or subletting of estates. While they often built up the great families, they also operated to strengthen the power of the crown at the very time when that of Parliament and the people was increasing as a check upon its authority.

278. Legislation respecting the Church. — A third enactment checked the undue increase of church property. Through gifts and bequests the clergy had become owners of a very large part of the most fertile soil of the realm. No farms, herds of cattle, or flocks of sheep compared with theirs. These lands were said to be in mortmain, or "dead hands"; since the church, being a corporation, never let go its hold, but kept its property with the tenacity of a dead man's grasp. The clergy constantly strove to get these church lands exempted from furnishing soldiers, or paying taxes to the king. Instead of men or money they offered prayers. Practically, the government succeeded from time to time in compelling them to do considerably more than this, but seldom without a violent struggle, as in the case of Henry II. and Becket. On account of these exemptions it had become the practice with many persons who wished to escape bearing their just share of the support of the government, to give their lands to the church, and then receive them again as tenants of some abbot or bishop. In this way they evaded their military and pecuniary obligations to the crown. To put a stop to this practice, and so make all landed proprietors do their part, a law was passed[1] requiring the donor of an estate to the church to obtain a royal license; which it is perhaps needless to say was not readily granted.[2]

279. Death of Edward. — Edward died while endeavoring to subdue a revolt in Scotland, in which Robert Bruce, grandson of the first of that name, had seized the throne. His last request was that his son Edward should continue the war. "Carry my bones before you on your march," said the dying king, "for the rebels will not be able to endure the sight of me, alive or dead!"

[1] Statute of Mortmain, 1279.

[2] See note on Clergy, Paragraph No. 200.

280. Summary. — During Edward I.'s reign, the following changes took place: —

1. Wales and Scotland were conquered, and the first remained permanently a part of the English kingdom.
2. The landed proprietors of the whole country were made more directly responsible to the crown.
3. The excessive growth of church property was checked.
4. Laws for the better suppression of acts of violence were enacted and rigorously enforced.
5. The Great Charter, with additional articles for the protection of the people, was confirmed by the king, and the power of taxation expressly acknowledged to reside in Parliament only.
6. Parliament, a legislative body now representing all classes of the nation, was permanently organized, and for the first time regularly and frequently summoned by the king.[1]

EDWARD II. — 1307–1327.

281. Accession and Character. — The son to whom Edward left his power was in every respect his opposite. The old definition of the word "king," was "the man who *can*," or the able man. The modern explanation usually makes him "the chief or head of a people." Edward II. would satisfy neither of these definitions. He lacked all disposition to do anything himself; he equally lacked power to incite others to do. By nature he was a jester, trifler, and waster of time. Being such, it is hardly necessary to say that he did not push the war with Scotland. Robert Bruce did not expect that he would; that valiant fighter, indeed, held the new English sovereign in utter contempt, saying that he feared the dead father much more than the living son.

[1] It will be remembered that De Montfort's Parliament, in 1265, was not regularly and legally summoned, since the king (Henry III.) was at that time a captive. The first Parliament (including a House of Commons, Lords, and Clergy) which was convened by the crown, was that called by Edward I. in 1295.

282. Piers Gaveston; the Lords Ordainers. — During the first five years of his reign, Edward did little more than lavish wealth and honors on his chief favorite and adviser, Piers Gaveston, a Frenchman who had been his companion and playfellow from childhood. While Edward I. was living, Parliament had with his sanction banished Gaveston from the kingdom, as a man of corrupt practices, but Edward II. was no sooner crowned, than he recalled him, and gave him the government of the realm during his absence in France, on the occasion of his marriage. On his return, the barons protested against the monopoly of privileges by a foreigner, and the king was obliged to consent to his banishment. He soon came back, however, and matters went on from bad to worse. Finally, the indignation of the nobles rose to such a pitch, that at the council held at Westminster the government was virtually taken from the king's hands and vested in a body of barons and bishops. The head of this committee was the king's cousin, the Earl of Lancaster; and from the ordinance which they drew up for the management of affairs they got the name of the Lords Ordainers. Gaveston was now sent out of the country for a third time; but the king persuaded him to return, and gave him the office of secretary of state. This last insult — for so the Lords Ordainers regarded it — was too much for the nobility to bear. They resolved to exile the hated favorite once more, but this time to send him "to that country from which no traveller returns." Edward taking the alarm, placed Gaveston in Scarborough Castle[1] for safety. The barons besieged it, starved Gaveston into surrender, and beheaded him forthwith. Thus ended the first favorite.

283. Scotland regains its Independence. — Seeing Edward's lack of manly fibre, Robert Bruce, who had been crowned king of the Scots, determined to make himself ruler in fact as well as in name. He had suffered many defeats; he had wandered a fugitive in forests and glens; he had been hunted with bloodhounds like a wild beast; but he had never lost courage or hope. On the field

[1] Scarborough: on the coast of Yorkshire.

of Bannockburn he once again met the English, and in a bloody and decisive battle drove them back like frightened sheep into their own country. By this victory, Bruce re-established the independence of Scotland — an independence which continued until the rival kingdoms were peaceably united under one crown, by the accession of a Scotch king to the English throne.[1]

284. The New Favorites; the King made Prisoner. — For the next seven years the Earl of Lancaster had his own way in England. During this time Edward, whose weak nature needed some one to lean on, had got two new favorites, — Hugh Despenser and his son. They were men of more character than Gaveston; but as they cared chiefly for their own interests, they incurred the hatred of the baronage.

The king's wife, Isabelle of France, now turned against him. She had formerly acted as a peacemaker, but from this time did all in her power to the contrary. Roger Mortimer, one of the leaders of the barons, was the sworn enemy of the Despensers. The queen had formed a guilty attachment for him. Together they plotted the ruin of Edward and his favorites. They raised a force, seized and executed the Despensers, and then took the king prisoner.

285. Deposition and Murder of the King. — Having imprisoned Edward in Kenilworth Castle,[2] the barons now resolved to remove him from the throne. Parliament drew up articles of deposition against him, and appointed commissioners to demand his resignation of the crown. When they went to the castle, Edward appeared before them clad in deep mourning. Presently he sank fainting to the floor. On his recovery he burst into a fit of weeping. Then, checking himself, he thanked Parliament through the commissioners for having chosen his eldest son Edward, a boy of fourteen, to rule over the nation.

Judge Trussel then stepped forward and said: "Unto thee, O

[1] James VI. of Scotland and I. of England, in 1603.
[2] Kenilworth Castle, Warwickshire.

king, I, William Trussel, in the name of all men of this land of England and speaker of this Parliament, renounce to you, Edward, the homage [oath of allegiance] that was made to you some time; and from this time forth I defy thee and deprive thee of all royal power, and I shall never be attendant on thee as king from this time."

Then Sir Thomas Blount, steward of the king's household, advanced, broke his staff of office before the king's face, and proclaimed the royal household dissolved.

Edward was soon after committed to Berkeley Castle,[1] in Gloucestershire. There, by the order of Mortimer, with the connivance of queen Isabelle, the "she-wolf of France," who acted as his companion in iniquity, the king was secretly and horribly murdered.

286. Summary. — The lesson of Edward II.'s career is found in its culmination. Other sovereigns had been guilty of misgovernment, others had had unworthy and grasping favorites, but he was the first whom Parliament had deposed. By that act it became evident that great as was the power of the king, there had now come into existence a greater still, which could not only make but unmake him who sat on the throne.

EDWARD III. — 1327–1377

287. Edward's Accession; Execution of Mortimer. — Edward III., son of Edward II., was crowned at fourteen. Until he became of age, the government was nominally in the hands of a council, but really in the control of Queen Isabelle and her "gentle Mortimer," the two murderers of his father. Early in his reign Edward attempted to reconquer Scotland, but failing in his efforts, made a peace acknowledging the independence of that country. At home,

[1] Berkeley Castle continues in the possession of the Berkeley family. It is considered one of the finest examples of feudal architecture now remaining in England. Over the stately structure still floats the standard borne in the crusades by an ancestor of the present Lord Berkeley.

however, he now gained a victory which compensated him for his disappointment in not subduing the Scots.

Mortimer was staying with Queen Isabelle at Nottingham Castle. Edward obtained entrance by a secret passage, carried him off captive, and soon after brought him to the gallows. He next seized his mother, the queen, and kept her in confinement for the rest of her life in Castle Rising, Norfolk.

288. The Rise of English Commerce. — The reign of Edward III. is directly connected with the rise of a flourishing commerce with the continent. In the early ages of its history England was almost wholly an agricultural country. At length the farmers in the eastern counties began to turn their attention to wool-growing. They exported the fleeces, which were considered the finest in the world, to the Flemish cities of Ghent and Bruges, where they were woven into cloth, and returned to be sold in the English market; for, as an old writer quaintly remarks, "the English people at that time knew no more what to do with the wool, than the sheep on whose backs it grew."[1] Through the influence of Edward's wife, Queen Philippa, who was a native of a province adjoining Flanders,[2] which was also extensively engaged in the production of cloth, woollen factories were now established at Norwich and other towns in the East of England. Skilled Flemish workmen were induced to come over, and by their help England successfully laid the foundation of one of her greatest and most lucrative industries. From that time wool was considered a chief source of the national wealth. Later, that the fact might be kept constantly in mind, a square crimson bag filled with it — the "Woolsack" — became, and still continues to be, the seat of the Lord Chancellor in the House of Lords.

[1] Fuller. This remark applies to the production of fine woollens only. The English had long manufactured common grades of woollen cloth, though not in any large quantity.

[2] Flanders: a part of the Netherlands or Low Countries. The latter then embraced Holland, Belgium, and a portion of Northern France.

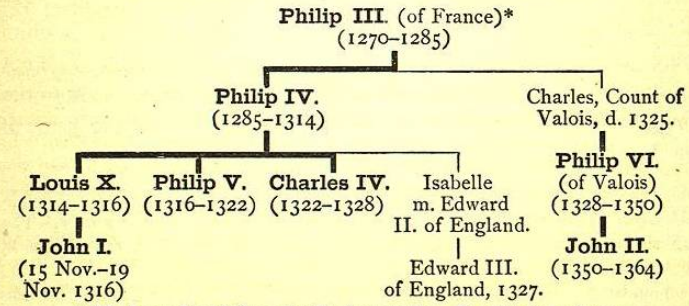
289. The Beginning of the Hundred Years' War (1338).— Indirectly, this trade between England and Flanders helped to bring on a war of such duration, that it received the name of the Hundred Years' War. Flanders was at that time a dependency of France; but the great commercial towns were rapidly rising in power, and were restive and rebellious under the exactions and extortion of their feudal master, Count Louis. Their business interests bound them strongly to England; and they were anxious to form an alliance with Edward against Philip VI. of France, who was determined to bring the Flemish cities into absolute subjection.

Philip was by no means unwilling to begin hostilities with England. He had long looked with a greedy eye on the tract of country south of the Loire,[1] which remained in possession of the English kings; and only wanted a pretext for annexing it. Through his alliance with Scotland, he was threatening to attack Edward's kingdom on the north, while for some time his war-vessels had been seizing English ships laden with wool, so that intercourse with Flanders was maintained with difficulty and peril.

Edward remonstrated in vain against these outrages. At length, having concluded an alliance with Ghent, the chief Flemish city, he boldly claimed the crown of France as his lawful right,[2] and

[1] Aquitaine (with the exception of Poitou). At a later period the province got the name of Guienne, which was a part of it. See Map No. 8, page 88.

[2] CLAIM OF EDWARD III. TO THE FRENCH CROWN.



* The heavy lines indicate the direct succession. See note on next page.

followed the demand with a declaration of war. Edward based his claim on the fact that through his mother Isabelle he was nephew to the late French king, Charles IV., whereas the reigning monarch was only cousin. Nothing in the law of France justified the English sovereign in his extravagant pretensions, though, as we have seen, he had good cause for attacking Philip on other grounds.

290. Battle of Crécy[1] (1346).— For the next eight years, fighting between the two countries was going on pretty constantly on both land and sea, but without decisive results. Edward was pressed for money, and had to resort to all sorts of expedients to get it, even to pawning his own and the queen's crown, to raise enough to pay his troops. At last he succeeded in equipping a strong force, and with his son Edward, a lad of fifteen, invaded Normandy.[2]

His plan seems to have been to attack the French army in the South of France; but after landing he changed his mind, and determined to ravage Normandy, and then march north to meet his Flemish allies, who were advancing to join him. At Crécy, near the coast, on the way to Calais, a desperate battle took place. The French had the larger force, but Edward the better position. Philip's army included a number of hired Genoese cross-bowmen, on whom he placed great dependence; but a thunder-storm had wet their bowstrings, which rendered them nearly useless, and, as they advanced toward the English, the

When, in 1328, Charles IV. of France died without leaving a son, his cousin, Philip of Valois, succeeded him as Philip VI. (the French law excluding females from the throne). Edward III. of England claimed the crown, because through his mother Isabelle he was nephew to the late king, Charles IV. The French replied, with truth, that his claim was worthless, since he could not inherit from one who could not herself have ascended the throne.

[1] Crécy (kray-see).

[2] He landed near Cherbourg, opposite the Isle of Wight, crossed the Seine not very far below Paris,—the bridges having been destroyed up to that point,—and then marched for Calais by way of Crécy, a village near the mouth of the river Somme. See Map No. 9, page 130.

afternoon sun shone so brightly in their eyes, that they could not take accurate aim. The English archers, on the other hand, had kept their long-bows in their cases, so that the strings were dry and ready for action.

In the midst of the fight, the Earl of Warwick, who was hard pressed by the enemy, became alarmed for the safety of young Prince Edward. He sent to the king, asking reinforcements. "Is my son killed?" asked the king. "No, sire, please God!" "Is he wounded?" "No, sire." "Is he thrown to the ground?" "No, sire; but he is in great danger." "Then," said the king, "I shall send no aid. Let the boy win his spurs;[1] for I wish, if God so order it, that the honor of the victory shall be his." The father's wish was gratified. From that time the "Black Prince," as the French called him, from the color of his armor, became a name renowned throughout Europe. The battle, however, was gained, not by his bravery or that of the nobles who supported him, but by the sturdy English yeomen, who shot their keen white arrows so thick and fast, and with such deadly aim, that a writer who was present on the field compared them to a shower of snow. It was that fatal snow-storm which won the day.[2]

291. Use of Cannon; Chivalry. — At Crécy small cannon appear to have been used for the first time, though gunpowder was probably known to the English monk, Roger Bacon, many years before. The object of the cannon was to frighten and annoy the

[1] Spurs were the especial badge of knighthood. It was expected of every one who attained that honor that he should do some deed of valor; this was called "winning his spurs."

[2] The English yeomen, or country people, excelled in the use of the long-bow. They probably learned its value from their Norman conquerors, who employed it with great effect at the battle of Hastings. Writing at a much later period Bishop Latimer said: "In my tyme my poore father was as diligent to teach me to shote as to learne anye other thynge. * * * He taught me how to drawe, how to laye my bodye in my bowe, and not to drawe wyth strength of armes as other nacions do, but with strength of the bodye. I had bowes boughte me accordyng to my age and strength; as I encreased in them, so my bowes were made bigger, and bigger, for men shal neuer shot well, excepte they be broughte up in it." The advantage of this weapon over the steel cross-bow (used by the Genoese) lay in the fact that it could be discharged much more rapidly; the latter being a cumbrous affair, which had to be wound up with a crank for each shot. Hence the English long-bow was to that age what the revolver is to ours. It sent an arrow with such force that only the best armor could withstand it. The French peasantry at that period had no skill with this weapon; and about the only part they took in a battle was to stab horses and despatch wounded men.

Scott, in the Archery Contest in Ivanhoe (Chap. XIII.) has given an excellent picture of the English bowman.

horses of the French cavalry. They were laughed at as ingenious toys; but in the course of the next two centuries those toys revolutionized warfare and made the steel-clad knight little more than a tradition and a name.

In its day, however, knighthood did the world good service. Chivalry aimed to make the profession of arms a noble instead of a brutal calling. It gave it somewhat of a religious character. It taught the warrior the worth of honor, truthfulness, and courtesy, as well as valor — qualities which still survive in the best type of the modern gentleman. We owe, therefore, no small debt to that military brotherhood of the past, and may join the English poet in his epitaph on the order: —

> "The Knights are dust,
> Their good swords rust;
> Their souls are with the saints, we trust."[1]

292. Calais taken. — Edward now marched against Calais. He was particularly anxious to take the place, since its situation as a fortified port on the Strait of Dover, within sight of the chalk cliffs of England, would, if he captured it, give him at all times "an open doorway into France."

After besieging it for nearly a year, the garrison was starved into submission and prepared to open the gates. Edward was so exasperated with the stubborn resistance the town had made, that he resolved to put the entire population to the sword, but consented at last to spare them, on condition that six of the chief men should give themselves up to be hanged.

[1] Coleridge (altered by Scott?), The Knight's Tomb.

A meeting was called, and St. Pierre, the wealthiest citizen of the place, volunteered, with five others, to go forth and die.

Bareheaded, barefooted, with halters round their necks, they silently went out, carrying the keys of the city. When they appeared before the English king, he ordered the executioner, who was standing by, to seize them and carry out the sentence forthwith; but Queen Philippa, who had accompanied her husband, now fell on her knees before him, and with tears, begged that they might be forgiven. For a long time Edward was inexorable, but finally, unable to resist her entreaties, he granted her request, and the men who had dared to face death for others, found life both for themselves and their fellow-citizens.[1]

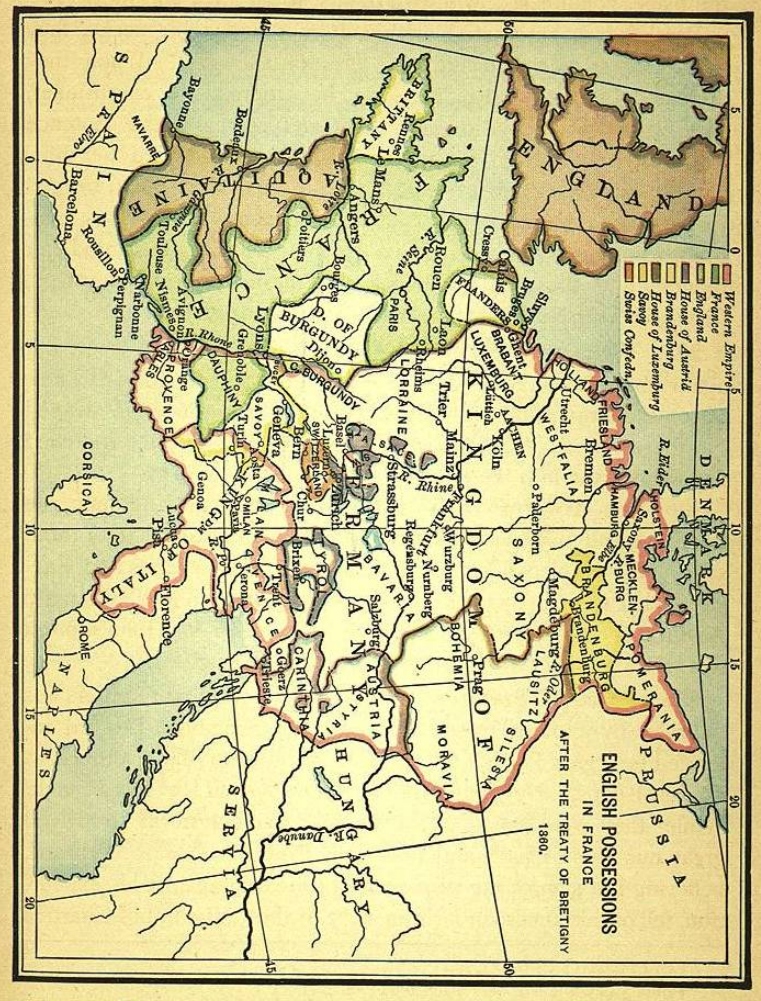
293. Victory of Poitiers[2] (1356). — After a long truce, war again broke out. Philip VI. had died, and his son, John II., now sat on the French throne. Edward, during this campaign, ravaged Northern France. The next year his son, the Black Prince, marched from Bordeaux into the heart of the country.

Reaching Poitiers[3] with a force of ten thousand men, he found himself nearly surrounded by a French army of sixty thousand. He so placed his troops amidst the narrow lanes and vineyards, that the enemy could not attack him with their full strength. Again the English archers gained the day, and King John himself was taken prisoner and carried in triumph to England.

294. Peace of Brétigny[4] (1360). — The victory of Poitiers was followed by another truce; then war began again. Edward intended besieging Paris, but was forced to retire to obtain provisions for his troops. Negotiations were now opened by the French. While they were going on, a terrible thunder-storm destroyed great numbers of men and horses in Edward's camp. Edward, believing it a sign of the displeasure of Heaven against his expedition, fell on his knees, and within sight of the Cathedral of Chartres

1 See Froissart's Chronicles.
2 Poitiers (Pwă-te-ā'), nearly like Pwī-te-ā'.
3 Poitiers, near a southern branch of the Loire. See Map No. 9, page 130.
4 Brétigny (bray-teen-yee').

No. 9.



To face page 130.

vowed to make peace. A treaty was accordingly signed at Brétigny near by. By it, Edward renounced all claim to Normandy and the French crown.[1] France, on the other hand, acknowledged the right of England, in full sovereignty, to the country south of the Loire, together with Calais, and agreed to pay an enormous ransom in gold for the restoration of King John.

295. Effects of the French Wars in England. — The great gain to England from these wars was not in the territory conquered, but in the new feeling of unity they aroused among all classes. For generations afterward, the memory of the brave deeds achieved in those fierce contests on a foreign soil made the glory of the Black Prince, whose rusty helmet and dented shield still hang above his tomb in Canterbury Cathedral,[2] one with the glory of the plain bowmen, whose names are found only in country churchyards.

Henceforth, whatever lingering feeling of jealousy and hatred had remained in England, between the Norman and the Englishman, now gradually melted away in an honest patriotic pride, which made both feel that at last they had become a united and homogeneous people.

The second effect of the wars was political. In order to carry them on, the king had to apply constantly to Parliament for money. Each time that body granted a supply, they insisted on some reform which increased their strength, and brought the crown more and more under the influence of the nation.

Thus it came to be clearly understood, that though the king held the sword, the people held the purse; and that the ruler who made the greatest concessions got the largest grants.

It was also in this reign that the House of Commons, which

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1 But the title of "King of France" was retained by English sovereigns down to a late period of the reign of George III.

2 These are probably the oldest accoutrements of the kind existing in Great Britain. The shield is of embossed leather stretched over a wooden frame, and is almost as hard as metal; the helmet is of iron. See Stothard's Monumental Effigies.

now sat as a separate body, and not, as at first, with the Lords,[1] obtained the important power of impeaching, or bringing to trial before the Upper House, any of the king's ministers or council guilty of misgovernment.

About this time, also, statutes were passed which forbade appeals from the king's courts of justice to that of the Pope,[2] who was then a Frenchman, and was believed to be under French political influence.

All foreign church officials were prohibited from taking money from the English church, or interfering in any way with its management.[3]

296. The Black Death. — Shortly after the first campaign in France, a frightful pestilence broke out in London, which swept over the country, destroying upwards of half the population. The disease, which was known as the Black Death,[4] had already traversed Europe, where it had proved equally fatal. "How many amiable young persons," said an Italian writer of that period,[5] "breakfasted with their friends in the morning, who, when evening came, supped with their ancestors." In Bristol and some other English cities, the mortality was so great that the living were hardly able to bury the dead; so that all business, and, for a time even war, came to a standstill.

297. Effect of the Plague on Labor. — After the pestilence had subsided, it was impossible to find laborers enough to till the soil and shear the sheep. Those who were free now demanded higher wages, while the villeins and slaves left their masters, and roamed about the country asking pay for their work, like freemen. It was a general agricultural strike which lasted over thirty years.

[1] The knights of the shire, or country gentlemen, now took their seats with the House of Commons, and as they were men of property and influence, this greatly increased the power of the representatives of the people in Parliament.

[2] First Statute of Præmunire.

[3] Statute of Provisors.

[4] Black Death: so called from the black spots it produced on the skin.

[5] Boccaccio, Decameron.

It marks the beginning of that contest between capital and labor which had such an important influence in the next reign, and which, after a lapse of five hundred years, is not yet satisfactorily adjusted.

Parliament endeavored to restore order. They passed laws forbidding any freeman from asking more for a day's work than before the plague. They gave the master the right to punish a serf who persisted in running away, by branding him on the forehead with the letter "F," for fugitive. But legislation was all in vain; the movement had begun, and parliamentary statutes could no more stop it than they could stop the ocean tide. It continued to go on until it reached its climax in the peasant insurrection led by Wat Tyler under Edward's successor, Richard II.

298. Beginning of English Literature. — During Edward's reign the first work in English prose was written. It was a volume of travels by Sir John Mandeville, who had journeyed in the East for over thirty years. On his return he wrote an account of what he had heard and seen, first in Latin, that the learned might read it; next in French, that the nobles might read it; and lastly in English for the common people. He dedicated the work to the king. Perhaps the most interesting and wonderful thing in it was the statement of his belief that the world is a globe, and that a ship may sail round it "above and beneath," — an assertion which probably seemed to those who read it then as less credible than any of the marvellous stories in which his book abounds.

William Langland was writing rude verses about his "vision of Piers the Plowman," contrasting "the wealth and woe" of the world, and so helping forward that democratic outbreak which was soon to take place among those who knew the woe and wanted the wealth. John Wycliffe, a lecturer at Oxford, attacked the rich and indolent churchmen in a series of tracts and sermons, while Chaucer, who had fought on the fields of France, was preparing to bring forth the first great poem in our language.[1]

[1] Wycliffe and Chaucer will appear more prominently in the next reign.

299. Edward's Death. — The king's last days were far from happy. His son, the Black Prince, had died, and Edward fell into the hands of selfish favorites and ambitious schemers. The worst of these was a woman named Alice Perrers, who, after Queen Philippa was no more, got almost absolute control of the king. She stayed with him until his last sickness. When his eyes began to glaze in death, she plucked the rings from his unresisting hands, and fled from the palace.

300. Summary. — During this reign the following events deserve especial notice: —

1. The acknowledgment of the independence of Scotland.
2. The establishment of the manufacture of fine woollens in England.
3. The beginning of the Hundred Years' War, with the victories of Crécy, and Poitiers, the Peace of Brétigny, and their social and political results in England.
4. The Black Death and its results on labor.
5. The partial emancipation of the English church from the power of Rome.
6. The rise of modern literature, represented by the works of Mandeville, Langland, and the early writings of Wycliffe and Chaucer.

RICHARD II. — 1377–1399.

301. England at Richard's Accession. — The death of the Black Prince left his son Richard heir to the crown. As he was but eleven years old, Parliament provided that the government during his minority should be carried on by a council; but John of Gaunt, Duke of Lancaster, speedily got the control of affairs.[1] He was an unprincipled man, who wasted the nation's money, opposed reform, and was especially hated by the laboring classes. The times were critical. War had again broken out with both Scotland and France, the French fleet was raiding the English

[1] John of Gaunt (a corruption of Ghent, his birthplace): he was a younger brother of Edward the Black Prince.

coast, the national treasury had no money to pay its troops, and the government debt was rapidly accumulating.

302. The New Tax; Tyler and Ball. — To raise money, it was resolved to levy a new form of tax, — a poll or head tax, — which had first been tried on a small scale during the last year of the previous reign. The attempt had been made to assess it on all classes, from laborers to lords. This imposition was now renewed in a much more oppressive form. Not only every laborer, but every member of a laborer's family above the age of fifteen, was required to pay what would be equal to the wages of an able-bodied man for at least several days' work.[1]

We have already seen that, owing to the ravages of the Black Death, and the strikes which followed, the country was on the verge of revolt. This new tax was the spark that caused the explosion. The money was roughly demanded in every poor man's cottage, and its collection caused the greatest distress. In attempting to enforce payment, a brutal collector shamefully insulted the young daughter of a workman named Wat Tyler. The indignant father, hearing the girl's cry for help, snatched up a hammer, and rushing in, struck the ruffian dead on the spot.

Tyler then collected a multitude of discontented serfs and free laborers on Blackheath Common, near London, with the determination of attacking the city and overthrowing the government.

John Ball, a fanatical priest, harangued the gathering, now sixty thousand strong, using by way of a text lines which were at that time familiar to every workingman: —

> "When Adam delved and Eve span,
> Who was then the gentleman?"

"Good people," he cried, "things will never go well in England so long as goods be not in common, and so long as there be

[1] The tax on laborers and their families varied from four to twelve pence each, the assessor having instructions to collect the latter sum, if possible. The wages of a day-laborer were then about a penny, so that the smallest tax for a family of three would represent the entire pay for nearly a fortnight's labor. See Pearson's England in the Fourteenth Century.