

Confronted by these evils, Parliament met in the Great Hall at Westminster. Many of the barons were in complete armor. As the king entered there was an ominous clatter of swords. Henry, looking around, asked timidly, "Am I a prisoner?"

"No, sire," answered Earl Bigod; "but we must have reform." The king agreed to summon a Parliament to meet at Oxford and consider what should be done. Their enemies nicknamed the assembly the "Mad Parliament"; but there was both method and determination in their madness, for which the country was grateful. With Simon de Montfort, the king's brother-in-law, at their head, they drew up a set of articles or provisions to which Henry gave an unwilling assent, which practically took the government out of his inefficient hands and vested it in the control of three committees, or councils.

**262. Renewal of the Great Charter.**—Even this was not enough. The king was now compelled to reaffirm that Great Charter which his father had unwillingly granted at Runnymede. Standing in St. Catherine's Chapel within the partially finished church of Westminster Abbey, Henry, holding a lighted taper in his hand, in company with the chief men of the realm, swore to observe the provisions of the covenant. At the close he exclaimed, as he dashed the taper on the pavement, while all present repeated the words and the action, "So go out with smoke and stench the accursed souls of those who break or pervert this charter." There is no evidence that the king was insincere in his oath; but unfortunately his piety was that of impulse, not of principle. The compact was soon broken, and the land again stripped by taxes extorted by violence, partly to cover Henry's own extravagance, but largely to swell the coffers of the Pope, who had promised to make his son Prince Edward ruler over Sicily.

**263. Growing Feeling of Discontent.**—During this time the barons were daily growing more mutinous and defiant, saying that they would rather die than be ruined by the "Romans," as they called the papal power. To a fresh demand for money Earl

Bigod gave a flat refusal. "Then I will send reapers and reap your fields for you," cried the king to him. "And I will send you back the heads of your reapers," retorted the angry earl.

It was evident that the nobles would make no concessions. The same spirit was abroad which, at an earlier date, made the parliament of Merton declare, when asked to alter the customs of the country to suit the ordinances of the church of Rome, "We will not change the laws of England." So now they were equally resolved not to pay the Pope money in behalf of the king's son.

**264. Civil War; Battle of Lewes.**—In 1264 the crisis was reached, and war broke out between the king and his brother-in-law, Simon de Montfort, Earl of Leicester, better known by his popular name of Sir Simon the Righteous.

With fifteen thousand Londoners, and a number of the barons, he met Henry, who had a stronger force, on the heights above the town of Lewes, in Sussex. The result of the great battle fought there, was as decisive as that fought two centuries before by William the Conqueror, not many miles distant on the same coast.<sup>1</sup>

**265. De Montfort's Parliament; the House of Commons (1265).**—Bracton, the foremost jurist of that day, said in his comments on the dangerous state of the times, "If the king were without a bridle,—that is, the law,—his subjects ought to put a bridle on him."

Earl Simon had that bridle ready, or rather he saw clearly where to get it. The battle of Lewes had gone against Henry, who had fallen captive to De Montfort. As head of the state the earl now called a parliament, which differed from all its predecessors in the fact that for the first time two citizens from each city, and two townsmen from each borough, or town, together with two knights, or country gentlemen, from each county, were summoned to London to join the barons and clergy in their deliberations. Thus, in the winter of 1265, that House of Commons, or legislative

<sup>1</sup> The village of Battle, which marks the spot where the battle of Hastings was fought, 1066, is less than twenty miles east of Lewes.

assembly of the people, originated, which, when fully established in the next reign, was to sit for more than three hundred years in the chapter-house<sup>1</sup> of Westminster Abbey. At last those who had neither land nor rank, but who paid taxes on personal property only, had obtained representation. Henceforth the king had a bridle which he could not shake off. Henceforth Magna Carta was no longer to be a dead parchment promise of reform, rolled up and hidden away, but was to become a living, ever-present, effective truth.

From this date the Parliament of England began to lose its exclusive character and to become a true representative body standing for the whole nation, and hence the model of every such assembly which now meets, whether in the old world or the new; the beginning of what President Lincoln called, "government of the people, by the people, for the people."

**266. Earl Simon's Death.** — Yet the same year brought for the earl a fatal reaction. The barons, jealous of his power, fell away from him. Edward, the king's eldest son, gathered them round the royal standard to attack and crush the man who had humiliated his father. De Montfort was at Evesham;<sup>2</sup> from the top of the church tower he saw the prince approaching. "Commend your souls to God," he said to the faithful few who stood by him; "for our bodies are the foes!" There he fell. In the north aisle of Westminster Abbey, not far from Henry's tomb, may be seen the emblazoned arms of the brave earl. England, so rich in effigies of her great men, so faithful, too, in her remembrance of them, has not yet set up in the vestibule of the House of Commons among the statues of her statesmen, the image of him who was in many respects the leader of them all, and the real originator and founder of the House itself.

**267. Summary.** — Henry's reign lasted over half a century. During that period England, as we have seen, was not standing

<sup>1</sup> Chapter-house: the building where the chapter or governing body of an abbey or cathedral meet to transact business.

<sup>2</sup> Evesham, Worcestershire.

still. It was an age of reform. In religion, the Mendicant Friars were exhorting men to better lives. In education, Roger Bacon and other devoted scholars were laboring to broaden knowledge and deepen thought. In political affairs the people through the House of Commons now first obtained a voice. Henceforth the laws will be in a measure their work, and the government will reflect in an ever-increasing degree their will.

EDWARD I. — 1272-1307.<sup>1</sup>

**268. Edward I. and the Crusades.** — Henry's son, Prince Edward, was in the East, fighting the battles of the crusades, at the time of his father's death. According to an account given in an old Spanish chronicle, his life was saved by the devotion of his wife Eleanor, who, when her husband was assassinated with a poisoned dagger, heroically sucked the poison from the wound.

**269. Edward's First Parliament.** — Shortly after his return to England, he convened a parliament, to which the representatives of the people were summoned. This body declared that all previous laws should be impartially executed, and that there should be no interference with elections.<sup>2</sup> Thus it will be seen that though Earl Simon was dead, his work went on. Edward had the wisdom to adopt and perfect the example his father's conqueror had left. By him, though not until near the close of his reign (1295), Parliament was firmly established, in its twofold form, of Lords and Commons,<sup>3</sup> and became "a complete image of the nation."

**270. Conquest of Wales; Birth of the first Prince of Wales.** — Henry II. had labored to secure unity of law for England. Edward's aim was to bring the whole island of Britain under one ruler. On the West, Wales only half acknowledged the power of the English king, while on the north, Scotland was practically an

<sup>1</sup> Edward I. was not crowned until 1274.

<sup>2</sup> The First Statute of Westminster.

<sup>3</sup> Lords: this term should be understood to include the higher clergy.

independent sovereignty. The new king determined to begin by annexing the first-named country to the crown. He accordingly led an army thither, and, after several victorious battles, considered that he had gained his end. To make sure of his new possessions, he erected the magnificent castles of Conway, Beaumaris, Harlech, and Caernarvon, all of which were permanently garrisoned with bodies of troops ready to check revolt.

In the last-named stronghold, tradition still points out a little dark chamber, more like a state-prison cell than a royal apartment, where Edward's son, the first Prince of Wales, was born. The Welsh had vowed that they would never accept an Englishman as king; but the young prince was a native of their soil, and certainly in his cradle, at least, spoke as good Welsh as their own children of the same age. No objection, therefore, could be made to him; by this happy compromise, it is said, Wales became a principality joined to the English crown.<sup>1</sup>

**271. Conquest of Scotland; the Stone of Scone.** — An opportunity now presented itself for Edward to assert his power in Scotland. Two claimants, both of Norman descent, had come forward demanding the crown.<sup>2</sup> One was John Baliol; the other, Robert Bruce, an ancestor of the famous king and general of that name, who comes prominently forward some years later. Edward

<sup>1</sup> Wales was not wholly incorporated with England until two centuries later, in the reign of Henry VIII. It then obtained local self-government and representation in Parliament.

<sup>2</sup> Scotland: At the time of the Roman conquest of Britain, Scotland was inhabited by a Celtic race nearly akin to the primitive Irish, and more distantly so to the Britons. In time, the Saxons from the continent invaded the country, and settled on the lowlands of the East, driving back the Celts to the western highlands. Later, many English emigrated to Scotland, especially at the time of the Norman Conquest, where they found a hearty welcome. In 1072, William the Conqueror compelled the Scottish king to acknowledge him as overlord; and eventually so many Norman nobles established themselves in Scotland, that they constituted the chief landed aristocracy of the country. The modern Scottish nation, though it keeps its Celtic name (Scotland), is made up in great measure of inhabitants of English descent, the pure Scotch being confined mostly to the Highlands, and ranking in population only as about one to three of the former.

was invited by the contestants to settle the dispute. He decided in Baliol's favor, but insisted, before doing so, that the latter should acknowledge the overlordship of England, as the king of Scotland had done to William I. Baliol made a virtue of necessity, and agreed to the terms; but shortly after formed a secret alliance with France against Edward, which was renewed from time to time, and kept up between the two countries for three hundred years. It is the key to most of the wars in which England was involved during that period. Having made this treaty, Baliol now openly renounced his allegiance to the English king. Edward at once organized a force, attacked Baliol, and compelled the country to acknowledge him as ruler. At the Abbey of Scone, near Perth, the English seized the famous "Stone of Destiny," the palladium of Scotland, on which her kings were crowned. Carrying the trophy to Westminster Abbey, Edward enclosed it in that ancient coronation chair which has been used by every sovereign since, from his son's accession down to that of Victoria.

**272. Confirmation of the Charters.** — Edward next prepared to attack France. In great need of money, he demanded a large sum from the clergy, and seized a quantity of wool in the hands of the merchants. The barons, alarmed at these arbitrary measures, insisted on the king's reaffirming all previous charters of liberties, including the Great Charter, with certain additions expressly providing that no money or goods should be taken by the crown except by the consent of the people. Thus out of the war, England "gained the one thing it needed to give the finishing touch to the building-up of Parliament; namely, a solemn acknowledgment by the king that the nation alone had power to levy taxes."<sup>1</sup>

**273. Revolt and Death of Wallace.** — Scotland, however, was not wholly subdued. The patriot, William Wallace rose and led his countrymen against the English — led them with that impetuous valor which breathes in Burns' lines: —

<sup>1</sup> Rowley, *Rise of the English People*.

"Scots wha ha'e wi' Wallace bled."

But fate was against him. After eight years of desperate fighting, the valiant soldier was captured, executed on Tower Hill as a traitor, and his head, crowned in mockery with a wreath of laurel, set on a pike on London Bridge.

But though the hero who perished on the scaffold could not prevent his country from becoming one day a part of England, he did hinder its becoming so on unfair and tyrannical terms. "Scotland is not Ireland. No; because brave men arose there, and said, 'Behold, ye must not tread us down like slaves,—and ye shall not,—and ye cannot!'"<sup>1</sup>

**274. Expulsion of the Jews.** — The darkest stain on Edward's reign was his treatment of the Jews. Up to this period that unfortunate race had been protected by the kings of England as men protect the cattle which they fatten for slaughter. So long as they accumulated money, and so long as the sovereign could rob them of their accumulations when he saw fit, they were worth guarding. A time had now come when the populace demanded their expulsion from the island, on the ground that their usury and extortion were ruining the country. Edward yielded to the clamor, and first stripping the Jews of their possessions, he prepared to drive them into exile. It is said that even their books were taken from them and given to the libraries of Oxford. Thus pillaged, they were forced to leave the realm — a miserable procession, numbering some sixteen thousand. Many perished on the way, and so few ventured to return, that for four centuries and a half, until Cromwell came to power, they practically disappear from English history.

**275. Death of Queen Eleanor.** — Shortly after this event, Queen Eleanor died. The king showed the love he bore her in the crosses he raised to her memory, three of which still stand.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Carlyle, Past and Present.

<sup>2</sup> Originally there were thirteen of these crosses. Of these, three remain; viz., at Northampton, at Geddington, near by, and at Waltham, about twelve miles northeast of London.

These were erected at the places where her body was set down, in its transit from Grantham, in Lincolnshire, where she died, to the little village of Charing (now Charing Cross, the geographical centre of London), its last station before reaching its final resting-place, in that abbey at Westminster, which holds such wealth of historic dust. Around her tomb wax-lights were kept constantly burning, until the Protestant Reformation extinguished them, three hundred years later.

**276. Edward's Reforms; Statute of Winchester.** — The condition of England when Edward came to the throne was far from settled. The country was overrun with marauders. To suppress these, the Statute of Winchester made the inhabitants of every district punishable by fines for crimes committed within their limits. Every walled town had to close its gates at sunset, and no stranger could be admitted during the night unless some citizen would be responsible for him.

To clear the roads of the robbers that infested them, it was ordered that all highways between market towns should be kept free of underbrush for two hundred feet on each side, in order that desperadoes might not lie in ambush for travellers.

Every citizen was required to keep arms and armor, according to his condition in life, and to join in the pursuit and arrest of criminals.

**277. Land Legislation.** — Two important statutes were passed during this reign, respecting the free sale or transfer of land.<sup>1</sup>

Their effect was to confine the great estates to the hands of their owners and direct descendants, or, when land changed hands, to keep alive the claims of the great lords or the crown upon it. These laws rendered it difficult for landholders to evade, as they hitherto frequently had, their feudal duties to the king by the sale

<sup>1</sup> These laws may be regarded as the foundation of the English system of landed property: they completed the feudal claim to the soil established by William the Conqueror. They are known as the Second Statute of Westminster (De Donis, or Entail, 1285) and the Third Statute of Westminster (Quia Emptores, 1290).

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<sup>1</sup> 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.<sup>2</sup>

**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!"

<sup>1</sup> Statute of Mortmain, 1279.

<sup>2</sup> 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.<sup>1</sup>

#### EDWARD II. — 1307-1327.

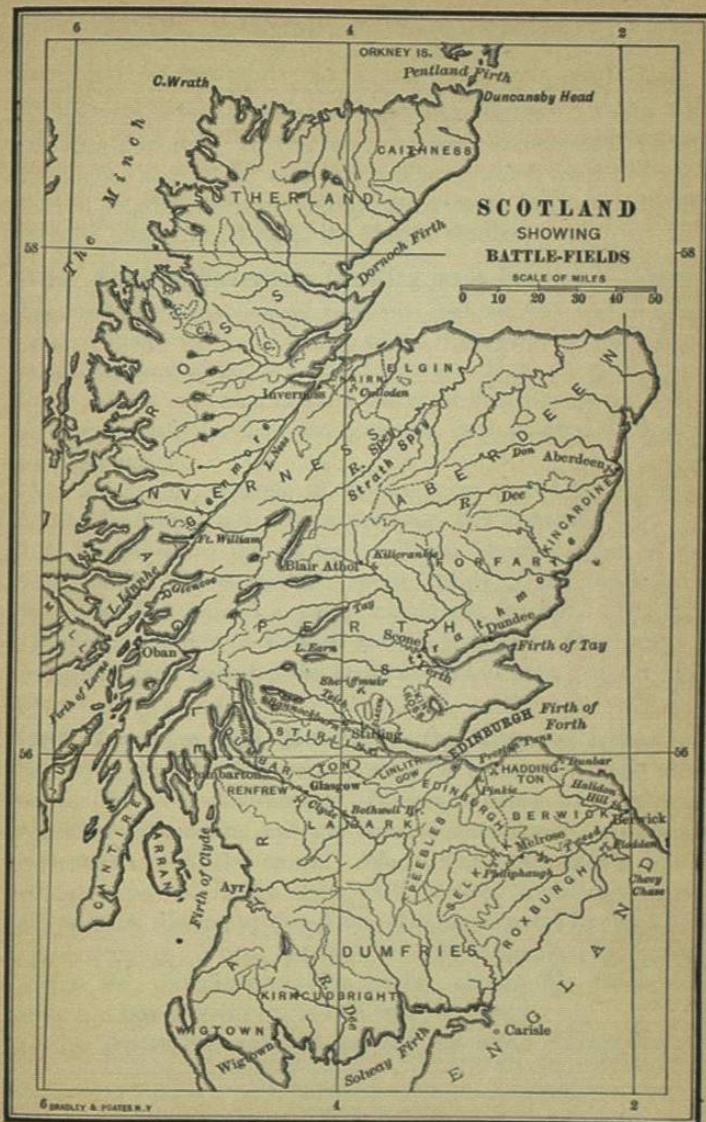
**281. Accession and Character.** — The son to whom Edward left his power was in every respect his opposite. The old definition of the word "king," was "the man who *can*," or the able man. The modern explanation usually makes him "the chief or head of a people." Edward II. would satisfy neither of these 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.

<sup>1</sup> 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<sup>1</sup> 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

<sup>1</sup> 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.<sup>1</sup>

**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,<sup>2</sup> 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

<sup>1</sup> James VI. of Scotland and I. of England, in 1603.

<sup>2</sup> 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,<sup>1</sup> 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,

<sup>1</sup> 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."<sup>1</sup> Through the influence of Edward's wife, Queen Philippa, who was a native of a province adjoining Flanders,<sup>2</sup> 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.

<sup>1</sup> 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.

<sup>2</sup> Flanders: a part of the Netherlands or Low Countries. The latter then embraced Holland, Belgium, and a portion of Northern France.



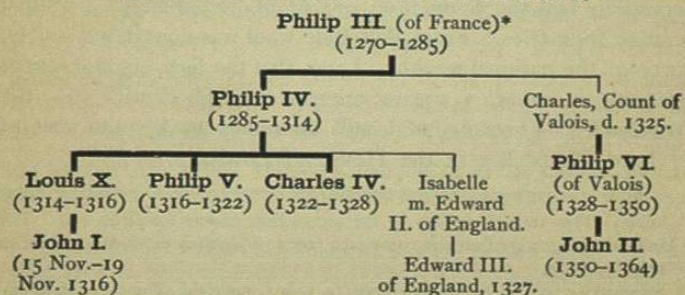
**289. The Beginning of the Hundred Years' War (1338).—**Indirectly, this trade between England and Flanders helped to bring on a war of such duration, that it received the name of the Hundred Years' War. Flanders was at that time a dependency of France; but the great commercial towns were rapidly rising 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,<sup>1</sup> 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,<sup>2</sup> and

<sup>1</sup> 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.

<sup>2</sup> CLAIM OF EDWARD III. TO THE FRENCH CROWN.



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<sup>1</sup> (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.<sup>2</sup>

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.

<sup>1</sup> Crécy (kray-see).

<sup>2</sup> 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;<sup>1</sup> 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.<sup>2</sup>

**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

<sup>1</sup> 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."

<sup>2</sup> 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 thyng. \* \* \* 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 wyth 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

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."<sup>1</sup>

**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.

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.

<sup>1</sup> 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.<sup>1</sup>

**293. Victory of Poitiers<sup>2</sup> (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<sup>3</sup> 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.

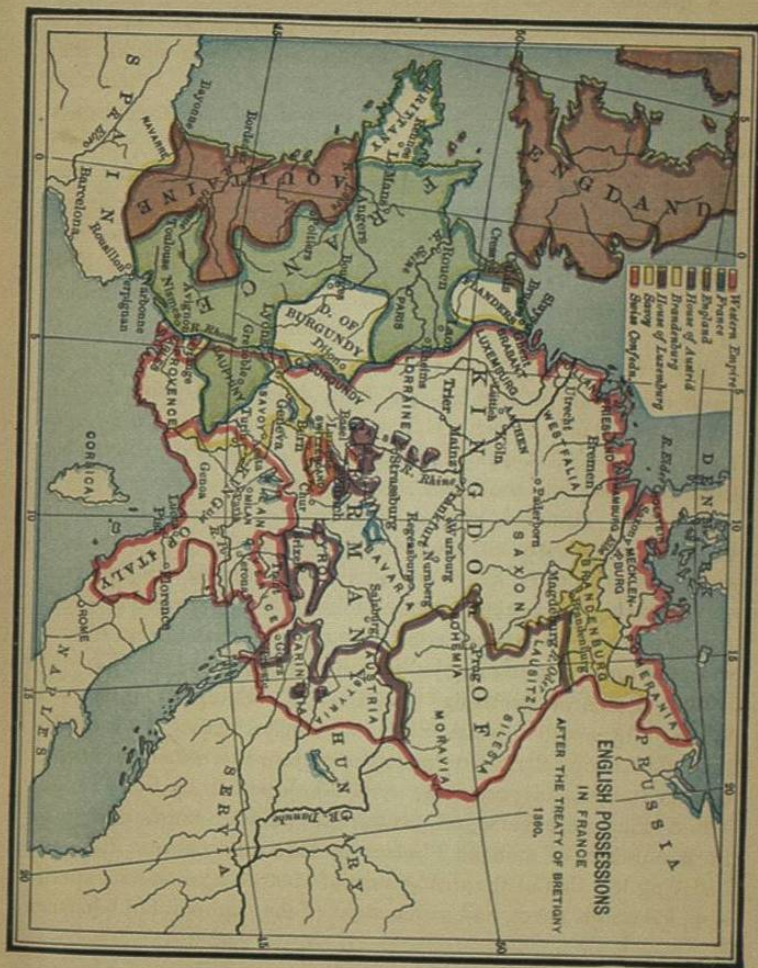
**294. Peace of Brétigny<sup>4</sup> (1360).**— The victory of Poitiers was followed by another truce; then war began again. Edward intended besieging Paris, but was forced to retire to obtain provisions for his troops. Negotiations were now opened by the French. While they were going on, a terrible 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

<sup>1</sup> See Froissart's Chronicles.

<sup>2</sup> Poitiers (Pwā-te-ā'), nearly like Pwī-te-ā'.

<sup>3</sup> Poitiers, near a southern branch of the Loire. See Map No. 9, page 130.

<sup>4</sup> Brétigny (bray-teen-yee').



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