

It was still many years before the wars between England and Scotland ceased, but the battle of Bannockburn had the effect of securely establishing Bruce and his successors as kings of Scotland.

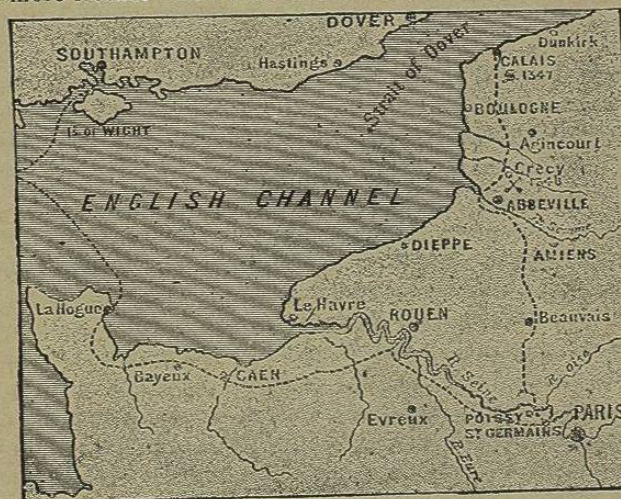
XXII.

BATTLE OF CRECY.—FROISSART.

[The real cause of the Hundred Years' War, begun by Edward III., was an attempt on the part of the French king, Philip of Valois, to annex Edward's province of Aquitaine to the crown of France. The preposterous claim of Edward to the French throne was urged mainly as a pretext for the war. The age of Edward was pre-eminently the age of chivalry, and he made war in the spirit of a knight-errant, without much plan or purpose, for personal glory. After having undertaken several expeditions against France, he landed at La Hogue, in Normandy, in July, 1346, intending to join the Flemings. But the French king, with a large army, lay between him and Flanders, on the right bank of the Seine. By a feint upon Paris, however, Edward succeeded in crossing the river, and advanced toward the Somme, which he also crossed, near Abbeville, and there won the great victory of Crecy (August 6, 1346), against enormous odds. But even this surprising success brought no permanent advantage to England; nevertheless it was a "glorious" victory.]

That night the English king lay in the fields with his host, and made a supper to all his chief lords of his host and made them good cheer. And when they were all departed to take their rest, then the king entered into his oratory, and kneeled down before the altar, praying God devoutly that if he fought the next day, that he might achieve the journey to his honor. Then, about midnight, he laid him down to rest, and in the morning he rose betimes, and heard mass, and the prince, his son (the Black Prince), with him, and the most part of his company were confessed and houseled. And, after the mass said, he commanded every man to be armed,

and to draw to the field, to the same place before appointed. Then the king caused a park to be made by the wood-side, behind his host, and there was set all carts and carriages, and within the park were all their horses, for every man was afoot; and into this park there was but one entry. After arranging the army in three battalions, the king leapt on a hobby, with a white rod in his hand, one of his marshals on the one hand, and the other on the other hand; he rode from rank to rank, desiring every man to take heed that day to his right and honor; he spake it so sweetly, and with so good countenance and merry cheer, that all such as were discomfited took courage in the seeing and hearing of him. And when he had thus visited all his battles (battalions) it was then nine of the day: then he caused every man to eat and drink a little, and so they did at their leisure; and afterward they ordered again their battles. Then every man lay down on the earth, and by him his salet and bow, to be the more fresher when their enemies should come. It was in



BATTLE OF CRECY.

this position that they were found by the tumultuous French army, which came rushing on, crying "Down with them," "Let us slay them." in such a manner, that, says Froissart, there was no man, though he were present at the journey, that could imagine or show the truth of the evil order that was among them. The day of this meeting was Saturday, August 6, 1346.

The Englishmen, who were in three battles, lying on the ground to rest them, as soon as they saw the Frenchmen approach, they rose upon their feet, fair and easily, without any haste, and arranged their battles: the first, which was the prince's battle; the archers there stood in the manner of a herse (harrow), and the men-of-arms in the bottom of the battle. The earl of Northampton and the earl of Arundel, with the second battle, were on a wing in good order, ready to comfort the prince's battle, if need were. The lords and knights of France came not to the assembly together in good order; for some came before, and some came after, in such haste and evil order that one of them did trouble another. When the French king saw the Englishmen, his blood changed, and (he) said to his marshals, "Make the Genoese go on before, and begin the battle in the name of God and St. Denis." There were of the Genoese cross-bows about fifteen thousand; but they were so weary of going a-foot that day a six league, armed with their cross-bows, that they said to their constables, "We be not well ordered to fight this day, for we be not in the case to do any great deed of arms, as we have more need of rest." These words came to the duke of Alençon, who said, "A man is well at ease to be charged with such a sort of rascals, to be faint and fail now at most need." Also at the same season there fell a great rain and eclipse, with a terrible thunder; and before the rain there came flying over both battles a great number of crows, for fear of the tempest coming. Then anon the air began to wax clear and the sun to shine fair and bright, the which was

right in the Frenchmen's eyes and on the Englishmen's backs. When the Genoese were assembled together, and began to approach, they made a great leap and cry to abash the Englishmen, but they stood still, and stirred not for all that. Then the Genoese again the second time made another leap, and a fell cry, and stept forward a little, and the Englishmen removed not one foot; thirdly, again they leaped and cried, and went forth till they came within shot, then they shot fiercely with their cross-bows. Then the English archers stept forth one pass (pace), and let fly their arrows so wholly, and so thick, that it seemed snow. When the Genoese felt the arrows pressing through heads, arms, and breasts, many of them cast down their cross-bows, and did cut their strings, and returned discomfited. When the French king saw them flee away, he said, "Kill me these rascals; for they shall lett (hinder) and trouble us without reason." Then ye should have seen the men-of-arms dash in among them, and kill a great number of them; and ever still the Englishmen shot whereas they saw thickest press; the sharp arrows ran into the men-of-arms and into their horses, and many fell, horse and men, among the Genoese; and when they were down, they could not relyne again, the press was so thick that one overthrew another. And also among the Englishmen there were certain rascals that went on foot, with great knives, and they went in among the men-of-arms, and slew and murdered many as they lay on the ground, both earls, barons, knights, and squires, whereof the king of England was after displeased, for he had rather they had been taken prisoners.

The valiant king of Bohemia, called Charles of Luxembourg, son to the noble Emperor Henry of Luxembourg, for all that he was nigh blind, when he understood the order of the battle, he said to them about him, "Where is the Lord Charles, my son?" His men said, "Sir, we cannot tell, we think he be fighting." Then he said, "Sirs, ye are my men,

my companions and friends in this journey; I require you bring me so forward that I may strike one stroke with my sword." They said they would do his commandment; and to the intent that they might not lose him in the press, they tied all the reins of their bridles each to other, and set the king before to accomplish his desire, and so they went on their enemies. The Lord Charles of Bohemia, his son, who wrote himself king of Bohemia, and bare the arms, he came in good order to the battle; but when he saw that the matter went awry on their party, he departed, I cannot tell you which way. The king, his father, was so far forward, that he struck a stroke with his sword, yea, and more than four, and fought valiantly, and so did his company, and they adventured themselves so forward that they were all slain, and the next day they were found in the place about the king, and all their horses tied to each other.

The prince's battalion at one period was very hard pressed; and they with the prince sent a messenger to the king, who was on a little windmill-hill; then the knight said to the king, "Sir, the earl of Warwick, and the earl of Oxford, Sir Reynold Cobham, and others, such as be about the prince, your son, are fiercely fought withal, and are sore handled, wherefore they desire you that you and your battle will come and aid them, for if the Frenchmen increase, as they doubt they will, your son and they will have much ado." Then the king said, "Is my son dead or hurt, or on the earth felled?" "No, sir," quote the knight, "but he is hardly matched, wherefore he hath need of your aid." "Well," said the king, "return to him and to them that sent you hither, and say to them, that they send no more to me for any adventure that faileth, as long as my son is alive; and also say to them, that they suffer him this day to win his spurs, for if God be pleased, I will this journey be his, and the honor thereof, and to them that be about him." Then the knight returned again to them, and showed the king's words,

the which greatly encouraged them, and they repined in that they had sent to the king as they did. The king of France stayed till the last. It was not until the evening that he could be induced to acknowledge that all was lost. Then, when he had left about him no more than a threescore persons, one and other, whereof Sir John of Heynault was one, who had remounted once the king—for his horse was slain with an arrow—then he said to the king, "Sir, depart hence, for it is time; lose not yourself willfully; if ye have loss this time, ye shall recover it again another season;" and so he took the king's horse by the bridle and led him away in a manner per force. Then the king rode till he came to the castle of La Broyes; the gate was closed, because it was by that time dark; then the king called the captain, who came to the walls, and said, "Open your gate quickly, for this is the fortune of France." The captain knew then it was the king, and opened the gate and let down the bridge; then the king entered, and he had with him but five barons, Sir John of Heynault and four others. The unhappy king, however, could not rest there, but drank and departed thence about midnight.

X

XXIII.

THE BLACK DEATH.—WARBURTON.

[The great pestilence which swept over England in 1348-49 was by far the most important event of Edward III.'s reign. It destroyed nearly half of the population, and raged most fiercely among the working classes. It more than doubled the rate of wages, in spite of the stringent laws enacted to keep the price of labor at its former standard. It led to the rising of the peasants in the next reign, to the re-organization of the agricultural system of the time, and ultimately to the emancipation of the peasant class from serfdom or villeinage.]

In the interval between the capture of Calais and this attempt to recover it, a visitation occurred which turned all the gay prosperity of England into mourning, and brought the French nation to the very brink of ruin. The outbreak of the Plague, or the "Black Death," as it was then called, has been left comparatively in the background by contemporary historians; but it is undoubtedly the central fact of the reign of Edward III. and of the fourteenth century, and, in the opinion of some writers, the most important economic fact in modern history. Among its consequences may be reckoned an immense advance in the social condition of the working classes, owing to the scarcity of labor, and consequent increase in its value as a commodity; the substitution of what we should call tenant-farming for landlord occupation; and a "strike" of fifty years' duration, which culminated in the rebellion of Wat Tyler in the following reign, and, though then cruelly and treacherously put down, resulted at last in the emancipation of the English peasantry.

The local origin of the Plague is mysterious, and it has, therefore, perhaps, been traced to Cathay, the land of mystery; but it is an ascertained fact that all the most devastating epidemics which have visited Europe have had their cradle in the far East. Tidings of the Plague's ravages in

Central Asia had reached England as far back as the year 1333; but the western peoples thought little of it as long as it was talked of only as one of the many scourges of imperfectly known and half-barbarous nations. Constantinople was then, as now, the great frontier city between European civilization and the far East, and through it flowed one of the three principal tides of Oriental traffic. Thither, in 1347, the destroyer came, along with the caravans laden with Asiatic produce, and followed the westward course of commerce by easy stages along the shores and islands of the Mediterranean, sometimes pausing, sometimes doubling back, but always gaining ground, till it reached the uttermost north-western boundary of Europe, not sparing Iceland, and even leaping over to Greenland—where it probably extirpated the European colony—and returning by Norway and Sweden, through Russia, in 1351.

In Provence the chief cities were almost depopulated. At Avignon, where Pope Clement VI. held the most extravagant and dissolute court in Europe, three fourths of the people died. The pope shut himself up a close prisoner in his palace-fortress, and kept huge fires burning day and night.

In Cypress, Sicily, and Florence the Plague was felt with extraordinary severity. In the last place only it would seem that some efforts, though ineffectual, were made by the authorities to check the spread of the disease, among the victims of which was Petrarch's "Laura." During its ravages in that city a number of ladies and gentlemen withdrew together from all communication with the outer world, diverting themselves with music and dancing and other in-door entertainments, eating and drinking of the best, and never listening to or thinking about any thing which might check their good spirits or disturb their serenity. Stories by which they are supposed to have amused each other have been preserved, or invented, in the "Decameron" of Boccaccio, the effect of

whose gay and festive pictures is heightened by contrast with the somber background on which they are drawn.

The Black Death, which made the tour of Europe in 1349-51, is undoubtedly the same disease as the Plague, now, or till quite lately, endemic on the shores of the Levant and in Egypt, having been, as it were, domesticated there by the lazy, filthy, and fatalistic habits of the people. Its specific causes are as much unknown as its original seat. The opinion of the time and some modern authorities agree in connecting its appearance with contemporary physical phenomena of a very remarkable kind; but it would seem as if these phenomena must have been of too limited and local a character to account for a pestilence which spread over a whole continent. Parching droughts, as it is said, were succeeded by convulsions of the earth and crackings of its surface, from which a fetid and poisonous vapor was projected into the atmosphere, the corruption of which was afterward increased by malarious exhalations from swamps caused by incessant deluges of rain. To the panic-struck imagination of the people the Black Death seemed to be advancing to their destruction in the palpable form of a "thick, stinking mist."

In some rare and frightful cases of seizure the victims fell down and died without premonitory symptoms, but in the majority of instances the attack began with shiverings and bristling of the hair, succeeded by burning internal fever with a cold skin, and the rapid formation of boils, first in the *axillae* and the groin, and afterward in the internal organs. The appearance of these boils was the most characteristic of all the symptoms of the Black Death, but the advance of dissolution was often so rapid as to outstrip these forerunners, which were, indeed, due to a strong effort of nature to expel the matter of the disease from the blood.

The terror of the Plague was every-where, inviting death; men's vital powers were so depressed by anticipation that they

were already half-dead before they were attacked; the throat parched, the pulse quickened, by nervous anxiety, were taken for the fatal symptoms of seizure. And next to the fear of death was that of previous desertion. Men and women feared to look in each other's faces lest they should be betrayed by the "muddy glistening" of the eye, or detected in feeling with feverish finger for "the little hard kernel, no bigger than a pea, which moved with the touch under the skin of the armpit," the sure precursor, as it was thought, of doom inevitable, irremediable, inexorable, and irrespective of persons, ages, or conditions of life. To imaginations morbid with terror pestilence indeed seemed to lurk in every thing—in every morsel eaten, in every rag that fluttered in the wind. But who would be so fool-hardy and irrational as to "throw good life after bad," by nursing a dying friend, when Black Death was in the breathing of his last sigh or the farewell pressure of his hand? So the nearest and dearest ties were dissolved, the calls of kindred and humanity neglected, and the sick were left to die and then be carted to the grave by hirelings. Numbers were driven, by an unreasoning terror, away from human habitations, and perished miserably in the solitude of the fields.

In England, however, by far the most memorable results of the Black Death were its social and economical effects. It made its appearance in Dorsetshire, in the month of August of the fatal year 1348, but it was three months before it had reached London. Knyghton, who lived at the time, says that "many villages and hamlets were desolated, without a house being left in them, all those who dwelt in them being dead." The country places which the Plague attacked were soon silenced, for the pestilence did not even spare the brute creation; and the carcasses of sheep, horses, and oxen lay putrefying in the fields, untouched by dogs or birds of prey. But in London the streets and public places were, for a time at least, all alive and brisk with funerals—"alive with death."

First single biers, and then cart-loads of corpses hurried along to the grave-yards: no time was to be lost, for there would soon be too few left living to bury the dead.

It is said on contemporary authority—and the statement is confirmed by modern research—that no less than one-half of the population perished. The immediate consequence was an enormous increase in the value of labor, and a corresponding depreciation in the value of land. In the winter which followed the Plague “flocks and herds wandered about the fields and corn without any that could drive them.” Landlords excused their tenants’ rents for one, two, or three years, lest they should desert their holdings, and leave them uncultivated on their owners’ hands. Wages were so high as to swallow up the farmer’s profit, and it frequently became a question whether it would be more ruinous to leave the crops ungathered or to comply with the extravagant demands of the laborers.

XXIV.

JOHN WYCLIF.—SHIRLEY.

[The career of Wyclif, as a reformer, included the later years of Edward III., and the earlier years of his grandson and immediate successor, Richard II. He attacked both the discipline and doctrine of the Church of his time, and in many points anticipated the great Reformation of the sixteenth century. When he first rose into prominence the papal court was at Avignon, in France. A few years later occurred what is known as the Great Schism. Two popes were elected, one at Rome and the other at Avignon, and Europe was divided between them. The schism caused great scandal and corruption, and did much to destroy the influence of the papacy. In England the French pope was regarded as an enemy; hence, to a large extent, the popular sympathy for Wyclif.]

OF all external events perhaps the great schism of the West exercised the most important influence on the career of the reformer; it strengthened his theological, but it under-

mined his political, position. He may not have been aware, certainly John of Gaunt, if we may judge by his acts, was not aware, how large a portion of the antipathy of Englishmen to the papal court was due to its residence at Avignon. The pope was, to Englishmen of the time of Edward III., the obedient slave of France, through whose coffers the treasure of this country passed to feed the war against herself, whose partisans, especially among the mendicant friars, were perpetually engaged in fostering an unpatriotic, unnational feeling, and who appeared, an advocate in the garb of mediator, to throw the weight of his influence in every negotiation into the scale of the enemies of England.

With the great schism all this was changed. Not only did the common feeling of reverence for the head of the Church naturally return when the causes which had for a time destroyed it were removed, but the nation must have witnessed, with novel delight, the “king’s adversary of France” falling under the ban of the papacy. The violence of the Lancastrian government, and its mad defiance of popular feeling, hastened the reaction, and thus before long Wyclif, sanguine as he was, had probably abandoned all serious hope of any practical reform of the Church.

From this time the theological element, in our modern and narrower sense of the word, becomes predominant in his works; he begins to write English tracts, to speak of the translation of the Bible, which was probably in progress at this time, and lastly, arriving at a conclusion to which he had long been tending, he put out, in the spring of 1381, a paper containing twelve propositions, in which he denied the doctrine of transubstantiation.

It was on these propositions that his prosecution by the archbishop was framed—a prosecution which, unlike that of four years before, was really theological, not political, in its object. Whatever share old party feeling may have had in stirring Courtney’s theological zeal, no archbishop of Canterbury,

even if inclined, could safely have neglected to proceed against the author of opinions so profoundly at variance with the ecclesiastical, even more than with the theological, principles of the day.

Yet the first attack on the new doctrine was not made by him. Almost immediately after its appearance it was condemned by the chancellor of the university and a select meeting of doctors. Wyclif appealed to John of Gaunt, who came down to Oxford, and, caring little to be embroiled in a theological dispute, confirmed the sentence of the chancellor by an injunction to the reformer not to speak further on the subject of the eucharist. A political partisan would have been silenced: Wyclif replied by his memorable confession. Help came to him from a quarter whence, perhaps, it was little expected.

The popular cry of heresy, then as ever, was far less telling within the university than in the country at large. The theological alarms of John of Gaunt were little felt by the masters of arts. Their common enmity to the religious, and especially to the mendicant orders, attached the secular clergy of Oxford, as a body, to the cause of Wyclif. They did not forget that three years before the monks, in gratifying their animosity against him, had sacrificed the independent pride of the university, and they could not but foresee, in the new prosecutions which were preparing, fresh sources of humiliation for her. This feeling, re-enforcing the strength of Wyclif's own party, told in the university elections. In the annual change of officers, the incoming chancellor and proctors were all more or less inclined to his cause, and the university troubled him no more.

Thus checked, the leaders of the movement turned to the archbishop, and, in consequence of their representations, in May, 1382, a provincial council was assembled at the Black Friars, in London.

The form of the proceedings was remarkable. Wyclif

himself was never summoned before the council, but twenty-four conclusions, extracted from his writings, were condemned, search was ordered to be made in Oxford for copies of his works, and he himself was banished from the university. For his followers severer measures were in store. The Lollard chancellor, Rigge, after a bold but short resistance, was compelled to submit; the heads of the party were made to recant, and the whole party in Oxford received a blow from which it seems to have never thoroughly recovered.



LUTTERWORTH—WYCLIF'S CHURCH.

Wyclif's enemies, however, were not satisfied. From his retreat at Lutterworth they summoned him before the papal court. The citation did not reach him till 1384. But he was then dying of paralysis. His reply to the pope, excusing himself from attendance, is preserved to us. From its half-enigmatical language we could scarcely guess, what we know from another source, that his failing strength was un-

equal to the journey. On the 29th of December, of the same year, as he was hearing mass in his parish church, a fatal stroke deprived him of speech, and on the 31st he breathed his last.

No friendly hand has left us any, even the slightest, memorial of the life and death of the great reformer. A spare, frail, emaciated frame, a quick temper, a conversation "most innocent," the charm of every rank; such are the scanty but significant fragments we glean of the personal portraiture of one who possessed, as few ever did, the qualities which give men power over their fellows. His enemies ascribed it to the magic of an ascetic habit; the fact remains engraven upon every line of his life.

To the memory of one of the greatest of Englishmen his country has been singularly and painfully ungrateful. On most of us the dim image looks down, like the portrait of the first of a long line of kings, without personality or expression—he is the first of the reformers. To some he is the watchword of a theological controversy, invoked most loudly by those whom he would most have condemned. Of his works, the greatest, "one of the most thoughtful of the Middle Ages," has twice been printed abroad, in England never. Of his original English works nothing beyond one or two short tracts has seen the light.* If considered only as the father of English prose, the great reformer might claim more reverential treatment at our hands. It is not by his translation of the Bible, remarkable as that work is, that Wyclif can be judged as a writer. It is in his original tracts that the exquisite pathos, the keen, delicate irony, the manly passion of his short, nervous sentences fairly overmasters the weakness of the unformed language, and gives us English which cannot be read without a feeling of its beauty to this hour.

* Since this was written (1858) the English works of Wyclif have been printed, with a very able and interesting introduction by F. D. Matthew (1880).

As it is in the light of subsequent events that we see the greatness of Wyclif as a reformer, so it is from the later growth of the language that we best learn to appreciate the beauty of his writing. But it was less the reformer, or the master of English prose, than the great schoolman, that inspired the respect of his contemporaries; and, next to the deep influence of personal holiness and the attractive greatness of his moral character, it was to his supreme command of the weapons of scholastic discussion that he owed his astonishing influence.

XXV.

DEPOSITION OF RICHARD II.—YORK POWELL.

[During the first twelve years of Richard II.'s reign, the conduct of affairs was largely in the hands of his uncle, the duke of Lancaster, and, after him, of another uncle, the duke of Gloucester. Richard however, was allowed to choose his own ministers. In 1387, through the efforts of Gloucester and four other nobles, called Lords Appellant, the ministers were impeached in Parliament and condemned to death. Two years later the king suddenly assumed sole authority, and for nearly eight years ruled wisely and successfully. In 1389 he entered upon a course of arbitrary government which led to his deposition. His cousin, Henry of Bolingbroke, duke of Hereford, took the vacant throne, with the title of Henry IV.]

THE earl of March had been killed by the "wild Irish" at Kenlys, July 20, 1398, and now, that all was outwardly at peace in England, Richard was minded to go over to Ireland, and stay there till he had established good government once for all. He made his will, leaving all his money to his heir, on condition that he up-



RICHARD II.