SECTION VII

"God's most dreaded instrument,
In working out a pure intent,
Is man — arrayed for mutual slaughter."
WORDSWORTH.

THE SELF-DESTRUCTION OF FEUDALISM

BARON against BARON

THE HOUSES OF LANCASTER AND YORK (1399–1485)

HOUSE OF LANCASTER (the Red Rose).	HOUSE OF YORK (the White Rose).
HENRY IV, 1399–1413.	EDWARD IV, 1461–1483.
HENRY V, 1413–1422.	†EDWARD V, 1483.
*HENRY VI, 1422–1471.	RICHARD III, 1483–1485.

331. Henry IV's Accession. — Richard II left no children. The nearest heir to the kingdom by right of birth was the boy Edmund Mortimer, a descendant of Richard's uncle Lionel, Duke of Clarence.[1] Henry ignored Mortimer's claim, and standing before Richard's empty throne in Westminster Hall, boldly demanded the crown for himself.[2]

The nation had suffered so much from the misgovernment of those who had ruled during the minority of Richard, that they

* Henry VI, deposed 1461; reinstated for a short time in 1470.

† Edward V, never crowned.

[1] See genealogical table, note, § 309.

[2] "In the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, I, Henry of Lancaster, challenge this realm of England and the Crown, with all the members and the appurtenances, as that I am descended by right line of blood, coming from the good King Henry III, and through that right that God of his grace hath sent me, with help of kin and of all my friends to recover it, the which realm was in point to be undone by default of government and undoing of the good laws."

wanted no more boy kings. Parliament, therefore, set aside the direct line of descent and accepted Henry.

332. Conspiracy in Favor of Richard. — The new King had hardly seated himself on the throne when a conspiracy was discovered, having for its object the release and restoration of Richard, still a prisoner in Pontefract Castle (§ 309). The plot was easily crushed. A month later Richard was found dead.

Henry had his body brought up to London and exposed to public view in St. Paul's Cathedral, in order that not only the people, but all would-be conspirators might now see that Richard's hands could never again wield the sceptre.

There was, however, one man at least who refused to be convinced. Owen Glendower, a Welshman, whom the late King had befriended, declared that Richard was still living, and that the corpse exhibited was not his body. Glendower prepared to maintain his belief by arms. King Henry mustered a force with the intention of invading Wales and crushing the rebel on his own ground; but a succession of terrible tempests ensued.

The English soldiers got the idea that Glendower raised these storms, for as an old chronicle declares: "Through art magike he [Glendower] caused such foule weather of winds, tempest, raine, snow, and haile to be raised for the annoiance of the King's armie, that the like had not beene heard of."[1] For this reason the troops became disheartened, and the King was obliged to postpone the expedition.

333. Revolt of the Percies; Parliament's Bold Step (1407). — The powerful Percy family had been active in helping Henry to obtain the throne,[2] and had spent large sums in defending the North against invasions from Scotland.[3] They expected a royal reward for these services, and were sorely disappointed because they did not get it. As young Henry Percy said of the King: —

"My father, and my uncle, and myself,
Did give him that same royalty he wears;

[1] Holinshed's Chronicle. [2] Thomas Percy, Earl of Worcester, with Henry Percy, Earl of Northumberland, and his son, Sir Henry Percy, or "Hotspur." See § 309. [3] See the Ballad of Chevy Chase.

> And, — when he was not six-and-twenty strong,
> Sick in the world's regard, wretched and low,
> A poor, unminded outlaw sneaking home, —
> My father gave him welcome to the shore:
> . . . . . .
> Swore him assistance and perform'd it too."[1]

But the truth is, Henry had little to give except promises. Parliament voted money cautiously, limiting its supplies to specific purposes. Men of wealth, feeling anxious about the issue of the King's usurpation, — for such many regarded it, — were afraid to lend him what he required. Finally (1407) the House of Commons took a bold and decisive step. It demanded and obtained the exclusive right of making all grants of money which the King asked for. This practically gave the people the control of the nation's purse.[2] Besides being held in check by Parliament, the King was hampered by a council whose advice he had pledged himself to follow. For these reasons Henry's position was in every way precarious.

He had no clear title to the throne, and he had no means to buy military support. In addition to these difficulties, Henry had made an enemy of Sir Henry Percy. He had refused to ransom his brother-in-law, a Mortimer,[3] whom Glendower had captured, but whom the King wished well out of the way with all others of that name.

Young Percy proved a dangerous foe. His hot temper and impetuous daring had got for him the title of "the Hotspur of the North." He was so fond of fighting that Shakespeare speaks of him as "he that kills me some six or seven dozen of Scots at a breakfast, washes his hands, and says to his wife, *Fie upon this quiet life! I want work.*"[4] This "fire-eater," with his father, his uncle, the Earl of Worcester, and the Scotch Earl of Douglas,

1 Shakespeare, Henry IV, Part I, Act IV, Scene 3.
2 See Summary of Constitutional History in the Appendix, page xii, § 13.
3 Sir Edmund Mortimer: he was uncle to the Edmund Mortimer, Earl of March, who was heir to the crown. See Bailey's Succession to the English Crown.
4 Shakespeare, Henry IV, Part I, Act II, Scene 4.

and, last of all, Glendower, now formed an alliance to force Henry to give up the throne.

334. Battle of Shrewsbury (1403). — At Shrewsbury, on the edge of Wales, the armies of the King and of the revolutionists met. A number of Henry's enemies had sworn to single him out in battle. The plot was divulged, and it is said thirteen knights arrayed themselves in armor resembling the King's in order to mislead the assailants. The whole thirteen perished on that bloody field, where fat Sir John Falstaff vowed he fought on Henry's behalf "a long hour by Shrewsbury clock."[1]

The insurgents were utterly defeated. Douglas was taken prisoner, "Hotspur" was killed, and several of his companions were beheaded after the battle. But new insurrections arose, and the country was far from enjoying any permanent peace.

335. Persecution of the Lollards; Statute of Heresy; the First Martyr (1401). — Thus far Henry had spent much time in crushing rebels, but he had also given part of it to burning heretics. To gain the favor of the clergy, and so render his throne more secure, the King favored the passage of a Statute of Heresy. The lords and bishops passed such a law (to which the House of Commons seems to have assented).[2] It punished the Lollards (§ 307) and others who dissented from the doctrines of Rome with death.

William Sawtrey, a London clergyman, was the first victim under the new law (1401). He had declared that he would not worship "the cross on which Christ suffered, but only Christ himself who had suffered on the cross." He had also openly denied the doctrine of transubstantiation, which teaches that the sacramental bread is miraculously changed into the actual body of the Saviour. For these and minor heresies he was burned at Smithfield, in London, in the presence of a great multitude.

Some years later a second martyrdom took place. But as the English people would not allow torture to be used in the case of the Knights Templars in the reign of Edward II (§ 317), so they

1 Shakespeare, Henry IV, Part I, Act V, Scene 4.
2 See Stubbs' Constitutional History of England, III, 32.

never favored the idea that by committing the body to the flames error could thereby be burned out of the soul.

The Lollards, indeed, were still cast into prison, as some of the extreme and communistic part of them doubtless deserved to be, but we hear of no more being put to cruel deaths during Henry's reign, though later, the utmost rigor of the law was again to some extent enforced.

336. Henry's Last Days. — Toward the close of his life the King seems to have thought of reviving the crusades for the conquest of Jerusalem, where, according to tradition, an old prediction declared that he should die. But his Jerusalem was nearer than that of Palestine. While praying at the tomb of Edward the Confessor in Westminster Abbey, he was seized with mortal illness. His attendants carried him into a room near by.

When he recovered consciousness, and inquired where he was, he was told that the apartment was called the Jerusalem Chamber. "Praise be to God," he exclaimed, "then here I die!" There he breathed his last, saying to his son, young Prince Henry: —

> "God knows, my son,
> By what by-paths and indirect crook'd ways,
> I met this crown; and I myself know well
> How troublesome it sat upon my head;
> To thee it shall descend with better quiet,
> Better opinion, better confirmation;
> For all the soil of the achievement[1] goes
> With me into the earth."

337. Summary. — At the outset of his reign Parliament showed its power by changing the succession and making Henry King instead of young Edmund Mortimer, the direct hereditary heir to the crown. Though successful in crushing rebellion, Henry was obliged to submit to the guidance of a council.

Furthermore, he was made more entirely dependent on Parliament, especially in the matter of supplies, than any previous king, for the House of Commons now got and held control of the

1 "Soil of the achievement": stain or blame by which the crown was won. Henry IV, Part II, Act IV, Scene 4.

nation's purse. For the first time in English history heresy was made punishable by death; yet such was the restraining influence of the people, that but two executions took place.

HENRY V — 1413–1422

338. Lollard Outbreak at Henry's Accession. — Henry's youth had been wild and dissolute, but the weight of the crown sobered him. He cast off poor old Jack Falstaff and his other roistering companions, and began his new duties in earnest.

Sir John Oldcastle, or Lord Cobham, was at this time the most influential man among the Lollards (§§ 307, 335). He was brought to trial and convicted of heresy. The penalty was death; but the King granted him a respite, in the hope that he might recant. Oldcastle managed to escape from prison (1414).

Immediately after, a conspiracy was detected among the Lollards for seizing the government, destroying the chief monasteries in and about London, and raising Oldcastle to power. Henry attacked the rebels unawares, killed many, and took a large number of prisoners, who were executed on a double charge of heresy and treason. Several years afterwards Oldcastle was burned as a heretic.

339. Report that Richard II was alive. — A strange report now began to circulate. It was said that Richard II (§ 309) had been seen in Scotland, and that he was preparing to claim the throne which Henry's father had taken from him. To silence this seditious rumor, the King exhumed Richard's body from its grave in the little village of Langley, Hertfordshire. The ghastly remains were propped up in a chair of state so that all might see them.

In this manner the King and his court escorted the corpse in solemn procession to Westminster Abbey, where it was reinterred among the tombs of the English sovereigns. With it he buried once for all the troublesome falsehood which had kept up insurrection, and had made the deposed King more feared after death than he had ever been during life.

340. War with France (1415). — To divert the attention of the nation from dangerous home questions likely to cause fresh revolts, Henry now determined to act on his father's dying counsel and pick a foreign quarrel. The old grudge against France, which began with the feuds of Duke William of Normandy before he conquered England, made a war with that country always popular. At this period the French were divided into fierce parties who hated each other even more, if possible, than they hated the English. This, of course, greatly increased the chances of Henry's success, as he might form an alliance with one of these factions.

The King believed it a good opportunity to get three things he wanted, — a wife, a fortune, and the French crown. The King of France and his most powerful rival, the Duke of Burgundy, had each a daughter. To make sure of one of them, Henry secretly proposed to both. After long and fruitless negotiations the French King declined to grant the enormous dowry which the English King demanded. The latter gladly interpreted this refusal as equivalent to a declaration of war.

341. Battle of Agincourt[1] **(1415).** — Henry set to work with vigor, raised an army, and invaded France. He besieged Harfleur, near the mouth of the Seine, and took it; but his army had suffered so much from sickness that, after leaving a garrison in the place, he resolved to move north, to Calais, and await reinforcements.

After a long and perilous march he reached a little village about midway between Crécy and Calais. There he encountered the enemy in great force. Both sides prepared for battle. The French had fifty thousand troops to Henry's seven or eight thousand; but the latter had that determination which wins victories. He said to one of his nobles who regretted that he had not a larger force: —

> "No, my fair cousin;
> If we are marked to die, we are enough
> To do our country loss; and if we live,
> The fewer men, the greater share of honor."[2]

1 Agincourt (Ah′zhăn′koor′). See Map No. 10, facing page 130.
2 Henry V, Act IV, Scene 3.

A heavy rain had fallen during the night, and the ploughed land over which the French must cross was so wet and miry that their heavily armed horsemen sank deep at every step. The English bowmen, on the other hand, being on foot, could move with ease. Henry ordered every archer to drive a stake, sharpened at both ends, into the ground before him. This was a substitute for the modern bayonet, and presented an almost impassable barrier to the French cavalry.

As at Crécy and Poitiers, the English bowmen gained the day (§§ 290, 293). The sharp stakes stopped the enemy's horses, and the blinding showers of arrows threw the splendidly armed knights into wild confusion. With a ringing cheer Henry's troops rushed forward.

> "When down their bows they threw,
> And forth their swords they drew,
> And on the French they flew:
> No man was tardy.
> Arms from the shoulder sent;
> Scalps to the teeth they rent;
> Down the French peasants went:
> These were men hardy."[1]

When the fight was over, the King asked, "What is the name of that castle yonder?" He was told it was called Agincourt. "Then," said he, "from henceforth this shall be known as the battle of Agincourt."

342. Treaty of Troyes,[2] **1420; Henry's Death.** — Henry went back in triumph to England. Two years later, he again invaded France. His victorious course continued. By the Treaty of Troyes (1420), he gained all that he had planned to get. He obtained large sums of money, the French princess Catharine in marriage, and the promise of the crown of France on the death of her father, Charles VI, who was then insane and feeble. Meantime Henry was to govern the kingdom as regent.

1 These vigorous lines, from Drayton's Ballad of Agincourt, if not quite true to the letter of history (since it is doubtful whether the French peasants were on the field), are wholly true to its spirit.
2 Troyes (Trwă).

Henry returned to England with the bride he had won by the sword, but he was soon recalled to France by a revolt against his power. He died there, leaving an infant son, Henry. Two months afterward Charles VI died, so that by the terms of the treaty Henry's son now inherited the French crown.

343. Summary. — The one great event with which Henry V's name is connected is the conquest of France. It was hailed at the time as a glorious achievement. In honor of it his tomb in Westminster Abbey was surmounted by a statue of the King having a head of solid silver. Eventually the head was stolen and never recovered; the wooden statue still remains. The theft was typical of Henry's short-lived victories abroad, for all the territory he had gained was soon destined to be hopelessly lost.

HENRY VI (House of Lancaster, Red Rose) — 1422–1471[1]

344. Accession of Henry; Renewal of the French War. — The heir to all the vast dominions left by Henry V was proclaimed King of England and France when in his cradle, and crowned, while still a child, first at Westminster and then at Paris.

But the accession to the French possessions was merely an empty form, for as the son of the late Charles VI of France refused to abide by the Treaty of Troyes (§ 342) and give up the throne, war again broke out.

345. Siege of Orleans.[2] — The Duke of Bedford[3] fought vigorously in Henry's behalf. In five years the English had got possession of most of the country north of the Loire. They now determined to make an effort to drive the French Prince south of that river. To accomplish this they must take the strongly fortified town of Orleans, which was situated on its banks.

Forts were accordingly built around the place, and cannon planted to batter down its walls. Six months later, so much

1 Dethroned 1461, restored for a few months in 1470, died in the Tower of London, 1471.

2 Orleans (Or'lā-on). See Map No. 8, facing page 88.

3 During Henry's minority, John, Duke of Bedford, was Protector of the realm. When absent in France, Humphrey, Duke of Gloucester, acted for him.

progress had been made in the siege, that it was plain the city could not hold out much longer. The fortunes of France seemed to depend on the fate of Orleans. If it fell, they would go with it.

346. Joan of Arc[1] **(1429–1431).** — At this juncture, Joan of Arc, a peasant girl of eighteen, came forward to inspire her despairing countrymen with fresh courage. She believed that Heaven had called her to drive the English from the land. The troops rallied round her. Clad in white armor, mounted on a white war-horse, she led the troops from victory to victory, until she saw Prince Charles triumphantly crowned in the Cathedral of Rheims.[2]

Her fortunes soon changed. Her own people basely abandoned her. The unworthy King Charles made no attempt to protect the "Maid of Orleans," and she fell into the hands of the infuriated English, who believed she was in league with the devil. In accordance with this belief Joan was tried for witchcraft and heresy at Rouen, and sentenced to the flames. She died (1431) as bravely as she had lived, saying in her last agonies that her celestial voices had not deceived her, and that through them she had saved France.

"God forgive us," exclaimed one of Henry's courtiers who was present, "we are lost! We have burned a saint!" It was the truth; and from the martyred girl's ashes a new spirit seemed to go forth to bless her ungrateful country. The heart of France was touched. The people rose against their invaders.

Before Henry VI reached his thirtieth year the Hundred Years' War with France, which Edward III had begun (§ 289), was ended (1453), and England had lost all of her possessions on the continent, except a bare foothold at Calais.

347. Henry VI's Character and Marriage. — When Henry became of age he proved to be but the shadow of a king. His health and character were alike feeble. At twenty-five he married the beautiful and unfortunate Margaret of Anjou, who was

1 The name given by the English to Jeanne d'Arc, or Darc. Later, the French called her La Pucelle, "The Maid"; or La Pucelle d'Orleans, "The Maid of Orleans." 2 Rheims (Rănz), northeast of Paris. See Map No. 10, facing page 130.

by far the better man of the two. When years of disaster came, this dauntless "queen of tears" headed councils, led armies, and ruled both King and kingdom.

348. Poverty of the Crown and Wealth of the Nobles. — One cause of the weakness of the Government was its poverty. The revenues of the Crown had been greatly diminished by gifts and grants to favorites. The King was obliged to pawn his jewels and the silver plate from his table to pay his wedding expenses; and it is said on high authority[1] that the royal couple were sometimes in actual want of a dinner.

On the other hand, the Earl of Warwick and other great lords had made fortunes out of the French wars,[2] and lived in regal splendor. The earl, it is said, had at his different castles and his city mansion in London upwards of thirty thousand men in his service. Their livery, or uniform, a bright red jacket with the Warwick arms, a bear erect holding a ragged staff, embroidered on it in white, was seen, known, and feared throughout the country.

Backed by such forces it was easy for the earl and other powerful lords to overawe kings, parliaments, and courts. Between these heads of the great houses quarrels were constantly breaking out. The safety of the people was endangered by these feuds, which became more and more violent, and often ended in bloodshed and murder.

349. Disfranchisement of the Common People (1430). — With the growth of power on the part of the nobles, there was also imposed for the first time a restriction on the right of the people to vote for members of Parliament. Up to this period all freemen might take part in the election of representatives chosen by the counties to sit in the House of Commons.

A law was now passed forbidding any one to vote at these elections unless he was a resident of the county and possessed of

1 Fortescue, on the Governance of England (Plummer).

2 First, by furnishing troops to the Government, the feudal system having now so far decayed that many soldiers had to be hired; secondly, by the plunder of French cities; thirdly, by ransoms obtained from noblemen taken prisoners.

landed property yielding an annual income of forty shillings ($200).[1] Subsequently it was further enacted that no county candidate should be eligible unless he was a man of means and social standing.

These two measures were blows against the free self-government of the nation, since their manifest tendency was to make the House of Commons represent the property rather than the people of the country (§ 371). (See, too, Summary of Constitutional History in the Appendix, page xiii, § 14.)

350. Cade's Rebellion (1450). — A formidable rebellion broke out in Kent (1450), then, as now, one of the most independent and democratic counties in England. The leader was Jack Cade, who called himself by the popular name of Mortimer (§ 309, note 1, and § 331). He claimed to be cousin to Richard, Duke of York, a nephew of that Edmund Mortimer, now dead, whom Henry IV had unjustly deprived of his succession to the Crown.

Cade, who was a mere adventurer, was quite likely used as a tool by plotters much higher than himself. By putting him forward they could judge whether the country was ready for a revolution and change of sovereigns.

Wat Tyler's rebellion, seventy years before (§ 303), was almost purely social in its character, having for its object the emancipation of the enslaved laboring classes. Cade's insurrection was, on the contrary, almost wholly political. His chief complaint was that the people were not allowed their free choice in the election of representatives, but were forced by the nobility to choose candidates they did not want.

Other grievances for which reform was demanded were excessive taxation and the rapacity of the evil counsellors who controlled the King.

Cade entered London with a body of twenty thousand men. He took formal possession of the place by striking his sword on London Stone, — a Roman monument still standing, which then

1 The income required by the statute was forty shillings, which, says Freeman, we may fairly call forty pounds of our present money. See Freeman's Growth of the English Constitution, page 97.

marked the centre of the ancient city, — saying, as Shakespeare reports him, "Now is Mortimer lord of this city." [1]

After three days of riot and the murder of the King's treasurer, the rebellion came to an end through a general pardon. Cade, however, endeavored to raise a new insurrection in the south, but was shortly after captured, and died of his wounds.

351. Wars of the Roses (1455–1485). — The real significance of Cade's insurrection is that it showed the widespread feeling of discontent caused by misgovernment, and that it served as an introduction to the long and dreary period of civil strife known as the Wars of the Roses.

So long as the English nobles had France for a fighting ground, French cities to plunder, and French captives to hold for heavy ransoms, they were content to let matters go on quietly at home. But that day was over. Through the bad management, if not through the positive treachery of Edmund, Duke of Somerset, the French conquests had been lost, a weak king, at times insane, sat on the English throne, while Richard, Duke of York, a really able man and a descendant of the Mortimers (see table on page 163), was, as many believed, unlawfully excluded from it.

This fact in itself would have furnished a plausible pretext for hostilities, even as far back as Cade's rising. But the birth of a son [2] to Henry (1453) probably gave the signal for the outbreak, since it cut off all hopes which Richard's friends may have had of his peaceful succession.

1 "Now is Mortimer lord of this city, and here, sitting upon London Stone, I charge and command that, at the city's cost, this conduit runs nothing but claret wine this first year of our reign; and now it shall be treason for any man to call me other than Lord Mortimer." — *Henry VI*, Part II, Act IV, Scene 6.

It is worthy of remark that here, as elsewhere in his historical plays, the great dramatist expresses little, if any, sympathy with the cause of the people. In King John he does not mention the Great Charter, in Richard II he passes over Wat Tyler without a word, while in Henry VI he mentions Cade only to ridicule him and his movement. The explanation of this lies, perhaps, in the fact that Shakespeare lived in an age when England was threatened by both open and secret enemies. The need of his time was a strong, steady hand at the helm; it was no season for reform or change of any sort. This may be the reason why he was silent in regard to democratic risings and demands in the past.

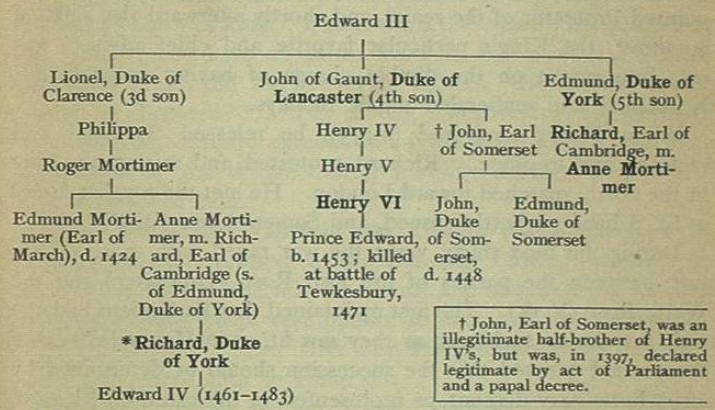
2 Prince Edward. See genealogical table on page 163, under "Henry VI."

352. The Scene in the Temple Garden. — Shakespeare represents the smouldering feud between the rival houses of Lancaster and York (both of whom it should be remembered were descendants of Edward III) [1] as breaking into an angry quarrel in the Temple Garden, London, when Richard, Duke of York, says: —

> "Let him that is a true-born gentleman,
> And stands upon the honor of his birth,
> If he suppose that I have pleaded truth,
> From off this brier pluck a white rose with me."

To this challenge John Beaufort, Duke of Somerset, [2] a descendant of the house of Lancaster, who has just accused Richard of being the dishonored son of a traitor, replies: —

1 Table showing the descendants of Edward III, with reference to the claims of Lancaster and York to the Crown: —



† John, Earl of Somerset, was an illegitimate half-brother of Henry IV's, but was, in 1397, declared legitimate by act of Parliament and a papal decree.

* Inherited the title of Duke of York from his father's eldest brother, Edward, Duke of York, who died without issue.

Richard's father, the Earl of Cambridge, had forfeited his title and estates by treason; but Parliament had so far limited the sentence that his son was not thereby debarred from inheriting his uncle's rank and fortune.

Richard, Duke of York, now represented the direct hereditary line of succession to the crown, while Henry VI and his son represented that established by Parliament through acceptance of Henry IV. Compare geneaological table on page 141.

2 John, Duke of Somerset, died 1448. He was brother of Edmund, Duke of Somerset, who was slain at St. Albans, 1455.

"Let him that is no coward, nor no flatterer,
But dare maintain the party of the truth,
Pluck a red rose from off this thorn with me."

The Earl of Warwick rejoins: —

"This brawl to-day,
Grown to this faction in the Temple-garden,
Shall send, between the red rose and the white,
A thousand souls to death and deadly night."[1]

353. The Real Object of the War. — The war, however, did not directly originate in this quarrel, but rather in the strife for power between Edmund, Duke of Somerset (John's brother), and Richard, Duke of York. Each desired to get the control of the Government, though at first neither appears to have openly aimed at the Crown.

During Henry's attack of insanity (1453), Richard was appointed Protector of the realm, and shortly afterward the Duke of Somerset, the King's particular favorite and chief adviser, was cast into prison on the double charge of having culpably lost Normandy and embezzled public moneys.

When Henry recovered (1455), he released Somerset and restored him to office. Richard protested, and raising an army in the north, marched toward London. He met the royalist forces at St. Albans; a battle ensued, and Somerset was slain.

During the next thirty years the war raged with more or less fury between the parties of the Red Rose (Lancaster) and the White Rose (York). The first maintained that Parliament had the right to choose such king as they saw fit, as in Henry IV's case; the second insisted that the succession should be determined by strict hereditary descent, as represented in the claim of Richard.

But beneath the surface the contest was not for principle, but for place and spoils. The great nobles, who during the French wars (§ 340) had pillaged abroad, now pillaged each other; and as England was neither big enough nor rich enough to satisfy the greed of all of them, the struggle gradually became a war of mutual extermination.

[1] Shakespeare's Henry VI, Part I, Act II, Scene 4.

It was, to a certain extent, a sectional war. Eastern England, then the wealthiest and most progressive part of the country, had strongly supported Wycliffe in his reforms (§ 306). It now espoused the side of Richard, Duke of York, who was believed to be friendly to religious liberty, while the western counties fought for the cause of Lancaster and the Church.[1]

354. The First Battles (1455–1460). — We have already seen (§ 353) that the first blood was shed at St. Albans (1455), where the Yorkists, after half an hour's fighting, gained a complete victory.[2] A similar result followed at Bloreheath, Staffordshire (1459). In a third battle, at Northampton,[3] the Yorkists were again successful (1460). Henry was taken prisoner, and Queen Margaret fled with the young Prince Edward to Scotland. Richard now demanded the crown.

Henry answered with unexpected spirit: "My father was king, his father also was king. I have worn the crown forty years from my cradle; you have all sworn fealty to me as your sovereign, and your fathers did the like to my fathers. How, then, can my claim be disputed?" After a long controversy, a compromise was effected. Henry agreed that if he were left in peaceable possession of the throne during his life, Richard or his heirs should succeed him.

355. Battles of Wakefield and Towton (1460–1461). — But Queen Margaret refused to see her son, Prince Edward, thus tamely set aside. She raised an army and attacked the Yorkists. Richard, whose forces were inferior to hers, had entrenched himself in his castle.[4] Day after day Margaret went up under the walls and dared him to come out.

At length, stung by her taunts, the duke sallied from his stronghold, and the battle of Wakefield was fought (1460). Margaret was victorious. Richard was slain, and the Queen, in mockery of his claims to sovereignty, cut off his head, decked it

[1] It will be remembered that the persecution of Wycliffe's followers began under Henry IV, the first Lancastrian king. See § 335.

[2] For the battle-fields of the Wars of the Roses, see Map No. 11, facing page 174.

[3] Northampton, Northamptonshire.

[4] Sandal Castle, near Wakefield, Yorkshire. Towton, also in Yorkshire.

with a paper crown, and set it up over the chief gate of the city of York. Fortune now changed. The next year (1461) the Lancastrians were defeated with great slaughter at Towton. The light spring snow was crimsoned with the blood of thirty thousand slain, and the way strewn with corpses for ten miles up to the walls of York.

The Earl of Warwick, henceforth popularly known as "the king-maker," now placed Edward, eldest son of the late Duke of York, on the throne, with the title of Edward IV (§ 352, table). Henry and Margaret fled to Scotland. The new Government summoned them to appear, and as they failed to answer, proclaimed them traitors.

Four years later, Henry was taken prisoner and sent to the Tower of London. He may have been happier there than battling for his throne. He was not born to reign, but rather, as Shakespeare makes him say, to lead a shepherd's life, watching his flocks, until the peacefully flowing years should —

"Bring white hairs unto a quiet grave." [1]

356. Summary. — The history of the period is one of loss. The brilliant French conquests of Henry V slipped from the nerveless hands of his son, leaving France practically independent. The elective franchise had been restricted. The House of Commons had ceased to be democratic even in a moderate degree. Its members were all property-holders elected by property-holders. Cade's rebellion was the sign of political discontent and the forerunner of civil war.

The contests of the parties of the Red and the White Roses drenched England's fair fields with the best blood of her own sons. The reign ends with King Henry in prison, Queen Margaret and Prince Edward fugitives, and the Yorkist, Edward IV, placed on the throne by the help of the powerful Earl of Warwick.

[1] See Henry's soliloquy on the field of Towton, beginning, —

"O God! methinks it were a happy life
To be no better than a homely swain."

SHAKESPEARE, *Henry VI*, Part III, Act II, Scene 5.

EDWARD IV (House of York, White Rose) — 1461–1483

357. Continuation of the War; Barnet; Death of Henry; Tewkesbury (1471). — During the whole of Edward's reign the war went on with varying success, but unvarying ferocity, until at last neither side would ask or give quarter. Some years after the accession of the new sovereign the Earl of Warwick quarrelled with him, thrust him from the throne, and restored Henry VI (§ 355).

But a few months later, at the battle of Barnet (1471), Warwick, who was "the last of the great barons," was killed, and Henry, who had been led back to the Tower [1] again, died one of those "conveniently sudden deaths" which were then so common.

The heroic Queen Margaret (§§ 347, 355), however, would not give up the contest in behalf of her son's claim to the crown. But fate was against her. A few weeks after the battle of Barnet [2] her army was utterly defeated at Tewkesbury (1471), her son Edward slain, and the Queen herself taken prisoner.

She was eventually released on the payment of a large ransom, and returned to France, where she died broken-hearted in her native Anjou, prophesying that the contest would go on until the Red Rose, representing her party, should get a still deeper dye from the blood of her enemies.[3]

358. The Introduction of Printing, 1477. — But an event was at hand of greater importance than any question of crowns or parties, though then none was wise enough to see its real significance. William Caxton, a London merchant, had learned the new art of printing at Bruges in Flanders. He now returned to his native country and set up a small press within the grounds of Westminster Abbey.

There, at the sign of a shield bearing a red pale,[4] he advertised

[1] The Tower of London, built by William the Conqueror, as a fortress to overawe the city, became later both a royal palace and a prison of state. It is now used as a citadel, armory, and depository for the crown jewels.

[2] Barnet, about eleven miles northwest of London, Hertfordshire. Tewkesbury, near Gloucester, Gloucestershire. See Map No. 11, facing page 174.

[3] See Scott's Anne of Geierstein, Chapter XXX.

[4] Pale: a perpendicular band on a shield; such signs were then commonly used by the Flemish printers.

his wares as "good chepe." He was not only printer, but translator and editor. Edward gave him some royal patronage. He paid liberally for work which not long before the clergy in France had condemned as a black art emanating from the devil. Many, too, of the English clergy regarded it with no very friendly eye, since it threatened to destroy the copying trade, of which the monks had well-nigh a monopoly.

The first printed book which Caxton is known to have published in England was a small volume entitled "The Sayings of the Philosophers," 1477.[1] This venture was followed in due time by Chaucer's "Canterbury Tales," and whatever other poetry, history, or classics seemed worthy of preservation; making in all nearly a hundred distinct works comprising more than eighteen thousand volumes.

Up to this time a book of any kind was a luxury, laboriously "written by the few for the few"; but from this date literature of all sorts was destined to multiply and fill the earth with many leaves and some good fruit.

Caxton's patrons, though few, were choice, and when one of them, the Earl of Worcester, was beheaded in the wars, he said of him, "The axe did then cut off more learning than was left in all the heads of the surviving lords."

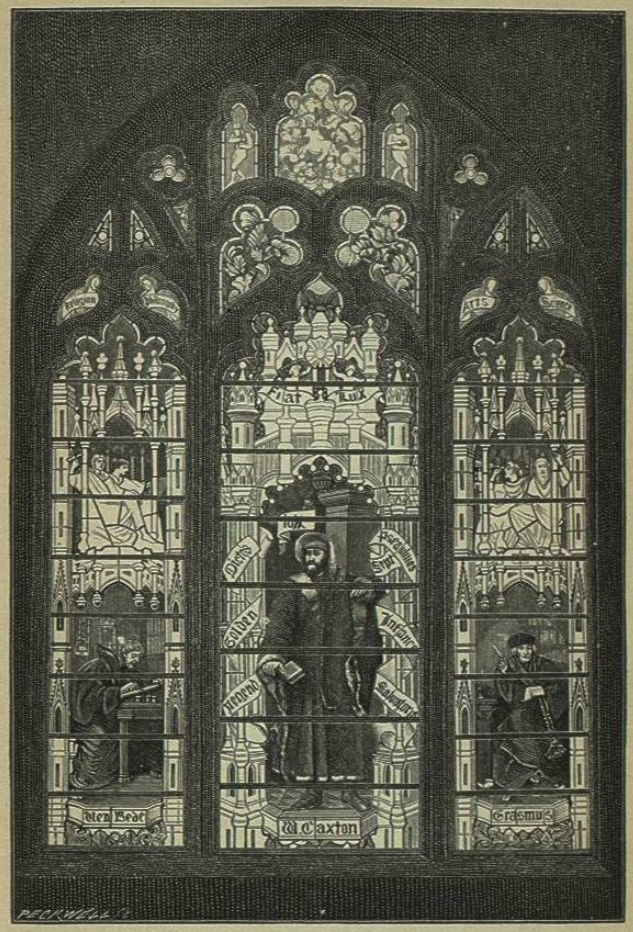
Recently a memorial window has been placed in St. Margaret's Church within the abbey grounds, as a tribute to the man who, while England was red with slaughter, introduced "the art preservative of all arts," and preservative of liberty no less[2] (§ 374).

1 "The dictes or sayengis of the philosophres, enprynted by me william Caxton at westmestre, the year of our lord MCCCCLxxvii."

It has no title-page, but ends as above. A copy is preserved in the British Museum. The Game and Play of the Chess is supposed by some to have been published a year or two earlier, but as the book has neither printer's name, place of publication, nor date, the time of its issue remains wholly conjectural.

2 "Lord! taught by thee, when Caxton bade
His silent words forever speak;
A grave for tyrants then was made,
Then crack'd the chain which yet shall break."

EBENEZER ELLIOTT, *Hymn for the Printers' Gathering at Sheffield, 1833*



THE CAXTON MEMORIAL WINDOW (St. Margaret's Church, London)

359. King Edward's Character. — The King, however, cared more for his pleasures than for literature or the welfare of the nation. His chief aim was to beg, borrow, or extort money to waste in dissipation. The loans which he forced his subjects to grant, and which were seldom, if ever, repaid, went under the name of "benevolences." But it is safe to say that those who furnished them were in no very benevolent frame of mind at the time.

Exception may perhaps be made of the rich and elderly widow, who was so pleased with the King's handsome face that she willingly handed him £20 (a large sum in those days); and when the jovial monarch gallantly kissed her out of gratitude for her generosity, she at once, like a true and loyal subject, doubled the donation. Edward's course of life was not conducive to length of days, even if the times had favored a long reign. He died early, leaving a son, Prince Edward, to succeed him.

360. Summary. — The reign was marked by the continuation of the Wars of the Roses, the death of King Henry VI and of his son, with the return of Queen Margaret to France. The most important event outside of the war was the introduction of the printing-press by William Caxton.

EDWARD V (House of York, White Rose) — 1483

361. Gloucester appointed Protector. — Prince Edward, heir to the throne, was a lad of twelve. He was placed under the guardianship of his ambitious and unscrupulous uncle, Richard, Duke of Gloucester, who had been appointed Lord Protector of the realm until the boy should become of age. Richard protected his young nephew as a wolf would a lamb.

He met the prince coming up to London from Ludlow Castle, Shropshire, attended by his half-brother, Sir Richard Grey, and his uncle, Lord Rivers. Under the pretext that Edward would be safer in the Tower of London than at Westminster Palace, Richard sent the prince there, and soon found means for having his kinsmen, Grey and Rivers, executed.