

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.

held the acts of the last two Parliaments, appointed his uncle, the duke of York, Keeper of the Realm, and then sailed, with many of his nobles, May, 1399. As soon as Henry heard that he was gone, he set out from Brittany with Archbishop Arundel and his nephew (the dead earl's son), Sir Thomas Erpingham, and forty men, and landed at Ravenspur, July 4, swearing to the northern lords who joined him that he was come to claim his heritage, and to put an end to the bad rule of the king's friends, but not to touch the crown. The Keeper was won over July 27, Bristol surrendered, and the king's friends there were hanged. Richard sent Salisbury to gather troops at Conway, promising to follow him at once; yet he did not come for three weeks, when he landed at Beaumaris. But there his own men fled from him, and he fell into despair, and cursed the untruth of England, saying, "Alas! what faith is there in this false world?" and, instead of going to Bordeaux, where he would have found help and welcome, left his treasure and fled, in disguise, to Conway. He found no help there; Salisbury's levies had gone home, tired of waiting for him. Ere he could make fresh plans, he was lured, by Northumberland's false oath, out of his stronghold and brought to Flint. "Fool that I was!" he cried, when he found himself betrayed, "to have saved the life of this Henry of Lancaster three times, as I have, yea, when his own father would have had him die for his treason and wickedness! 'Tis a true saying, indeed, 'Your worst foe is him you free from the gallows.'"

When he saw Lancaster, he smiled and said, "Welcome, fair cousin!" "I am come home before my time, sir," answered Lancaster, bowing, "for your people complain that you have ruled them harshly for a score of years or more, but now, if it please God, I will help you to rule better." "If it please you, it pleaseth us well," replied Richard. They then started for London.

At Lichfield the king tried to escape, but was retaken,

and henceforth strictly guarded. The Londoners welcomed Henry with joy, but hooted and groaned as the king was led to the Tower. Before the Parliament that had been called could meet, Richard, seeing no present hope, agreed, in writing, to give up the crown. When the Parliament met, the resignation was read in English and Latin, and accepted. Thirty-three charges against Richard were then read, which accused him of having acted wrongfully toward Archbishop Arundel and the appellants; of having packed Parliaments by means of the sheriffs, and got them to give up their lawful rights to him; of having lowered the free crown of England by seeking the pope's approval of acts of Parliament; of having raised unlawful taxes, loans, purveyance, and ransoms; of having broken the laws as to the sheriffs, and royal officers, and judges; of having made an unrighteous will; of having said and held that the laws lay in his own mouth, and that he could change them as he liked, and that the life, lands, and goods of every man were at his mercy without trial.

The Parliament voted these charges true, and sufficient grounds for setting the king aside, and sent seven commissioners to tell him so. Only one man, Thomas Marks, bishop of Carlisle, spoke up for his master, and asked for a fair trial, but he was not listened to. As soon as the throne was declared vacant, the duke of Lancaster rose, and, crossing himself, said, "In the name of God, I, Henry of Lancaster, claim this realm, and the crown thereof, with all the members and appurtenances thereto, as coming of the right blood of King Henry, and through that right which God, of his grace, hath sent me, with the help of my kin and of my friends, to recover it, the which realm was in point to be undone for default of governance and undoing of laws." And with that he showed the signet which Richard had given him at Flint.

Whereon the Three Estates, severally and together, agreed

to take him as king. Then Henry, having knelt down and prayed a while in their midst, was handed to the throne by the two archbishops. After a sermon by Arundel, on the text, "Behold the man whom I spake to thee of, the same shall rule over my people," Henry spoke again: "Sirs, I thank you, both spiritual and temporal, and all the estates of the land, and I do you to wit that it is not my will that any man should think that by way of conquest I would disinherit any man of his heritage, liberties, or other rights that he ought to have, or put him out of that he hath and hath had by the good laws of this realm, save those that have been against the good state and common profit of the realm." And on the morrow, October 1st, Sir William Thirning, as the spokesman of the Seven Commissioners, went to the Tower and addressed Richard, saying, "Sir, ye remember you well that ye renounced and put off the state of king and lordship, and of all the dignity that belongeth thereto." "Yea," said Richard, "but not the ghostly honor of the royal anointing, which I could not renounce or put off." But Thirning went on to say that "his renunciation and cession was plainly accepted and agreed to by all the estates and people. And besides this, sir, at the instance of all the estates and people, there were certain articles of default in your governance there read, and there well heard and plainly understood by all the the estates aforesaid, and by them thought so true and notorious and well-known that for these two causes, and for others also, as they said, and having consideration to your own words in your renunciation and cession, that ye were not worthy nor sufficient nor able for to govern because of your own demerits (as it is more fully declared therein), they therefore thought that it was reasonable and cause for to depose you." "Nay, nay," cried Richard, "not for any lack of power, but because my rule did not please the people." "I am but using your words, sir," answered Thirning. "Well," said Richard, smiling, "I look for no more, but, after

all this, I hope that my cousin will be good lord to me." This was the imprisoned king's last free utterance. On the 27th he was condemned by the Lords and Council to perpetual imprisonment, and two days after sent from the Tower to Pomfret. His after fate is as yet unknown.

Richard was ruined, as William Langland says, by *redleness*, or lack of good counsel. He was not an idle trifler, like Edward II., nor a shiftless spendthrift, like Henry III.; but a singularly gifted man, handsome, brave, generous, intelligent, merciful, and able to act boldly and quickly when he chose. His path was never free from difficulty and danger, family quarrels, foreign hatred, and English discontent, a heritage of trouble that came to him with his crown; but he was on the verge of safety when he ruined himself by two or three false steps taken in the interest of his friends, rather than of himself or his people. He was ill-advised when, for the sake of peace, he let the irritating misdeeds of his brothers, his officers, and his guard go unpunished; ill-advised when, out of love for art, splendor, and a fair life, he kept up a grand court, and was the patron of poets, painters, and architects, though he knew that his people grudged spending money on any thing but war; ill-advised when, impatient at the ceaseless falsehood and plots of his kinsmen, he used haughty language, and spoke of his royal rights as above the law; and still more ill-advised when he tried to govern well without consulting the likes and dislikes of the people he had to rule, banishing their favorites, breaking down their privileges, mocking at their cherished beliefs, and overriding the rights to which they clung. But Richard was no brutal or heartless tyrant, and if his luck had not left him, he might have put away the follies, set right the mistakes into which his youth and his young counselors had led him, and so reigned more happily than his supplanter. However, he had had his chance and failed, and the English people, perhaps rightly, would not give him another, though he had a few warm

friends who could not forget his fair face and open hand, and pitied his fate.

"Ah, Richard, with the eyes of heavy mind
I see thy glory like a shooting star
Fall to the bare earth from the firmament.
Thy sun sets weeping in the lowly west,
Witnessing storms to come, war, and unrest."

XXVI.

BATTLE OF AZINCOURT.—MARTIN.

[The reign of Henry IV., the first of the Lancastrian kings, was a constant struggle against treason and revolt. His son, Henry V., strong in his position at home, renewed the old quarrel with France. In 1415 he landed with an army in Normandy, captured Harfleur, after a hard siege, and then marched to Calais. On his way thither he encountered and overthrew the French army at Azincourt.]

ON Thursday evening, October 24, the English were encamped in and around the little village of Maisoncelle; the French lay in the open fields near the village of Azincourt, through which ran the road to Calais. The night was cold, dark, and rainy. The French, with feet in the mud, and bodies exposed to the rain, gathered around large fires which had been built near the banners of their chiefs, and awaited the tardy coming of an autumnal dawn. Among them there was a great noise of pages, varlets, and "all sorts of fellows," calling and shouting; "but they had few musical instruments to cheer them, and few of the horses neighed during the night, a fact which many marveled at, and thought full of omen. The English, on the other hand, though weary, hungry, and cold, kept their trumpets and various musical instruments sounding all night long, so that the whole region round about was filled with the noise; and they made their peace with God, confessing their sins with tears, and many partaking of

the sacrament, for they expected certain death on the morrow." But not a shout, not a useless word, was heard among them; the men-at-arms refitted the lacings of their armor, and the archers put new strings to their bows.

At length morning dawned. The French army drew up on the narrow plain of Azincourt, in three deep lines of battle, each directly behind the other, so that neither could render the others any assistance. The little English army presented a front of equal extent to this great multitude, which gained no advantage from the depth of its lines. Nearly all the princes, lords, and great nobles had insisted on placing themselves in the advance-guard, sending to the rear the infantry, the bowmen, and probably the artillery also, as there is no mention of it during the day. Eight thousand gentlemen, magnificently arrayed, pressed into the front line of battle, with the constable, the dukes of Orleans and Bourbon, the counts of Eu and Richemont, and the Marshal Boucicaut, grand-master of the cross-bowmen. Five hundred of these eight thousand nobles, including the duke of Orleans and the count of Nevers, had had themselves invested with knight-hood the preceding day. The dukes of Alençon and Bar, and the count of Nevers had very reluctantly consented to take command of the second line; the rear-guard had been intrusted to the counts of Dammartin, Marle, and Fauquemberg; but these noblemen and their followers immediately abandoned their posts, and, rushing on, helped to encumber the advance-guard. With the exception of the two wings, each composed of several hundred lancers, and destined "to strike" the English archers and "break their fire," all the men-at-arms of the first two lines had dismounted, and had shortened their lances so as to fight on foot. These warriors, heavily armed as they were, sank half-way to the knee in the freshly-plowed ground, which was soaked with rain, and had been trampled into mud by the horses during the night. They could not move, and so resolved, instead of

attacking the enemy, to await his attack. A vague feeling of sadness spread through the ranks; affecting scenes took place. Gentlemen "pardoned each other for the hatreds they had cherished, many embraced and made peace, which was a touching sight to see." The solemnity of the situation awakened kindly feelings in the souls of even these men, steeped, as they were, in pride and sensuality; they became serious in the presence of death.

The English had arrayed themselves by placing the mass of their archers in front; behind these came the men-at-arms on foot, and on the wings were men-at-arms and bowmen intermingled. The archers were protected by a movable palisade, each man carrying a stake sharpened at both ends, which he fixed in the ground in front of him, with the point inclined toward the enemy. The English presented a strange contrast to the French nobles, who were all resplendent in their steel breast-plates, and their coats of mail, embroidered with gold and silver, and variegated with brilliant colors. The archers had suffered so much in this campaign that they looked like a troop of vagabonds and beggars; many of them were barefoot and without helmets; others had head-pieces of waxed leather or of willow, guarded only by a cross-piece of iron, and most of them were without mailed doublets; but they were all the more active for fighting on this muddy and slippery ground, and though their "jackets" were worn-out, and their breeches in tatters, their weapons were in good condition, as they speedily proved.

King Henry had begun the day by hearing three masses in succession; then he put on his helmet, surmounted by a crown of gold, mounted a charger, and ordered his men forward into a field of young grain, where the soil was less soaked than elsewhere. He rode along the lines, and reminded them of the "fine affairs which the kings, his predecessors, had won over the French. . . . Moreover he told them that the French boasted they would take all the archers prisoners, and

cut off the three fingers of the right hand." The English answered, with a great shout, "Sire, God give you long life and victory."

The two armies were within bow-shot. But Henry hesitated to begin a conflict with thirteen or fourteen thousand combatants against fifty thousand. Conferences had already taken place in the preceding days; and he now sent a message to the chiefs of the French army, offering, it is said, to give up his claim to the French crown, and to surrender Harfleur, if they would restore to him the county of Ponthieu and five cities, which ought to belong to his duchy of Guyenne, and give him in marriage the Princess Catherine of France, with eight hundred thousand crowns of gold. The French demanded Harfleur, and renunciation of the crown, without compensation. They consented to leave to the English only Calais, and what they actually held in Guyenne. The English refused.

It was now eleven o'clock in the morning; and, as soon as the conference was broken off, the marshal of the English army, Sir Thomas Erpingham, exhorted his troops again to fight well, then, throwing his staff in the air, cried out, "Ne strecke!" (Now strike!) The English army raised a great shout, and advanced several paces. The French remained motionless; they were nearly knee-deep in mud. The English gave another shout, advanced nearer, and the archers began the battle with a volley of ten thousand arrows, which was followed by many more. The French at last began to move, and, bowing their heads so that the arrows might not penetrate the openings in their visors, they struggled laboriously against the enemy's line, and forced it back a little, while at the same time the men-at-arms on the two wings, who had remained mounted, started from Azincourt and Tramecourt to take the archers in flank.

This cavalry charge, if it could have been properly executed, would have decided the fortune of the day; but the

condition of the ground was such that it failed completely. Most of the cavalry stumbled and fell in the furrows of the newly-plowed fields; not more than one in ten succeeded in reaching the enemy. A few of the bravest and best-mounted came on against the pointed stakes of the archers, and were slain; the others, recoiling before the hail of arrows, struggled out of the mud in which they were nearly mired, fell back on the first line of battle, and their horses, wounded, and furious with pain, plunged into the ranks, causing frightful disorder. The line of the advance-guard was broken; the men-at-arms fell one upon the other, and were unable to rise; "many got out of the *mêlée*, and fled."

The archers seeing these breaks in the French line, threw down their bows and arrows, and, seizing their swords, hatchets, loaded clubs, and *hawk-bills*, charged through their palisade of stakes into the gaps of the opposing ranks. The French men-at-arms, weighed down by their armor, sinking at every step into the spongy soil, and already exhausted before having fought at all, were so crowded together that they could scarcely raise their arms to strike. "The archers smote them down in heaps; it seemed as if they were hammering on anvils; and the French nobles fell one upon another, some being suffocated, the rest killed or captured."

The archers broke through to the second line of battle, opening a way for King Henry and his men-at-arms, who followed and supported them with the greatest energy. The second line met the fate of the first, which it had been unable to assist, and was now involved with it in irretrievable disaster. Desperate efforts were made to dispute the victory, but any general maneuver on the part of the French was impossible; the flower of their nobility could only sell their lives or their liberty as dearly as possible. Lefevre, an eye-witness, reports that eighteen French knights had solemnly sworn to get at the English king and strike the crown from his head, or lose their lives in the attempt. They did, in fact, get so near him

that one of them, with a blow of his ax, struck one of the jewels from the crown; but he and all the rest were speedily cut down and killed. The duke of Alençon, with his men, forced his way nearly through the English line, killed the duke of York, the king's cousin, close by his side, but was cut down by the royal guard just as Henry advanced to spare his life. Duke Antoine de Brabant, who was hastening up by forced marches to join the French army, reached the field at this juncture with the best-mounted of his men. Without stopping even to put on his coat of mail, he seized an emblazoned banner from one of his trumpeters, cut a hole in it, slipped it over his head, and, with drawn sword, rushed upon the English. He was at once unhorsed and slain. The English archers and men-at-arms advanced steadily, always in good order, "fighting, killing, and taking prisoners," without ever breaking their lines to pursue the fugitives, until they were face to face with the French rear-guard, which had remained mounted. The latter did not await their onset; they broke and fled, with the exception of the leaders and some six hundred lancers, who perished in a last charge against the victorious foe.

The English were already complete masters of the field when it was announced to the English king that a new enemy had appeared in his rear, and was plundering his baggage. Henry, alarmed at this unexpected attack, and seeing, in the distance, the fugitives of the French rear-guard gathering again in companies, gave orders, at the sound of the trumpet, for every Englishman to slay his prisoners. The English refused to obey, not from any feeling of humanity, but for fear of losing the great ransoms they expected to get from their captives. Henry then detailed a knight and two hundred archers to do the "business, and there, in cold blood, all that French nobility was killed and cut to pieces, a pitiable sight to see." A multitude of persons had been slaughtered when the king, seeing that the men who had attacked

the baggage were fleeing with their booty, revoked his barbarous order. The attack had been made by only a few hundred soldiers and peasants, under the command of the lord of Azincourt. The men of the French rear-guard, who had tried to rally, fled as soon as they saw that the English were ready to fight them.

The English remained till evening, plundering the dead and succoring those of the wounded from whom they hoped to receive a ransom. The next morning they returned to finish their work and turned over all the heaps of wounded that lay scattered about the plain, choosing whom to kill and whom to take away.

Never had the French nobility experienced a disaster comparable to that of Azincourt. Courtrai, Crecy, and Poitiers had been surpassed. Of the ten thousand dead, there were counted more than eight thousand nobles, a great part of whom had been massacred after they had surrendered, when Henry V. gave orders to slay the prisoners. Among these were the dukes of Alençon and Brabant, the duke of Bar and his two brothers, the Constable d'Albret, the counts of Nevers, Marle, Fauquemberg, and others, the warlike bishop of Sens, about one hundred and twenty great barons, etc. The duke of Orleans was drawn out, alive, from a heap of dead and wounded, and remained a prisoner, together with the duke of Bourbon, the counts of Eu, Vendôme, and Richemont, the Marshal Boucicaut, and fifteen hundred knights and esquires. The English lost the duke of York, the earl of Suffolk, and about sixteen hundred men.

XXVII.

JEANNE DARC—GUEST.

[Henry V. pursued his French conquests until his death, in 1422. He left to his brother, the duke of Bedford, the care of his French dominions. At that time France was in a deplorable condition, rent with faction, and a prey to anarchy. Her imbecile king, Charles VI., died, and his son, the dauphin, was unable to unite the nation, restore order, and drive out the English. What was needed was a leader, and one came at last in the peasant girl, Jeanne Darc. At the time of her appearance, the English were engaged in besieging the city of Orleans.]

THERE is no story in all the long history of the world more strange and beautiful than the story of the Maid of Orleans. She was born in a wild and woody country, on the borders of Lorraine and Champagne. Her father, Jacques Darc, was a poor laborer. His little Joan, or Jeanne, was bred up like any other poor man's child; but before we can understand either the maiden or her story, we must try to realize a little, if we can, the world she lived in, and how different it was from our world. When she was taken to the little country church, on Sundays and holy days, she would, doubtless, see on the walls the images of crowned saints and angels, of Christ, and the Virgin Mary. They might be very roughly painted, but to the poor village people they would seem beautiful and glorious; nor would they be looked upon as mere pictures. Jeanne and all the others in the church thought they were actually like the real saints and angels in heaven, and would kneel and pray before them without a moment's doubt that they would hear and answer. If the world seemed cold and bleak, the poor cottages rude and bare, and men were rough and miserable, they would like to think of the happy, glorious world, where their friends the saints sat in glory, with a kind thought of pity for them and their troubles. Jeanne loved going to church above all other things.

But when she walked in the great oak forests, near her home,