

## CHAPTER XIV.

Ravages in Scotland, and on the coasts of the Channel.—Peace with France and Scotland.—Francis I. and Charles of Spain.—Conquest of Milan.—Wolsey, cardinal and legate.—Position of the Church.—Affair of Richard Hunne.—Election for the Empire.—Proposed meeting between Henry and Francis.—Arrival of Charles at Dover.—The embarkation.—Characteristics of the two kings.—Field of the Cloth of Gold.—Meeting with Charles V.—Conviction and execution of the duke Buckingham.

THE intelligence of the slaughter of Flodden was received in England with the unmixed exultation that necessarily arose out of what was deemed a national triumph. The time was yet distant when Englishmen and Scots should regard each other as children of the same soil, having in a great degree the same origin, speaking the same language with slight variation, and having more natural sympathies than conventional antipathies. The amiable queen Catherine, who in August described herself as "horrible busy in making standards, banners, and badges" for this war,\* writes to the king, after the victory, "this battle hath been to your grace and all the realm the greatest honour that could be, and more than [if] ye should win all the crown of France."† When the king returned, Surrey was created duke of Norfolk, and his son Thomas the earl of Surrey. Honours were also bestowed upon other leaders. But the desolation of Scotland had not extinguished the high spirit of the country; and, after a short time, there were inroads made from the Scottish border, as well as from the English, of which the ferocity on either side was equally balanced. In 1514, lord Dacre, describing the "robbing, spoiling, and vengeance in Scotland," adds, "which I pray our Lord God to continue."‡ Thus men appealed to the Author of all good in support of their perpetration of all evil. It was long before war came to be regarded as a great calamity, and before it was held that its inevitable miseries should be inflicted as lightly as possible upon non-combatants. Such warfare as that of the forays of England and Scotland was only to be duly estimated when the military class ceased to be the preponderating power in either state.

\* Letter to Wolsey, Ellis, First Series, vol. i. p. 83. † *Ibid.*, p. 88.

England made great preparations for war against France in the beginning of 1514; but the actual hostilities were confined to ravages on the coast of the Channel. An attack of the French upon the Sussex shore presents a curious contrast to such a possible enterprise in our own day. "About this time [May] prior John, great captain of the French navy, with his galleys and foists,\* charged with great basilisks and other great artillery, came on the border of Sussex, and came a-land on the night at a poor village in Sussex called Brighthelmstone; and ere the watch could him descry he set fire on the town, and took such poor goods as he found. Then the watch fired the beacons, and people began to gather; which seeing, prior John sounded his trumpet to call his men aboard, and by that time it was day. Then six archers which kept the watch followed prior John to the sea, and shot so fast that they beat the galley-men from the shore, and prior John himself waded to the foist.† The bold prior was shot with an arrow in the face; and he offered an image of himself, with the identical arrow sticking in the waxen cheek, in gratitude to our Lady at Boulogne for saving his life by miracle. On the coast of Normandy an English commander burnt twenty-one villages and towns. But Louis of France was too wise to continue a contest in which his own safety was so imperilled. Henry of England had a sister, Mary, now in her seventeenth year. Charles Brandon, duke of Suffolk, had won her affections; but, in treating for peace, when the king of France asked her hand, she was consigned to age and decrepitude, instead of to the most gallant of English knights. Mary was crowned queen of France on the 5th of November, 1514. On the 1st of January, king Louis was dead. On the 9th of January, the widowed queen wrote to Wolsey, signing herself, "your loving friend," to declare, that "as it shall please the king my brother and his council, I will be ordered."‡ Charles Brandon was sent to bring the queen from France. She came to England as his wife. Henry was indignant, but his anger passed away; and "cloth of frize" was match'd with cloth of gold,§ without the

\* Foists are light and quick sailing boats.

† Hall, p. 568.

‡ Ellis, First Series, vol. i. p. 121.

§ There was a picture at Strawberry hill, of Brandon and Mary, with this inscription on a label affixed to Brandon's lance:—

"Cloth of gold do not despise,  
Though thou be match'd with cloth of frize;  
Cloth of frize, be not too bold,  
Though thou be match'd with cloth of gold."

risk that might have attended the "great and high displeasure" of the king at another period of his life. At the time of the treaty with France peace was also concluded with Scotland.

The political events of the first ten years of the reign of Henry VIII. appear but as the prologue to the great drama which is about to be enacted. Louis XII. of France, in January 1515, is succeeded by his son-in-law Francis I., then in his twenty-first year. In 1516 Ferdinand of Spain dies, and is succeeded by his grandson, Charles, the son of Juana, the imbecile daughter of Ferdinand. His father, the archduke Philip, died in 1506, so that the young prince had already inherited the Netherlands, when he came to the crowns of Aragon and Castile, of Naples and Sicily, the frontiers of France, on the side of Flanders and on the side of the Pyrenees, were thus in the hands of this monarch, a youth of sixteen. That war would be the result of this dangerous proximity would have been more than probable under the most moderate of princes. But Francis and Charles were each extravagantly ambitious, though essentially different in personal character. The first act of the enterprising king of France was to make good his claim to the duchy of Milan. The pope, Leo X., opposed this claim, in conjunction with Ferdinand of Spain, and with the Swiss. Francis rapidly passed the Alps; and having won the great victory of Marignano, entered Milan as conqueror in October, 1515. He had recovered that ascendancy in Italy which France had lost. England had therefore more reason to fear that the balance of power would be deranged, than when she went to war to resist the alleged ambition of Louis XII. But Francis, after some ineffectual attempts on the part of England's ally, Maximilian, adroitly propitiated the favour of Wolsey; and the possession of Tournay was relinquished by Henry upon a payment to him of six hundred thousand crowns. Wolsey had been declared a cardinal in 1516. He received the great seal as chancellor in the same year; and he was nominated papal legate in 1517, with the high powers that belonged to the office of *legatus à latere*. From 1515 to 1523 no parliament was summoned. Henry and his great minister governed the kingdom at their sole will. In 1519, the emperor Maximilian died; and from that time the political affairs of Europe received an expansion which indicated the influence of higher agencies than the mere passions and caprices of individual sovereigns.

To understand the relative positions of Henry, the king, and of

Wolsey, his chancellor, we must constantly bear in mind that the English minister was also the representative of the papal supremacy. The cardinal and legate wielded his great power and displayed his extraordinary magnificence, not in opposition to the prerogative of the king or in rivalry with his dignity, but in strict conformity with the desire of Henry to be the faithful son and devoted champion of the Roman Church. He had raised his almoner from comparative obscurity to be archbishop of York; and with that preferment Wolsey absorbed other ecclesiastical revenues which furnished him with almost unbounded wealth. The magnificence of the cardinal's household, the number of noblemen and gentlemen daily attending upon him—the sumptuousness of his menial servants, his master-cook even wearing satin and velvet—his processions, with his silver crosses and silver pillars, his cardinal's hat and his great seal—his banquets to the king, with masks and mummeries, dancings and triumphant devices—all these exhibitions would have been scarcely endured by the most jealous of monarchs had they merely emanated from the ostentation of the courtier and statesman. In the magnificence of the great churchman Henry might believe that his people would recognise and humbly bow before the paramount authority of the Church. The vast abilities and the lofty ambition of the king's powerful minister, might practically invest the temporal government with the real ecclesiastical supremacy. The great cardinal was pope in England; but he was also the devoted servant of the crown. The period in which Wolsey was in full possession of these extraordinary powers was one in which the European mind was strongly agitated by signs of approaching change. The wealth, luxury, and immunities of the Church were offensive to a large portion of the laity. The spirit of the Lollards was not wholly trodden out in England. In Germany a new antagonist to the corruptions of the papacy had arisen, whose voice filled a wider area than that of Wycliffe. The spirit with which Martin Luther first denounced the abomination of the sale of Indulgences might naturally suggest the fear that other iniquities would be laid bare. The time for effectually suppressing opinions was past; for the printing-press would do its work in spite of papal bulls and excommunications. Leo X., even without yielding to that foreign influence which is supposed to have given Wolsey the cardinal's hat, would naturally look to one so able of himself, and so favoured by circumstances, to keep England safe from the contaminating opinions of the

monk of Wittenberg. The appointment of Henry's great minister as the papal legate was concurrent with the time when Luther first challenged the power of the pope to absolve the sinner from the penalties of Divine justice. Leo affected to make light of the dispute between the professor of Wittenberg and the Dominican monk, who was selling his indulgences as openly as any other merchandise was sold. The danger might not appear to him imminent; but the pope was too acute a politician not to secure for himself the services of a man of such commanding influence as Wolsey. The choice was a wise one; for as long as Wolsey was in power, though he was a church-reformer in a limited degree, he maintained the papal supremacy inviolate in England. When his reign was over, the delegated authority of Rome was snatched for ever from the hands that had previously kept the world in awe. The political despotism of the king was the instrument, under God's providence, by which the inestimable blessing of freedom from the yoke of the Romish church was secured, without which all civil freedom would have quickly passed away. That Wolsey had a perfect understanding with his royal master as to the parts which each was to sustain in matters of ecclesiastical controversy, may be inferred from the position which each took in 1515. By an Act of Henry VII., the "benefit of clergy" was regulated, so as to inflict some penalty upon murderers and robbers. In the fourth year of Henry VIII., 1512, a Statute was passed, which recites, that "robberies, murders, and felonies daily increase more and more, and be committed and done in more heinous, open, and detestable wise, than hath been oft seen in times past, and the persons so offending little regard the punishment thereof by the course of the common law, nor by reason of any statute heretofore made, but bear them bold of their clergy." The Act then exempts from the benefit of clergy all murderers, highway-robbers, and burglars, "such as be within holy orders only except." The Act could not be passed through the House of Lords without granting the exception to "such as be within holy orders;" and a provision was added that it should only endure for a year. Reasonable and just as this Statute was, as far as it went, the ecclesiastical authorities regarded it as an encroachment upon the privileges of the Church, and they prevented its renewal on the expiration of the first year. Murderers and robbers might again "bear them bold of their clergy." A certain abbot of Winchelcomb, in 1515, denounced from the pulpit at

Paul's Cross all those who had assented to the Act of 1512. The temporal lords then addressed the king, beseeching him to repress the increasing extravagance of the pretensions of the churchmen; and after a long debate before Henry in council, the bishops were moved to order the zealous abbot to recant his opinions. This they refused to do, justifying all his proceedings. A violent controversy now sprung up between the parliament and the convocation, which became more serious from a remarkable incident of the same period, which agitated the people of London far more than the dispute about the franchises of the church. There was a paltry quarrel between the incumbent of a parish in Middlesex and Richard Hunne, a merchant tailor of London, about the right of the clergyman to a piece of linen, which he claimed as what was called "a mortuary." The tailor was sued in the spiritual court, then sitting under the authority of the pope's legate; and he, by the advice of his counsel, took out a writ against his pursuer. The bold citizen held that the clerk of Middlesex was guilty of a præmunire, or offence against the king's majesty, in bringing his subjects under a foreign jurisdiction. A counter-charge of heresy was got up against Hunne. He was imprisoned in the Lollards' Tower at St. Paul's; and, being brought before the bishop of London, was terrified into an admission of some of the crimes of which he was accused, one of which was that he had in his possession the epistles and gospels in English, and "Wycliffe's damnable works." He was sent back to his prison, and two days after was found hanging in his cell. A coroner's inquest charged the bishop's chancellor and other officers with murder; but it was maintained by them that the heretic had committed suicide. The bishop and the clergy had the incredible folly to begin a new process of heresy against the dead body, which was adjudged guilty; and according to the sentence burnt in Smithfield. "After that day the city of London was never well affected to the popish clergy."\* Dr. Horsey, the bishop of London's chancellor, was hiding from the warrant out against him, on the finding of the coroner's inquest; and the temper of the Londoners is described in a letter of the bishop to Wolsey, in which he says, "if my chancellor be tried by any twelve men in London, they be so maliciously set in favour of heretical wickedness (*in favorem heretica pravitatis*) that they will cast and condemn any clerk though he were as innocent as Abel." This affair was eventually compromised. But the pre-

\* Burnet, "History of the Reformation," book i.

vious dispute was kept up by the Convocation summoning before them Dr. Standish, who had conducted the discussion against the abbot of Winchelcomb, to defend the opinions which he had declared before the king in counsel. The matter was again referred to Henry; who called the Lords, some of the Commons, and the judges, before him at Baynard's Castle. Wolsey, as cardinal, knelt before the king, and, in the name of the clergy, protested that none of them intended to do anything that might derogate from his prerogative; and implored that the king, "to avoid the censures of the Church, would refer the matter to the decision of the pope and his council at the court of Rome." Henry, with that determination to uphold his prerogative which was an abiding principle of his government, said, "By the permission and ordinance of God we are king of England, and the kings of England in times past had never any superior but God alone. Therefore know you well that we will maintain the right of our crown, and of our temporal jurisdiction as well in this, and in all other points, in as ample manner as any of our progenitors have done before our time." Rebuking then the spirituality for interpreting their decrees at their own pleasure, he left the matter as it stood. The king and the cardinal had each shown themselves wise in their generation. There was no papal interference to assert the demands of the clergy. There was no trial of the bishop's chancellor to uphold the claims of civil justice. This was the only thing in the first eighteen years of the king's reign that seemed to lessen the greatness of the clergy, but in all other things he was a most faithful son of the see of Rome.\*

The ostentation of Wolsey, as far as we may infer from the character of his display, was the result rather of policy than of temperament. He filled the two highest offices in the country, secular and ecclesiastical. He had been raised from the ranks of the people to be chancellor and cardinal. He was surrounded by a proud nobility, with whom he was "the butcher's cur." He exhibited the pomp of his high stations to demand the respect which would have been withheld from his talents and learning, under the cloud of the meanness of his birth. It was an age of display, when the king set the example to his court of the most extravagant splendour, which many of the nobles ruined themselves to imitate. The simplicity of private life, of which More, as chancellor, afterwards furnished so admirable a pattern, was scarcely

\* Burnet, book i.

compatible with Wolsey's great position as an ecclesiastic. He was the representative of the pomp and luxury of Leo X.; and he had the same exalted ideas as the pope evinced of bestowing a magnificent patronage upon learning and the arts. "Thus passed the cardinal," says Cavendish, "his life and time, from day to day, and year to year in such great wealth, joy and triumph, and glory, having always on his side the king's especial favour." But it was not that favour alone which upheld Wolsey. His position as the greatest of English ecclesiastics commanded the reverence that might have been denied to his civil abilities; his just administration in his court of equity; and the extraordinary influence over a despotic king, by which, for so long a period, he preserved him, with one or two exceptions, from any sanguinary course of jealousy or revenge, or any blood-guilty violation of the rights of the people Wolsey's real worth was duly estimated by More, a very competent judge, who said of his administration of the powers of the great seal "he behaves most beautifully." Still, the sumptuous churchman commanded a respect which the wise chancellor might have scarcely propitiated. In his hour of misfortune the duke of Norfolk said to him, "I regarded your honour, for that ye were archbishop of York, and cardinal, whose estate of honour surmounteth any duke now living within this realm."\* It was this reverence to his spiritual dignity which made him capricious and overbearing in his civil relations. Skelton has reproached him with his haughtiness to the nobility—

"He saith they have no brain  
Their estate to maintain."†

The same bitter satirist declares of Wolsey that no man dare come to his speech; of the truth of which charge, we have evidence in a letter to the earl of Shrewsbury from his chaplain, who danced attendance upon the proud minister at Guildford and Hampton-Court for many days, to have an answer to his lord's letter:—"Upon Monday last, as he walked in the park at Hampton-Court, I besought his grace I might know if he would command me any service. He was not content with me that I spoke to him. So that who shall be a suitor to him may have no other business but give attendance upon his pleasure."‡ To a servant of the deputy of Calais, who pressed for an answer to a letter, Wolsey said, "If

\* Cavendish, p. 280.

† "Why come ye not to Court?" vol. ii. p. 36, in Mr. Dyce's excellent edition.

‡ Ellis, First Series, vol. ii. p. 4. This letter also appears, with some variations, in Lodge's "Illustrations," vol. i. p. 28.

ye be not content to tarry my leisure, depart when ye will." His biographer says, "I assure you, in his time, he was the haughtiest man in all his proceedings alive." Some allowance must be made for this minister's position. No man in the highest office ever had more labour to perform; no servant of a king ever had a more difficult master to manage. Upon his death-bed he said of Henry to sir William Kingston, "He is sure a prince of royal courage, and hath a princely heart; and rather than he will either miss or want any part of his will or appetite, he will put the loss of one-half of his realm in danger. For I assure you I have often kneeled before him in his privy chamber on my knees, the space of an hour or two, to persuade him from his will and appetite, but I could never bring to pass to dissuade him therefrom. Therefore, Master Kingston, if it chance hereafter you to be one of his privy council, as for your wisdom and other qualities ye are meet to be, I warn you to be well advised and assured what matter ye put in his head, for ye shall never put it out again."\*

With a king and a minister whose individual characters would naturally give such a colour to her foreign policy, England found herself, in 1519, essentially involved in the complicated meshes of continental negotiations. The league with Francis I., in 1518, provided for the strictest amity between England and France; and by a special treaty the marriage of the dauphin with Mary, the daughter of Henry, was arranged. The death of the emperor Maximilian in January, 1519, introduced new complications in European politics. Some time before his death Maximilian had made an extraordinary offer of resigning the empire to Henry; but Dr. Cuthbert Tunstall, the king's ambassador, had clearly shown him that this was little more than an interested scheme of the needy emperor; and pointed out to Henry how impossible it was that he should be chosen, under the laws of the empire, adding, "I am afraid lest the said offer being so specious at the first hearing was only made to get thereby some money of your grace."† When Maximilian died, the ambition of Henry revived. Richard Pace, an accomplished scholar and able diplomatist, was sent on a secret mission to Germany to sound the electors. But there were two other candidates for the imperial dignity, whose claims were far more natural and reasonable than those of an insular king. Francis, king of France, then in his twenty-fifth year, wielded without control the power and resources of the most compact monarchy of

\* Cavendish, p. 389.

† Ellis, First Series, vol. i. p. 137.

continental Europe. Of a bold and impassioned nature, of a chivalrous bearing, energetic and enterprising, he was beloved by his own people, and had commanded the respect of other nations by his brilliant success in his career of arms. Charles of Spain, then in his nineteenth year, united in himself the sovereignty of the largest European dominions. Of a rare sagacity, of inflexible determination, of perfect self-command, he was formed by nature and by education to pursue a career of ambition, in which the subtle negotiator would command as great success as the skilful warrior. At this early period his force of character could be little understood; and the danger to be apprehended, from his grasping ambition calling into action his great resources, would appear dim and remote. The election for the empire was the first occasion in which Europe felt the real power of a prince who could command the riches of Flanders and of Spain; and who would employ them with all the subtlety that he might derive from the lessons of his favourite book, "The Prince" of Machiavel. The desire of the king of England, next to that of his own election, was that neither Francis nor Charles should obtain that accession of power. But his envoy intrigued in vain to accomplish either of these wishes. At the commencement of the contest Henry had promised his support to Francis. Towards its end he gave his interest to Charles. Each of these monarchs had bribed the needy electoral princes to an enormous extent. The skilful management of Charles secured his unanimous election. The rivalry thus excited lasted through their lives; and for twenty-eight years the emperor and the king of France, with short intervals of peace, warred against each other with unrelenting animosity; and in the support of one or the other rival England shifted sides, with little regard to the dignity of the crown or the interests of the people. But it must not be forgotten that the right course for the government of Henry to pursue was essentially of difficult and doubtful choice, if her insular position were not to free England from the obligation of interference with foreign politics. But even if she could have safely kept aloof from the temptation of aspiring to be the arbiter amongst contending kings, there were two circumstances which prevented her looking with a self-reliant calmness upon the preponderance of France or the concentrated power of the house of Austria. On one hand Henry was constantly urged by his own weak ambition to recover the English rule in France, and therefore to seek the depression

of the French king. On the other, the varying interests, spiritual and political, of the see of Rome, had an important influence on the policy of Henry's minister, whose own ambition constantly looked to acquiring for himself the dignity of the sovereign pontiff. It was a time when a double policy was held to be the safest by those whose interests were involved in the struggle between the two great rivals. It is related of Pope Leo X., that he avowed "that when he had concluded a treaty with the one party, he did not, on that account, cease to negotiate with the other."\* Not the least of the difficulties of the papacy was the necessity of looking to some support in the struggle that seemed approaching between the infallible Church and the bold opposers of its corruptions. The historian of the popes has truly said of Luther, "The appearance of such an actor on the world's stage was too significant a fact not to invest him with high political importance."† In the councils of England that importance was soon sensibly felt.

On the 12th of March, 1520, a solemn instrument was prepared by Wolsey, for the regulation of a meeting between Henry and Francis, before the end of the following May. It was drawn up with a strict regard to an equal weighing of the honour and dignity of the two kings. The equality of their personal merits is also flatteringly asserted in this document: "As the said serene princes of England and France be like in force corporal, beauty, and gift of nature, right expert and having knowledge in the art militant, right chivalrous in arms, and in the flower and vigour of youth," they are to "take counsel and dispose themselves to do some fair feat of arms."‡ The place of meeting was to be between the English castle of Guisnes and the French castle of Ardres. The curious "Chronicle of Calais" records, that on the 19th of March, the commissioners of king Henry landed, "to oversee the making of a palace before the castle gate of Guisnes; wherefore there was sent the king's master-mason, master-carpenter, and three hundred masons, five hundred carpenters, one hundred joiners, many painters, glaziers, tailors, smiths, and other artificers, both out of England and Flanders, to the number in all two thousand and more." The temporary palace was of stone walls and framed timber, with glazed windows, and canvas roofs. These particulars are curious, as showing how labour could be organised in England for the rapid completion of a great work, at a period when we are accustomed

\* Ranke, "History of the Popes," vol. i. p. 85.

† Hall, p. 602.

‡ *Ibid.*, p. 86.

to think that the national industry was conducted upon a very small scale. Henry was highly flattered by the proposal of Francis, "to meet with us within our dominion, pale, and marches of Calais, whereas heretofore semblable honour of pre-eminence hath not been given by any of the French kings to our progenitors or ancestors."\* Wolsey took care to modify the offer, so that his sovereign's "honour of pre-eminence" should not be offensively asserted. The vast preparations at Guisnes went forward day and night, to construct a palace whose principal rooms were to be larger than in any house in England—whose canvas roofs were to be "curiously garnished"—whose walls were to be flourished with "histories," which Master Barclay, the poet, was to devise; and, in despite of the fears of the directors of the work, the building approached its completion after two months' labour. On the 21st of May, Henry and the queen set forth from Greenwich toward the sea-side. On the 25th they arrived at Canterbury, at which city the feast of Pentecost was to be kept. Slowly had the court travelled, for there was something to be accomplished before the great interview at Calais should take place. Another personage was to appear upon the scene, by the merest accident, at the exact moment when he was wanted. Tidings were brought to Canterbury, that Charles, the emperor elect, was on the sea, in sight of the coast of England. He was on his passage from Spain to visit his dominions in the Netherlands. He could not pass the English shores without landing to behold the king whom he so revered, and the aunt he so dearly loved. Wolsey hastened to Dover to welcome Charles, who landed at Hythe. The "*Deus ex machinâ*," was produced, to the wonderment of all spectators, and no one saw the wheels and springs of the mechanism. The politic young statesman won the hearts of the English, who rejoiced "to see the benign manner and meekness of so great a prince."† Henry came to Dover. They kept the Whitsuntide together at Canterbury, "with much joy and gladness;" and on the last day of May Charles sailed to Flanders from Sandwich, and Henry from Dover to Calais.

The character of this royal embarkation has been handed down to us in an ancient painting. The thousands of visitors who now range freely through the state-apartments of Hampton Court, and

\* Letter of Henry to Sir Adrian Fortescue, in Appendix to "Chronicle of Calais," p. 78.

† Hall, p. 604.

who are familiar with the solid grandeur of a modern English fleet, look with natural curiosity upon the unwieldy hulls, the decks covered with blazonry, the painted sails, of the sixteenth century, and think how a single steam-frigate would consign all this bravery to sudden destruction. With a fair wind such a navy might safely cross the channel. The low towers of Dover have vomited forth their fire and smoke; and in a few hours the guns of Calais salute the English king. The great palace was ready, with its ceilings draped with silk, and its walls hung "with rich and marvellous cloths of arras wrought of gold and silk." But while Henry was contemplating his splendours, Wolsey was busy arranging a treaty with Francis. The friendship of England was to be secured by a renewal of the treaty of marriage between the dauphin and the princess Mary. There can be little doubt that at this very time the cardinal was bound to the interests of the emperor, with the full concurrence of his royal master. Yet the play was to be played out. Henry was to meet the French king with such a display of the magnificence of his court as might challenge any rivalry. But Francis, possessing much of the same temper, was not to be outdone in pageantry.

"To-day the French

All clingant, all in gold, like heathen gods,  
Shone down the English; and, to-morrow, they  
Made Britain, India; every man that stood,  
Show'd like a mine."<sup>\*</sup>

The dramatic poet has described this famous meeting in a short dialogue. Hall, the chronicler, who was present, elaborates these "fierce vanities" in many quarto pages. On the 7th of June, the two kings met in the valley of Andren. Titian has made us acquainted with the animated features of Francis. Hall has painted him with coarser colours; as "a goodly prince, stately of countenance, merry of cheer, brown coloured, great eyes, high-nosed, big lipped, fair breasted and shoulders, small legs, and long feet." Holbein has rendered Henry familiar to us in his later years; but at this period he was described by a Venetian resident in England as "handsomer by far than the king of France. He is exceeding fair, and as well proportioned in every part as is possible. When he learned that the king of France wore a beard, he allowed his also to grow, which being somewhat red, has at present the appearance of being of gold." † It is scarcely necessary to tran-

<sup>\*</sup> Shakspeare, "Henry VIII." Act i. Scene 1.

† From a letter of Sebastiano Giustiniani in 1519, quoted in Ellis, First Series, vol. i. p. 177.

scribe the complimentary speeches, and the professions of affection which are related to have passed at this meeting. The two kings did not come to the appointed valley, surrounded each with an amazing train of gorgeously appareled gentlemen and nobles, and with a great body of armed men, without some fears and suspicions on either side. The English, if we may believe the chronicler, were most wanting in honourable confidence. The English lords and their attendants moved not from their appointed ranks. "The Frenchmen suddenly brake, and many of them came into the English party, speaking fair; but for all that, the court of England and the lords kept still their array."<sup>\*</sup>

The solemnities of "The Field of the Cloth of Gold," as the place of this meeting came to be called, occupied nearly three weeks of that June of 1520. Ten days were spent in the feats of arms for which Wolsey had provided. There was tilting with lances, and tourneys on horseback with the broad sword, and fighting on foot at the barriers. The kings were always victorious against all comers. But from the court of the emperor there came no knight to answer the challengers. The lists were set up close to the Flemish frontier, but not a gentleman of Spain, or Flanders, or Brabant, or Burgundy, stirred to do honour to these pageant-tries. "By that," says Hall, "it seemed there was small love between the emperor and the French king." On Midsummer-day the gaudy shows were over. The kings separated after an exchange of valuable presents,—Francis to Paris, Henry to Calais. Here the English court remained till the 10th of July. It was in vain that the French king had come unattended and unarmed into the English quarter, to show his confidence in the friendship of his companion in feats of chivalry. In vain had the French nobles put all their estates upon their backs to rival the jewelled satins and velvets of England. On 11th of July Henry met the emperor near Gravelines; and the emperor returned with him to Calais. After a visit of three days, Charles accomplished far more by his profound sagacity than Francis by his generous frankness. Wolsey was propitiated by presents and promises; Henry by a studied deference to his superior wisdom. Hall has recorded that during the pomps of the valley of Andren, on the 18th of June, "there blew such storms of wind and weather that marvel was to hear; for which hideous tempest some said it was a very prognostication of trouble and hatred to come between princes." The French, in

<sup>\*</sup> Hall, p. 610.

this second meeting between Henry and Charles saw the accomplishment of the foreboding beginning to take a definite form.

In the roll of illustrious names of nobles and knights at the Field of the Cloth of Gold, the name of the duke of Buckingham stands at the head. He was there one of the four judges of the jousts deputed on the king's part. High as he was in wealth and honours, he might have deemed that the evil destinies of his line were at an end; and that, whilst his father had died on the scaffold under Richard III., and the three preceding heads of his house had fallen in civil warfare, he might have securely passed through life to the death of the peaceful. But any lineal descendant of Edward III. was still unsafe, especially if his pride of ancestry were not held in check by unrelaxing prudence. The father of this Edward Stafford perished through his vain conviction that he was "meet to be a ruler of the realm;"\* and the son, although a man of ability, was tempted by the ever-present thought of his high descent, to commit himself by some unguarded though trifling acts, of which his enemies took advantage. His chief enemy is said to have been Wolsey; and the cause of the cardinal's enmity is held to have arisen out of Buckingham's dissatisfaction with the expense of the great pageantry at Guisnes. But the jealousy of Henry had been exhibited in 1519; when sir William Bulmer, who had quitted the king's service to enter that of the duke, had to acknowledge his fault in the star-chamber, and to implore the mercy of the king. Henry forgave the offence; but said, "that he would none of his servants should hang on another man's sleeve; and that he was as well able to maintain him as the duke of Buckingham, and that what might be thought by his [Bulmer's] departing, and what might be supposed by the duke's retaining, he would not then declare."† The king had now entered upon that course of action which rendered his subsequent career so fearful and so odious. He could cover up his hatreds till the moment arrived for striking his victim securely. After eighteen months had passed since he had rebuked sir William Bulmer, and darkly hinted at some evil motive of the duke in retaining him in his service, the mine, which had been warily constructed, exploded under Edward Stafford's feet. He was suddenly sent for from his castle of Thornbury, to appear in the king's presence. He was watched by the king's officers to Windsor; and there perceived that he could not escape. He rode to Westminster, where he took his barge, and landed "at

\* See *ante*, p. 176.

† Hall, p. 599.

the cardinal's bridge;" but Wolsey refusing to see him, the duke said, "Well, yet will I drink of my lord's wine, ere I pass;" and he was brought, with much reverence, into the cellar. On his way to London, his barge was boarded, and he arrested. His fate was soon determined. On the 13th of May he was indicted before his peers, the duke of Norfolk presiding. Charles Knyvet, a discarded officer of the duke, was the chief witness against him; and deposed to certain words of Buckingham said to himself and lord Abergavenny, which, even if true, could not be fairly wrested into an overt act of treason. A monk of the Charterhouse, who pretended to a knowledge of future events, "had divers times said to the duke that he should be king of England; but the duke said that in himself he never consented to it."\* The judicial inference was, that he had committed the crime of imagining the death of the king; and that his words were satisfactory evidence of such imagining. Buckingham was convicted; and Norfolk pronounced the sentence. The heroic attitude of the man in this his hour of agony, needs no exaltation by the power of the poet. He said to his judges, "May the eternal God forgive you my death as I do. I shall never sue to the king for life, howbeit he is a gracious prince, and more grace may come from him than I deserve." The duke was beheaded on the 17th of May.

In the early part of the reign of Henry VIII., there were many reversals of attainders that had been passed in the previous reign. There was then evidently a merciful desire for the oblivion of political offences; and for restoring to their estates and honours the heirs of those unfortunate persons who had suffered the penalties of treason. † There was no hesitation in the avowal that it was possible that an attainted person might have been unjustly condemned. In the case of Henry Courtney, earl of Devonshire, the preamble to the Act of reversal says that his father was convicted of high treason "by the sinister means and untrue informations of certain malicious and evil disposed persons made unto your noble father, of famous memory." ‡ This open acknowledgment of the possibility of an unjust conviction, under the forms of law, might have led the king who would show no mercy to Buckingham, judged as he was upon the most frivolous accusations, to think that the declaration of his high will might have some effect in calling

\* Hall, p. 623.

† See various Statutes from the first year to the sixth of Henry VIII.

‡ 4 Hen. VIII. c. 9, first printed in the Statutes by Authority.



forth such "untrue representations." The time was not yet arrived when he should find his ready instruments of despotism in the highest of the land; and when he should be able to perpetrate through his slaves in a parliament, the murders which the oriental despot could effect by a single sign to the eunuchs of the seraglio. He tasted of blood when he put Buckingham to death; and after a few more years, during which his will, being unquestioned, was less tyrannical, he showed that his relish for it was not to be satisfied to his dying hour.

## CHAPTER XV.

Luther.—King Henry writes a book against his doctrines.—His title of Defender of the Faith.—League and war against France.—Wolsey levies contributions on property.—Jealousy of foreigners; Evil May-Day.—A Parliament assembled.—Great debate upon the demand for a subsidy.—Affairs of Scotland.—Siege of Jedburgh.—Duke of Suffolk makes war in France.—Battle of Pavia.—Francis a prisoner.—Taxes levied without authority of Parliament.—Insurrection in Suffolk.—The illegal demand abandoned.

IN the year 1521 Henry had been king for twelve years. Possessed of considerable ability and some learning, his mind was not so wholly occupied by pleasures and pageantries as in the flush of youth. He sought for a higher excitement in theological controversy. There was a daring innovator, who had proceeded from attacking the open sale of indulgences for sin to question the foundations of the authority of the Church. Martin Luther had been first despised in his supposed obscurity; but his preaching and writing had produced an effect in Europe, which had stirred up the luxurious Leo X. to apprehend that a poor monk, with no power but his zeal and courage, might become troublesome to the repose even of the most splendid of pontiffs. At length, in 1520, the pope issued a bull, declaring certain passages of Luther's writings heretical; denouncing the penalties of excommunication against him unless he should recant; and threatening the same penalties against all princes who should neglect to secure the heretic. In January, 1520, Luther, for having denied the pontifical supremacy, was expelled from the communion of the Church. The emperor Charles V. was called upon to punish the Reformer; but the elector of Saxony induced the emperor to let the question be tried before a diet of the empire. In April, the diet met at Worms. Luther entered the town singing the noble hymn called by his name. The multitude who surrounded the monk repeated the inspiring words, "Our God is a strong citadel;" and the hymn of Luther became the rallying song of the Reformation. Before the emperor, the electors of the empire, princes, bishops, Luther avowed that the writings denounced by the pope were his; and refused to retract any proposition he had set forth, unless from the authority