirs, book iii. chap.