RELIGION

317. Restriction of the Papal Power. — During the Angevin period the popes endeavored to introduce the canon law (a body of ordinances consisting mainly of the decisions of church councils and popes) into England, with the view of making it supreme; but Parliament, at Merton, refused to accept it, saying, "We will not change the laws of England."

The Statute of Mortmain was also passed (see § 278) and other measures (Statute of Provisors and Statute of Præmunire) (§ 295), which forbade the Pope from taking the appointment of bishops and other ecclesiastics out of the hands of the clergy; and which prohibited any appeal from the king's court to the papal court. Furthermore, many hundreds of parishes, formerly filled by foreigners who could not speak English, were now given to native priests, and the sending of money out of the country to support foreign ecclesiastics was in great measure stopped.

During the crusades two religious military orders had been established, called the Knights Hospitallers and the Knights Templars. The object of the former was, originally, to provide entertainment for pilgrims going to Jerusalem; that of the latter, to protect them. Both had extensive possessions in England. In 1312 the order of Templars was broken up on a charge of heresy and evil life, and their property in England given to the Knights Hospitallers, who were also called Knights of St. John.

318. Reform. — The Mendicant Friars began a reformatory movement in the Church and accomplished much good. This was followed by Wycliffe's attack on religious abuses, by his translation of the Bible, with the revival carried on by the "Poor Priests," and by the rise of the Lollards, who were eventually punished by the passage of severe laws, partly on the ground of their heretical opinions, and partly because they became in a measure identified with socialistic and communistic efforts to destroy rank and equalize property.

MILITARY AFFAIRS

319. Scutage. — By a tax called scutage, or shield-money, levied on all knights who refused to serve the King in foreign wars, Henry II obtained the means to hire soldiers. By a law reviving the national militia, composed of freemen below the rank of knights, the King made himself in great measure independent of the barons, with respect to raising troops.

320. Armor; Heraldry. — The linked or mail armor now began to be superseded by that made of pieces of steel joined together so as to fit the body. This, when it was finally perfected, was called plate armor, and was both heavier and stronger than mail.

With the introduction of plate armor and the closed helmet it became the custom for each knight to wear a device, called a crest, on his helmet, and also to have one called a coat of arms (because originally worn on a loose coat over the armor).

This served to distinguish him from others, and was of practical use not only to the followers of a great lord, who thus knew him at a glance, but it served in time of battle to prevent the confusion of friend and foe. Eventually, coats of arms became hereditary, and the descent, and to some extent the history, of a family can be traced by them. In this way heraldry serves as a help to the knowledge of men and events.

321. Chivalry; Tournaments. — The profession of arms was regulated by certain rules, by which each knight solemnly bound himself to serve the cause of religion and the king, and to be true, brave, and courteous to those of his own rank, to protect ladies (women of gentle birth), and succor all persons in distress. Under Edward III chivalry reached its culmination and began to decline.

One of the grotesque features of the attack on France was an expedition of English knights with one eye bandaged; this half-blind company having vowed to partially renounce their sight until they did some glorious deed. The chief amusement of the nobles and knights was the Tournament, a mock combat fought on horseback, in full armor, which sometimes ended in a real battle. At these entertainments a lady was chosen queen, who gave prizes to the victors.

322. The Use of the Long-Bow; Introduction of Cannon; Wars. — The common weapon of the yeomen, or foot-soldiers, was the long-bow. It was made of yew-tree wood, and was of the height of the user. Armed with this weapon, the English soldiers proved themselves irresistible in the French wars, the French having no native archers of any account.

Roger Bacon is supposed to have known the properties of gunpowder as early as 1250, but no practical use was made of the discovery until the battle of Crécy, 1346, when a few very small cannon are said

to have been employed by the English against the enemy's cavalry. Later, they were used to throw heavy stones in besieging castles. Still later, rude hand-guns came slowly into use. From this period kings gradually began to realize the full meaning of the harmless-looking black grains, with whose flash and noise the Oxford monk had amused himself.

The chief wars of the time were the contests between the kings and the barons, Richard I's crusade, John's war with France, resulting in the loss of Normandy, Edward I's conquest of Wales and temporary subjugation of Scotland, and the beginning of the Hundred Years' War with France under Edward III.

The navy of this period was made up of small, one-masted vessels, seldom carrying more than a hundred and fifty fighting men. As the mariner's compass had now come into general use, these vessels could, if occasion required, make voyages of considerable length.

LEARNING, LITERATURE, AND ART

323. Education. — In 1264 Walter de Merton founded the first college at Oxford, an institution which has ever since borne his name, and which really originated the English college system. During the reign of Edward III, William of Wykeham, Bishop of Winchester, gave a decided impulse to higher education by the establishment, at his own expense, of Winchester College, the first great public school founded in England. Later, he built and endowed New College at Oxford to supplement it.

In Merton's and Wykeham's institutions young men of small means were instructed, and in great measure supported, without charge. They were brought together under one roof, required to conform to proper discipline, and taught by the best teachers of the day. In this way a general feeling of emulation was roused, and at the same time a fraternal spirit cultivated which had a strong influence in favor of a broader and deeper intellectual culture than the monastic schools at Oxford and elsewhere had encouraged.

324. Literature. — The most prominent historical work was that by Matthew Paris, a monk of St. Alban's, written in Latin, based largely on earlier chronicles, and covering the period from the Norman Conquest, 1066, to his death, in 1259. It is a work of much value, and was continued by writers of the same abbey.

The first English prose work was a volume of travels by Sir John Mandeville, dedicated to Edward III. It was followed by Wycliffe's translation of the Bible into English from the Latin version, and by Chaucer's "Canterbury Tales," the first great English poem.

325. Architecture. — Edward I and his successors began to build structures combining the palace with the stronghold.[1] Conway and Caernarvon Castles in Wales, Warwick Castle, Warwickshire, and a great part of Windsor Castle on the Thames, twenty-three miles west of London, are magnificent examples, the last still being occupied as a royal residence.

In churches, the massive architecture of the Normans, with its heavy columns and round arches, was followed by Early English, or the first period of the Gothic, with pointed arches, slender, clustered, columns and tapering spires, like that of Salisbury Cathedral.

Later, the Decorated style was adopted. It was characterized by broader windows, highly ornamented to correspond with the elaborate decoration within, which gave this style its name, which is seen to advantage in Exeter Cathedral, York Minster, and Merton College Chapel.

GENERAL INDUSTRY

326. Fairs; Guilds. — The domestic trade of the country was largely carried on during this period by great fairs held at stated times by royal license. Bunyan, in "Pilgrim's Progress," gives a vivid picture of one of these centres of trade and dissipation, under the name of "Vanity Fair." Though it represents the great fair of Sturbridge, near Cambridge, as he saw it in the seventeenth century, yet it undoubtedly describes similar gatherings in the time of the Plantagenets.

In all large towns the merchants had formed associations for mutual protection and the advancement of trade, called merchant-guilds. Artisans now instituted similar societies, under the name of craft-guilds. For a long time the merchant-guilds endeavored to shut out the craft-guilds, the men, as they said, "with dirty hands and blue nails," from having any part in the government of the towns. But eventually the latter got their full share, and in some cases, as in London, became the more influential party of the two. In London they still survive under the name of the "City Companies."

[1] The characteristic features of the Edwardian castles are double surrounding walls, with numerous protecting towers, and the omission of the square Norman keep.

327. The Wool Trade. — Under Edward III a flourishing trade in wool grew up between England and Flanders. The manufacture of fine woollen goods was also greatly extended in England. All commerce at this period was limited to certain market towns called "staples."

To these places material and goods for export had to be carried in order that they might pay duty to the Government before leaving the country. Imports also paid duties. If an Englishman carried goods abroad and sold them in the open market without first paying a tax to the Crown, he was liable to the punishment of death.

328. The Great Strike. — The scarcity of laborers caused by the ravages of the Black Death caused a general strike for higher wages on the part of free workingmen, and also induced thousands of villeins to run away from their masters, in order to get work on their own account. The general uprising which a heavy poll-tax caused among the laboring class, though suppressed at the time, led to the ultimate emancipation of the villeins, by a gradual process extending through many generations.

MODE OF LIFE, MANNERS, AND CUSTOMS

329. Dress; Furniture. — During most of this period great luxury in dress prevailed among the rich and noble. Silks, velvets, scarlet cloth and cloth of gold were worn by both men and women. At one time the lords and gallants at court wore shoes with points curled up like rams' horns and fastened to the knee with silver chains.

Attempts were made by the Government to abolish this and other ridiculous fashions, and also to regulate the cost of dress according to the rank and means of the wearer; but the effort met with small success. Even the rich at this time had but little furniture in their houses, and chairs were almost unknown. The floors of houses were strewn with rushes, which, as they were rarely changed, became horribly filthy, and were a prolific cause of sickness.

330. The Streets; Amusements; Profanity. — The streets of London and other cities were rarely more than twelve or fifteen feet wide. They were neither paved nor lighted. Pools of stagnant water and heaps of refuse abounded. There was no sewerage. The only scavengers were the crows. The houses were of timber and plaster, with projecting stories, and destructive fires were common. The chief amusements were hunting and hawking, contests at archery, and

tournaments. Plays were acted by amateur companies on stages on wheels, which could be moved from street to street.

The subjects continued to be drawn in large measure from the Bible and from legends of the saints. They served to instruct men in Scripture history, in an age when few could read. The instruction was not, however, always taken to heart, as profane swearing was so common that an Englishman was called on the continent by his favorite oath, which the French regarded as a sort of national name before that of "John Bull" came into use.