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. They 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 (1346). — At Crécy (§ 290) small cannon appear to have been used for the first time in field warfare, though gunpowder was probably known to the English monk, Roger Bacon (§ 260), a hundred years before. The object

[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 (Chapter XIII) has given an excellent picture of the English bowman.

THE BATTLE OF CRÉCY. 1346

of the cannon was to frighten and annoy the 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 (§ 322).

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. Edward III takes Calais (1347). — Edward now marched against Calais.[2] He was particularly anxious to take the place: first, because it was a favorite resort of desperate pirates; secondly, because such a fortified port on the Strait of Dover, within sight of the chalk cliffs of England, would 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 at last he consented to spare them, on condition that six of the chief men should give themselves up to be hanged.

A meeting was called, and St. Pierre,[3] 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

[1] Coleridge; see Scott, The Knight's Tomb.
[2] Calais (Kăl'ay').
[3] St. Pierre (San Pee'ere').

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]

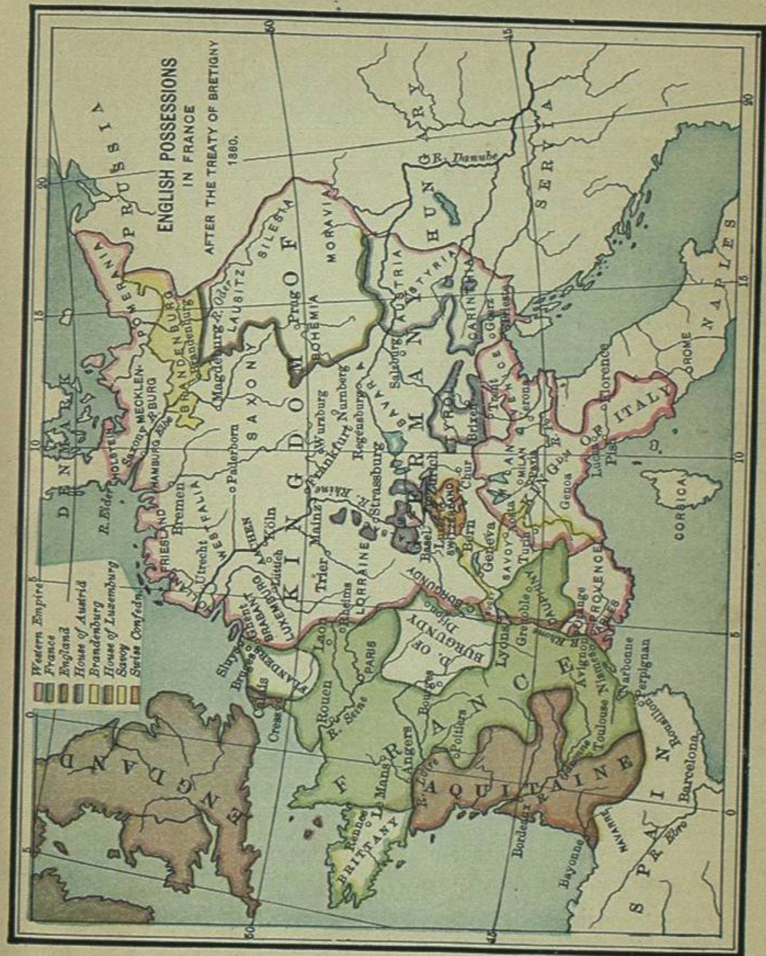
293. Victory of Poitiers[2] (1356). — After a long truce, war again broke out. Philip VI had died, and his son, John II, now sat on the French throne. Edward, during this campaign, ravaged Northern France. The next year his son, the Black Prince (§ 290), marched from Bordeaux[3] into the heart of the country.

Reaching Poitiers[4] 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 (§ 290), and King John himself was taken prisoner and carried in triumph to England.

294. Peace of Brétigny[5] (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[6] 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.[7] 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.

[1] See Froissart's Chronicles.
[2] Poitiers (Pwă-te-ā´, nearly like Pwī-te-ā´).
[3] Bordeaux (Bŏr´doe´).
[4] Poitiers, near a southern branch of the Loire. See Map No. 10, facing page 130.
[5] Brétigny (Bray-teen-yee´).
[6] Chartres (Shartr).
[7] But the title of "King of France" was retained by English sovereigns down to a late period of the reign of George III.



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. The memory of the brave deeds achieved in those fierce contests on a foreign soil never faded out. The glory of the Black Prince (§ 293), whose rusty helmet and dented shield still hang above his tomb in Canterbury Cathedral,[1] became 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 (§ 244), now gradually melted away. An honest, patriotic pride 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. (See Summary of Constitutional History in Appendix, page xii, § 13.)

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 now sat as a separate body, and not, as at first, with the Lords,[2] 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. (See Summary of Constitutional History in Appendix, page xii, § 13.)

About this time, also, statutes were passed which forbade appeals from the King's courts of justice to that of the Pope,[3]

[1] 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.

[2] 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.

[3] First Statute of Provisors (1351) and of Præmunire (1353). See § 317.

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.[1]

296. The Black Death (1349). — 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,[2] had already traversed Europe, where it had proved equally fatal.

"How many amiable young persons," said an Italian writer of that period,[3] "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.

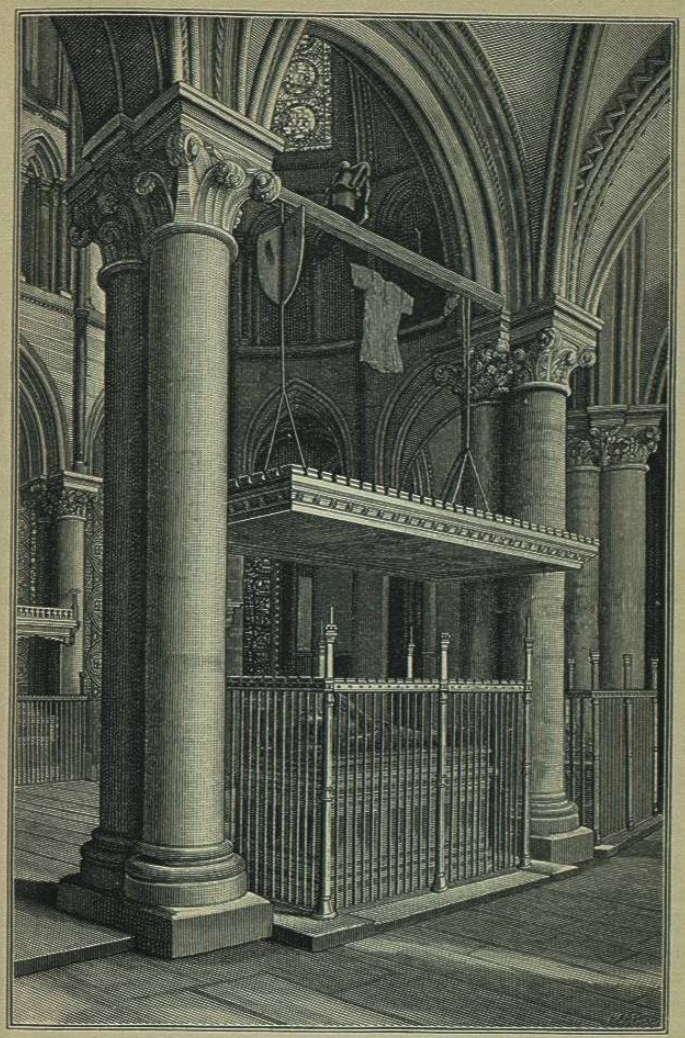
297. Effect of the Plague on Labor, 1349. — After the pestilence had subsided, it was impossible to find laborers enough to till the soil and shear the sheep. Those who were free now demanded higher wages, while the villeins, or serfs (§ 160), and slaves left their masters, and roamed about the country asking pay for their work, like freemen.

It was a general agricultural strike, which lasted over thirty years. 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 more than five hundred years, is not yet satisfactorily adjusted.

Parliament endeavored to restore order. It passed laws forbidding any freeman to ask more for a day's work than before the plague. It 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

1 Statute of Provisors (1351), and see § 317.
2 Black Death: so called from the black spots it produced on the skin.
3 Boccaccio's Decameron.



THE TOMB OF THE BLACK PRINCE IN CANTERBURY CATHEDRAL

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 (§ 303).

298. Beginning of English Literature, 1369–1377. — During Edward's reign the first work in English prose may have been 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 he, or some unknown person, translated it into 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 many who read it then as less credible than any of the marvellous stories in which his book abounds.

William Langland was writing rude verses (1369), 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]

299. The "Good Parliament" (1376); Edward's Death. — The "Good Parliament" (1376) attempted to carry through important reforms. It impeached (for the first time in English history)[2] certain prominent men for fraud. But in the end its work failed for want of a leader. The King's last days were far from happy. His son, the Black Prince (§ 290), had died, and Edward fell entirely into the hands of selfish favorites and ambitious schemers like John of Gaunt, Duke of Lancaster. Perhaps the worst one of

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

[2] See Summary of Constitutional History in the Appendix, page xii, § 13.

this corrupt "ring" 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 (§§ 290, 299) 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 (§ 299), 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 coast, the national treasury had no money to pay its troops, and the government debt was rapidly accumulating.

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

302. The New Tax; Tyler and Ball (1381). — 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 (§§ 296, 297). 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[2] 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 villeins (§ 160) and gentlemen. They call us slaves, and beat us

[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.

[2] Serfs or villeins. See § 160.

if we are slow to do their bidding, but God has now given us the day to shake off our bondage."

303. The Great Outbreak; Violence in London (1381). — Twenty years before there had been similar outbreaks in Flanders and in France. This, therefore, was not an isolated instance of insurrection, but rather part of a general uprising. The rebellion begun by Tyler and Ball (§ 302) spread through the southern and eastern counties of England, taking different forms in different districts. It was violent in St. Albans, where the serfs rose against the exactions of the abbot, but it reached its greatest height in London.

For three weeks the mob held possession of the capital. They pillaged and then burned John of Gaunt's palace (§§ 299, 301). They seized and beheaded the Lord Chancellor and the chief collector of the odious poll-tax (§ 302). They destroyed all the law papers they could lay hands on, and ended by murdering a number of lawyers; for the rioters believed that the members of that profession spent their time forging the chains which held the laboring class in subjection.

304. Demands of the Rebels; End of the Rebellion. — The insurrectionists demanded of the King that villeinage (§ 160) should be abolished, and that the rent of agricultural lands should be fixed by Parliament at a uniform rate in money. They also insisted that trade should be free, and that a general unconditional pardon should be granted to all who had taken part in the rebellion.

Richard promised redress; but while negotiations were going on, Walworth, mayor of London, struck down Tyler with his dagger, and with his death the whole movement collapsed almost as suddenly as it arose. Parliament now began a series of merciless executions, and refused to consider any of the claims which Richard had shown a disposition to listen to. In their punishment of the rebels the House of Commons vied with the Lords in severity, few showing any sympathy with the efforts of the peasants to obtain their freedom from feudal bondage.

The uprising, however, was not in vain, for by it the old

restrictions were in some degree loosened, so that in the course of the next century and a half, villeinage (§ 160) was gradually abolished, and the English laborer acquired that greatest yet most perilous of all rights, the complete ownership of himself.[1]

So long as he was a serf, the peasant could claim assistance from his master in sickness and old age; in attaining independence he had to risk the danger of pauperism, which began with it, — this possibility being part of the price which man must everywhere pay for the inestimable privilege of freedom.

305. The New Movement in Literature (1390?). — The same spirit which demanded emancipation on the part of the working classes showed itself in literature. We have already seen (§ 298) how, in the previous reign, Langland, in his poem of "Piers Plowman," gave bold utterance to the growing discontent of the times in his declaration that the rich and great destroyed the poor.

In a different spirit, Chaucer, "the morning-star of English song," now began (1390?) to write his "Canterbury Tales," a series of stories in verse, supposed to be told by a merry band of pilgrims on their way from the Tabard-Inn, Southwark,[2] to the shrine of St. Thomas Becket in Canterbury (§ 221).

There is little of Langland's complaint in Chaucer, for he was generally a favorite at court, seeing mainly the bright side of life, and sure of his yearly allowance of money and daily pitcher of wine from the royal bounty. Yet, with all his mirth, there is a vein of playful satire in his description of men and things. His pictures of jolly monks and easy-going churchmen, with his lines addressed to his purse as his "saviour, as down in this world here," show that he saw beneath the surface of things. He too was thinking, at least at times, of the manifold evils of poverty and of that danger springing from religious indifference which poor Langland had taken so much to heart.

[1] In Scotland villeinage lasted much longer, and so late as 1774, in the reign of George III, men working in coal and salt mines were held in a species of slavery, which was finally abolished the following year.

[2] Southwark. See note to § 153.

306. Wycliffe; the First English Bible, 1378. — But the real reformer of that day was John Wycliffe, rector of Lutterworth in Leicestershire and lecturer at Oxford. He boldly attacked the religious and the political corruption of the age. The Mendicant Friars, who had once done such good work (§ 260), had now grown too rich and lazy to be of further use.

Wycliffe organized a new band of brothers, known as "Poor Priests," to take up and push forward the reforms the friars had dropped. Clothed in red sackcloth cloaks, barefooted, with staff in hand, they went about from town to town[1] preaching "God's law," and demanding that Church and State bring themselves into harmony with it.

The only Bible then in use was the Latin version. The people could not read a line of it, and many priests were almost as ignorant of its contents. To carry on the revival which he had begun, Wycliffe now translated the Scriptures into English, 1378. The work was copied and circulated by the "Poor Priests."

But the cost of such a book in manuscript — for the printing-press had not yet come into existence — was so great that only the rich could buy the complete volume. Many, however, who had no money would give a load of farm produce for a few favorite chapters.

In this way Wycliffe's translation was spread throughout the country among all classes.[2] Later, when persecution began, men hid these precious copies and read them with locked doors at night, or met in the forests to hear them expounded by preachers who went about at the peril of their lives. These things led Wycliffe's enemies to complain "that common men and women who could read were better acquainted with the Scriptures than the most learned and intelligent of the clergy."

1 Compare Chaucer's

"A good man ther was of religioun,
That was a poure persone [parson] of a town."

Prologue to the Canterbury Tales (479).

2 The great number of copies sent out is shown by the fact that after the lapse of five hundred years, one hundred and sixty-five, more or less complete, are still preserved in England.

307. The Lollards; Wycliffe's Remains burned. — The followers of Wycliffe eventually became known as Lollards, or Psalm-singers.[1] From having been religious reformers denouncing the wealth and greed of a corrupt Church, they would seem, at least in many cases, to have degenerated into socialists or communists. They demanded, like John Ball (§ 302), — who may have been one of their number, — that all property should be equally divided, and that all rank should be abolished.

This fact should be borne in mind with reference to the subsequent efforts made by the Government to suppress the movement. In the eyes of the Church, the Lollards were heretics; in the judgment of many moderate men, they were destructionists and anarchists, as unreasonable and as dangerous as the "dynamiters" of to-day.

More than forty years after Wycliffe's death (1384), a decree of the church council of Constance[2] ordered the reformer's body to be dug up and burned (1428). But his influence had not only permeated England, but had passed to the continent, and was preparing the way for that greater movement which Luther was to inaugurate in the sixteenth century.

Tradition says that the ashes of his corpse were thrown into a brook flowing near the parsonage of Lutterworth, the object being to utterly destroy and obliterate the remains of the arch-heretic. Fuller says: "This brook did convey his ashes into the Avon, Avon into Severn, Severn into the narrow sea, and that into the wide ocean. And so the ashes of Wycliffe are the emblem of his doctrine, which is now dispersed all the world over."[3]

308. Richard's Misgovernment; the "Merciless Parliament." — Richard's reign was unpopular with all classes. The people

1 Or "Babblers."

2 Constance, Southern Germany. This Council (1415) sentenced John Huss and Jerome of Prague, both of whom may be considered Wycliffites, to the stake.

3 Fuller's Church History of Britain. Compare also Wordsworth's Sonnet to Wycliffe, and the lines, attributed to an unknown writer of Wycliffe's time:—

"The Avon to the Severn runs,
The Severn to the sea;
And Wycliffe's dust shall spread abroad,
Wide as the waters be."

hated him for his extravagance; the clergy, for his failing to put down the Wycliffites (§§ 306, 307), with the doctrines of whose founder he was believed to sympathize; while the nobles disliked his injustice and favoritism.

In the "Merciless Parliament" (1388) the "Lords Appellant" [1] put to death such of his ministers or chief counsellors as they could lay hands on. Later, that body attempted some political reforms, which were partially successful. But the King soon regained his power, and took summary vengeance (1397) on the "Lords Appellant." Two influential men were left, Thomas Mowbray, Duke of Norfolk, and Henry Bolingbroke, Duke of Hereford, whom he had found no opportunity to punish. After a time they openly quarrelled, and accused each other of treason.

A challenge passed between them, and they were to fight the matter out in the King's presence; but when the day arrived, and they came ready for the combat, the King banished both from England (1398). Shortly after they had left the country Bolingbroke's father, John of Gaunt, Duke of Lancaster, died. Contrary to all law, Richard now seized and appropriated the estate, which belonged by right to the banished nobleman.

309. Richard deposed and murdered (1399). — When Bolingbroke, now by his father's death Duke of Lancaster, heard of the outrage, he raised a small force and returned to England, demanding the restitution of his lands.

Finding that the powerful family of the Percies were willing to aid him, and that many of the common people desired a change of government, the duke boldly claimed the crown, on the ground that Richard had forfeited it by his tyranny, and that he stood next in succession through his descent from Henry III. But in reality Henry Bolingbroke had no claim save that given by right of conquest, since the boy Edmund Mortimer held the direct title to the crown.[2]

The King now fell into Henry's hands, and events moved rapidly to a crisis. Richard had rebuilt Westminster Hall (§ 206).

[1] The "Lords Appellant" were the noblemen who "appealed" or accused Richard's counsellors of treason. [2] See genealogical table, under No. 4, on page 141.

The first Parliament which assembled there met to depose him, and to give his throne to the victorious Duke of Lancaster. Shakespeare represents the fallen monarch saying in his humiliation: —

"With mine own tears I wash away my balm,[1]
With mine own hand I give away my crown."

After his deposition Richard was confined in Pontefract Castle, Yorkshire, where he found, like his unfortunate ancestor, Edward II (§ 285), "that in the case of princes there is but a step from the prison to the grave." His death did not take place, however, until after Henry's accession.[2]

310. Summary. — Richard II's reign comprised: —

1. The peasant revolt under Wat Tyler, which led eventually to the emancipation of the villeins, or serfs.

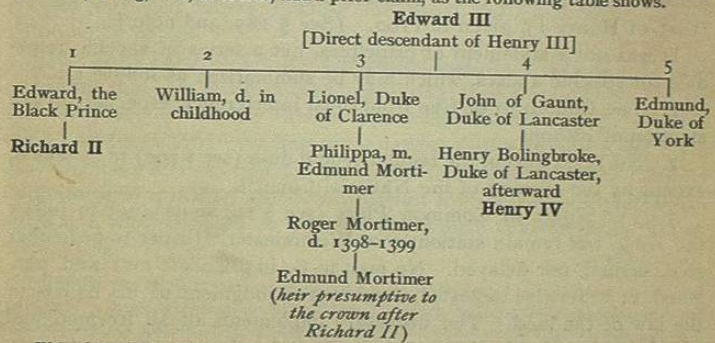
2. Wycliffe's reformation movement; his translation of the Latin Bible, with the rise of the Lollards.

3. The publication of Chaucer's "Canterbury Tales," the first great English poem.

4. The deposition of the King, and the transfer of the crown by Parliament to Henry, Duke of Lancaster.

[1] Richard II, Act IV, Scene 1. The balm was the sacred oil used in anointing the King at his coronation.

[2] Henry of Lancaster was the son of John of Gaunt, who was the fourth son of Edward III; but there were descendants of that king's *third* son (Lionel, Duke of Clarence) living, who, of course, had a prior claim, as the following table shows.



This disregard of the strict order of succession furnished a pretext for the Civil Wars of the Roses, which broke out sixty years later.

GENERAL VIEW OF THE ANGEVIN, OR PLANTAGENET, PERIOD (1154–1399)

I. GOVERNMENT. — II. RELIGION. — III. MILITARY AFFAIRS. — IV. — LITERATURE, LEARNING, AND ART. — V. GENERAL INDUSTRY AND COMMERCE. — VI. MODE OF LIFE, MANNERS, AND CUSTOMS.

GOVERNMENT

311. Judicial Reforms. — In 1164 Henry II undertook, by a series of statutes called the Constitutions of Clarendon, to bring the Church under the common law of the land, but was only temporarily successful. By subsequent statutes he reorganized the administration of justice, and laid the foundation of trial by jury.

312. Town Charters. — Under Richard I many towns secured charters giving them the control of their own affairs in great measure. In this way municipal self-government arose, and a prosperous and intelligent class of merchants and artisans grew up who eventually obtained important political influence in the management of national affairs.

313. The Great, or National, Charter. — This pledge, extorted from King John in 1215, put a check to the arbitrary power of the sovereign, and guaranteed the rights of all classes, from the serf and the townsman to the bishop and baron (§ 251). It consisted originally of sixty-three articles, founded mainly on the first royal charter (that of Henry I), given in 1100. (See § 185, and note.)

It was not a statement of principles, but a series of specific remedies for specific abuses, which may be summarized as follows: —

1. The Church to be free from royal interference, especially in the election of bishops.

2. No taxes except the regular feudal dues (see § 200) to be levied, except by the consent of the National Council.

3. The Court of Common Pleas (see § 197, note), not to follow the King, but remain stationary at Westminster. Justice to be neither sold, denied, nor delayed. No man to be imprisoned, outlawed, punished, or otherwise molested, save by the judgment of his equals or the law of the land. The necessary implements of all freemen, and the farming-tools of villeins or serfs (§ 160), to be exempt from seizure.

4. Weights and measures to be kept uniform throughout the realm. All merchants to have the right to enter and leave the kingdom without paying exorbitant tolls for the privilege.

5. Forest laws to be justly enforced.

6. The charter to be carried out by twenty-five barons together with the mayor of London.

This document marks the beginning of a written constitution, and it proved of the highest value henceforth in securing good government. It was confirmed thirty-seven times by subsequent kings and parliaments, the confirmation of this and previous charters by Edward I in 1297 being of especial importance.

314. Rise of the House of Commons. — In 1265, under Henry III, through the influence of Simon de Montfort, two representatives from each city and borough, or town, together with two knights of the shire, or country gentlemen, were summoned to meet with the lords and clergy in the National Council, or Parliament. From this time the body of the people began to have a voice in making the laws.

Later in the period the knights of the shire joined the representatives from the towns in forming a distinct body in Parliament sitting by themselves under the name of the House of Commons. They obtained the power of levying all taxes, and also of impeaching before the House of Lords any government officer guilty of misuse of power.

315. New Class of Barons. — Under Henry III other influential men of the realm, aside from the great landholders and barons by tenure, began to be summoned to the King's council. These were called "barons by writ." Later (under Richard II), barons were created by open letters bearing the royal seal, and were called "barons by patent."[1]

316. Land Laws. — During this period important laws (De Donis, or Entail, and Quia Emptores) respecting land were passed, which had the effect of keeping estates in families, and also of preventing their possessors from evading their feudal duties to the King. At the same time a restriction on the acquisition of land by the Church (Statute of Mortmain), which was exempt from paying certain feudal dues, was also imposed to prevent the King's revenue from being diminished.

[1] This is the modern method of raising a subject (*e.g.*, Lord Tennyson) to the peerage. It marks the fact that from the thirteenth century the ownership of land was no longer considered a necessary condition of nobility; and that the peerage had now developed into the five degrees, which it still maintains, of dukes, marquises, earls, viscounts, and barons.