

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.