CHAPTER V

THE HUNDRED YEARS' WAR

1336—1431

SECTION I.—EDWARD THE THIRD, 1336—1360

[Authorities.—The chronicle of Hemingburgh is continued by an unknown author to the eve of the battle of Cressy. Other important authorities for the first part of Edward III.'s reign are Murimuth, Robert of Avesbury, Geoffrey le Baker (the first part of whose chronicle was originally known as "Thomae de la Moor"), Knighton, and the "Eulogium Historiarum" (all in the Rolls Series). The Chroniclers of St. Alban's and the "Polychronicon" may also be mentioned. For the Hundred Years' War, the most famous authority is, of course, Froissart. He was at first attached to the English court, and the earliest version of his work has an English bias; the second and third versions were composed under French influence. As a history, his writings are of no particular value. The best edition is that published for the Société de l'Histoire de France. Froissart made use of Jean le Bel, "Chroniques," which supplies the best authority for the war. Various other French chronicles are of value. Among modern authorities may be mentioned Mackinnon's "History of Edward III," and Déprez, "Préliminaires de la Guerre de Cent Ans." The best edition of the works of Chaucer is that of Skeat; for the general literary history of the period, see Jusserand.]

In the middle of the fourteenth century the great movement towards freedom and unity which had begun under the last of the Norman Kings seemed to have reached its end, and the perfect fusion of conquered and conquerors into an English people was marked by the disuse, even amongst the nobler classes, of the French tongue. In spite of the efforts of the grammar schools, and of the strength of fashion, English was winning its way throughout the reign of Edward the Third to its final triumph in that of his grandson. "Children in school," says a writer of the earlier reign, "against the usage and manner of all other nations, be compelled for to leave their own language, and for to construe their lessons and their things in French, and so they have since Normans first came into England. Also gentlemen's children be taught to speak French from the time that they be rocked in their cradle, and know how to speak and play with a child's toy; and uplandish (or country) men will liken themselves to gentlemen, and fondell (or delight) with great business for to speak French to be told of." "This manner," adds a translator of Richard's time, "was much used before the first murrain (the plague of 1349), and is since somewhat changed; for John Cornewall, a master of grammar, changed the lore in grammar school and construing from French into English; and Richard Pencrciche learned this manner of teaching of him, as others did of Pencrciche. So that now, the year of our Lord, 1385, and of
the second King Richard after the conquest nine, in all the grammar schools of England children leaveth French, and construeth and learneth in English.” A more formal note of the change thus indicated is found in the Statute of 1362, which orders English to be used in the pleadings of courts of law, because “the French tongue is much unknown.” The tendency to a general use of the national tongue told powerfully on literature. The influence of the French romances had everywhere tended to make French the one literary language at the opening of the fourteenth century, and in England this influence had been backed by the French tone of the court of Henry the Third and the three Edwards. But at the close of the reign of Edward the Third the long French romances were translated even for knightly hearers. “Let clerks indite in Latin,” says the author of the “Testament of Love,” “and let Frenchmen in their French also indite their quaint terms, for it is kindly to their mouths; and let us show our fantasies in such words as we learned of our mother’s tongue.” The new national life afforded nobler material than “fantasies” for English literature. With the completion of the work of national unity had come the completion of the work of national freedom. Under the first Edward the Parliament had vindicated its right to the control of taxation, under the second it had advanced from the removal of ministers to the deposition of a King, under the third it gave its voice on questions of peace and war, controlled expenditure, and regulated the course of civil administration. The vigour of English life showed itself socially in the wide extension of commerce; in the rapid growth of the woollen manufactures after the settlement of Flemish weavers on the eastern coast; in the progress of the towns, fresh as they were from the victory of the craft-guilds; and in the development of agriculture through the rise of the tenant-farmer. It gave nobler signs of its activity in the spirit of national independence and moral earnestness which awoke at the call of Wyclif. New forces of thought and feeling, which were destined to tell on every age of our later history, broke their way through the crust of feudalism in the socialist revolt of the Lollards, and a sudden burst of military glory threw its glamour over the age of Cressy and Poitiers.

It is in this new gladness of a great people which utters itself in the verse of Geoffrey Chaucer. In spite of a thousand conjectures, we know little of the life of our first great poet. From his own statement we gather that he was born about the middle of the fourteenth century. His death must have taken place about the year of its close. His family, though not noble, seems to have been of some importance, for, from the opening of his career, we find Chaucer in close connexion with the Court. He first bore arms in the campaign of 1359, but he was luckless enough to be made prisoner; and from the time of his release after the treaty of Bretigny he took no further share in the military enterprises of his time. If he married a sister of the famous Katherine Swynford, the mistress, and at a later time the wife of John of Gaunt, the match would ally him to
the Duke of Lancaster; it was as his adherent that he sate in the Parliament of 1386, and to his patronage that he owed a petty office in the Customs and an appointment as clerk of the Royal Works. A mission, which was probably connected with the financial straits of the Crown, carried him in early life to Italy. He visited Genoa and the brilliant court of the Visconti at Milan; at Florence, where the memory of Dante, the "great master," whom he commemorates so reverently in his verse, was still living, he may have met Boccaccio; at Padua, like his own clerk of Oxenford, he may have caught the story of Griseldis from the lips of Petrarch. But with these few facts and guesses our knowledge of him ends. In person, the portrait of Occleve, which preserves for us his forked beard, his dark-coloured dress and hood, the knife and pen-case at his girdle, is supplemented by a few vivid touches of his own. The Host in the "Canterbury Tales" describes him as one who looked on the ground as though he would find a hare, as elf-like in face, but portly of waist. He heard little of his neighbours' talk; when labour was over "thou goest home to thine own house anon, and also dumb as a stone thou sittest at another book till fully dazed is thy look, and livest thus as an hermit, although thy abstinence is litle (little)." But of this abstraction from his fellows there is no trace in his verse. No poetry was ever more human than Chaucer's; none ever came more frankly and genially home to its readers. The first note of his song is a note of freshness and gladness. "Of ditties and of songs glad, the which he for my sake made, the land fulfilled is over all," Gower makes Love say in his lifetime; and the impression of gladness remains just as fresh now that four hundred years have passed away. The historical character of Chaucer's work lies on its surface. It stands out in vivid contrast with the poetical literature from the heart of which it sprang. The long French romances were the product of an age of wealth and ease, of indolent curiosity, of a fanciful and self-indulgent sentiment. Of the great passions which gave life to the Middle Ages, that of religious enthusiasm had degenerated into the pretty conceits of Mariolatry, that of war into the gorgeous extravagances of Chivalry. Love, indeed, remained; it was the one theme of troubadour and trouvère, but it was a love of refinement, of romantic follies, of scholastic discussions, of sensuous enjoyment—a plaything rather than a passion. Nature had to reflect the pleasant indolence of man; the song of the minstrel moved through a perpetual May-time; the grass was ever green; the music of the lark and the nightingale rang out from field and thicket. There was a gay avoidance of all that is serious, moral, or reflective in man's life: life was too amusing to be serious, too piquant, too sentimental, too full of interest and gaiety and chat. It was an age of talk: "mirth is none," says the host, "to ride on by the way dumb as a stone;" and the Trouvère aimed simply at being the most agreeable talker of his day. His romances, his rhymes of King Horn or Sir Tristram,
his Romance of the Rose, are full of colour and fantasy, endless in detail, but with a sort of gorgeous idleness about their very length, the minuteness of their description of outer things, the vagueness of their touch when it passes to the subtler inner world. Nothing is more unreal than the tone of the French romance, nothing more absolutely real than the tone of Chaucer. If with the best modern critics we reject from the list of his genuine works the bulk of the poems which preceded "Troilus and Cressida," we see at once that, familiar as he was with the literature of the Trouveres, his real sympathies drew him not to the dying verse of France, but to the new and mighty upgrowth of poetry in Italy. Dante's eagle looks at him from the sun. "Fraunce Petrark, the laureat poete," is to him one "whose rethorique sweete enlumyned al Itail of poetric." The "Troilus" is an enlarged English version of Boccaccio's "Filostrate," the Knight's Tale of his Teseide. It was, indeed, the "Decameron" which suggested the very form of the "Canterbury Tales." But even while changing, as it were, the front of English poetry, Chaucer preserves his own distinct personality. If he quizzes in the rime of Sir Thopaz the wearisome idleness of the French romance, he retains all that was worth retaining of the French temper, its rapidity and agility of movement, its lightness and brilliancy of touch, its airy mockery, its gaiety and good humour, its critical coolness and self-control. The French wit quickens in him more than in any English writer the sturdy sense and shrewdness of our national disposition, corrects its extravagance, and relieves its somewhat ponderous morality. If, on the other hand, he echoes the joyous carelessness of the Italian tale, he tempers it with the English seriousness. As he follows Boccaccio, all his changes are on the side of purity; and when the Troilus of the Florentine ends with the old sneer at the changeableness of woman, Chaucer bids us "look Godward," and dwells on the unchangeableness of Heaven.

But the genius of Chaucer was neither French nor Italian, whatever element it might borrow from either literature, but English to the core. Of the history of the great poem on which his fame must rest, or of the order in which the "Canterbury Tales" were really written, a little is now known. The work was the fruit of his old age: it was in his last home, the house in the garden of St. Mary's Chapel at Westminster, that Chaucer rested from his labours; and here he must have been engaged on the poem which his death left unfinished. Its story—that of a pilgrimage from London to Canterbury—not only enabled him to string together a number of tales which seem to have been composed at very different times, but lent itself admirably to the peculiar characteristics of his poetic temper, dramatic power, and the universality of his sympathy. His tales cover the whole field of medieval poetry; the legend of the priest, the knightly romance, the wonder-tale of the traveller, the broad humour of the fabliau, allegory and apologue, all are there. He finds a yet wider scope for his genius in the persons who
tell these stories, the thirty pilgrims who start in the May morning from the Tabard in Southwark—thirty distinct figures, representa-
tives of every class of English society, from the noble to the plough-
man. We see the “verray perfiht gentil knght” in cassock and
coat of mail, with his curly-headed squire beside him, fresh as the
May morning, and behind them the brown-faced yeoman, in his
coat and hood of green, with the good bow in his hand. A group of
ecclesiastics lights up for us the medieval church—the brawny
hunt-loving monk, whose bridle jingles as loud and clear as the
chapel-bell—the wanton friar, first among the beggars and harpers
of the country side—the poor parson, threadbare, learned, and
devout (“Christ’s lore and His apostles’ twelve he taught, and
first he followed it himself”)—the summoner with his fiery face—
the pardoner with his wallet “bret-full of pardons, come from
Rome all hot”—the lively prioress with her courtly French lisp,
her soft little red mouth, and “Amor vincet omnia” graven on
her brooch. Learning is there in the portly person of the doctor
of physic, rich with the profits of the postenice—the busy serjeant-
of-law, “that ever seemed busier than he was”—the hollow-
cheeked clerk of Oxford, with his love of books, and short, sharp
sentences that disguise a latent tenderness which breaks out at
last in the story of Griseldis. Around them crowd types of English
industry; the merchant; the franklin, in whose house “it snowed
of meat and drink;” the sailor fresh from frays in the Channel;
the buxom wife of Bath; the broad-shouldered miller; the haberdasher, carpenter, weaver, dyer, tapestry-maker, each in the new
livery of his craft; and last, the honest ploughman, who would
dyke and delve for the poor without hire. It is the first time in
English poetry that we are brought face to face not with characters
or allegories or reminiscences of the past, but with living and
breathing men, men distinct in temper and sentiment as in face
or costume or mode of speech; and with this distinctness of each
maintained throughout the story by a thousand shades of expre-
sion and action. It is the first time, too, that we meet with the
ramatic power which not only creates each character, but com-
bines it with its fellows, which not only adjusts each tale or jest to
the temper of the person who utters it, but fuses all into a poetic
unity. It is life in its largeness, its variety, its complexity, which
surrounds us in the “Canterbury Tales.” In some of the stories,
indeed, composed no doubt at an earlier time, there is the tedium of
the old romance or the pedantry of the schoolman; but taken as a
whole the poem is the work not of a man of letters, but of a man
of action. He has received his training from war, courts, business,
travel—a training not of books, but of life. And it is life that he
loves—the delicacy of its sentiment, the breadth of its farse, its
laughter and its tears, the tenderness of its Griseldis or the Smollett-
like adventures of the miller and the schoolboy. It is this largeness
of heart, this wide tolerance, which enables him to reflect man for
us as none but Shakespeare has ever reflected it, but to reflect it
with a pathos, a shrewd sense and kindly humour, a freshness and joyousness of feeling, that even Shakespeare has not surpassed.

It is strange that such a voice as this should have awakened no echo in the singers who follow; but the first burst of English song died as suddenly and utterly with Chaucer as the hope and glory of his age. The hundred years which follow the brief sunshine of Cressy and the "Canterbury Tales" are years of the deepest gloom; no age of our history is so sad and sombre as the age which we traverse from the third Edward to Joan of Arc. The throbs of hope and glory which pulsed at its outset through every class of English society died into inaction or despair. Material life lingered on indeed, commerce still widened, but its progress was dissociated from all the nobler elements of national well-being. The towns sank again into close oligarchies; the bondsmen struggling forward to freedom fell back into a servitude which still leaves its trace on the soil. Literature reached its lowest ebb. The religious revival of the Lollard was trodden out in blood, while the Church shrivelled into a self-seeking secular priesthood. In the clash of civil strife political freedom was all but extinguished, and the age which began with the Good Parliament ended with the despotism of the Tudors.

The secret of the change is to be found in the fatal war which for more than a hundred years drained the strength and corrupted the temper of the English people. We have followed the attack on Scotland to its disastrous close, but the struggle, ere it ended, had involved England in a second contest, to which, for the sake of clearness, we have only slightly alluded, but to which we must now turn back, a contest yet more ruinous than that which Edward the First had begun. From the war with Scotland sprang the hundred years' struggle with France. From the first, France had watched the successes of her rival in the north, partly with a natural jealousy, but still more as likely to afford her an opening for winning the great southern Duchy of Guienne—the one fragment of Eleanor's inheritance which remained to her descendants. Scotland had no sooner begun to resent the claims of her over-lord, Edward the First, than a pretext for interference was found in the rivalry between the mariners of Normandy and those of the Cinque Ports, which culminated at the moment in a great sea-fight that proved fatal to 8000 Frenchmen. So eager was Edward to avert a quarrel with France, that his threats roused the English seamen to a characteristic defiance. "Be the King's Council well advised," ran the remonstrance of the mariners, "that if wrong or grievance be done them in any fashion against right, they will sooner forsake wives, children, and all that they have, and go seek through the seas where they shall think to make their profit." In spite, therefore, of Edward's efforts the contest continued, and Philip found an opportunity to cite the King before his court at Paris for wrongs done to his suzerain. Again Edward endeavoured to avert the conflict by a formal cession of Guienne into Philip's hands during
forty days, but the refusal of the French sovereign to restore the
province left no choice for him but war. The instant revolt of
Balliol proved that the French outrage was but the first blow in a
deliberate and long-planned scheme of attack; Edward had for a
while no force to waste on France, and when the first conquest of
Scotland freed his hands, his league with Flanders for the recovery
of Guienne was foiled by the refusal of his baronage to follow him
on a foreign campaign. Even after the victory of Falkirk, Scotch
independence was still saved, as we have seen, for three years by
the threats of France and the intervention of its ally, Boniface the
Eighth; and it was only the quarrel of these two confederates
which allowed Edward to complete its subjection. But the rising
under Bruce was again backed by French aid and by the renewal
of the old quarrel over Guienne—a quarrel which hampered England
through the reign of Edward the Second, and which indirectly
brought about his terrible fall. The accession of Edward the Third
secured a momentary peace, but the fresh attack on Scotland
which marked the opening of his reign kindled hostility anew;
the young King David found refuge in France, and arms, money,
and men were despatched from its ports to support his cause. It
was this intervention of France which foiled Edward's hopes of the
submission of Scotland at the very moment when success seemed
in his grasp; the solemn announcement by Philip of Valois that his
treaties bound him to give effective help to his old ally, and the
assembly of a French fleet in the Channel drew the King from his
struggle in the north to face a storm which his negotiations could
no longer avert.

The two weapons on which Edward counted for success at the
opening of the contest thus forced on him were the wealth of Eng-
land and his claim upon the crown of France. The commerce of the
country was still mainly limited to the exportation of wool to Flan-
ders, but the rapid rise of this trade may be conjectured from the
fact that in a single year Edward received more than £80,000 from
duties levied on wool alone. So fine was the breed of sheep, that
the exportation of live rams for the improvement of foreign wool
was forbidden by law, though a flock is said to have been smuggled
out of the realm shortly after, and to have become the source of the
famous merinos of Spain. Up to Edward's time few woolen fabrics
seem to have been woven in England, though Flemish weavers
had come over with the Conqueror to found the prosperity of Nor-
wich; but the number of weavers' guilds shows that the trade
was gradually extending. Edward appears to have taken it under
his especial care; at the outset of his reign he invited Flemish
weavers to settle in his country, and took the new immigrants,
who chose principally Norfolk, Suffolk, and Essex for the seat of
their trade, under his especial protection. It was on the wealth
which England derived from the great development of its com-
merce that the King relied for the promotion of a great league with
Flanders and the Empire, by which he proposed to bring the French
war to an end. Anticipating the later policy of Godolphin and Pitt, Edward became the paymaster of the poorer princes of Germany; his subsidies purchased the aid of Hainault, Gueldres, and Juliers; sixty thousand crowns went to the Duke of Brabant, while the Emperor himself was induced by a promise of 3000 gold florins to furnish 2000 men-at-arms. Years, however, of elaborate negotiations and profuse expenditure brought the King little fruit save the title of Vicar-General of the Empire on the left of the Rhine; now the Flemings hung back, now his imperial allies refused to move without the Emperor's express consent; and when the host at last crossed the border Edward found it impossible to bring the French King to an engagement. Philip, meanwhile, was busy in sweeping the Channel and harrying the shores of England; and his threats of invasion were only averted by a naval victory off the Flemish coast, in which Edward in person utterly destroyed for the time the fleet of France. The King's difficulties, however, had at last reached their height. His loans from the great bankers of Florence amounted to half-a-million of our money; his overtures for peace were contemptuously rejected; his claim to the French crown found not a single adherent. To establish such a claim, indeed, was difficult enough. The three sons of Philip le Bel had died without male issue, and Edward claimed as the son of Philip's daughter Isabella. But though her brothers had left no sons, they had left daughters; and if female succession were admitted, these daughters of Philip's sons would precede the son of Philip's daughter. If, on the other hand, as the great bulk of French jurists asserted, only male succession gave right to the throne, then the right of Philip le Bel was exhausted, and the crown passed to the son of his brother Charles, who had in fact peacefully succeeded to it as Philip of Valois. By a legal subtlety, however, while asserting the rights of female succession and of the line of Philip le Bel, Edward alleged that the nearest living male descendant of that King could claim in preference to females who were related to him in as near a degree. Though advanced on the accession of Philip of Valois, the claim seems to have been regarded on both sides as a mere formality; Edward, in fact, did full and liege homage to his rival for his Duchy of Guisnes; and it was not till his hopes from Germany had been exhausted, and his claim was found to be useful in securing the loyal aid of the Flemish cities, that it was brought seriously to the front. But a fresh campaign in the Low Countries was as fruitless as its predecessors, and the ruin of the English party in Flanders, through the death of its chief, Van Artevelde, was poorly compensated by a new opening for attack in Brittany, where, of the two rival claimants to the Duchy, one did homage to Philip and the other to Edward.

The failure of his foreign hopes threw Edward on the resources of Essex of England itself, and it was with an army of thirty thousand men that he landed at La Hogue, and commenced a march which was to
change the whole face of the war. His aim was simply to advance
to ravaging to the north, where he designed to form a junction with
a Flemish force gathered at Gravelines, but the rivers between
them were carefully guarded, and it was only by throwing a bridge
across the Seine at Poissy, and by forcing the ford of Blanche-
Tauche on the Somme, that Edward escaped the necessity of sur-
rendering to the vast host which was hastening in pursuit. His
communications, however, were no sooner secured than he halted
at the little village of Cressy in Ponthieu, and resolved to give
battle. Half of his army, now greatly reduced in strength, con-
sisted of the light-armed footmen of Ireland and Wales; the bulk
of the remainder was composed of English bowmen. The King
ordered his men-at-arms to dismount, and drew up his forces on
a low rise sloping gently to the south-east, with a windmill on its
summit from which he could overlook the whole field of battle.
Immediately beneath him lay the reserve, while at the base of the
slope was placed the main body of the army in two divisions, that
to the right commanded by the young Prince of Wales, that to the
left by the Earl of Northampton. A small ditch protected the
English front, and behind it the bowmen were drawn up "in the
form of a harrow," with small bombards between them "which,
with fire, threw little iron balls to frighten the horses"—the first
instance of the use of artillery in field warfare. The halt of the
English army took Philip by surprise, and he attempted for a
time to check the advance of his army, but the disorderly host
rolled on to the English front. The sight of his enemies, indeed,
stirred the King's own blood to fury, "for he hated them," and at
vespers the fight began. Fifteen thousand Genoese crossbowmen,
hired from among the soldiers of the Lord of Monaco, on the sunny
Riviera, were ordered to begin the attack. The men were weary
with the march; a sudden storm wetted and rendered useless
their bowstrings; and the loud shouts with which they leapt for-
ward to the encounter were met with dogged silence in the
English ranks. Their first arrow-flight, however, brought a
terrible reply. So rapid was the English shot, "that it seemed
as if it snowed." "Kill me these scoundrels," shouted Philip,
as the Genoese fell back; and his men-at-arms plunged butchering
into their broken ranks, while the Counts of Alencon and Flanders,
at the head of the French knighthood, fell hotly on the Prince's
line. For the instant his small force seemed lost, but Edward re-
fused to send him aid. "Is he dead or unhorsed, or so wounded that
he cannot help himself?" he asked the envoy. "No, Sir," was the
reply, "but he is in a hard passage of arms, and sorely needs your
help." "Return to those that sent you, Sir Thomas," said the
King, "and bid them not send to me again so long as my son
lives! Let the boy win his spurs; for I wish, if God so order it,
that the day may be his, and that the honour may be with him
and them to whom I have given it in charge." Edward could see,
in fact, from his higher ground, that all went well. The bowmen
and men-at-arms held their ground stoutly, while the Welshmen were stabbing the horses in the mêlée, and bringing knight after knight to the ground. Soon the great French host was waverling in a fatal confusion. "You are my vassals, my friends," cried the blind King of Bohemia, who had joined Philip’s army, to the nobles around him: "I pray and beseech you to lead me so far into the fight that I may strike one good blow with this sword of mine!" Linking their bridles together, the little company plunged into the thick of the combat to fall as their fellows were falling. The battle went steadily against the French: at last Philip himself hurried from the field, and the defeat became a rout: 1200 knights and 30,000 footmen—a number equal to the whole English force—lay dead upon the ground.

"God has punished us for our sins," cries the chronicler of St. Calais Denys, in a passion of bowed grief, as he tells the rout of the great host which he had seen mustering beneath his abbey walls. But the fall of France was hardly so sudden or so incomprehensible then as the fall of chivalry. The lesson which England had learnt at Bannockburn she taught the world at Cressy. The whole social and political fabric of the Middle Ages rested on a military base, and its base was suddenly withdrawn. The churl had struck down the noble; the bondsman proved more than a match in sheer hard fighting for the knight. From the day of Cressy feudalism tottered slowly but surely to its grave. But to England the day was the beginning of a career of military glory, which, fatal as it was destined to prove to the higher sentiments and interests of the nation, gave it for the moment an energy such as it had never known before. Victory followed victory. A few months after Cressy a Scotch army which had burst into the north was routed at Neville’s Cross, and its King, David, taken prisoner; while the withdrawal of the French from the Garonne left England unopposed in Guienne and Poitou. Edward’s aim, however, was not to conquer France, but simply to save English commerce by securing the mastery of the Channel. Calais was the great pirate-haven; in one year alone, twenty-two privateers had sailed from its port; while its capture promised the King an easy base of communication with Flanders, and of operations against France. The siege lasted a year, and it was not till Philip had failed to relieve it that the town was starved into surrender. Mercy was granted to the garrison and the people on condition that six of the citizens gave themselves unconditionally into the King’s hands. "On them," said Edward, with a burst of bitter hatred, "I will do my will." At the sound of the town bell, Johan le Bel tells us, the folk of Calais gathered round the bearer of these terms, "desiring to hear their good news, for they were all mad with hunger. When the said knight told them his news, then began they to weep and cry so loudly that it was great pity. Then stood up the wealthiest burgess of the town, Master Eustache de S. Pierre by name, and spake thus before all: ‘My masters, great grief and mishap it were for all
to leave such a people as this is to die by famine or otherwise; and
great charity and grace would he win from our Lord who could
defend them from dying. For me, I have great hope in the Lord
that if I can save this people by my death, I shall have pardon for
my faults, wherefore will I be the first of the six, and of my own
will put myself barefoot in my shirt and with a halter round my
neck in the mercy of King Edward.' " The list of devoted men was
soon made up, and the six victims were led before the King. "All
the host assembled together; there was great press, and many
bade hang them openly, and many wept for pity. The noble
King came with his train of counts and barons to the place,
and the Queen followed him, though great with child, to see what
there would be. The six citizens knelt down at once before the
King, and Master Eustache said thus: 'Gentle King, here be
we six who have been of the old bourgeoisie of Calais and great
merchants; we bring you the keys of the town and castle of
Calais, and render them to you at your pleasure. We set our-
selves in such wise as you see purely at your will, to save the rem-
nant of the people that has suffered much pain. So may you have
pity and mercy on us for your high nobleness' sake.' Certes, there
was then in that place neither lord nor knight that wept not for
pity, nor who could speak for pity; but the King had his heart so
hardened by wrath, that for a long while he could not reply; then
he commanded to cut off their heads. All the knights and lords
prayed him with tears, as much as they could, to have pity on
them, but he would not hear. Then spoke the gentle knight, Master
Walter de Manny, and said, 'Ha, gentle sire! bridle your wrath;
you have the renown and good fame of all gentleness; do not a
thing whereby men can speak any villany of you! If you have no
pity, all men will say that you have a heart full of all cruelty to
put these good citizens to death that of their own will are come to
render themselves to you to save the remnant of their people.'
At this point the King changed countenance with wrath, and said,
'Hold your peace, Master Walter! it shall be none otherwise.
Call the headsman! They of Calais have made so many of my men
die, that they must die themselves!' Then did the noble Queen
of England a deed of noble lowliness, seeing she was great with
child, and wept so tenderly for pity, that she could no longer stand
upright; therefore she cast herself on her knees before her lord
the King, and spake on this wise: 'Ah, gentle sire! from the day
that I passed over sea in great peril, as you know, I have asked for
nothing: now pray I and beseech you, with folded hands, for the
love of our Lady's Son, to have mercy upon them.' The gentle King
waited a while before speaking, and looked on the Queen as she
knelt before him bitterly weeping. Then began his heart to soften
a little, and he said, 'Lady, I would rather you had been otherwhere;
you pray so tenderly, that I dare not refuse you; and though I do it
against my will, nevertheless take them, I give them you.' Then
took he the six citizens by the halters and delivered them to the
Queen, and released from death all those of Calais for the love of her; and the good lady bade them clothe the six burgesses and make them good cheer."

A great naval victory won over a Spanish pirate fleet which was sweeping the narrow seas completed the work which had begun with the capture of Calais. In Froissart's naval picture we see the King sitting on deck in his jacket of black velvet, his head covered with a black beaver hat which became him well, and calling on his minstrels to play to him on the horn, and on John Chandos to troll out the songs he has brought over from Germany, till the great Spanish ships heave in sight, and a furious struggle begins which ends in their destruction. Edward was now "King of the Sea," but peace with France was as far off as ever. Even the truce which had for eight years been forced on both countries by sheer exhaustion became at last impossible. Edward threw three armies at once on the French coast, but the campaign proved a fruitless one. The "Black Prince," as the hero of Cressy was now styled, alone won a disgraceful success. Northern and central France had by this time fallen into utter ruin; the royal treasury was empty, the fortresses unoccupied, the troops disbanded for want of pay, the country swept by bandits. Only the south remained at peace, and the young Prince led his army of freebooters up the Garonne into "what was before one of the fat countries of the world, the people good and simple, who did not know what war was; indeed, no war had been waged against them till the Prince came. The English and Gascons found the country full and gay, the rooms adorned with carpets and draperies, the caskets and chests full of fair jewels. But nothing was safe from these robbers. They, and especially the Gascons, who are very greedy, carried off everything."

The capture of Narbonne loaded them with booty, and they fell back to Bordeaux, "their horses so laden with spoil that they could hardly move." With the same aim of plunder, the Black Prince started the next year for the Loire; but the assembly of a French army under John, who had succeeded Philip of Valois on the throne, forced him to retreat. As he approached Poitiers, however, he found the French, who now numbered 60,000 men, in his path. The Prince at once took a strong position in the fields of Maupertuis, his front covered by thick hedges, and approachable only by a deep and narrow lane which ran between vineyards. The Prince lined the vineyards and hedges with bowmen, and drew up his small body of men-at-arms at the point where the lane opened upon the higher plain where he was encamped. His force numbered only 8000 men, and the danger was great enough to force him to offer the surrender of his prisoners, and an oath not to fight against France for seven years, in exchange for a free retreat. The terms were rejected, and three hundred French knights charged up the narrow lane. It was soon choked with men and horses, while the front ranks of the advancing army fell back before the galling fire of arrows from the hedgerows. In the moment of confusion a body of
English horsemen, posted on a hill to the right, charged suddenly on the French flank, and the Prince seized the opportunity to fall boldly on their front. The English archery completed the disorder produced by this sudden attack; the French King was taken, desperately fighting; and at noon tide, when his army poured back in utter rout to the gates of Poitiers, 8000 of their number had fallen on the field, 3000 in the flight, and 2000 men-at-arms, with a crowd of nobles, were taken prisoners. The royal captive entered London in triumph, and a truce for two years seemed to give healing-time to France. But the miserable country found no rest in itself. The routed soldiery turned into free companies of bandits, while the captive lords purchased their ransom by extortion which drove the peasantry into universal revolt. "Jacques Bonhomme," as the insurgents called themselves, waged war against the castles; while Paris, impatient of the weakness and misrule of the Regency, rose in arms against the Crown. The rising had hardly been crushed, when Edward again poured ravaging over the wasted land. Famine, however, proved its best defence. "I could not believe," said Petrarch of this time, "that this was the same France which I had seen so rich and flourishing. Nothing presented itself to my eyes but a fearful solitude, an utter poverty, land uncultivated, houses in ruins. Even the neighbourhood of Paris showed everywhere marks of desolation and conflagration. The streets are deserted, the roads overgrown with weeds, the whole is a vast solitude." Both parties were at last worn out. Edward's army had fallen back, ruined, on the Loire, when proposals of peace reached him. By the treaty of Bretigny, the English King waived his claims on the crown of France and on the Duchy of Normandy. On the other hand, his Duchy of Aquitaine, which included Gascony, Guienne, Poitou, and Saintonge, was left to him, no longer as a feoff, but in full sovereignty, while his new conquest of Calais remained a part of the possessions of the English crown.

Green's account of the origin of the Hundred Years' War should be compared with that given by Dèprez, "Préliminaires de la guerre de Cent Ans." It is probable that the account in the text attaches too much importance to the Scottish side of the quarrel and hardly enough to the commercial cause of the war. The constant pressure of the French upon Gascony, which tended to make the position of the English in that district untenable, was almost certain to produce a conflict, quite apart from the Franco-Scottish alliance. For the claim to the French throne, see also Dèprez. Edward did not definitely assume the title of king of France until the war had actually begun, though his claim had been raised at the time of the accession of Philip VI., and the homage which had been done to the Valois king did not necessarily prejudice the later prosecution of the claim. On the battle of Poitiers, see Tout, "Political History of England, 1216-1377." Green is in error in stating that the suzerainty of France over the English possession was resigned by the treaty of 1360; it was abandoned in the preliminaries of peace at Bretigny, but reasserted in the definitive treaty of Calais.
SEC. II.]

The Good Parliament

SECTION II.—THE GOOD PARLIAMENT, 1300—1377

[Authorities.—The most important authority for the close of Edward III.'s reign is the "Chronicon Angliae" (Rolls Series), originally known through the compilation of Thomas of Waltham. Among modern works, Armitage Smith, "John of Gaunt," and Trevelyan, "England in the Age of Wycliffe," may be mentioned.]

If we turn from the stirring but barren annals of foreign warfare to the more fruitful field of constitutional progress, we are at once struck with a marked change which takes place during this period in the composition of Parliament. The division, with which we are so familiar, into a House of Lords and a House of Commons, formed no part of the original plan of Edward the First; in the earlier Parliaments, in fact, each of the four orders of clergy, barons, knights, and burgesses met, deliberated, and made their grants apart from each other. This isolation, however, of the Estates soon showed signs of breaking down. While the clergy, as we have seen, held steadily aloof from any real union with its fellow-orders, the knights of the shire were drawn by the similarity of their social position into a close connexion with the lords. They seem, in fact, to have been soon admitted by the baronage to an almost equal position with themselves, whether as legislators or councillors of the Crown. The burgesses, on the other hand, took little part in parliamentary proceedings, save in those which related to the taxation of their class. But their position was raised by the strides of the reign which followed, when their aid was needed by the baronage in its struggle with the Crown; and their right to share fully in all legislative action was asserted in the famous statute of Edward the Second. Gradually too, through causes with which we are imperfectly acquainted, the knights of the shire drifted from their older connexion with the baronage into so close and intimate a union with the representatives of the towns that at the opening of the reign of Edward the Third the two orders are found grouped formally together, under the name of "The Commons." It is difficult to over-estimate the importance of this change. Had Parliament remained broken up into its four orders of clergy, barons, knights, and citizens, its power would have been neutralized at every great crisis by the jealousies and difficulty of co-operation among its component parts. The permanent union of the knighthood and the baronage, on the other hand, would have converted Parliament into the mere representative of an aristocratic caste, and would have robbed it of the strength which it has drawn from its connexion with the great body of the commercial classes. The new attitude of the knighthood, their social connexion as landed gentry with the baronage, their political union with the burgesses, really welded the three orders into one, and gave that unity of feeling and action to our Parliament on which its power has ever since mainly depended. From the moment
of this change, indeed, we see a marked increase of parliamentary activity. A crowd of enactments for the regulation of trade, whether wise or unwise, and for the protection of the subject against oppression or injustice, as well as the great ecclesiastical provisions of this reign, show the rapid widening of the sphere of parliamentary action. A yet larger development of their powers was offered to the Commons by Edward himself. In his anxiety to shift from his shoulders the responsibility of the war with France, he referred to them for counsel on the subject of one of the numerous propositions of peace. As yet, however, the Commons shrank from the task of advising the Crown on so difficult a subject as that of State policy. “Most dreaded lord,” they replied, “as to your war and the equipment necessary for it, we are so ignorant and simple that we know not how, nor have the power, to devise: therefore we pray your Grace to excuse us in this matter, and that it please you, with advice of the great and wise persons of your Council, to ordain what seems best to you for the honour and profit of yourself and of your kingdom; and whatsoever shall be thus ordained by assent and agreement for you and your lords we readily assent to, and will hold it firmly established.” But while shrinking from so wide an extension of their responsibility, the Commons wrested from the Crown a practical reform of the highest value. As yet their petitions, if granted, had been embodied by the Royal Council in “Ordinances” at the close of the session, when it was impossible to decide whether the Ordinance was in actual accordance with the petition on which it was based. It was now agreed that, on the assent of the Crown to their petitions, they should at once be converted into “statutes,” and derive force of law from their entry on the rolls of Parliament.

The political responsibility which the Commons evaded was at last forced on them by the misfortunes of the war. In spite of quarrels in Brittany and elsewhere, peace had been fairly preserved in the nine years which followed the treaty of Bretigny; but the shrewd eye of Charles V., the successor of John, was watching keenly for the moment of renewing the struggle. He had cleared his kingdom of the freebooters by despatching them into Spain, and the Black Prince had plunged into the revolutions of that country only to return from his fruitless victory of Najara in broken health, and impoverished by the expenses of the campaign. The anger caused by the taxation which this necessitated was fanned by Charles into revolt. He listened, in spite of the treaty, to an appeal from the lords of Gascony, and summoned the Black Prince to his court. “I will come,” replied the Prince, “but helmet on head, and with sixty thousand men at my back.” War, however, had hardly been declared before the ability with which Charles had laid his plans was seen in the seizure of Ponthieu, and the insurrection of the whole country south of the Garonne. The Black Prince, borne on a litter to the walls of Limoges, recovered the town, which had been surrendered to the French, and by a
merciless massacre sullied the fame of his earlier exploits; but sickness recalled him home, and the war, protracted by the caution of Charles, who had forbidden his armies to engage, did little but exhaust the energy and treasures of England. At last, however, the fatal error of the Prince's policy was seen in the appearance of a Spanish fleet in the Channel, and in a decisive victory which it won over an English convoy off Rochelle. The blow was in fact fatal to the English cause, wrestling as it did from them the mastery of the seas; and Charles was roused to new exertions. Poitou, Saintonge, and the Angoumois yielded to his general Du Guesclin, while a great army under John of Gaunt penetrated fruitlessly into the heart of France. Charles had forbidden any fighting. "If a storm rages over the land," said the King, coolly, "it disperses of itself; and so will it be with the English." Winter, in fact, overtook the Duke of Lancaster in the mountains of Auvergne, and a mere fragment of his great host reached Bourdeux. The failure was the signal for a general defection, and ere a year had passed the two towns of Bourdeux and Bayonne were all that remained of the English possessions in Aquitaine.

It was a time of shame and suffering such as England had never known. Her conquests were lost, her shores insulted, her fleets annihilated, her commerce swept from the sea; while within she was exhausted by the long and costly war, as well as by the ravages of pestilence. In the hour of distress the eyes of the feudal baronage turned greedily on the riches of the Church. Never had her spiritual or moral hold on the nation been less; never had her wealth been greater. Out of a population of little more than two millions, the ecclesiastics numbered between twenty and thirty thousand, owning in landed property alone more than a third of the soil; their "spiritualities" in dues and offerings amounting to twice the royal revenue. The position of the bishops as statesmen was still more galling to the feudal baronage, flushed as it was with a new pride by the victories of Cressy and Poitiers. On the renewal of the war the Bishop of Winchester, William of Wykeham, was at once removed, with other prelates, from the ministry, and their places filled by creatures of the baronage, with John of Gaunt, the King's son, at their head. Heavy taxes were imposed on church lands, and projects of confiscation were openly advocated. But the utter failure of the new administration and the calamities of the war left it powerless before the Parliament of 1376. The action of this Parliament marks a new stage in the character of the natural opposition to the illegal government of the Crown. Till now the task of resistance had devolved on the baronage, and had been carried out through risings of its feudal tenantry; but the misgovernment was now that of the baronage itself. The progress of peace and order had rendered a recourse to warfare odious to the people at large, while the power of the Commons afforded an adequate means of peaceful redress. The old reluctance to meddle with matters of state was roughly swept away by the pressure of the time. The
knights of the shire united with the burgesses in a joint attack on the royal council. "Trusting in God, and standing with his followers before the nobles, whereof the chief was John Duke of Lancaster, whose doings were ever contrary," their speaker, Sir Peter de la Mare, denounced the mismanagement of the war, the oppressive taxation, and demanded an account of the expenditure. "What do these base and ignoble knights attempt?" cried John of Gaunt. "Do they think they be kings or princes of the land?" But it was soon discovered that, sick as he was to death, the Black Prince gave his hearty support to the cause of the Commons. Lancaster was forced to withdraw from the Council, and the Parliament proceeded fearlessly in its task of investigation. A terrible list of abuses was revealed, which centred in the infamy of the King himself, who had sunk into a premature dotage, and was wholly under the influence of a mistress named Alice Perrers. She was forced to swear never to return to the King's presence; and the Parliament proceeded to the impeachment and condemnation of two ministers, Lord Latimer and William Lyons, and to the solemn presentation of one hundred and sixty petitions which embodied the grievances of the realm. They demanded the annual assembly of Parliament, and freedom of election for the knights of the shire, whose choice was now often tampered with by the Crown; they protested against arbitrary taxation and Papal inroads on the liberties of the Church; petitioned for the protection of trade, and demanded a vigorous prosecution of the war. The death of the Prince suddenly interrupted the work of reform; Lancaster resumed his power, and by an unscrupulous interference with elections procured the return of a new Parliament, which reversed the Acts of its predecessor. The greed of the triumphant baronage broke out in a fresh strife with the great churchmen who had, whether for their own purposes or not, supported the popular party. William of Wykeham was again dismissed from office, and summoned to Parliament. Fresh projects of spoliation were openly canvassed, and it is his support of these plans of confiscation which first brings us historically across the path of John Wyclif.

In the Good Parliament, the Black Prince and the Earl of March were allied with the clerical ministers, of whom the chief was William of Wykeham; Peter de la Mare was seneschal to the Earl of March. John of Gaunt was allied with a court and legal party, though it is worth noticing that among his supporters was Lyons, a London merchant. It is possible to contend that the Good Parliament was "packed" no less than the succeeding parliament by which its acts were largely reversed. For a more favourable estimate of John of Gaunt, see Armitage Smith's "Life,"
SECTION III.—JOHN WYCLIF

[Authorities.—The De Dominio Divino and the De Civili Dominio are edited in "Fasciculi Zizanorum" (Rolls Series). Reference should also be made to the edition of Wyclif's Latin works (published for the Wycliffe Society), and to "The Select English Works of John Wycliffe," edited Arnold, and the English Works of Wycliffe hitherto unprinted (Early English Text Society). Poole, "Illustrations of the History of Medieval Thought"; Lechler, "Wyclif und die Vogeschiöe der Reformation"; and the volume in Stephens' and Hunt's "History of the English Church," are all useful works. There are several biographies of Wyclif; cp. the "Dictionary of National Biography," art. Wycliffe.]

Nothing is more remarkable than the contrast between the obscurity of Wyclif's earlier life and the fulness and vividness of our knowledge of him during the twenty years which preceded its close. Born in the earlier part of the fourteenth century, he had already reached middle age when he was appointed to the mastership of Balliol College, in the University of Oxford, and recognized as first among the schoolmen of his day. Of all the scholastic doctors those of England had been throughout the keenest and the most daring in philosophical speculation; a reckless audacity and love of novelty was the common note of Bacon, Duns Scotus, and Ockham, as against the sober and more disciplined learning of the Parisian schoolmen, Albert and Aquinas. But the decay of the University of Paris during the English wars had transferred her intellectual supremacy to Oxford, and in Oxford Wyclif stood without a rival. To his predecessor, Bradwardine, whose work as a scholastic teacher he carried on in the speculative treatises he published during this period, he owed the tendency to a predestinarin Augustinianism which formed the groundwork of his later theological revolt. His debt to Ockham revealed itself in his earliest efforts at Church reform. Undismayed by the thunder and excommunications of the Church, Ockham had not shrunk in his enthusiasm for the Empire from attacking the foundations of the Papal supremacy or from asserting the rights of the civil power. The spare, emaciated frame of Wyclif, weakened by study and by asceticism, hardly promised a Reformer who would carry on the stormy work of Ockham; but within this frail form lay a temper quick and restless, an immense energy, an immovable conviction, an unconquerable pride. The personal charm which ever accompanies real greatness only deepened the influence he derived from the spotless purity of his life. As yet indeed even Wyclif himself can hardly have suspected the immense range of his intellectual power. It was only the struggle that lay before him which revealed in the dry and subtle schoolman the founder of our later English prose, a master of popular invective, of irony, of persuasion, a dexterous politician, an audacious partisan, the organizer of a religious order, the unsparing assailant of abuses, the boldest and
most indefatigable of controversialists, the first Reformer who dared, when deserted and alone, to question and deny the creed of the Christendom around him, to break through the tradition of the past, and with his last breath to assert the freedom of religious thought against the dogmas of the Papacy.

The attack of Wyclif began precisely at the moment when the Church of the middle ages had sunk to its lowest point of spiritual decay. The transfer of the Papacy to Avignon robbed it of much of the awe in which it had been held, for not only had the Popes sunk into creatures of the French King, but their greed and extortion produced almost universal revolt. The claim of first fruits and annates from all ecclesiastical preferments, the assumption of a right to dispose of all benefices in ecclesiastical patronage, the imposition of direct taxes on the clergy, the intrusion of foreign priests into English livings and English sees, produced a fierce hatred and contempt of Rome which never slept till the Reformation. The people scorned a "French Pope," and threatened his legates with stoning when they landed. The wit of Chaucer flouted the wallet of "pardons hot from Rome." Parliament vindicated the right of the State to prohibit the admission or execution of Papal bulls or briefs within the realm by the Statute of Praemunire, and denied the Papal claim to dispose of benefices by that of Provisors. But the failure of the effort showed the amazing power which Rome had acquired from the unquestioning submission of so many ages. The Pope waived indeed his right to appoint foreigners; but by a compromise, in which Pope and King combined for the enslaving of the Church, archbishoprics, bishoprics, abbacies, and the wealthiest livings still continued to receive Papal nominees. The protest of the Good Parliament is a record of the ill-success of its predecessor's attempt. It asserted that the taxes levied by the Pope amounted to five times the amount of those levied by the King, that by reservation during the life of actual holders he disposed of the same bishopric four or five times over, receiving each time the first fruits. "The brokers of the sinful City of Rome promote for money unlearned and unworthy caitiffs to benefices of the value of a thousand marks, while the poor and learned hardly obtain one of twenty. So decays sound learning. They present aliens who neither see nor care to see their parishioners, despise God's services, convey away the treasure of the realm, and are worse than Jews or Saracens. The Pope's revenue from England alone is larger than that of any prince in Christendom. God gave his sheep to be pastured, not to be shaven and shorn." The grievances were no trifling ones. At this very time the deaneries of Lichfield, Salisbury, and York, the arch-deaconry of Canterbury, which was reputed the wealthiest English benefice, together with a host of prebends and preferments, were held by Italian cardinals and priests, while the Pope's collector from his office in London sent twenty thousand marks a year to the Papal treasury.
If extortion and tyranny such as this severed the English clergy from the Papacy, their own selfishness severed them from the nation at large. Immense as was their wealth, they bore as little as they could of the common burthens of the realm. The old quarrel over the civil jurisdiction still lingered on, and the mild punishments of the ecclesiastical courts carried little dismay into the mass of disorderly clerks. Privileged as they were against all interference from the world without, the clergy penetrated by their control over wills, contracts, divorce, by the dues they exacted, as well as by directly religious offices, into the very heart of the social life around them. Thousands of summoners enforced their jurisdiction, and there were few persons of substance who escaped the vexations of their courts. On the other hand, their moral authority was rapidly passing away; the wealthiest churchmen, with curled hair and hanging sleeves, aped the costume of the knightly society to which they really belonged. We have already seen the general impression of their worldliness in Chaucer's picture of the hunting monk and the courtly prioress, with her love-motto on her brooch. Over the vice of the higher classes they exerted no influence whatever; the King paraded his mistress as a Queen of Beauty through London, the nobles blazoned their infamy in court and tournament. "In those days," says a canon of the time, "arose a great rumour and clamour among the people, that wherever there was a tournament there came a great concourse of ladies of the most costly and beautiful, but not of the best in the kingdom, sometimes forty or fifty in number, as if they were a part of the tournament, in diverse and wonderful male apparell, in particular tunicas, with short caps and bands wound cord-wise round their head, and girdles bound with gold and silver, and daggers in pouches across their body, and then they proceeded on chosen courser to the place of tourney, and so expended and wasted their goods and vexed their bodies with scurrilous wantonness that the rumour of the people sounded everywhere; and thus they neither feared God nor blushed at the chaste voice of the people." They were not called on to blush at the chaste voice of the Church. The clergy were in fact rent by their own dissensions. The higher prelates were busy with the cares of political office, and severed from the lower priesthood by the scandalous inequality between the revenues of the wealthier ecclesiastics and the "poor parson" of the country. The older religious orders had sunk into mere landowners, while the enthusiasm of the Friars had utterly died away and left a crowd of impudent mendicants behind it. In Oxford itself a fierce schism had for some time divided the secular clergy, who now came to the front of the scholastic movement, from the regulars with whom it had begun. Fitz-Ralf, the Archbishop of Armagh, who had been its Chancellor, attributed to the Friars the decline in the number of academical students, and the University checked by statute their admission of mere children into their orders. Wyclif, at a later time, denounced them as sturdy beggars,
and declared formally that "the man who gives alms to a begging Friar is ipso facto excommunicate."

Without the ranks of the clergy stood a world of earnest men who, like Piers the Ploughman, denounced their worldliness and vice, sceptics, like Chaucer, laughing at the jingling bells of their hunting-abbots, and the brutal and greedy baronage under John of Gaunt, eager to drive the prelates from office and to seize on their wealth. Worthless as the last party seems to us, it was with John of Gaunt that Wyclif allied himself in the first effort he made for the reform of the Church. As yet his quarrel was not with its doctrine, but with its practice: it was on the principles of Ockham that he defended the Parliament's indignant refusal of the "tribute" which was claimed by the Papacy, the expulsion of the bishops from office by the Duke of Lancaster, and the taxation of Church lands. But his treatise on "The Kingdom of God" (De Dominio Divino) shows how different his aims really were from the selfish aims of the men with whom he acted. In this, the most famous of his works, Wyclif bases his action on a distinct ideal of society. All authority, to use his own expression, is "founded in Grace." Dominion in the highest sense is in God alone; it is God who, as the suzerain of the universe, deals out His rule in fief to rulers in their various stations on tenure of their obedience to himself. It was easy to object that in such a case "dominion" could never exist, since mortal sin is a breach of such a tenure, and all men sin. But, as Wyclif urged it, the theory is a purely ideal one. In actual practice he distinguishes between dominion and power, power which the wicked may have by God's permission, and to which the Christian must submit from motives of obedience to God. In his own scholastic phrase, so strangely perverted afterwards, here on earth "God must obey the devil." But whether in the ideal or practical view of the matter, all power or dominion was of God. It was granted by Him not to one person, His Vicar on earth, as the Papacy alleged, but to all. The King was as truly God's Vicar as the Pope. The Royal power was as sacred as the ecclesiastical, and as complete over temporal things, even the temporalities of the Church, as that of the Church over spiritual things. On the question of Church and State therefore the distinction between the ideal and practical view was of little account. His application of the theory of "dominion" to the individual conscience was of far higher and wider importance. Obedient as each Christian might be to king or priest, he himself, as a possessor of "dominion," held immediately of God. The throne of God Himself was the tribunal of personal appeal. What the Reformers of the sixteenth century attempted to do by their theory of Justification by Faith, Wyclif attempted to do by his theory of "dominion." It was a theory which in establishing a direct relation between man and God swept away the whole basis of a mediating priesthood on which the medieval Church was built; but for a time its real drift was hardly perceived. To
Wyclif’s theory of Church and State, his subjection of their temporalities to the Crown, his contention that like other property they might be seized and employed for national purposes, his wish for their voluntary abandonment and the return of the Church to its original poverty, the clergy were more sensitive. They were just writhing under the attack on Wykeham by the nobles when the treatise appeared, and in the prosecution of Wyclif, who was regarded as the theological bulwark of the Lancastrian party, they resolved to return blow for blow. He was summoned before Bishop Courtenay of London to answer for his heretical propositions concerning the wealth of the Church. The Duke of Lancaster accepted the challenge as really given to himself, and stood by Wyclif’s side in the Consistory Court at St. Paul’s. But no trial took place. Fierce words passed between the nobles and the prelate; the Duke himself was said to have threatened to drag Courtenay out of the church by the hair of his head, and at last the London populace, to whom John of Gaunt was hateful, burst in to their Bishop’s rescue. Wyclif’s life was saved with difficulty by the aid of the soldiery, but his influence seems to have been unshaken. Papal bulls, which had been procured by the bishops, directing the University to condemn and arrest him, only extorted a bold defiance. In a defence circulated widely through the kingdom and laid before parliament, Wyclif broadly asserted that no man could be excommunicated by the Pope “unless he were first excommunicated by himself.” He denied the right of the Church to exact or defend temporal privileges by spiritual censures, declared that a Church might justly be deprived by the king or lay lords of its property for defect of duty, and defended the subjection of ecclesiastics to civil tribunals. Bold as the defiance was, it won him the support of the people and the crown. When he appeared at the close of the year in Lambeth Chapel to answer the Archbishop’s summons, a message from the Court forbade the Bishop to proceed, and the Londoners broke in and dissolved the session.

Wyclif was still working hand in hand with John of Gaunt in advocating his plans of ecclesiastical reform, when the great insurrection of the peasants, which we shall soon have to describe, broke out under Wat Tyler. In a few months the whole of his work was undone. Not only was the power of the Lancastrian party on which Wyclif had relied for the moment annihilated, but the quarrel between the baronage and the Church, on which his action had hitherto been grounded, was hushed in the presence of a common danger. Much of the odium of the outbreak too fell on the Reformer: the Friars charged him with being a “sower of strife, who by his serpent-like instigation has set the serf against his lord,” and though Wyclif tossed back the charge with disdain, he had to bear a suspicion which was justified by the conduct of some of his followers. John Ball, who had figured in the front rank of the revolt, was claimed as one of his adherents, and was alleged to have denounced in his last hour the conspiracy of the
"Wycliffites." His most prominent scholar, Nicholas Herford, was said to have openly approved the brutal murder of Archbishop Sudbury. Whatever belief such charges might gain, it is certain that from this moment all plans for the reorganization of the Church were confounded in the general odium which attached to the projects of the socialist peasant leaders, and that any hope of ecclesiastical reform at the hands of the baronage and the Parliament was at an end. But even if the Peasant Revolt had not deprived Wyclif of the support of the aristocratic party with whom he had hitherto co-operated, their alliance must have been dissolved by the new position which he had already taken up. Some months before the outbreak of the insurrection, he had by one memorable step passed from the position of a reformer of the discipline and political relations of the Church to that of a protestant against its cardinal beliefs. If there was one doctrine upon which the supremacy of the Medieval Church rested, it was the doctrine of Transubstantiation. It was by his exclusive right to the performance of the miracle which was wrought in the mass that the lowest priest was raised high above princes. With the formal denial of the doctrine of Transubstantiation which Wyclif issued in the spring of 1381 began that great movement of revolt which ended, more than a century after, in the establishment of religious freedom, by severing the mass of the Teutonic peoples from the general body of the Catholic Church. The act was the bolder that he stood utterly alone. The University, in which his influence had been hitherto all-powerful, at once condemned him. John of Gaunt enjoined him to be silent. Wyclif was presiding as Doctor of Divinity over some disputations in the schools of the Augustinian Canons when his academical condemnation was publicly read, but though startled for the moment he at once challenged Chancellor or doctor to disprove the conclusions at which he had arrived. The prohibition of the Duke of Lancaster he met by an open avowal of his teaching, a confession which closes proudly with the quiet words, "I believe that in the end the truth will conquer." For the moment his courage dispelled the panic around him. The University responded to his appeal, and by displacing his opponents from office tacitly adopted his cause. But Wyclif no longer looked for support to the learned or wealthier classes on whom he had hitherto relied. He appealed, and the appeal is memorable as the first of such a kind in our history, to England at large. With an amazing industry he issued tract after tract in the tongue of the people itself. The dry, syllogistic Latin, the abstruse and involved argument which the great doctor had addressed to his academic hearers, were suddenly flung aside, and by a transition which marks the wonderful genius of the man the schoolman was transformed into the pamphleteer. If Chaucer is the father of our later English poetry, Wyclif is the father of our later English prose. The rough, clear, homely English of his tracts, the speech of the ploughman and the trader of the day, though coloured with the picturesque phraseology of the
John Wyclif

Bible, is in its literary use as distinctly a creation of his own as the style in which he embodied it, the terse vehement sentences, the stingy sarcasms, the hard antitheses which roused the dullest mind like a whip. Once fairly freed from the trammels of unquestioning belief, Wyclif's mind worked fast in its career of scepticism. Pardons, indulgences, absolutions, pilgrimages to the shrines of the saints, worship of their images, worship of the saints themselves, were successively denied. A formal appeal to the Bible as the one ground of faith, coupled with an assertion of the right of every instructed man to examine the Bible for himself, threatened the very groundwork of the older dogmatism with ruin. Nor were these daring denials confined to the small circle of the scholars who still clung to him; with the practical ability which is so marked a feature of his character, Wyclif had organized, some few years before, an order of poor preachers, "the Simple Priests," whose coarse sermons and long russet dress moved the laughter of the clergy, but who now formed a priceless organization for the diffusion of their master's doctrines. How rapid their progress must have been we may see from the panic-struck exaggerations of their opponents; a few years later every second man you met, they complain, was a Lollard; the followers of Wyclif abounded everywhere and in all classes, among the baronage, in the cities, among the peasantry of the country-side, even in the monastic cell itself.

"Lollard," a word which probably means much the same as "idle babbler," was the nickname of scorn with which the orthodox Churchmen chose to insult their assailants. But this rapid increase changed their scorn into vigorous action. Courtenay, now become Archbishop, summoned a council at Blackfriars, and formally submitted twenty-four propositions drawn from Wyclif's works. An earthquake in the midst of the proceedings terrified every prelate but the resolute Primate; the expulsion of all humours from the earth, he said, was of good omen for the expulsion of all humours from the Church; and the condemnation was pronounced. Then the Archbishop turned fiercely upon Oxford as the fount and centre of the new heresies. In an English sermon at St. Frideswide's, Nicholas Herford had asserted the truth of Wyclif's doctrines, and Courtenay ordered the Chancellor to silence him and his adherents on pain of being himself treated as a heretic. The Chancellor fell back on the liberties of the University, and appointed as preacher another Wycliffite, Repyngdon, who did not hesitate to style the Lollards "holy priests," and to affirm that they were protected by John of Gaunt. Party spirit meanwhile ran high among the students; the bulk of them sided with the Lollard leaders, and the Carmelite Peter Stokes, who had procured the Archbishop's letters, cowered panic-stricken in his chamber while the Chancellor, protected by an escort of a hundred townsmen, listened approvingly to Repyngdon's defiance. "I dare go no further," wrote the poor Friar to the Archbishop, "for fear of death;" but he soon mustered courage to descend into the schools where Repyngdon was now
maintaining that the clerical order was "better when it was but nine years old than now that it has grown to a thousand years and more." The appearance, however, of scholars in arms again drove Stokes to fly in despair to Lambeth, while a new heretic in open Congregation maintained Wyclif's denial of Transubstantiation. "There is no idolatry," cried William James, "save in the Sacrament of the Altar." "You speak like a wise man," replied the Chancellor, Robert Rygge. Courtenay however was not the man to bear defiance tamely, and his summons to Lambeth wrested a submission from Rygge which was only accepted on his pledge to suppress the Lollardism of the University. "I dare not publish them, on fear of death," exclaimed the Chancellor when Chichele handed him his letters of condemnation. "Then is your University an open fundor of heretics," retorted the Primate, "if it suffers not the Catholic truth to be proclaimed within its bounds." The royal council supported the Archbishop's injunction, but the publication of the decrees at once set Oxford on fire. The scholars threatened death against the Friars, "crying that they wished to destroy the University." The masters suspended Henry Crump from teaching, as a troubler of the public peace, for calling the Lollards "heretics." The Crown however at last stepped roughly in to Courtenay's aid, and a royal writ ordered the instant banishment of all favourers of Wyclif, with the seizure and destruction of all Lollard books, on pain of forfeiture of the University's privileges. The threat produced its effect. Herford and Repyngdon appealed in vain to John of Gaunt for protection; the Duke himself denounced them as heretics against the Sacrament of the Altar, and after much evasion they were forced to make a formal submission. Within Oxford itself the suppression of Lollardism was complete, but with the death of religious freedom all trace of intellectual life suddenly disappears. The century which followed the triumphs of Courtenay is the most barren in its annals, nor was the sleep of the University broken till the advent of the New Learning restored to it some of the life and liberty which the Primate had so roughly trodden out.

Nothing marks more strongly the grandeur of Wyclif's position as the last of the great schoolmen, than the reluctance of so bold a man as Courtenay even after his triumph over Oxford to take extreme measures against the head of Lollardy. Wyclif, though summoned, had made no appearance before the "Council of the Earthquake." "Pontius Pilate and Herod are made friends today," was his bitter comment on the new union which it proved to have sprung up between the prelates and the monastic orders who had so long been at variance with each other; "since they have made a heretic of Christ, it is an easy inference for them to count simple Christians heretics." He seems indeed to have been sick at the moment, but the announcement of the final sentence roused him to life again. "I shall not die," he is said to have cried at an earlier time when in grievous peril, "but live and declare the works of the Friars." He petitioned the King and Parliament that he
might be allowed freely to prove the doctrines he had put forth, and turning with characteristic energy to the attack of his assailants, he asked that all religious vows might be suppressed, that tithes might be diverted to the maintenance of the poor and the clergy maintained by the free alms of their flocks, that the Statutes of Provisors and Premunire might be enforced against the Papacy, that Churchmen might be declared incapable of secular offices, and imprisonment for excommunication cease. Finally, in the teeth of the council's condemnation, he demanded that the doctrine of the Eucharist which he advocated might be freely taught. If he appeared in the following year before the Convocation at Oxford, it was to perplex his opponents by a display of scholastic logic which permitted him to retire without any retraction of his sacramental heresy. For the time his opponents seemed satisfied with his expulsion from the University, but in his retirement at Lutterworth he was forging during these troubled years the great weapon which, wielded by other hands than his own, was to produce so terrible an effect on the triumphant hierarchy. An earlier translation of the whole Bible, in part of which he was aided by his scholar Herford, was being revised and brought to the second form, which is better known as "Wyclif's Bible," when death drew near. The appeal of the prelates to Rome was answered at last by a Brief ordering him to appear at the Papal Court. His failing strength exhausted itself in the cold sarcastic reply which explained that his refusal to comply with the summons simply sprang from broken health. "I am always glad," ran the ironical answer, "to explain my faith to any one, and above all to the Bishop of Rome; for I take it for granted that if it be orthodox he will confirm it, if it be erroneous he will correct it. I assume, too, that as chief Vicar of Christ upon earth the Bishop of Rome is of all mortal men most bound to the law of Christ's Gospel, for among the disciples of Christ a majority is not reckoned by simply counting heads in the fashion of this world, but according to the imitation of Christ on either side. Now Christ during His life upon earth was of all men the poorest, casting from Him all worldly authority. I deduce from these premisses, as a simple counsel of my own, that the Pope should surrender all temporal authority to the civil power and advise his clergy to do the same." The boldness of his words sprang perhaps from a knowledge that his end was near. The terrible strain on energies enfeebled by age and study had at last brought its inevitable result, and a stroke of paralysis while Wyclif was hearing mass in his parish church of Lutterworth was followed on the next day by his quiet death.
SECTION IV.—The Peasant Revolt, 1377—1381

Authorities.—The "Chronicon Angliae" is the chief original source; see also the Continuator of Knighton, Froissart, and the Anonymus Chronicle of St. Mary's, York ("English Historical Review," 1898). For legislation, see the Statutes of the Realm, 1235-1713. As to the condition of land and labour, see Thorold Rogers, "History of Agriculture and Prices" and "Six Centuries of Work and Wages," which should be compared with later works on the Peasant Revolt, especially Réville, "Soulevement des Travailleurs d'Angleterre"; Oman, "Great Revolt of 1381"; and Trevelyan, "England in the Age of Wycliffe."

The English Manor

The religious revolution which we have been describing gave fresh impulse to a revolution of even greater importance, which had for a long time been changing the whole face of the country. The manorial system, on which the social organization of every rural part of England rested, had divided the land, for the purposes of cultivation and of internal order, into a number of large estates; in each of which about a fourth of the soil was usually retained by the owner of the manor as his demesne or home-farm, while the remainder was distributed, at the period we have reached, among tenants who were bound to render service to their lord. We know hardly anything of the gradual process by which these tenants had risen out of the slave class who tilled the lands of the first English settlers. The slave, indeed, still remained, though the number of pure "serfs" bore a small proportion to the other cultivators of the soil. He was still, in the strictest sense, his lord's property; he was bound to the soil, he paid head-money for licence to remove from the estate in search of trade or hire, and a refusal to return on recall by his owner would have ended in his pursuit as a fugitive outlaw. But even this class had now acquired definite rights of its own; and although we still find instances of the sale of serfs "with their litter," or family, apart from the land they tilled, yet, in the bulk of cases, the amount of service due from the serf had become limited by custom, and, on its due rendering, his holding was practically as secure as that of the freest tenant on the estate. But at a time earlier than any record we possess the mass of the agricultural population had risen to a position of far greater independence than this, and now formed a class of peasant proprietors, inferior indeed to the older Teutonic freeman, but far removed from the original serf. Not only had their service and the time of rendering it become limited by custom, not only had the possession of each man's little hut with the plot around it, and the privilege of turning out a few cattle on the waste of the manor, passed from mere indulgences granted and withdrawn at a lord's caprice into rights which could be pleaded at law, but the class as a whole were no longer "in the power of the lord." The claim of the proprietors over peasants of this kind ended with the due rendering of their service in the cultivation of his demesne, and this service might be rendered either personally or by deputy. It was the nature
and extent of this labour-rent which determined the rank of the tenants among themselves. The villain, or free tenant, for instance, was only bound to gather in his lord’s harvest and to aid in the ploughing and sowing of autumn and Lent, while the cottar, the bordar, and the labourer were bound to aid in the work of the home-farm throughout the year. The cultivation, indeed, of the home-farm, or as it was then called, the demesne, rested wholly with the tenants; it was by them that the great grange of the Lord was filled with sheaves, his sheep sheared, his grain malted, the wood hewn for his hall fire. The extent of these services rested wholly on tradition, but the number of teams, the fines, the reliefs, the heriots which the lord could claim was, at this time, generally entered on the court-roll of the manor, a copy of which became the title-deed of the tenants, and gave them the name of copyholders, by which they became known at a later period. Disputes were easily settled by the steward of the manor on reference to this roll or on oral evidence of the custom at issue, but a social arrangement, eminently characteristic of the English spirit of compromise, generally secured a fair adjustment of the claims of employer and employed. It was the duty of the lord’s bailiff to exact their dues from the tenantry, but his coadjutor in this office, the reeve or foreman of the manor, was chosen by the tenants themselves, and acted as the representative of their interests and their rights.

The first disturbance of the system of tenure which we have described sprang from the introduction of leases. The lord of the manor, instead of cultivating the demesne through his own bailiff, often found it more convenient and profitable to let the manor to a tenant at a given rent, payable either in money or in kind. Thus we find the manor of Sandon leased by the Chapter of St. Paul’s at a very early period on a rent which comprised the payment of grain both for bread and ale, of alms to be distributed at the cathedral door, of wood to be used in its bakehouse and brewery, and of money to be spent in wages. It is to this system of leasing, or rather to the usual term for the rent it entailed (foem. from the Latin *firma*), that we owe the words “farm” and “farmer,” the growing use of which from the twelfth century marks the first step in the rural revolution which we are examining. It was a revolution which made little direct change in the manorial system, but its indirect effect in breaking the tie on which the feudal organization of the manor rested, that of the tenant’s personal dependence on his lord, and in affording an opportunity by which the wealthier among the tenantry could rise to a position of apparent equality with their older masters, was of the highest importance. This earlier step, however, in the modification of the manorial system, by the rise of the Farmer-class, was soon followed by one of a far more serious character in the rise of the Free Labourer. Labour, whatever right it might have attained in other ways, was as yet in the strictest sense bound to the soil. Neither villain nor
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serf had any choice, either of a master or of a sphere of toil. The tenant was born, in fact, to his holding and to his lord. But the advance of society and the natural increase of population had for a long time been silently freeing the labourer from this local bondage. The influence of the Church had been exerted in promoting emancipation, as a work of piety, on all estates but its own. The fugitive bondsmen found freedom in a flight to chartered towns, where a residence during a year and a day conferred franchise. The increase of population had a far more serious effect. The numbers of the English people seem to have all but tripled since the Conquest, and as the law of gavel-kind, which was applicable to all landed estates not held by military tenure, divided the inheritance of the tenantry equally among their sons, the holding of each tenant and the services due from it became divided in a corresponding degree. The labour-rent thus became more difficult to enforce, at the very time when the increase of wealth among the tenantry and the rise of a new spirit of independence made it more burthensome to those who rendered it. It was probably from this cause that the commutation of the arrears of labour for a money payment, which had long prevailed on every estate, gradually developed into a general commutation of services. We have already witnessed the silent progress of this remarkable change in the case of St. Edmondsbury, but the practice soon became universal, and "malt-silver," "wood-silver," and "larder silver" were gradually taking the place of the older personal services on the court-rolls, at the opening of the fourteenth century. Under the Edwards the process of commutation was hastened by the necessities of the lords themselves. The luxury of the time, the splendour and pomp of chivalry, the cost of incessant campaigns, drained the purses of knight and baron, and the sale of freedom to the serf or exemption from services to the villain afforded an easy and tempting mode of refilling them. In this process Edward the Third himself led the way: commissioners were sent to royal estates for the especial purpose of selling manumissions to the King's serfs; and we still possess the names of those who were enfranchised with their families by a payment of hard cash in aid of the exhausted exchequer.

By this entire detachment of the serf from actual dependence on the land, the manorial system was even more radically changed than by the rise of the serf into a copyholder. The whole social condition of the country, in fact, was modified by the appearance of a new class. The rise of the free labourer had followed that of the farmer, labour was no longer bound to one spot or one master; it was free to hire itself to what employer, and to choose what field of employment it would. At the close of Edward's reign, in fact, the lord of a manor had been reduced over a large part of England to the position of a modern landlord, receiving a rental in money from his tenants, and dependent for the cultivation of his own demesne on hired labour; while the wealthier of the tenants
themselves often took the demesne on lease as its farmers, and thus created a new class intermediate between the larger proprietors and the customary tenants. The impulse towards a wider liberty given by the extension of this process of social change was soon seen on the appearance for the first time in our history of a spirit of social revolt. A Parliamentary statute of this period tells us that "villains and tenants of lands in villenage withdrew their customs and services from their lords, having attached themselves to other persons who maintained and abetted them; and who, under colour of exemplifications from Domesday of the manors and villas where they dwelt, claimed to be quit of all manner of services, either of their body or of their lands, and would suffer no distress or other course of justice to be taken against them, the villains aiding their maintainers by threatening the officers of their lords with peril to life and limb, as well by open assemblies as by confederacies to support each other." The copyholder was struggling to become a freeholder, and the farmer (perhaps) to be recognized as proprietor of the demesne which he held on lease. It was while this struggle was growing in intensity that a yet more formidable difficulty met the lords who had been driven by the enfranchisement of their serfs to rely on hired labour. Everything depended on the abundant supply of free labourers, and this abundance suddenly disappeared. The most terrible plague which the world ever witnessed advanced at this juncture from the East, and after devastating Europe from the shores of the Mediterranean to the Baltic, swooped at the close of 1348 upon Britain. The traditions of its destructiveness, and the panic-struck words of the statutes which followed it, have been more than justified by modern research. Of the three or four millions who then formed the population of England more than one-half were swept away in its repeated visitations. Its ravages were fiercest in the greater towns, where filthy and undrained streets afforded a constant haunt to leprosy and fever. In the burial ground which the piety of Sir Walter Manny purchased for the citizens of London, a spot whose site was afterwards marked by the Charter House, more than fifty thousand corpses are said to have been interred. Nearly sixty thousand people perished at Norwich, while in Bristol the living were hardly able to bury the dead. But the Black Death fell on the village almost as fiercely as on the town. More than one-half of the priests of Yorkshire are known to have perished; in the diocese of Norwich two-thirds of the parishes were left without incumbents. The whole organization of labour was thrown out of gear. The scarcity of hands made it difficult for the minor tenants to perform the services due for their lands, and only a temporary abandonment of half the rent by the landowners induced the farmers to refrain from the abandonment of their farms. For the time cultivation became impossible. "The sheep and cattle strayed through the fields and corn," says a contemporary, "and there were none left who could drive them." Even when the first
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burst of panic was over, the sudden rise of wages consequent on the enormous diminution in the supply of free labour, though accompanied by a corresponding rise in the price of food, rudely disturbed the course of industrial employments; harvests rotted on the ground, and fields were left untilled, not merely from scarcity of hands, but from the strife which now for the first time revealed itself between Capital and Labour.

While the landowners of the country and the wealthier craftsmen of the town were threatened with ruin by what seemed to their age the extravagant demands of the new labour class, the country itself was torn with riot and disorder. The outbreak of lawless self-indulgence which followed everywhere in the wake of the plague told especially upon the "landless men," wandering in search of work, and for the first time masters of the labour market; and the wandering labourer or artisan turned easily into the "sturdy beggar," or the bandit of the woods. A summary redress for these evils was found by the Parliament and the Crown in a royal ordinance which was subsequently embodied in the Statute of Labourers. "Every man or woman," runs this famous Act, "of whatsoever condition, free or bond, able in body, and within the age of threescore years, . . . and not having of his own whereof he may occupy himself, and not serving any other, shall be bound to serve the employer who shall require him to do so, and shall take only the wages which were accustomed to be taken in the neighbourhood where he is bound to serve" two years before the plague began. A refusal to obey was punished by imprisonment. Stern measures were soon found to be necessary. Not only was the price of labour fixed by the Parliament of 1350, but the labour class was once more tied to the soil. The labourer was forbidden to quit the parish where he lived in search of better-paid employment; if he disobeyed he became a "fugitive," and subject to imprisonment at the hands of the justices of the peace. To enforce such a law literally must have been impossible, for corn had risen to so high a price that a day's labour at the old wages would not have purchased wheat enough for a man's support. But the landowners did not flinch from the attempt. The repeated re-enactment of the law shows the difficulty of applying it and the stubbornness of the struggle which it brought about. The fines and forfeitures which were levied for infractions of its provisions formed a large source of royal revenue, but so ineffectual were the original penalties that the runaway labourer was at last ordered to be branded with a hot iron on the forehead, while the harbouring of serfs in towns was rigorously put down. Nor was it merely the existing class of free labourers which was attacked by this reactionary movement. Not only was the process of emancipation suddenly checked, but the ingenuity of the lawyers, who were employed as stewards of each manor, was recklessly exercised in cancelling on grounds of informality manumissions and exemptions which had
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passed without question, and in bringing back the villain and the
serf into a bondage from which they held themselves freed. The
attempt was the more galling that the cause had to be pleaded in
the manor-court itself, and to be decided by the very officer whose
interest it was to give judgment in favour of his lord. We can see
the growth of a fierce spirit of resistance through the statutes
which strove in vain to repress it. In the towns, where the system
of forced labour was applied with even more rigour than in the
country, strikes and combinations became frequent among the
lower craftsmen. In the country the free labourers found allies in
the villains whose freedom from manorial service was questioned,
and throughout Kent and the eastern counties the gatherings of
"fugitive serfs" were supported by an organized resistance and
by large contributions of money on the part of the wealthier
tenantry. The cry of the poor found a terrible utterance in the
words of "a mad priest of Kent," as the courtly Froissart calls
him, who had for twenty years been preaching a Lollardy of
carser and more popular type than that of Wyclif, and who found
audience for his sermons in defiance of interdict and imprisonment
in the stout yeomen who gathered in the Kentish churchyards.
"Mad" as the landowners called him, it was in the preaching of
John Ball that England first listened to the knell of feudalism and
the declaration of the rights of man. "Good people," cried the
preacher, "things will never go well in England so long as goods
be not in common, and so long as there be villains and gentlemen.
By what right are they whom we call lords greater folk than we?
On what grounds have they deserved it? Why do they hold us in
serfage? If we all came of the same father and mother, of Adam
and Eve, how can they say or prove that they are better than we,
if it be not that they make us givn for them by our toil what they
spend in their pride? They are clothed in velvet, and warm in
their furs and their ermines, while we are covered with rags. They
have wine and spices and fair bread; and we eat cake and straw,
and water to drink. They have leisure and fine houses; we have
pain and labour, the rain and the wind in the fields. And yet it is
of us and of our toil that these men hold their state." It was the
tyrranny of property that then as ever roused the defiance of
socialism. A spirit fatal to the whole system of the Middle Ages
breathed in the popular rhyme which condensed the levelling
doctrine of John Ball: "When Adam delved and Eve span, who
was then the gentleman?"

The rhyme was running from lip to lip when a fresh instance of
public oppression fanned the smouldering discontent into a flame.
Edward the Third died in a dishonoured old age, robbed on his
death-bed even of his finger-rings by the vile mistress to whom he
had elung, and the accession of the child of the Black Prince,
Richard the Second, revived the hopes of what in a political sense
we must still call the popular party in the Legislature. The Parlia-
ment of 1377 resumed its work of reform, and boldly assumed the
control of the expenditure by means of a standing committee of two burgesses of London: that of 1378 demanded and obtained an account of the mode in which its subsidies had been spent. But the real strength of these assemblies was directed, as we have seen, to the desperate struggle in which the proprietary classes, whom they exclusively represented, were striving to reduce the labourer into a fresh servage. Meanwhile the shame of defeat abroad was added to the misery and discord at home. The French war ran its disastrous course: one English fleet was beaten by the Spaniards, a second sunk by a storm; and a campaign in the heart of France ended, like its predecessors, in disappointment and ruin.

It was to defray the cost of these failures that the Parliament granted a fresh subsidy, to be raised by means of a poll-tax on every person in the realm. To such a tax the poorest man contributed as large a sum as the wealthiest, and the gross injustice of such an exaction set England on fire from sea to sea. In the eastern counties its levy gathered crowds of peasants together, armed with clubs, rusty swords, and bows; the royal commissioners sent to repress the tumult were driven from the field, and a party of insurgents in Essex gave the signal for open revolt by crossing the Thames under Jack Straw and calling Kent to arms. Canterbury, where "the whole town was of their sort," threw open its gates, plundered the Archbishop's palace, and dragged John Ball from its prison, while a hundred thousand Kentish-men gathered round Wat Tyler, a soldier who had served in the French wars, and who was at once recognized as the head of the insurrection. Quaint rhymes passed through the country, and served as summons to the revolt, which soon extended from the eastern and midland counties over all England south of the Thames. "John Ball," ran one, "greeteth you all, and doth for to understand he hath rung your bell. Now right and might, will and skill, God speed every dele." "Help truth," ran another, "and truth shall help you! Now reigneth pride in price, and covetise is counted wise, and lechery withouten shame, and gluttony withouten blame. Envy reigneth with treason, and sloth is take in great season. God do bote, for now is tyme!" We recognize Ball's hand in the yet more stirring missives of "Jack the Miller" and "Jack the Carter." "Jack Miller asketh help to turn his mill aright. He hath grounden small, small: the King's Son of Heaven he shall pay for all. Look thy mill go aright with the four sailes, and the post stand with steadfastness. With right and with might, with skill and with will; let might help right, and skill go before will, and right before might, so goeth our mill aright." "Jack Carter," ran the companion missive, "prays you all that ye make a good end of that ye have begun, and do well, and aye better and better; for at the even men heareth the day." "Falseness and guile," sang Jack Trewman, "have reigned too long, and truth hath been set under a lock, and falseness and guile reigneth in every stock. No man may come truth to, but if he sing 'si dedero.' True love
is away that was so good, and clerks for wealth work them wo.
God do bote, for now is tyme.” In the rude jingle of these lines
began for England the literature of political controversy: they
are the first predecessors of the pamphlets of Milton and of Burke.
Rough as they are, they express clearly enough the mingled
passions which met in the revolt of the peasants: their longing
for a right rule, for plain and simple justice; their scorn of the
immorality of the nobles and the infamy of the court: their
resentment at the perversion of the law to the cause of oppression.
The revolt spread like wildfire over the country: Norfolk and
Suffolk, Cambridge and Hertfordshire rose in arms: from Sussex
and Surrey the insurrection extended as far as Winchester and
Somerset. But the strength of the rising lay in the Kentish-men,
who were marching on London. As they poured on to Blackheath,
every lawyer who fell into their hands was put to death; “not
till all these were killed would the land enjoy its old freedom again,”
the peasants shouted as they fired the houses of the stewards and
flung the records of the manor-courts into the flames. The whole
population joined them as they marched along, while the nobles
were paralyzed with fear, and the Duke of Lancaster fled before
the popular hatred over the border, and took refuge in Scotland.
The young King—he was but a boy of sixteen—addressed them
from a boat on the river; but the refusal of his Council under the
guidance of Archbishop Sudbury to allow him to land kindled the
peasants to fury, and with cries of “Treason” the great mass
rushed on London. Its gates were flung open by the poorer
artisans within the city, and the stately palace of John of Gaunt
at the Savoy, the new inn of the lawyers at the Temple, the houses
of the foreign merchants, were soon in a blaze. But the insurgents,
as they proudly boasted, were “seekers of truth and justice, not
thieves or robbers,” and a plunderer found carrying off a silver
vessel from the sack of the Savoy was flung with his spoil into the
flames. The general terror was shown ludicrously enough on the
following day, when a daring band of peasants, under Tyler him-
self, forced their way into the Tower, and taking the panic-stricken
knights of the garrison in rough horse-play by the beard, promised
to be their equals and good comrades in the time to come. But
the horse-play changed into dreadful earnest when Archbishop
Sudbury and the Prior of St. John who had hindered the King
from a conference with the peasants were discovered in the chapel;
the primate was dragged from his sanctuary and beheaded on
Tower Hill, and the same vengeance was wreaked on the treasurer
and the chief commissioner in the levy of the hated poll-tax.
Meanwhile the King found the mass of the peasants waiting for a
conference with him without the city at Mile-End. “I am your
King and Lord, good people,” the boy began with a fearlessness
which marked his whole bearing throughout the crisis; “what
will ye?” “We will that you free us for ever,” shouted the
peasants, “us and our lands; and that we be never named nor
held for serfs." "I grant it," replied Richard; and he bade them go home, pledging himself at once to issue charters of freedom and amnesty. A shout of joy welcomed the promise. Throughout the day more than thirty clerks were busied writing letters of pardon and emancipation, and with these the mass of the insurgents dispersed quietly to their homes. It was with such a charter that William Grindedecobbe returned to St. Albans, and breaking at the head of the townsmen into the abbey precincts, summoned the abbot to deliver up the charters which bound the town in servage to his house. But a more striking proof of its servitude remained in the millstones, which after a long suit at law had been surrendered to the abbey, and placed within its cloister as a triumphant witness that no burgess held the right of grinding corn within the bounds of its domain. The men of St. Albans now burst the cloister gates, and tearing the millstones from the floor, broke them into small pieces, "like blessed bread in church," so that each might have something to show of the day when their freedom was won again.

Thirty thousand peasants, however, still remained with Wat Tyler to watch over the fulfilment of the royal pledge, and it was this body which Richard by a more chance encountered the next morning at Smithfield. Hot words passed between his train and the peasant leader, who had advanced to a fresh conference with the King; and a threat brought on a brief scuffle in which the Mayor of London, William Walworth, struck Tyler with his dagger to the ground. "Kill, kill," shouted the crowd, "they have killed our Captain." "What need ye, my masters?" cried the boy King, as he rode boldly to the front, "I am your Captain and your King! Follow me." The hopes of the peasants centred in the young sovereign: one object of their rising had been to free him from the evil counsellors who, as they believed, abused his youth, and they now followed him with a touching loyalty and trust to the Tower. His mother welcomed him with tears of joy.

"Rejoice and praise God," the boy answered, "for I have recovered to-day my heritage which was lost, and the realm of England." The panic of the nobles had in fact passed away, and six thousand knights gathered round the King, eager for blood, but Richard was as yet true to his word. He contented himself with issuing the promised letters of freedom and dismissing the peasants to their homes. The revolt, indeed, was far from being at an end. A strong body of peasants occupied St. Albans. In the eastern counties fifty thousand men forced the gates of St. Edmundsbury and wrested from the trembling monks a charter of enfranchisement for the town. Littester, a dyer of Norwich, headed a strong mass of peasants, under the title of the King of the Commons, and compelled the nobles he captured to act as his meat-tasters and to serve him on their knees during his repast. But the death of Tyler gave courage to the nobles, while it seems to have robbed the action of the peasants of all concert and decision. The warlike
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Bishop of Norwich fell lance in hand on the rebel camp in his own diocese, and scattered them at the first shock: while the King, with an army of 40,000 men, spread terror by the ruthlessness of his executions as he marched in triumph through Kent and Essex. But the stubbornness of the resistance which he met showed the temper of the people. The villagers of Billericay demanded from the King the same liberties as their lords, and on his refusal threw themselves into the woods and fought two hard fights before they were reduced to submission. It was only by threats of death that verdicts of guilty could be wrung from the Essex jurors when the leaders of the revolt were brought before them. Grindalbothe was offered his life if he would persuade his followers at St. Albans to restore the charters they had wrung from the monks. He turned bravely to his fellow-townsmen and made them take no thought for his trouble. "If I die," he said, "I shall die for the cause of freedom we have won, counting myself happy to end my life by such a martyrdom. Do then to-day as you would have done had I been killed yesterday." But the stubborn will of the conquered was met by as stubborn a will in their conquerors. The royal council indeed showed its sense of the danger of a mere policy of resistance by submitting the question of enfranchisement to the Parliament which assembled on the suppression of the revolt with words which suggested a compromise. "If you desire to enfranchise and set at liberty the said serfs," ran the royal message, "by your common assent, as the King has been informed that some of you desire, he will consent to your prayer." But no thoughts of compromise influenced the landowners in their reply. The King's grant and letters, the Parliament answered with perfect truth, were legally null and void: their serfs were their goods, and the King could not take their goods from them but by their own consent. "And this consent," they ended, "we have never given and never will give, were we all to die in one day."

Section V.—Richard the Second, 1381—1399

[Authorities.—To those mentioned under earlier sections may be added the anonymous "Historia Vitæ et Regni Ricardi II," the "Annales Ricardi II. et Henrici IV" (Rolls Series), and for views favourable to Richard, Jean Creton, "Histoire du Roy d'Angleterre, Richard II.," and the "Chronique de la traion et mort de Richard II." (English Historical Society). The Calendar of State Papers for Richard II.'s reign has been published. Wright's "Political Songs" illustrate popular feeling. "Piers Ploughman" has been edited by Skew. In addition to Stubbs, "Constitutional History," and to the modern works on special points, already mentioned, Wallon's "Histoire de Richard II." is of value, though written before various original authorities were available. For the deposition of Richard II., the best account is that given by Adam of Usk (edited Maunde Thompson).

All the darker and stermer aspects of the age which we have been viewing, its social revolt, its moral and religious awakening, the misery of the peasant, the protest of the Lollard, are painted with man
a terrible fidelity in the poem of William Longland. Nothing brings more vividly home to us the social chasm which in the fourteenth century severed the rich from the poor than the contrast between the "Complaint of Pieris the Ploughman" and the "Canterbury Tales." The world of wealth and ease and laughter through which the courtly Chaucer moves with eyes downcast as in a pleasant dream is a far-off world of wrong and of ungodliness to the gaunt poet of the poor. Born probably in Shropshire, where he had been put to school and received minor orders as a clerk, "Long Will," as Longland was nicknamed for his tall stature, found his way at an early age to London, and earned a miserable livelihood there by singing placebos and diriges in the stately funerals of his day. Men took the silent moody clerk for a madman; his bitter poverty quickened the defiant pride that made him loth—as he tells us—to bow to the gay lords and dames who rode decked in silver and miniver along the Cheap, or to exchange a "God save you" with the law serjeants as he passed their new house in the Temple. His world is the world of the poor: he dwells on the poor man's life, on his hunger and toil, his rough rovelry and his despair with the narrow intensity of a man who has no outlook beyond it. The narrowness, the misery, the monotony of the life he paints reflect themselves in his verse. It is only here and there that a love of nature or a grim earnestness of wrath quicken his rhyme into poetry; there is not a gleam of the bright human sympathy of Chaucer, of his fresh delight in the gaiety, the tenderness, the daring of the world about him, of his picturesque sense of even its coarsest contrasts, of his delicate irony, of his courtly wit. The cumbrous allegory, the tedious platitudes, the rhymed texts from Scripture which form the staple of Longland's work, are only broken here and there by phrases of a shrewd common sense, by bitter outbursts, by pictures of a broad Hogarthian humour. What chains one to the poem is its deep undertone of sadness: the world is out of joint and the gaunt rhymers who stalks silently along the Strand has no faith in his power to put it right. His poem covers indeed an age of shame and suffering such as England had never known, for if its first brief sketch appeared two years after the Peace of Bretigny its completion may be dated at the close of the reign of Edward the Third, and its final issue preceded but by a single year the Peasant Revolt. Londoner as he is, Will's fancy flies far from the sin and suffering of the great city to a May-morning in the Malvern Hills. "I was very forwandered and went me to rest under a broad bank by a burn side, and as I lay and leaned and looked in the water I slumbered in a sleeping, it sweyved (sounded) so merry." Just as Chaucer gathers the typical figures of the world he saw into his pilgrim train, so the dreamer gathers into a wide field his army of traders and chaffers, of hermits and solitaries, of minstrels, "japers and jugglers," bidders and beggars, ploughmen that "in setting and in sowing swonken (toil) full hard," pilgrims "with their wenches after," weavers
and labourers, burgess and bondman, lawyer and scrivener, court-haunting bishops, friars, and pardoners "parting the silver" with the parish priest. Their pilgrimage is not to Canterbury, but to Truth; their guide to Truth neither clerk nor priest but Peterkin the Ploughman, whom they find ploughing in his field. He it is who bids the knight no more wrest gifts from his tenant nor misdo with the poor. "Though he be thine underling here, well may hap in heaven that he be worthier set and with more bliss than thou... For in chancel at church churches be evil to know, or a knight from a knave there." The gospel of equality is backed by the gospel of labour. The aim of the Ploughman is to work, and to make the world work with him. He warns the labourer as he warns the knight. Hunger is God's instrument in bringing the idlest to toil, and Hunger waits to work her will on the idler and the waster. On the eve of the great struggle between wealth and labour Longland stands alone in his fairness to both, in his shrewd political and religious common sense. In the face of the popular hatred towards John of Gaunt, he paints the Duke in a famous apologue as the cat who, greedy as she might be, at any rate keeps the noble rats from utterly devouring the mice of the people. The poet is loyal to the Church, but his pilgrimage is not to Walsingham, but to Truth; he proclaims a righteous life to be better than a host of indulgences, and God sends His pardon to Piers when priests dispute it. But he sings as a man conscious of his loneliness and without hope. It is only in a dream that he sees Corruption, "Lady Moed," brought to trial and the world repenting at the preaching of Reason. In the waking life Reason finds no listeners. The poet himself is looked upon—he tells us bitterly—as a madman. There is a terrible despair in the close of his later poem, where the triumph of Christ is only followed by the reign of Antichrist; where Contrition slumbers amidst the revel of Death and Sin; and Conscience, hard beset by Pride and Sloth, rouses himself with a last effort, and seizing his pilgrim staff wanders over the world to find Piers Ploughman.

The strife indeed which Longland would have averted raged only the fiercer after the repression of the Peasant Revolt. The Statutes of Labourers, effective as they proved in sowing hatred between rich and poor, and in creating a mass of pauperism for later times to deal with, were powerless for their immediate end, either in reducing the actual rate of wages or in restricting the mass of floating labour to definite areas of employment. During the century and a half after the Peasant Revolt villainage died out so rapidly that it became a rare and antiquated thing. A hundred years after the Black Death, we learn from a high authority that the wages of an English labourer "commanded twice the amount of the necessaries of life which could have been obtained for the wages paid under Edward the Third." The statement is corroborated by the incidental descriptions of the life of the working classes which we find in Piers Ploughman. Labourers, Longland
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tells us, "that have no land to live on but their hands," disdained
to live on penny ale or bacon, but demanded "fresh flesh or fish,
fried or bake, and that hot or hotter for chilling of their maw."
The market was still in fact in the labourer’s hands, in spite of
statutes; "and but if he be highly hired else will he chide and wait
the time that he was made a workman." The poet saw clearly
that as population rose to its normal rate times such as these
would pass away. "While Hunger was their master here would
none of them chide nor strive against his stature, so sternly he
looked: and I warn you, workmen, win while ye may, for Hunger
hath and will hasteth him fast." But even at the time when he wrote
there were seasons of the year during which employment for this
floating mass of labour was hard to find. In the long interval
between harvest-tide and harvest-tide, work and food were alike
scarce in the medieval homestead. "I have no penny," says
Piers the Ploughman in such a season, in lines which give us the
picture of a farm of the day, "pullets for to buy, nor neither geese
nor pigs, but two green cheeses, a few curds and cream, and an
oaten cake, and two loaves of beans and bran baken for my children.
I have no salt bacon nor no cooked meat collops for to make, but
I have parsley and leeks and many cabbage plants, and eke a cow
and a calf, and a cart-mare to draw a-field my dung while the
drought lasteth, and by this livelihood we must all live till Lammas-
tide (August), and by that I hope to have harvest in my croft."
But it was not till Lammas-tide that high wages and the new corn
bade "Hunger go to sleep," and during the long spring and
summer the free labourer, and the "waster that will not work but
wander about, that will eat no bread but the finest wheat, nor
drink but of the best and brownest ale," was a source of social and
political danger. "He grieveth him against God and grudgeth
against Reason, and then curseth he the King and all his Council
after such law to allow labourers to grieve." The terror of the
landowners expressed itself in legislation which was a fitting sequel
of the Statutes of Labourers. They forbade the child of any tiller
of the soil to be apprenticed in a town. They prayed Richard to
ordain "that no bondman nor bondwoman shall place their chil-
dren at school, as has been done, so as to advance their children
in the world by their going into the Church." The new colleges
which were being founded at the two Universities at this moment
closed their gates upon villains. It was the failure of such futile
efforts to effect their aim which drove the energy of the great
proprietors into a new direction, and in the end revolutionized
the whole agricultural system of the country. Sheep farming
required fewer hands than tillage, and the scarcity and high price
of labour tended to throw more and more land into sheep-farms.
In the decrease of personal service, as villanie died away, it
became the interest of the lord to diminish the number of tenants
on his estate as it had been before his interest to maintain it, and
he did this by massing the small allotments together into larger
holdings. By this course of eviction the number of the free-labour
class was enormously increased while the area of employment was
diminished; and the social danger from vagabondage and the
"sturdy beggar" grew every day greater till it brought about the
despotism of the Tudors.

This social danger mingled with the yet more formidable religious peril which sprang from the party violence of the later Lollardry. The persecution of Courtenay had deprived the religious reform of its more learned adherents and of the support of the University, while Wyclif's death had robbed it of its head at a moment when little had been done save a work of destruction. From that moment Lollardism ceased to be in any sense an organized movement, and crumbled into a general spirit of revolt. All the religious and social discontent of the times floated instinctively to this new centre; the socialist dreams of the peasantry, the new and keener spirit of personal morality, the hatred of the friars, the jealousy of the great lords towards the prelacy, the fanaticism of the Puritan zealot were blended together in a common hostility to the Church and a common resolve to substitute personal religion for its dogmatic and ecclesiastical system. But it was this want of organization, this looseness and fluidity of the new movement, that made it penetrate through every class of society. Women as well as men became the preachers of the new sect. Its numbers increased till to the frenzied panic of the Churchmen it seemed as if every third man in the streets was a Lollard. The movement had its own schools, its own books; its pamphlets were passed everywhere from hand to hand; scurrilous ballads, in which it revived old attacks of "Goliath" in the Angevin times upon the wealth and luxury of the clergy, were sung at every corner. Nobles, like the Earl of Salisbury, and at a later time Sir John Oldcastle, placed themselves openly at the head of the cause and threw open their gates as a refuge for its missionaries. London in its hatred of the clergy was fiercely Lollard, and defended a Lollard preacher who had ventured to advocate the new doctrines from the pulpit of St. Paul's. Its mayor, John of Northampton, showed the influence of the new morality in the Puritan spirit with which he dealt with the morals of the city. Compelled to act, as he said, by the remissness of the clergy, who connived for money at every kind of debauchery, he arrested the loose women, cut off their hair, and carted them through the streets as an object of public scorn. But the moral spirit of the new movement, though infinitely its grander side, was less dangerous to the Church than its open repudiation of the older doctrines and systems of Christendom. Out of the floating mass of opinion which bore the name of Lollardry one great faith gradually evolved itself, a faith in the sole authority of the Bible as a source of religious truth. The translation of Wyclif did its work. Scripture, complains a canon of Leicester, "became a vulgar thing, and more open to lay folk and women that knew how to read than it is wont to be to clerks themselves." Conse-
quences which Wyclif had perhaps shrunk from drawing were boldly drawn by his disciples. The Church was declared to have become apostate, its priesthood was denounced as no priesthood, its sacraments as idolatry. It was in vain that the clergy attempted to stifle the new movement by their old weapon of persecution. The jealousy entertained by the baronage and gentry of every pretension of the Church to secular power foiled its efforts to make persecution effective. At the moment of the Peasant Revolt, Courtenay procured the enactment of a statute which commissioned the sheriffs to seize all persons convicted before the bishops of preaching heresy. But the statute was repealed in the next session, and the Commons added to the bitterness of the blow by their protest that they considered it "in nowise their interest to be more under the jurisdiction of the prelates or more bound by them than their ancestors had been in times past." Heresy indeed was still a felony by the common law, and there were earlier instances in our history of the punishment of heretics by the fire. But the limitation of each bishop's jurisdiction within the limits of his own diocese made it almost impossible to arrest the wandering preachers of the new doctrine, and the civil punishment—even if it had been sanctioned by public opinion—seems to have long fallen into desuetude. Experience proved to the prelates that no sheriff would arrest on the mere warrant of an ecclesiastical officer, and that no royal court would issue the old writ "for the burning of a heretic" on a bishop's requisition. But powerless as the efforts of the Church were for purposes of repression, they were effective in rousing the temper of the Lollards into a bitter and fanatical hatred of their persecutors. The Lollard teachers directed their fiercest invectives against the wealth and secularity of the great Churchmen. In a formal petition to Parliament they mingled denunciations of the riches of the clergy with an open profession of disbelief in transubstantiation, priesthood, pilgrimages, and image worship, and a demand, which illustrates the strange medley of opinions which jostled together in the new movement, that war might be declared unchristian, and that trades such as those of the goldsmith or the armourer, which were contrary to apostolical poverty, might be banished from the realm. They contended (and it is remarkable that a Parliament of the next reign adopted the statement) that from the superfluous revenues of the Church, if once they were applied to purposes of general utility, the King might maintain fifteen earls, fifteen hundred knights, and six thousand squires, besides endowing a hundred hospitals for the relief of the poor.

The distress of the landowners, the general disorganization of the country, in every part of which bands of marauders were openly defying the law, the panic of the Church and of society at large as the projects of the Lollards shaped themselves into more daring and revolutionary forms, added a fresh keenness to the national discontent at the languid and inefficient prosecution of the war.
France was, in fact, mistress of the seas; Guienne lay at her mercy, and the northern frontier of England itself was flung open to her by the alliance of the Scots. The landing of a French force in the Forth roused the whole country to a desperate effort, and a large and well-equipped army of Englishmen penetrated as far as Edinburgh in the vain hope of bringing their enemy to battle. A more terrible blow followed in the submission of Ghent to the French forces, the reception of a French prince by Flanders as its Count, and the loss of the one remaining market for English commerce; while the forces which should have been employed in saving it, and in the protection of the English shores against the threat of invasion, were squandered by John of Gaunt on the Spanish frontier in pursuit of a visionary crown, which he claimed in his wife's right, the daughter of Pedro the Cruel. But even calamities such as these galled the national pride less than the peace tendency of the court. Michael de la Pole, the Earl of Suffolk, had stood since the suppression of the revolt at the head of the royal councils, and the whole aim of his policy had been to bring about a reconciliation with France. Unsuccessful as they were in effecting this object, his efforts roused the resentment of the nobles, and at the instigation of the Duke of Gloucester, who, in the absence of his brother, John of Gaunt, had placed himself at its head, the Parliament demanded the dismissal of the minister and the transfer of the royal power to a permanent Council chosen by the lords. The resistance of the young King was crushed by the appearance of the baronage in arms, and a bill of impeachment hurried into exile and to death both the Earl and the judges of his party who had pronounced the rule of the Council to be in itself illegal. It may have been the violence of these measures which restored popular sympathy to the royal cause, for hardly a year had passed when Richard found himself strong enough to break down by a word the government against which he had struggled so vainly. In the great Easter Council he suddenly asked his uncle to tell him how old he was. "Your Highness," replied Gloucester, "is in your twenty-second year." "Then I am old enough to manage my own affairs," said Richard, coolly. "I have been longer under guardianship than any ward in my realm. I thank you for your past services, my lords, but I need them no longer."

For nine years the young King wielded the power which thus passed quietly into his hands with singular wisdom and good fortune. On the one hand he carried his peace policy into effect by a succession of negotiations which brought about the conclusion of a truce for four years, and this period of rest was lengthened to twenty-eight by a subsequent agreement on his marriage with Isabella, the daughter of Charles the Fifth of France. On the other he announced his resolve to rule by the advice of his Parliament, submitted to its censure, and consulted it on all matters of importance. In a vigorous campaign he pacified Ireland while redressing the abuses of its government; and the Lollard troubles which
had broken out during his absence were at once repressed on his return. But the brilliant abilities which Richard shared with the rest of the Plantagenets were marred by a fitful inconstancy and a mean spirit of revenge. His uncle, the Duke of Gloucester, remained at the head of the war-party; his turbulent opposition to the peace policy of the King, and his resistance to the French marriage which embodied it, may have made a conflict inevitable; but the readiness with which Richard seized on the opportunity of provoking such a contest shows the bitterness with which during the long years which had passed since the death of Suffolk he had brooded over his projects of vengeance. The Parliament which had been employed by Gloucester to humble the Crown was now used to crush its opponents. The pardons granted nine years before were recalled; the commission of Regency declared to have been illegal, and it was ruled that the enactment of such a measure rendered its promoters guilty of treason. The blow was ruthlessly followed up. When the summons to answer to his impeachment reached the Duke, he was found dead in his prison at Calais: while his chief supporter, Arundel, the Archbishop of Canterbury, was condemned to exile, and the nobles of his party to imprisonment. The measures introduced into the Parliament of the following year showed that from a mere project of revenge Richard's designs had widened into a definite plan of absolute government. He was freed from Parliamentary control by the grant to him of a tax upon wool for the term of his life. His next step got rid of Parliament itself. A committee of twelve peers and six commoners was appointed in Parliament, with power to continue their sittings after its dissolution and to "examine and determine all matters and subjects which had been moved in the presence of the king with all the dependencies thereof." The aim of Richard was to supersede by means of this permanent commission the body from which it originated: he at once employed it to determine causes and enact laws, and forced from every tenant of the Crown an oath to recognize the validity of its acts and to oppose any attempts to alter or revoke them. With such an engine at his command the King was absolute, and with the appearance of absolutism the temper of his reign suddenly changed. A system of forced loans, the sale of charters of pardon to Gloucester's adherents, the outlawry of seventeen counties at once on the plea that they had supported his enemies, a reckless interference with the course of justice and the independence of the judges, roused into new life the social and political discontent which was threatening the very existence of the Crown.

By his good government and by his evil government alike Richard had succeeded in alienating every class of his subjects. He had estranged the nobles by his peace policy, the landowners by his refusal to sanction the insane measures of repression they directed against the labourer, the merchant class by his illegal exactions, and the Church by his shelter of the Lollards. Not only
had the persecution of the new sect been foiled by the inactivity of the royal officers and the repeal of the bills of heresy introduced by the Primate, but Lollardism found favour in the very precincts of the court. It was through the patronage of Richard's first queen, Anne of Bohemia, that the tracts and Bible of the Reformer had been introduced into her native land to give rise to the remarkable movement which found its earliest leaders in John Huss and Jerome of Prague. The head of the sect, the Earl of Salisbury, was of all the English nobles the most favoured by and the most faithful to the King. Richard stood almost alone in fact in his realm, but even this accumulated mass of hatred might have failed to crush him had not an act of jealousy and tyranny placed an able and unscrupulous leader at the head of the national discontent. Henry, Earl of Derby and Duke of Hereford, the eldest son of John of Gaunt, though he had taken part against his royal cousin in the earlier troubles of his reign, had loyally supported him in his recent measures against Gloucester. No sooner, however, were these measures successful than Richard turned his new power against the more dangerous House of Lancaster, and availing himself of a quarrel between the Dukes of Hereford and Norfolk, in which each party bandied accusations of treason against the other, banished both from the realm. Banishment was soon followed by outlawry, and on his father's death Henry found himself deprived of both the title and estates of his house. At the moment when he had thus driven his cousin to despair, Richard crossed into Ireland to complete the work of conquest and organization which he had begun there; and Archbishop Arundel, an exile like himself, urged the Earl to take advantage of the King's absence for the recovery of his rights. Eluding the vigilance of the French Court, at which he had taken shelter, Henry landed with a handful of men on the coast of Yorkshire, where he was at once joined by the Earls of Northumberland and Westmoreland, the heads of the great houses of the Percies and the Nevilles; and, with an army which grew as he advanced, entered triumphantly into London. The Duke of York, whom the King had left regent, united his forces to those of Henry, and when Richard landed at Milford Haven he found the kingdom lost. His own army dispersed as it landed, and the deserted King fled in disguise to North Wales to find a second force which the Earl of Salisbury had gathered for his support already disbanded. Invited to a conference with the Duke of Lancaster at Flint, he saw himself surrounded by the rebel forces. "I am betrayed," he cried, as the view of his enemies burst on him from the hill; "there are pennons and banners in the valley." But it was too late for retreat. Richard was seized and brought before his cousin. "I am come before my time," said Lancaster, "but I will show you the reason. Your people, my lord, complain that for the space of twenty years you have ruled them harshly; however, if it please God, I will help you to rule them better." "Fair cousin," replied the King, "since it pleases you, it pleases me well."
But Henry’s designs went far beyond a share in the government of the realm. The Parliament which assembled in Westminster Hall received with shouts of applause a formal paper in which Richard resigned the Crown as one incapable of reigning and worthy for his great demerits to be deposed. The resignation was, in fact, confirmed by a solemn Act of Deposition. The coronation oath was read, and a long impeachment, which stated the breach of the promises made in it, was followed by a solemn vote of both Houses which removed Richard from the state and authority of King. According to the strict rules of hereditary descent as construed by the feudal lawyers, by an assumed analogy with the descent of ordinary estates, the crown would now have passed to a house which had at an earlier period played a leading part in the revolutions of the Edwards. The great-grandson of the Mortimer who brought about the deposition of Edward the Second had married the daughter and heiress of Lionel of Clarence, the third son of Edward the Third. The childlessness of Richard and the death of Edward’s second son without issue placed Edmund, his grandson by this marriage, first among the claimants of the crown; but he was a child of six years old, the strict rule of hereditary descent had never received any formal recognition in the case of the Crown, and precedent had established the right of Parliament to choose in such a case a successor among any other members of the Royal House. With the characteristic subtlety of his temper, however, Henry professed to disguise this choice of the nation by the assertion of a second right arising from a supposed conquest of the realm. He rose from his seat and solemnly challenged the crown, “as that I am descended by regal line of blood coming from the good lord King Henry the Third, and through that right that God of His Grace hath sent me with 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 good laws.” Whatever defects such a claim might present were more than covered by the solemn recognition of Parliament. The two Archbishops, taking the new sovereign by the hand, seated him upon the throne, and Henry in emphatic words ratified the compact between himself and his people. “Sirs,” he said to the prelates, lords, knights, and burgesses gathered round him, “I thank God and you, spiritual and temporal, and all estates of the land: and do you to wit it is not my will that any man think that by way of conquest I would disinherit any of his heritage, franchises, or other rights that he ought to have, nor put him out of the good that he has and has had by the good laws and customs of the realm, except those persons that have been against the good purpose and the common profit of the realm.”

It has been contended, since Green wrote, that the poem of Piers Ploughman was not the work of a single individual, and that Longland or Longland never existed.

The effect of the Peasant Revolt was rather to retard than to accelerate
the decline of villainage, the tendency after the suppression of the revolt being to insist upon villain service. Michael de la Pole fled to France as a result of the baronial attack upon him, but died at Paris about a year later. The favour shown by Richard to De Vere, Earl of Oxford, was a further factor in rousing the hostility of the nobles. The policy of the Lords Appellant, Gloucester and his friends, seems to have been throughout mainly selfish.

York was unable to resist the progress of Henry after his landing, and declared his belief in Henry's professions of loyalty to Richard. In claiming the throne as descended from Henry III., Henry IV. was possibly alluding to the legend that Edmund of Lancaster was the elder brother of Edward I., but had been excluded from the throne on the ground of his deformity.

SECTION VI.—THE HOUSE OF LANCASTER, 1399—1422

[Authorities.—The chronicles of this period of English history become increasingly defective. The collection which has gone by the name of Walsingham; the "Annales Ricardi II. et Henrici IV.", the "Chronicle, edited Giles", and the "Chronicle, edited Davies"; Adam of Usk; Otterbourne, "Chronica," the "Translator of Livius," "Life of Henry V.", and Elmham, "Vita et Gestis Henrici V.", may be mentioned. The Rolls of Parliament are of great value. Among modern works, Ramsay, "Lancaster and York," gives a complete account of the whole period. For the French war, see Monstrelet, "Chronique" (Société de l'Histoire de France), and among modern works, Puisieux, "Siège de Rouen."]

Raised to the throne by a Parliamentary revolution and resting its claims on a Parliamentary title, the House of Lancaster was precluded by its very position from any resumption of the last struggle for independence on the part of the Crown which had culminated in the bold effort of Richard the Second. During no period of our early history were the powers of the two Houses so frankly recognized. The tone of Henry the Fourth till the very close of his reign is that of humble compliance with the prayers of the Parliament, and even his imperious successor shrank almost with timidity from any conflict with it. But the Crown had been bought by other pledges less noble than that of constitutional rule. The support of the nobles had been secured by a tacit engagement on Henry's part to reverse the peace policy of his predecessor and to renew the fatal war with France. The support of the Church had been purchased by the more terrible promise of persecution. The last pledge was speedily redeemed. In the first Convocation of his reign Henry announced himself as the protector of the Church, and ordered the prelates to take measures for the suppression of heresy and of the wandering preachers. The hindrances which had neutralized the efforts of the bishops were taken away by an Act which gave them power to arrest on common rumour, to put the accused to purgation, and to punish with imprisonment. These, however, were but preludes to the more formidable provisions of the Statute of Heretics. By the provisions of this infamous Act, bishops were
now not only permitted to arrest and imprison, so long as their heresy should last, all preachers of heresy, all schoolmasters infected with heretical teaching, all owners or writers of heretical books, but a refusal to abjure, or a relapse after abjuration, enabled them to hand over the heretic to the civil officers, and by these—so ran the first legal enactment of religious bloodshed which defiled our statute book—he was to be burnt on a high place before the people. The statute was hardly passed before William Sawtre, who had quitted a Norfolk rectory to spread the new Lollardism, became its first victim. A layman, John Badbie, was committed to the flames in the presence of the Prince of Wales for a denial of transubstantiation. The groans of the sufferer were taken for a recantation, and the Prince ordered the fire to be plucked away; but the offer of life and of a pension failed to break the spirit of the Lollard, and he was again hurled back to his doom. It was probably the fierce resentment of the Reformers which gave life to the incessant revolts which threatened the throne of Henry the Fourth. The mere maintenance of his power through the troubled years of his reign is the best proof of the King's ability. A conspiracy of Richard's half-brothers, the Earls of Huntingdon and Kent, was hardly suppressed when the discontent of the Percies at the ingratitude of a monarch whom they claimed to have raised to the crown broke out in rebellion, and Hotspur, the son of the Earl of Northumberland, leagued himself with the Scots and with the insurgents of Wales. His defeat and death in an obstinate battle near Shrewsbury for a time averted the danger; but three years later his father rose in a fresh insurrection, and though the seizure and execution of his fellow-conspirator Scrope, the Archbishop of York, drove Northumberland over the border, he remained till his death in a later inroad a peril to the throne. Encouraged meanwhile by the weakness of England, Wales, so long tranquil, shook off the yoke of her conquerors, and the whole country rose at the call of an adventurer, Owen Glendower, or of Glendower's, who proclaimed himself the descendant of its native princes. Owen left the invaders, as of old, to contend with famine and the mountain storms; but they had no sooner retired than he sailed out from his inaccessible fastnesses to win victories which were followed by the adhesion of all North Wales and great part of the South to his cause, while a force of French auxiliaries was despatched by Charles of France to his aid. It was only the restoration of peace in England which enabled Henry to roll back the tide of Glendower's success. By slow and deliberate campaigns continued through four years the Prince of Wales wrested from him the South; his subjects in the North, discouraged by successive defeats, gradually fell away from his standard; and the repulse of a bold descent upon Shropshire drove Owen at last to take refuge among the mountains of Snowdon, where he seems to have maintained the contest, single-handed, till his death. With the close of the Welsh rising the Lancastrian throne felt itself secure from
without, but the danger from the Lollards remained as great as ever within. The new statute and its terrible penalties were boldly defied. The death of the Earl of Salisbury in one of the revolts against Henry, though his gory head was welcomed into London by a procession of abbots and bishops who went out singing psalms of thanksgiving to meet it, only transferred the leadership of the party to one of the foremost warriors of the time. Sir John Oldcastle, whose marriage raised him to the title of Lord Cobham, threw open his castle of Cowling to the Lollards as their head-quarters, sheltered their preachers, and set the prohibitions and sentences of the bishops at defiance. Although Henry the Fourth died worn out with the troubles of his reign without venturing to cope with this formidable opponent, the stern temper of his successor at once faced the danger. A new royal mandate was issued against the preachers, and Oldcastle was besieged in his castle and conducted as a prisoner to the Tower. His escape was the signal for the revolt of his sect. A secret command summoned the Lollards to assemble in St. Giles's fields. We gather, if not the real aims of the rising, at least the terror that it caused, from Henry's statement that its purpose was "to destroy himself, his brothers, and several of the spiritual and temporal lords;" but the vigilance of the young King prevented the junction of the Lollards of London with their friends in the country by securing the city gates, and those who appeared at the place of meeting were dispersed by the royal forces. On the failure of the rising, the law was rendered more rigorous. Magistrates were directed to arrest all Lollards and hand them over to the bishops; a conviction of heresy was made to entail forfeiture of blood and of estate; and the execution of thirty-nine prominent Lollards was followed after some years by the arrest of Oldcastle himself. In spite of his rank and of an old friendship with the King, Lord Cobham was hung alive in chains and a fire slowly kindled beneath his feet.

With the death of Sir John Oldcastle the political activity of Lollardism came suddenly to an end, while the steady persecution of the bishops, if it failed to extinguish it as a religious movement, succeeded in destroying the vigour and energy which it had shown at the outset of its career. But the House of Lancaster had, as yet, only partially accomplished the aims with which it mounted the throne. In the eyes of the nobles, Richard's chief crime had been his policy of peace, and the aid which they gave to the revolution sprang mainly from their hope of a renewal of the war. The energy of the war-party was seconded by the temper of the nation at large, already forgetful of the sufferings of the past struggle and longing only to wipe out its shame. The internal calamities of France offered at this moment a tempting opportunity for aggression. Its King, Charles the Sixth, was a maniac, while its princes and nobles were divided into two great parties, the one headed by the Duke of Burgundy and bearing his name, the other by the Duke of Orleans and bearing the title of Armagnacs. The struggle had
been jealously watched by Henry the Fourth, but his attempt to
feed it by pushing an English force into France at once united the
combatants. Their strife, however, recommenced more bitterly
than ever when the claim of the French crown by Henry the Fifth on
his accession declared his purpose of renewing the war. No claim
could have been more utterly baseless, for the Parliamentary title
by which the House of Lancaster held England could give it no
right over France, and the strict law of hereditary succession which
Edward asserted could be pleaded, if pleaded at all, only by the
House of Mortimer. Not only the claim, indeed, but the
very nature of the war itself was wholly different from that of Ed-
ward the Third. Edward had been forced into the struggle against
his will by the ceaseless attacks of France, and his claim of the
crown was a mere afterthought to secure the alliance of Flanders.
The war of Henry, on the other hand, though in form a mere
renewal of the earlier struggle on the expiration of the truce made
by Richard, was in fact a wanton aggression on the part of a nation
tempted by the helplessness of its opponent and still galled by the
memory of former defeat. It was in vain that the French strove
to avert the English attack by an offer to surrender the Duchy of
Acquitaine; Henry’s aims pointed to the acquisition of Normandy
rather than of the South, and his first exploit was the capture of
Harfleur. Dysentery made havoc in his ranks during the siege, and
it was with a mere handful of men that he resolved to insult the
enemy by a daring march, like that of Edward, upon Calais. The
discord, however, on which he probably reckoned for security,
vanished before the actual appearance of the invaders in the heart
of France, and when his weary and half-starved force succeeded
in crossing the Somme, it found sixty thousand Frenchmen encam-
ped right across its line of march. Their position, flanked on
either side by woods, but with a front so narrow that the dense
masses were drawn up thirty men deep, was strong for purposes of
defence but ill suited for attack; and the French leaders, warned
by the experience of Cressy and Poitiers, resolved to await the
English advance. Henry, on the other hand, had no choice between
attack and unconditional surrender. His troops were starving, and
the way to Calais lay across the French army. But the King’s
courage rose with the peril. A knight—it was said—in his train
wished that the thousands of stout warriors lying idle that night
in England had been standing in his ranks. Henry answered with
a burst of scorn. “I would not have a single man more,” he replied.
“If God give us the victory, it will be plain that we owe it to His
grace. If not, the fewer we are, the less loss for England.” Starv-
ing and sick as were the handful of men whom he led, they shared the
spirit of their leader. As the chill rainy night passed away, his
archers bared their arms and breasts to give fair play to “the
crooked stick and the grey goose wing,” but for which—as the
rhyme ran—“England were but a fling,” and with a great shout
sprang forward to the attack. The sight of their advance roused
the fiery pride of the French; the wise resolve of their leaders was forgotten, and the dense mass of men-at-arms plunged heavily forward through miry ground on the English front. But at the first sign of movement Henry had halted his line, and fixing in the ground the sharp palisades with which each man was furnished, his archers poured their fatal arrow flights into the hostile ranks. The carnage was terrible, but the desperate charges of the French knighthood at last drove the English archers to the neighbouring woods, from which they were still able to pour their shot into the enemy's flanks, while Henry, with the men-at-arms around him, flung himself on the French line. In the terrible struggle which followed the King bore off the palm of bravery: he was felled once by a blow from a French mace, and the crown on his helmet was cleft by the sword of the Duke of Alençon; but the enemy was at last broken, and the defeat of the main body of the French was followed at once by the rout of their reserve. The triumph was more complete, as the odds were even greater, than at Cressy. Eleven thousand Frenchmen lay dead on the field, and more than a hundred princes and great lords were among the fallen.

The immediate result of the battle of Agincourt was small, for the English army was too exhausted for pursuit, and it made its way to Calais only to return to England. The war was limited to a contest for the command of the Channel, till the increasing bitterness of the strife between the Burgundians and Armagnacs encouraged Henry to resume his attempt to recover Normandy. Whatever may have been his aim in this enterprise—whether it were, as has been suggested, to provide a refuge for his House, should its power be broken in England, or simply to acquire a command of the seas—the patience and skill with which his object was accomplished raise him high in the rank of military leaders. Disembarking with an army of 40,000 men, near the mouth of the Touque, he stormed Caen, received the surrender of Bayeux, reduced Alençon and Falaise, and detaching his brother the Duke of Gloucester to occupy the Cotentin, made himself master of Avranches and Domfront. With Lower Normandy wholly in his hands, he advanced upon Evreux, captured Louviers, and, seizing Pont de l'Arche, threw his troops across the Seine. The end of these masterly movements was now revealed. Rouen was at this time the largest and wealthiest of the towns of France; its walls were defended by a powerful artillery; Alan Blanchard, a brave and resolute patriot, infused the fire of his own temper into the vast population; and the garrison, already strong, was backed by fifteen thousand citizens in arms. But the genius of Henry was more than equal to the difficulties with which he had to deal. He had secured himself from an attack on his rear by the reduction of Lower Normandy, his earlier occupation of Harleuf severing the town from the sea, and his conquest of Pont de l'Arche cut it off from relief on the side of Paris. Slowly but steadily the King drew his lines of investment round the doomed city; a flotilla was
brought up from Harfleur, a bridge of boats thrown over the Seine above the town, the deep trenches of the besiegers protected by posts, and the desperate sallies of the garrison stubbornly beaten back. For six months Rouen held resolutely out, but famine told fast on the vast throng of country folk who had taken refuge within its walls. Twelve thousand of these were at last thrust out of the city gates, but the cold policy of the conqueror refused them passage, and they perished between the trenches and the walls. In the hour of their agony women gave birth to infants, but even the new-born babes which were drawn up in baskets to receive baptism were lowered again to die on their mother’s breast. It was little better within the town itself. As winter drew on one-half of the population wasted away. “War,” said the terrible King, “has three handmaidens ever waiting on her, Fire, Blood, and Famine, and I have chosen the meekest maid of the three.” But his demand of unconditional surrender nerved the citizens to a resolve of despair; they determined to fire the city and fling themselves in a mass on the English lines; and Henry, fearful lest his prize should escape him at the last, was driven to offer terms. Those who rejected a foreign yoke were suffered to leave the city, but his vengeance reserved its victim in Alan Blanchard, and the brave patriot was at Henry’s orders put to death in cold blood.

A few sieges completed the reduction of Normandy. The King’s designs were still limited to the acquisition of that province; and pausing in his career of conquest, he strove to win its loyalty by a remission of taxation and a redress of grievances, and to seal its possession by a formal peace with the French Crown. The conferences, however, which were held for this purpose at Pontoise failed through the temporary reconciliation of the French factions, while the length and expense of the war began to rouse remonstrance and discontent at home. The King’s difficulties were at their height when the assassination of the Duke of Burgundy at Montereau, in the very presence of the Dauphin with whom he had come to hold conference, rekindled the fires of civil strife. The whole Burgundian party, with the new Duke, Philip the Good, at its head, flung itself in a wild thirst for revenge into Henry’s hands. The mad King, Charles the Sixth, with his Queen and daughters, were in Philip’s hands, and in his resolve to exclude the Dauphin from the throne the Duke stooped to buy English aid by giving Catharine, the eldest of the French princesses, in marriage to Henry, by conferring on him the Regency during the life of Charles, and recognizing his succession to the crown at that sovereign’s death. The treaty was solemnly ratified by Charles himself in a conference at Troyes, and Henry, who in his new capacity of Regent had undertaken to conquer in the name of his father-in-law the territory held by the Dauphin, reduced the towns of the Upper Sene and entered Paris in triumph side by side with the King. The States-General of the realm were solemnly convened to the capital; and strange as the provisions of the Treaty
of Troyes must have seemed, they were confirmed without a
murmur, and Henry recognized as the future sovereign of France.
A passing defeat of his brother Clarence in Anjou called him back
to the war. His re-appearance in the field was marked by the
capture of Dreux, and a repulse before Orleans was redeemed by his
success in the long and obstinate siege of Meaux. At no time had
the fortunes of Henry reached a higher pitch than at the moment
when he felt the touch of death. But the rapidity of his disease
baffled the skill of physicians, and with a strangely characteristic
regret that he had not lived to achieve the conquest of Jerusalem,
the great Conqueror passed away.
CHAPTER VI

THE NEW MONARCHY, 1422 — 1540

SECTION I.—JOAN OF ARC, 1422—1451

[Authorities.—The "Wars of the English in France" (Rolls Series), "Narratives of the Expulsion of the English from Normandy" (Rolls Series), and Monstrelet are the chief sources for the war; for Joan of Arc, the "Procés de Jeanne d'Arc" (Société de l'Histoire de France). The various Chronicles of London (edited King-ford) and the Proceedings of the Privy Council are the chief sources for the internal history of the period. Ramsay, "Lancaster and York," is the main modern authority.]

The glory of Agincourt and the genius of Henry the Fifth hardly veiled at the close of his reign the weakness and humiliation of the Crown, hampered as it was by foreign war, by a huge debt amounting to nearly four millions of our money and which increased each year as the expenses doubled the income, by the weakness of its own title and by the claims of the House of Mortimer. The long minority of Henry the Sixth, who was a boy of nine months old at his father's death, as well as the personal weakness which marked his after-rule, left the House of Lancaster at the mercy of the Parliament. But the Parliament was fast dying down into a mere representation of the baronage and the great landowners. The Commons indeed retained the right of granting and controlling subsidies, of joining in all statutory enactments, and of impeaching ministers. But the Lower House was ceasing to be a real representative of the "Commons" whose name it bore. The borough franchise was suffering from the general tendency to restriction and privilege which in the bulk of towns was soon to reduce it to a farce. Up to this time all freemen settling in a borough and paying their dues to it became by the mere settlement its burgesses, but during the reign of Henry the Sixth this largeness of borough life was roughly curtailed. The trade companies which vindicated civic freedom from the tyranny of the older merchant guilds themselves tended to become a narrow and exclusive oligarchy. Most of the boroughs had by this time acquired civic property, and it was with the aim of securing their own enjoyment of this against any share of it by "strangers" that the existing burgesses, for the most part, procured charters of incorporation from the Crown, which turned them into a close body and excluded from their number all who were not burgesses by birth or who failed henceforth to purchase their right of entrance by a long apprenticeship. In addition to this narrowing of the burgess-body, the internal government of the boroughs had almost universally passed, since the failure of the Communal movement in the thirteenth

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century, from the free gathering of the citizens in borough-mote into the hands of Common Councils, either self-elected or elected by the wealthier burgesses; and it was to these councils, or to a yet more restricted number of "solect men" belonging to them, that clauses in the new charters generally confined the right of choosing their representatives in Parliament. The restriction of the county franchise on the other hand was the direct work of the aristocracy. Economic changes were in fact fast widening the franchise in the counties when the great landowners jealously interfered to curtail it. The number of freeholders had increased with the subdivision of estates and the social changes which we have already examined, while the increase of independence was marked by the "riots and divisions between the gentlemen and other people," which the nobles attributed to the excessive number of the voters. Matters were in this state when by an early Act of the reign of Henry the Sixth the right of voting in shires was restricted to freeholders holding land worth forty shillings (a sum equal in our money to at least twenty pounds) a year, and representing a far higher proportionate income at the present time. This "great disfranchising statute," as it has been justly termed, was aimed, in its own words, against voters "of no value, whereof every of them pretended to have a voice equivalent with the more worthy knights and esquires dwelling within the same counties." But in actual working the statute was interpreted in a far more destructive fashion than its words were intended to convey. Up to this time all suitors who found themselves at the Sheriff's Court had voted without question for the Knight of the Shire, but by the new statute the great bulk of the existing voters, that is to say the leaseholders and copyholders, found themselves implicitly deprived of their franchise. A later statute, which seems, however, to have had no practical effect, showed the aristocratic temper, as well as the social changes against which it struggled, in its requirement that every Knight of the Shire should be "a gentleman born." The restriction of the suffrage was soon followed by its corruption in the "management" of elections. The complaint of the Kentishmen in Cade's revolt alleges that "the people of the shire are not allowed to have their free election in the choosing of knights for the shire, but letters have been sent from divers estates to the great rulers of all the county, the which enforce their tenants and other people by force to choose other persons than the common will is."

The death of Henry the Fifth revealed in its bare reality the secret of power. The whole of the royal authority vested without struggle in a council composed of great lords and Churchmen representing the baronage, at whose head stood Henry Beaufort, Bishop of Winchester, a legitimated son of John of Gaunt by his mistress Catherine Swynford. In the presence of Lollardism, the Church had at this time ceased to be a great political power and sunk into a mere section of the landed aristocracy. Its one aim was to preserve its enormous wealth, which was threatened at once
The New Monarchy

by the hatred of the heretics and by the greed of the nobles. Lollardism still lived, in spite of the steady persecution, as a spirit of revolt; and nine years after the young King’s accession we find the Duke of Gloucester traversing England with men-at-arms for the purpose of repressing its risings and hindering the circulation of its invectives against the clergy. The greed of the nobles had been diverted, whether, as later legend said, by the deliberate device of the great Churchmen or no, to the fair field of France. For the real source of the passion with which the baronage pressed for war was sheer lust of gold. Whatever pulse of patriotism may have stirred the blood of the English archer at Agincourt, the aim of the English noble was simply plunder, the pillage of farms, the sack of cities, the ransom of captives. So intense was the greed of gain that only a threat of death could keep the fighting men in their ranks, and the results of victory after victory were lost by the anxiety of the conquerors to deposit their plunder and captives safely at home before reaping the more military fruits of their success. The moment the firm hand of great leaders such as Henry or Bedford was removed, the war died down into mere massacre and brigandage. “If God had been a captain now-a-days,” exclaimed a French general, “He would have turned marauder.” Cruelty went hand-in-hand with greed, and we find an English privateer coolly proposing to drown the crews of a hundred merchant vessels which he has taken, unless the council to whom he writes should think it better to spare their lives. The nobles were as lawless and dissolute at home as they were greedy and cruel abroad. The Parliaments, which had now become mere sittings of their retainers and partizans, were like armed camps to which the great lords came with small armies at their backs. That of 1428 received its name of the “Club Parliament,” from the fact that when arms were prohibited the retainers of the barons appeared with clubs on their shoulders. When clubs were forbidden, they hid stones and balls of lead in their clothes. The dissoluteness against which Lollardism had raised its great moral protest reigned now without a check. A gleam of intellectual light was breaking on the darkness of the time, but only to reveal its hideous combination of mental energy with moral worthlessness. The Duke of Gloucester, whose love of letters was shown in the noble library he collected, was the most selfish and profligate prince of his day. The Earl of Worcester, a patron of Caxton, and one of the earliest scholars of the Revival of Letters, earned his title of “butcher” by the cruelty which raised him to a pre-eminence of infamy among the bloodstained leaders of the Wars of the Roses. All spiritual life seemed to have been trodden out in the ruin of the Lollards. Never had English literature fallen so low. A few tedious moralists alone preserved the name of poetry. History died down into the barest and most worthless fragments and annals. Even the religious enthusiasm of the people seemed to have spent itself, or to have been crushed out by the bishops’ courts. The one belief
of the time was in sorcery and magic. Eleanor Cobham, the wife of the Duke of Gloucester, was convicted of having practised magic against the King's life with the priests of her household, and condemned to do penance in the streets of London. The shrivelled arm of Richard the Third was attributed to witchcraft. The mist which wrapt the battle-field of Barnet was attributed to the incantations of Friar Bungay. The one pure figure which rises out of the greed, the lust, the selfishness, and unbelief of the time, the figure of Joan of Arc, was regarded by every Englishman as that of a sorceress.

Jeannette d'Arc was the child of a labourer of Domremy, a little village in the neighbourhood of Vaucouleurs on the borders of Lorraine and Champagne, in other words of France and of the Empire. Just without the little cottage where she was born began the great woods of the Vosges, where the children of Domremy drank in poetry and legend from fairy ring and haunted well, hung their flower garlands on the sacred trees, and sang songs to the "good people" who might not drink of the fountain because of their sins. Jeanne loved the forest; its birds and beasts came lovingly to her at her childish call. But at home men saw nothing in her but "a good girl, simple and pleasant in her ways," spinning and sewing by her mother's side while the other girls went to the fields, tender to the poor and sick, fond of church, and listening to the church-bell with a dreamy passion of delight which never left her. The quiet life was soon broken by the storm of war as it at last came home to Domremy. The death of Charles the Sixth, which followed hard on that of Henry, greatly weakened the moral force of the English cause; and the partizans of the Dauphin, who still held his ground south of the Loire, pushed their incursions over the river with fresh vigour as they received reinforcements of Lombards from the Milanese, and of four thousand Scots who landed at Rochelle under the Earl of Douglas. In genius for war, however, and in political capacity, the Duke of Bedford, who had taken the command in France on his brother's death, was hardly inferior to Henry himself. Drawing closer by a patient diplomacy his alliances with the Dukes of Burgundy and Brittany, he completed the conquest of Northern France, secured his communication with Normandy by the capture of Meulan, made himself master of the line of the Yonne by a victory near Auxerre, and pushed forward into the country near Macon. It was to arrest his progress that the Constable of Buchan advanced boldly from the Loire to the very borders of Normandy and attacked the English army at Verneuil. But a repulse hardly less disastrous than that of Agincourt left a third of the French knighthood on the field; and the Regent was preparing to cross the Loire when he was hindered by the intrigues of his brother the Duke of Gloucester. The nomination of Gloucester to the Regency in England by the will of the late King had been set aside by the council, and sick of the powerless Protectorate with which they had invested
him, the Duke sought a new opening for his restless ambition in a marriage with Jacqueline, the Countess in her own right of Holland and Hainault. The match at once roused the jealousy of the Duke of Burgundy, who regarded himself as the heir of her dominions, and the efforts of Bedford were paralyzed by the withdrawal of his allies as they marched northward to combat his brother. For three years the council strove in vain to put an end to the ruinous struggle, during which Bedford was forced to remain simply on the defensive, till the failure of Gloucester again restored to him the aid of Burgundy, and he was once more able to push forward to the conquest of the South. The delay, however, brought little help to France, and the Dauphin saw Orleans invested by ten thousand of the allies without power to march to its relief. The war had long since reached the borders of Lorraine, and the family of Jeanne had more than once been forced to fly to the woods before bands of marauders, and find their home burnt and sacked on their return. The whole North of France, indeed, from the Lorraine to the German border was being fast reduced to a desert. The husbandmen fled for refuge to the towns, till these in fear of famine shut their gates against them. Then in their despair they threw themselves into the woods and became brigands in their turn. So terrible was the devastation, that the two contending armies at one time failed even to find one another in the desolate Beauce. The towns were in hardly better case, for misery and disease killed a hundred thousand people in Paris alone. As the outcasts and wounded passed by Domremy the young peasant girl gave them her bed and nursed them in their sickness. Her whole nature summed itself up in one absorbing passion: she "had pity," to use the phrase for ever on her lip, "on the fair realm of France." As her passion grew she recalled old prophecies that a maid from the Lorraine border should save the land; she saw visions; St. Michael appeared to her in a flood of blinding light, and bade her go to the help of the King and restore to him his realm. "Messire," answered the girl, "I am but a poor maiden; I know not how to ride to the wars, or to lead men-at-arms." The archangel returned to give her courage, and to tell her of "the pity" that there was in heaven for the fair realm of France. The girl wept, and longed that the angels who appeared to her would carry her away, but her mission was clear. It was in vain that her father when he heard her purpose swore to drown her ere she should go to the field with men-at-arms. It was in vain that the priest, the wise people of the village, the captain of Vaucouleurs, doubted and refused to aid her. "I must go to the King," persisted the peasant girl, "even if I wear my limbs to the very knees." "I had far rather rest and spin by my mother's side," she pleaded with a touching pathos, "for this is no work of my choosing, but I must go and do it, for my Lord wills it." "And who," they asked, "is your Lord?" "He is God." Words such as these touched the rough captain at last: he took Jeanne by the hand and swore to
lead her to the King. At the Court itself she found hesitation and doubt. The theologians proved from their books that they ought not to believe her. "There is more in God's book than in yours," Jeanne answered simply. At last the Dauphin received her in the midst of a throng of nobles and soldiers. "Gentle Dauphin," said the girl, "my name is Jehan the Maid. The Heavenly King sends me to tell you that you shall be anointed and crowned in the town of Rheims, and you shall be lieutenant of the Heavenly King who is the King of France."

Orleans had already been driven by famine to offers of surrender when Jeanne appeared in the French Court. Charles had done nothing for its aid but shut himself up at Chinon and weep hopelessly. The long series of English victories had in fact so demoralized the French soldiery that a mere detachment of archers under Sir John Pastolfe had repulsed an army, in what was called the "Battle of the Herrings," and conducted the convoy of provisions to which it owed its name in triumph into the camp before Orleans. Only two or three thousand Englishmen remained there in the trenches after a new withdrawal of their Burgundian allies, but though the town swarmed with men-at-arms not a single sally had been ventured upon during the six months' siege. The success however of the handful of English besiegers depended wholly on the spell of terror which they had cast over France, and the appearance of Jeanne at once broke the spell. The girl was in her eighteenth year, tall, finely formed, with all the vigour and activity of her peasant rearing, able to stay from dawn to nightfall on horseback without meat or drink. As she mounted her charger, clad in white armour from head to foot, with the great white banner studded with fleur-de-lis waving over her head, she seemed "a thing wholly divine, whether to see or hear." The ten thousand men-at-arms who followed her from Chinon, rough plunderers whose only prayer was that of La Hire, "Sire Dieu. I pray you to do for La Hire what La Hire would do for you, were you captain-at-arms and he God," left off their oaths and foul living at her word and gathered round the altars on their march. Her shrewd peasant humour helped her to manage the wild soldiery, and her followers laughed over their camp-fires at the old warrior who had been so puzzled by her prohibition of oaths that she suffered him still to swear by his bâton. In the midst of her enthusiasm her good sense never left her. The people crowded round her as she rode along, praying her to work miracles, and bringing crosses and chaplets to be blest by her touch. "Touch them yourself," she said to an old Dame Margaret; "your touch will be just as good as mine." But her faith in her mission remained as firm as ever. "The Maid prays and requires you," she wrote to Bedford, "to work no more distraction in France, but to come in her company to rescue the Holy Sepulchre from the Turk." "I bring you," she told Dunois when he sallied out of Orleans to meet her, "the best aid ever sent to any one, the aid of the King of Heaven." The besiegers looked
on overawed as she led her force unopposed through their lines into Orleans, and, riding round the walls, bade the people look fearlessly on the dreaded forts which surrounded them. Her enthusiasm drove the hesitating generals to engage the handful of besiegers, and the enormous disproportion of forces at once made itself felt. Fort after fort was taken, till only the Tournelle remained, and then the council of war resolved to adjourn the attack. “You have taken your counsel,” replied Jeanne, “and I take mine.” Placing herself at the head of the men-at-arms, she ordered the gates to be thrown open, and led them against the fort. Few as they were, the English fought desperately, and the Maid, who had fallen wounded while endeavouring to scale its walls, was borne into a vineyard, while Dunois sounded the retreat. “Wait a while!” the girl imperiously pleaded, “eat and drunk! so soon as my standard touches the wall you shall enter the fort.” It touched, and the assailants burst in. On the next day the siege was abandoned, and the force which had conducted it withdrew in good order to the North. In the midst of her triumph Jeanne still remained the pure, tender-hearted peasant girl of the Vosges. Her first visit as she entered Orleans was to the great church, and there, as she knelt at mass, she wept in such a passion of devotion that “all the people wept with her.” Her tears burst forth afresh at her first sight of bloodshed and of the corpses strewn over the battle-field. She grew frightened at her first wound, and only threw off the touch of womanly fear when she heard the signal for retreat. Yet more womanly was the purity with which she passed through the brutal warriors of a medieval camp. It was her care for her honour that had led her to clothe herself in a soldier’s dress. She wept hot tears when told of the foul taunts of the English, and called passionately on God to witness her chastity. “Yield thee, yield thee, Glasdale,” she cried to the English warrior whose insults had been foulest, as he fell wounded at her feet. “you called me harlot! I have great pity on your soul.” But all thought of herself was lost in the thought of her mission. It was in vain that the French generals strove to remain on the Loire. Jeanne was resolute to complete her task, and while the English remained panic-stricken around Paris the army followed her from Gien through Troyes, growing in number as it advanced, till it reached the gates of Rheims. With the coronation of the Dauphin the Maid felt her errand to be over. “O gentle King, the pleasure of God is done,” she cried, as she flung herself at the feet of Charles the Seventh and asked leave to go home. “Would it were His pleasure,” she pleaded with the Archbishop as he forced her to remain, “that I might go and keep sheep once more with my sisters and my brothers; they would be so glad to see me again!”

The policy of the French Court detained her while the cities of the North of France opened their gates to the newly-consecrated King. Bedford, however, who had been left without money or men, had now received reinforcements, and Charles, after a repulse
before the walls of Paris, fell back behind the Loire; while the
towns on the Oise submitted again to the Duke of Burgundy. In
this later struggle Jeannet fought with her usual bravery, but with
the fatal consciousness that her mission was at an end, and during
the defence of Compiègne she fell into the hands of the Bastard of
Vendome, to be sold by her captor into the hands of the Duke of
Burgundy and by the Duke into the hands of the English. To the
English her triumphs were victories of sorcery, and after a year's
imprisonment she was brought to trial on a charge of heresy before
an ecclesiastical court with the Bishop of Beauvais at its head.
Throughout the long process which followed every art was em-
ployed to entangle her in her talk. But the simple shrewdness of
the peasant girl foiled the efforts of her judges. "Do you believe," they asked, "that you are in a state of peace?" "If I am not," she replied, "God will put me in it. If I am, God will keep me in it." Her capture, they argued, showed that God had forsaken her. "Since it has pleased God that I should be taken," she answered meekly, "it is for the best." "Will you submit," they demanded at last, "to the judgment of the Church Militant?" "I have come to the King of France," Jeannet replied, "by commission from God and from the Church Triumphant above: to that Church I submit." "I had rather die," she ended, passionately, "than renounce what I have done by my Lord's command." They deprived her of mass. "Our Lord can make me hear it without your aid," she said, weeping. "Do your voices," asked the judges, "forbid you to submit to the Church and the Pope?" "Ah, no! Our Lord first served." Sick, and deprived of all religious aid, it was no wonder that as the long trial dragged on and question followed question Jeannet's firmness wavered. On the charge of sorcery and diabolical possession she still appealed firmly to God. "I hold to my Judge," she said, as her earthly judges gave sentence against her, "to the King of Heaven and Earth. God has always been my Lord in all that I have done. The devil has never had power over me." It was only with a view to be delivered from the English prison and transferred to the prisons of the Church that she consented to a formal abjuration of heresy. She feared in fact among the English soldiery those outrages to her honour, to guard against which she had from the first assumed the dress of a man. In the eyes of the Church her dress was a crime and she abandoned it; but a renewed insult forced her to resume the one safeguard left her, and the return to it was treated as a relapse into heresy which doomed her to death. A great pile was raised in the marketplace of Rouen where her statue stands now. Even the brutal soldiers who snatched the hated "witch" from the hands of the clergy and hurried her to her doom were hushed as she reached the
stake. One indeed passed to her a rough cross he had made from a
stick he held, and she clasped it to her bosom. "Oh! Rouen, Rouen," she was heard to murmur, as her eyes ranged over the
city from the lofty scaffold, "I have great fear lest you suffer for
my death." "Yes! my voices were of God!" she suddenly cried
as the last moment came; "they have never deceived me!" Soon
the flames reached her, the girl's head sunk on her breast, there
was one cry of "Jesus!"—"We are lost," an English soldier
muttered as the crowd broke up; "we have burned a Saint."

The English cause was indeed irretrievably lost. In spite of a
pompous coronation of their boy-king at Paris, Bedford, with the
cool wisdom of his temper, seems to have abandoned all hope of
permanently retaining France, and to have fallen back on his
brother's original plan of securing Normandy. Henry's Court was
established for a year at Rouen, a university founded at Caen, and
whatever rapine and disorder might be permitted elsewhere,
justice, good government, and security for trade were steadily
maintained through the favoured province. At home Bedford
was resolutely backed by the Bishop of Winchester, who had
been raised to the rank of Cardinal, and who still governed England
through the Royal Council in spite of the fruitless struggles of the
Duke of Gloucester. His immense wealth was poured without stint
into the exhausted Treasury; his loans to the Crown amounted
to half-a-million; and the army which he had raised at his own
cost for the Hussite Crusade in Bohemia was unscrupulously
devoted to the relief of Bedford after the delivery of Orleans.
The Cardinal's diplomatic ability was seen in the truces he wrung
from Scotland, and in his personal efforts to prevent the reconciliation
of Burgundy with France. But the death of Bedford was a
death-blow to the English cause. Burgundy allied itself with
Charles the Seventh; Paris, after a sudden revolt, surrendered
to the King; and the English dominions were at once reduced to
Normandy and the fortresses of Picardy, Maine, and Anjou. To
preserve these the English soldiers, shrank as they were to a mere
handful, struggled with a bravery as desperate as in their days of
victory. Lord Talbot, the most daring of their chiefs, forced the
Somme with the waters up to his chin to relieve Cretoy, and threw
his men across the Oise in the face of a French army to relieve
Pontoise. But in spite of these efforts and of the pressure of the
war-party at home, the great Churchmen, who, though weakened
by Beaufort's retirement, still remained at the head of affairs, saw
that success was no longer possible. They offered in vain to fall
back on the terms of the Treaty of Bretigny; and after the expiration
of a short truce, which they purchased by the release of the
Duke of Orleans, a fresh effort for peace was made by the Earl of
Suffolk, who had now become the minister of Henry the Sixth and
negotiated for his master a marriage with Marguerite of Anjou.
Her father, René, the titular King of Sicily and Jerusalem, was
also nominally Duke of the provinces of Maine and Anjou, and
these were surrendered by the English minister as the price of a
match which Suffolk regarded as the prelude to a final peace. A
terrible crime secured the peace party from the opposition of the
Duke of Gloucester, who had resumed his old activity on the
The Wars of the Roses

retirement of Cardinal Beaufort and had now placed himself at
the head of the partizans of the war; he was summoned to attend
a Parliament at St. Edmondsbury, charged with high treason, and
a few days after found dead in his bed. But the difficulties he had
raised foiled Suffolk in his negotiations; and though Charles
extorted the surrender of Le Mans by a threat of war, the provisions
of the treaty remained for the most part unfulfilled. The struggle,
however, now became a hopeless one. In two months from the
resumption of the war half Normandy was in the hands of Dunois;
Rouen rose against her feeble garrison and threw open her gates
to the King; and the defeat of three thousand Englishmen in a
fight at Tourmigny was the signal for revolt throughout the rest
of the province. The surrender of Cherbourg left Henry not a foot
of ground in Normandy, but the views of the French monarch
reached south of the Loire, where Guisonne was still loyal to the
English Crown. But not a man arrived for its defence; and the
surrender of fortress after fortress secured the final expulsion of
the English from the soil of France. The Hundred Years' War had
ended, not only in the loss of the temporary conquests made since
the time of Edward the Third, with the exception of Calais, but
in the loss of the great southern province which had remained in
English hands ever since the marriage of its Duchess, Eleanor, to
Henry the Second, and in the building up of France into a far
greater power than it had ever been before.

SECTION II.—The Wars of the Roses, 1450—1471

[Authorities—The original authorities are scanty in the extreme. The
London Chronicles and the Continuator of the Croyland Chronicles are
the chief sources for general history. Social life is well illustrated in the
"Paston Letters" (edited Gairdner), but they are of little value for
public events. Fortescue, "Governance of England" (edited Plummer),
and the "De Laudibus Legum Angliae," of the same author, are important
for the political theory of the period; the "Labelle de Englishe Police"
(Hakluyt Society) gives the first scheme of naval policy ever put
forward in England and supplies valuable economic information. The
"Chronicle of the Lincoln-shire Rebellion" (Camden Miscellany) and
the "Arrival of Edward IV." (Camden Society) are semi-official Yorkist
accounts of portions of the period.]

The ruinous issue of the great struggle with France roused Cade's
Revolt England to a burst of fury against the wretched government to
whose weakness and credulity it attributed its disasters. Suffolk
was impeached and murdered as he fled across sea. The Bishop of
Chichester, who had negotiated the cession of Anjou, was seized
by the populace and torn to pieces. In Kent, the great manufac-
turing district of the day, seething with a busy population, and
especially concerned with the French contest through the piracy
of the Cinque Ports where every house showed some spoil from the
wars, the discontent broke into open revolt. Yeomen and trades-
men formed the bulk of the insurgents, but they were joined by
more than a hundred esquires and gentlemen, and two great
landowners of Sussex, the Abbot of Battle and the Prior of Lewes,
openly favoured their cause. John Cade, a soldier of some ex-
perience in the French wars, was placed at their head, and the
army, now twenty thousand men strong, marched in Whitsun-week
on Blackheath. The "Complaint of the Commons of Kent," which
they laid before the Royal Council, is of enormous value in
the light which it throws on the condition of the people. So utterly
had Lollardism been extinguished that not one of the demands
touches on religious reform. The old social discontent seems to
have subsided. The question of villainage and serfage, which had
roused Kent to its desperate rising in 1381, finds no place in its
"Complaint" of 1450. In the seventy years which had intervened,
villainage had died naturally away before the progress of social
change. The Statutes of Apparel, which begin at this time to
cumber the Statute-Book, show in their anxiety to curtail the
dress of the labourer and the farmer the progress of these classes
in comfort and wealth; and from the language of the statutes
themselves, it is plain that as wages rose both farmer and labourer
went on clothing themselves better in spite of sumptuary pro-
visions. With the exception of a demand for the repeal of the
Statute of Labourers, the programme of the Commons was now
not social, but political. The "Complaint" calls for adminis-
trative and economical reforms, for a change of ministry, a more
careful expenditure of the Royal revenue, and, as we have seen, for
the restoration of freedom of election, which had been broken in
upon by the interference both of the Crown and the great land-
owners. The refusal of the Council to receive the "Complaint"
was followed by a victory of the Kentishmen over the Royal forces
at Sevenoaks; and the occupation of London, coupled with the
execution of Lord Say, the most unpopular of the Royal ministers,
broke the obstinacy of his colleagues. The "Complaint" was
received, and pardons granted to all who had joined in the rising;
but the insurgents were hardly dispersed to their homes, when
Cade, who had striven in vain to retain them in arms, was pursued
and slain as he fled into Sussex. No bloody retaliation followed on
the death of the chief of the revolt, but the "Complaint" was
quietly laid aside, and the Duke of Somerset, who was especially
regarded as responsible for the late misgovernment, resumed his
place at the head of the Royal Council.

Beaufort, Duke of Somerset, as the descendant of John of Gaunt
and his mistress Catherine Swynford, was the representative of a
junior branch of the House of Lancaster, whose claims to the throne
Henry IV. had barred by a clause in the Act which legitimated their
line, but whose hopes of the Crown were now roused by the child-
lessness of Henry the Sixth. It was probably a suspicion of their
designs which stirred the Duke of York to action. In addition to
other claims which he as yet refrained from urging, he claimed as

York and the Beauforts
the descendant of Edmund of Langley, the fifth among the sons of Edward the Third, to be regarded as heir presumptive to the throne. His claim seems to have been a popular one, and on the interruption of the struggle between the two rivals by the severe malady of the King who sank for a year into absolute incapacity, the vote of Parliament appointed York Protector of the Realm. On Henry's recovery, however, the Duke of Somerset, who had been impeached and committed to the Tower by his rival, was restored to power, and supported with singular vigour and audacity by the Queen. York at once took up arms, and backed by some of the most powerful nobles, advanced with 3000 men upon St. Albans where Henry was encamped. A successful assault upon the town was crowned by the fall of Somerset, and a return of the King's malady brought the renewal of York's Protectorate. Henry's recovery, however, again restored the supremacy of the House of Beaufort, and after a temporary reconciliation between the two parties York again raised his standard at Ludlow, where he was joined by the Earls of Salisbury and Warwick, the heads of the great house of Neville. After a slight success of Lord Salisbury at Bloreheath, the King marched rapidly on the insurgents, and a decisive battle was only averted by the desertion of a part of the Yorkist army and the disbandment of the rest. The Duke himself fled to Ireland, the Earls to Calais, while the Queen, summoning a Parliament at Coventry, pressed on their attainer. But the check, whatever its cause, had been merely a temporary one. In the following Midsummer the Earls again landed in Kent, and backed by a general rising of the county, entered London amidst the acclamations of its citizens. The Royal army was defeated in a hard-fought action at Northampton, Margaret fled to Scotland, and Henry was left a prisoner in the hands of the Duke of York.

The position of York as heir presumptive to the crown had ceased with the birth of a son to Henry the Sixth; but the victory of Northampton no sooner raised him to the supreme control of affairs than he ventured to assert the far more dangerous claims which he had secretly cherished, and to its consciousness of which was owing the bitter hostility of the Royal House. As the descendant of Edmund of Langley he stood only next in succession to the House of Lancaster, but as the descendant of Lionel, the elder brother of John of Gaunt, he stood in strict hereditary right before it. We have already seen how the claims of Lionel had passed to the House of Mortimer: it was through Anne, the heiress of the Mortimers, who had wedded his father, that they passed to the Duke. There was, however, no constitutional ground for any limitation of the right of Parliament to set aside an elder branch in favour of a younger, and in the Parliamentary Act which placed the House of Lancaster on the throne the claim of the House of Mortimer had been deliberately set aside. Possession, too, told against the Yorkist pretensions. To modern minds the best reply
to their claim lay in the words used at a later time by Henry himself. "My father was King; his father also was King; I myself have worn the crown forty years from my cradle; you have all sworn fealty to me as your sovereign, and your fathers have done the like to mine. How then can my right be disputed?" Long and undisturbed possession, as well as a distinctly legal title by free vote of Parliament, was in favour of the House of Lancaster. But the persecution of the Lollards, the disfranchisement of the voter, the interference with elections, the odium of the war, the shame of the long misgovernment told fatally against the weak and imbecile King, whose reign had been a long battle of contending factions. That the misrule had been serious was shown by the attitude of the commercial class. It was the rising of Kent, the great manufacturing district of the realm, which brought about the victory of Northampton. Throughout the struggle which followed London and the great merchant towns were steady for the House of York. Zeal for the Lancastrian cause was found only in the wild Welsh border-lands or in the yet wilder districts of the North and the West. It is absurd to suppose that the shrewd traders of Cheapside were moved by an abstract question of hereditary right, or that the rough borderers of the Marches believed themselves to be supporting the right of Parliament to regulate the succession. But it marks the power which Parliament had now gained that the Duke of York felt himself compelled to convene the two Houses, and to lay his claim before the Lords as a petition of right. Neither oaths nor the numerous Acts which had settled and confirmed the right to the crown in the House of Lancaster could destroy, he pleaded, his hereditary claim. The baronage received the petition with hardly concealed reluctance, and solved the question, as they hoped, by a compromise. They refused to de-throne the King, but they had sworn no fealty to his child, and at Henry's death they agreed to receive the Duke as successor to the crown. But the open display of York's pretensions at once united the partisans of the Royal House, and the deadly struggle which received the name of the Wars of the Roses, from the white rose which formed the badge of the House of York and the red rose which was the cognizance of the House of Lancaster, began in the gathering of the North round Lord Clifford and of the West round the new Duke of Somerset. York, who had hurried to meet the first with a far inferior force, was defeated and captured at Wakefield, and the passion of civil war broke fiercely out on the field. The Duke was hurried to the block, and his head, crowned in mockery with a diadem of paper, is said to have been impaled on the walls of York. His boy, Lord Rutland, fell crying for mercy on his knees before Clifford. But Clifford's father had been the first to fall in the battle of St. Albans which opened the struggle. "As your father killed mine," cried the savage Baron while he plunged his dagger in the boy's breast, "I will kill you!" A force of Kentishmen under the Earl of Warwick barred the march of
the conquerors on London, but after a desperate struggle at St. Albans the Yorkist forces broke under cover of night. An immediate march on the capital would have decided the contest, but the conquerors paused to sully their victory by a series of bloody executions, and the rough northerners, whom Margaret had brought up, scattered to pillage, while Edward, Earl of March, the son of the late Duke of York, who had cut his way through a body of Lancastrians at Mortimer’s Cross, struck boldly upon London. The citizens rallied at his call and cries of “Long live King Edward” rang round the handsome young leader as he rode through the streets. A council of Yorkist lords, hastily summoned, resolved that the compromise agreed on in Parliament was at an end and that Henry of Lancaster had forfeited the throne. The final issue, however, now lay, not with Parliament, but with the sword. Disappointed of London, the Lancastrian army fell rapidly back on the North, and Edward hurried as rapidly in pursuit.

The two armies encountered one another at Towton Field, near Tadcaster. In the numbers engaged, as well as in the terrible obstinacy of the struggle, no such battle had been seen in England since the fight of Senlac. On either side the armies numbered nearly 60,000 men. The day had just broken when the Yorkists advanced through a thick snow-fall, and for six hours the battle raged with desperate bravery on either side. At one critical moment Warwick saw his men falter, and stabbing his horse before them, swore on the cross of his sword to win or die on the field. At last the Lancastrians slowly gave way, a river in their rear turned the retreat into a rout, and the flight and carnage, for no quarter was given on either side, went on through the night and the morrow. Of the conquered, Edward’s herald counted more than 20,000 corpses on the field, and the losses of the conquerors were hardly less heavy. Six barons had fallen in the fight, the Earls of Devon and Wiltshire were taken and beheaded at its close; an enormous bill of attainder wrapt in the same ruin and confiscation all the nobles who still adhered to the House of Lancaster, and the execution of Lords Oxford and Aubrey gave a terrible significance to its clauses. The struggles of Margaret only served to bring fresh calamities on her adherents. A new rising in the North was crushed by the Earl of Warwick, and a legend which lights up the gloom of the time with a gleam of poetry told how the fugitive Queen, after escaping with difficulty from a troop of bandits, found a new brigand in the depths of the wood. With the daring of despair she confided to him her child. “I trust to your loyalty,” she said, “the son of your King.” Margaret and her child escaped over the border under the robber’s guidance, but a new rising in the following year brought about the execution of Somerset and flung Henry into the hands of his enemies. His feet were tied to the stirrups, he was led thrice round the pillory, and then conducted as a prisoner to the Tower.

Ruined as feudalism really was by the terrible bloodshed and
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confiscations of the civil war, it had never seemed so powerful as in the years which followed Towton. Out of the wreck of the baronage a family which had always stood high amongst its fellows towered into unrivalled greatness. Lord Warwick was by descent Earl of Salisbury, a son of the great noble whose support had been mainly instrumental in raising the House of York to the throne. He had doubled his wealth and influence by his acquisition of the Earldom of Warwick, through a marriage with the heiress of the Beauchamps. His services at Towton had been munificently rewarded by the grant of vast estates from the Lancastrian confiscations and by his elevation to the highest posts in the service of the State. He was governor of Calais, Lieutenant of Ireland, and Warden of the Western Marches. This personal power was backed by the power of the House of Neville, of which he was the head. Lords Falconberg, Abergavenny, and Latimer were his uncles. His brother, Lord Montagu, had received as his share in the spoil the Earldom of Northumberland, the estates of the Percies, and the command of the Northern border. His younger brother, George, had been raised to the See of York and the office of Lord Chancellor. At first sight the figure of Warwick strikes us as the very type of the feudal baron. He could raise armies at his call from his own earldoms. Six hundred liveried retainers followed him to Parliament. His fame as a military leader had been established by the great victories which crushed the House of Lancaster, as well as by the crowning glory of Towton. Yet few men were ever further, in fact, from the feudal ideal. Active, skilful, ruthless warrior as he was, Warwick—if we believe his contemporaries—had little personal daring. In war he was rather general than soldier. His genius in fact was not so much military as diplomatic; what he excelled in was intrigue, treachery, the contrivance of plots, and sudden desertions. And in the boy-king whom he had raised to the throne he met not merely a consummate general, but a politician whose subtlety and rapidity of conception was destined to leave a deep and enduring mark on the character of the monarchy itself. Edward was but nineteen at his accession, and both his kinship (for he was the King's cousin by blood) and his recent services rendered Warwick during the first three years of his reign all-powerful in the State. But the final ruin of Henry's cause in the battle of Hexham gave the signal for a silent struggle between Edward and his minister. The King's first step was to avow his marriage with the widow of a slain Lancastrian, Dame Elizabeth Grey, and to raise her family to greatness as a counterpoise to the Nevilles. Her father, Lord Rivers, became Constable; her son by the first marriage was wedded to the heiress of the Duke of Exeter, whom Warwick had demanded for his nephew. Warwick's policy lay in a close connection with France; he had been already foiled in negotiating a French marriage for the King, and on his crossing the seas to conclude a marriage of the King's sister, Margaret, with one of the
French princes, Edward availed himself of his absence to deprive his brother of the seals, and to wed his sister to the sworn enemy both of France and of Warwick, Charles the Bold, Duke of Burgundy. For the moment it seemed as if the King's ruin was at hand. In spite of the Royal opposition, Warwick replied to Edward's challenge by the marriage of his daughter with the King's brother, the Duke of Clarence, and a revolt which instantly broke out threw Edward into the hands of his great subject. The terms exacted as the price of the King's release transferred to the Nevilles the succession to the crown, for Edward was still without a son, and Warwick wrested from him the betrothal of his infant daughter to the son of Lord Montagu, the heir of his house. The Earl's ambition, however, was still unsatisfied, and he was advancing to support a new rising which had broken out at his instigation in Lincolnshire, when the rapid march of Edward was followed by a decisive victory over the insurgents. It is hopeless, with the scanty historical materials we possess of this period, to attempt to explain its sudden revolutions of fortune, or the panic which induced Warwick at this trivial cheek to fly for refuge to France, where the Burgundian connection of Edward secured his enemies the support of Louis the Eleventh. But the unscrupulous temper of the Earl was seen in the alliance which he at once concluded with the partizans of the House of Lancaster. On the promise of Queen Margaret to wed her son to his daughter Anne, Warwick engaged to restore the crown to the royal captive whom he had flung into the Tower; and choosing a moment when Edward was busy with a revolt in the North and when a storm had dispersed the Burgundian fleet which defended the Channel, he threw himself boldly on the English shore. Kent rose in his support as he disembarked, and the desertion of Lord Montagu, whom Edward still trusted, drove the King in turn to seek shelter over sea. While Edward fled with a handful of adherents to the Court of Burgundy, Henry of Lancaster was again conducted from his prison to the throne, but the bitter hate of the party Warwick had so ruthlessly crushed found no gratitude for the "King-Maker." His own conduct, as well as that of his party, when Edward again disembarked in the spring at Ravenspur, showed a weariness of the new alliance, quickened perhaps by their dread of Margaret, whose return to England was hourly expected. Passing through the Lancastrian districts of the North with a declaration that he waived all right to the crown and sought only his own hereditary duchy, Edward was left unassailed by an overwhelming force which Montagu had collected, was joined on his march by his brother Clarence who had throughout acted in concert with Warwick, and was admitted into London by Warwick's brother, the Archbishop of York. Enampt at Coventry, the Earl himself opened negotiations with Edward for a new desertion, but the King was now strong enough to fling off the mask, and Warwick, desperate of a reconciliation, marched suddenly on London. The battle of Barnet,
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a medley of carnage and treachery which lasted six hours, ended with the fall of Warwick as he fled for hiding to the woods. Margaret had landed too late to bring aid to her great partisan, but the military triumph of Edward was completed by the skilful strategy with which he forced her army to battle at Tewkesbury, and by its complete overthrow. The Queen herself became a captive; her boy fell on the field, stabbed—as was affirmed—by the Yorkist lords after Edward had met his cry for mercy by a buffet from his gauntlet; and the death of Henry in the Tower crushed the last hopes of the House of Lancaster.

The Beauforts were declared legitimate by an act of Richard II.; Henry IV. later added a clause to bar their rights of succession to the throne, but this clause was legally invalid (see Gairdner, "Richard III."). The numbers engaged at Towton have been very much exaggerated; Oman estimates from 15,000 to 20,000 as having been present.

SECTION III.—The New Monarchy, 1471—1509

[Authorities,—In addition to the authorities already mentioned, may be mentioned More, "History of Richard III.", and Polydore Vergil, "Anglois Historie." For Henry VII., see "Memorials of Henry VII." (Rolls Series), the "Letters and Papers of Richard III. and Henry VII." (Rolls Series), the Rolls of Parliament and Rymer's "Weedon." Dacre's "Henry VII.," though not an original authority, is a work of extreme interest. Gairdner, "Richard III.," and Busch, "England under the Tudors," are of great value. For Caxton, see Blades, "Biography and Typography of Caxton."]

There are few periods in our annals from which we turn with such weariness and disgust as from the Wars of the Roses. Its thick crowd of savage battles, its ruthless executions, its shameless treasons seem all the more terrible from the pure selfishness of the ends for which men fought, the utter want of all nobleness and chivalry in the struggle itself, of all great result in its close. But even while the contest was raging the cool eye of a philosophic statesman could find in it matter for other feelings than those of mere disgust. England presented to Philippe de Commines the rare spectacle of a land where, brutal as was the civil strife, "there are no buildings destroyed or demolished by war, and where the mischief of it falls on those who make the war." The ruin and bloodshed were limited, in fact, to the great lords and their feudal retainers. Once or twice indeed, as at Towton, the towns threw themselves into the struggle on the Yorkist side, but for the most part the trading and industrial classes stood wholly apart from, and unaffected by it. Commerce went on unchecked, and indeed developed itself through the closer friendship with Flanders and the House of Burgundy more rapidly than at any former period. The general tranquillity of the country at large, while feudalism was dashing itself to pieces in battle after battle, was shown by the remarkable fact that justice remained wholly undisturbed.
The law courts sat quietly at Westminster, the judges rode as of old in circuit, the system of jury-trial (though the jurors were still expected to use their local and personal knowledge of the case) took more and more its modern form by the separation of the jurors from the witnesses. But if the common view of England during these Wars as a mere chaos of treason and bloodshed is a false one, still more false is the common view of the pettiness of their result. The Wars of the Roses did far more than ruin one Royal House or set up another on the throne. If they did not utterly destroy English freedom, they arrested its progress for more than a hundred years. They found England, in the words of Comines, "among all the world's lordships of which I have knowledge, that where the public weal is best ordered, and where least violence reigns over the people." A King of England—the shrewd observer noticed—"can undertake no enterprise of account without assembling his Parliament, which is a thing most wise and holy, and therefore are these Kings stronger and better served" than the despotic sovereigns of the Continent. England, as one of its judges, Sir John Fortescue, could boast when writing at this time, was not an absolute but a limited monarchy; not a land where the will of the prince was itself the law, but where the prince could neither make laws nor impose taxes save by his subjects' consent. At no time had Parliament played so constant and prominent a part in the government of the realm. At no time had the principles of constitutional liberty seemed so thoroughly understood and so dear to the people at large. The long Parliamentary contest between the Crown and the two Houses since the days of Edward the First had firmly established the great securities of national liberty—the right of freedom from arbitrary taxation, from arbitrary legislation, from arbitrary imprisonment, and the responsibility of even the highest servants of the Crown to Parliament and to the law. But with the close of the war of the Succession freedom suddenly disappears. We enter on an epoch of constitutional retrogression in which the slow work of the age that went before it is rapidly undone. Parliamentary life is almost suspended, or is turned into a form by the overpowering influence of the Crown. The legislative powers of the two Houses are usurped by the Royal Council. Arbitrary taxation re-appears in benevolences and forced loans. Personal liberty is almost extinguished by a formidable spy-system and by the constant practice of arbitrary imprisonment. Justice is degraded by the prodigal use of bills of attainder, by the wide extension of the judicial power of the Royal Council, by the servility of judges, by the coercion of juries. If we seek a reason for so sudden and complete a revolution, we find it in the disappearance of feudalism, in other words of that organization of society in which our constitutional liberty had till now found its security. Freedom had been won by the sword of the Baronage. Its tradition had been watched over by the jealousy of the Church. The new class of the Commons which had grown from the union of
the country squire and the town trader was widening its sphere of political activity as it grew. But with the battle of Towton feudalism vanished away. The baronage lay a mere wreck after the storm of the civil war. The Church lingered helpless and perplexed, till it was struck down by Thomas Cromwell. The traders and the smaller proprietors sank into political inactivity. On the other hand, the Crown, which only fifty years before had been the sport of every faction, towered into solitary greatness. The old English Kingship, limited by the forces of feudalism or by the progress of constitutional freedom, faded suddenly away, and in its place we see, all-absorbing and unrestrained, the despotism of the New Monarchy.

If we use the name of the New Monarchy to express the character of the English sovereignty from the time of Edward the Fourth to the time of Elizabeth, it is because the character of the Monarchy during this period was something wholly new in our history. There is no kind of similarity between the Kingship of the Old-English, of the Norman, the Angevin, or the Plantagenet sovereigns, and the Kingship of the Tudors. The difference between them was the result, not of any gradual development, but of a simple revolution; and it was only by a revolution that the despotism of the New Monarchy was again done away. When the lawyers of the Long Parliament fell back for their precedents of constitutional liberty to the reign of the House of Lancaster, and silently regarded the whole period which we are about to traverse as a blank, they expressed not merely a legal truth but an historical one. What the Great Rebellion in its final result actually did was to wipe away every trace of the New Monarchy, and to take up again the thread of our political development just where it had been snapt by the Wars of the Roses. But revolutionary as the change was, we have already seen in their gradual growth the causes which brought about the revolution. The social organization from which our political constitution had hitherto sprung and on which it still rested had been silently sapped by the progress of industry, by the growth of spiritual and intellectual enlightenment, and by changes in the art of war. Its ruin was precipitated by religious persecution, by the disfranchisement of the Commons, and by the ruin of the Baronage in the civil strife. Of the great Houses some were extinct, others lingered only in obscure branches which were mere shadows of their former greatness. With the exception of the Poles, the Stanleys, and the Howards, themselves families of recent origin, hardly a fragment of the older baronage interfered from this time in the work of government. Neither the Church nor the smaller proprietors of the country, who with the merchant classes formed the Commons, were ready to take the place of the ruined nobles. Imposing as the great ecclesiastical body still seemed from the memories of its past, its immense wealth, its tradition of statesmanship, it was rendered powerless by a want of spiritual life, by a moral inertness, by its antagonism
to the deeper religious convictions of the people, and its blind hostility to the intellectual movement which was beginning to stir the world. Conscious of the want of popular favour and jealous only for the preservation of their vast estates, the Churchmen, who had clung for protection to the Baronage, clung on its fall for Protection to the Crown. Prelates like Morton and Warham devoted themselves to the Royal Council-board with the simple view of averting by means of the Monarchy the pillage of the Church. But in any wider political sense the influence of the body to which they belonged was insignificant. From the time of the Lollard outbreak the attitude of the Church is timid as that of a hunted thing. It is less obvious at first sight why the Commons should share the political ruin of the Church and the Lords, for the smaller county proprietors were growing enormously, both in wealth and numbers, at this moment through the fall of the great Houses and the dispersion of their vast estates, while the burgess class, as we have seen, was deriving fresh riches from the development of trade. But the result of the narrowing of the franchise and of the tampering with elections was now felt in the political insignificance of the Lower House. Reduced by these measures to a virtual dependence on the Baronage, it fell with the fall of the class to which it looked for guidance and support. And while its rival forces disappeared, the Monarchy stood ready to take their place. Not only indeed were the Churchman, the squire, and the burgess powerless to vindicate liberty against the Crown, but the very interests of self-preservation led them at this moment to lay freedom at its feet. The Church still trembled at the progress of heresy. The close corporations of the towns needed protection for their privileges. The landowners shared with the trader a profound horror of the war and disorder which they had witnessed, and an almost reckless desire to entrust the Crown with any power which would prevent its return. But above all, the landed and monied classes clung passionately to the Monarchy, as the one great force left which could save them from social revolt. The rising of the Commons of Kent shows that the troubles against which the Statutes of Labourers had been directed still remained as a formidable source of discontent. The great change in the character of agriculture indeed, which we have before described, the throwing together of the smaller holdings, the diminution of tillage, the increase of pasture lands, had tended largely to swell the numbers and turbulence of the floating labour class. The riots against "enclosures," of which we first hear in the time of Henry the Sixth, and which became a constant feature of the Tudor period, are indications not only of a constant strife going on in every quarter between the landowner and the smaller peasant class, but of a mass of social discontent which was constantly seeking an outlet in violence and revolution. And at this moment the break up of the military households of the nobles by the attainders and confiscations of the Wars of the Roses, as well as by the Statute
of Liveries which followed them, added a new element of violence and disorder to the seething mass. It is this social danger which lies at the root of the Tudor despotism. For the proprietary classes the repression of the poor was a question of life and death. The landowner and the merchant were ready, as they have been ready in all ages of the world, to surrender freedom into the hands of the one power which could preserve them from what they deemed to be anarchy. It was to the selfish panic of the wealthier landowners that England owed the Statutes of Labourers, with their terrible heritage of a pauper class. It was to the selfish panic of both the landowner and the merchant that she owed the despotism of the New Monarchy.

The founder of the New Monarchy was Edward the Fourth. As a mere boy he showed himself the ablest and the most pitiless among the warriors of the civil war. In the first flush of manhood he looked on with a cool ruthlessness while grey-haired nobles were hurried to the block, or while his Lancastrian child-rival was stabbed at his feet. In his later race for power he had shown himself more subtle in his treachery than even Warwick himself. His triumph was no sooner won however than the young King seemed to abandon himself to a voluptuous indolence, to revels with the city-wives of London and the caresses of his mistress, Jane Shore. Tall in stature and of singular beauty, his winning manners and gay carelessness of bearing secured him a popularity which had been denied to nobler kings. But his indolence and gaiety were mere veils beneath which Edward shrouded a profound political ability. No one could contrast more utterly in outer appearance with the subtle sovereigns of his time, with Louis the Eleventh or Ferdinand of Arragon, but his work was the same as theirs, and it was done even more completely. While jesting with aldermen, or dallying with his mistresses, or idling over the new pages from the printing-press at Westminster, Edward was silently laying the foundations of an absolute rule which Henry the Seventh did little more than develop and consolidate. The almost total discontinuance of Parliamentary life was in itself a revolution. Up to this moment the two Houses had played a part which became more and more prominent in the government of the realm. Under the two first Kings of the House of Lancaster they had been summoned almost every year. Not only had the right of self-taxation and initiation of laws been yielded explicitly to the Commons, but they had taken part in the work of Government itself, had directed the application of subsidies and called the Royal ministers to account by Parliamentary impeachments. Under Henry the Sixth an important step in constitutional progress had been made by abandoning the old form of presenting the requests of the Parliament in the form of petitions which were subsequently moulded into statutes by the Royal Council; the statute itself, in its final form, was now presented for the Royal assent, and the Crown was deprived of its former privilege of modifying it. Not only does this
progress cease, but the legislative activity of Parliament itself comes abruptly to an end. The reign of Edward the Fourth is the first since that of John in which not a single law which promoted freedom or remedied the abuses of power was even proposed to Parliament. The necessity for summoning the two Houses had, in fact, been removed by the enormous tide of wealth which the confiscations of the civil war poured into the Royal Treasury. In the single bill of attainder which followed the victory of Towton, twelve great nobles and more than a hundred knights and squires were stripped of their estates to the King’s profit. It was said that nearly a fifth of the land had passed into the Royal possession at one period or another of the civil war. Edward added to his resources by trading on a vast scale. The Royal ships, freighted with tin, wool, and cloth, made the name of the merchant-king famous in the ports of Italy and Greece. The enterprises he planned against France, though frustrated by the refusal of Charles of Burgundy to co-operate with him in them, afforded a fresh financial resource; and the subsidies granted for a war which never took place swelled the Royal exchequer. But the pretext of war enabled Edward not only to increase his hoard, but to deal a deadly blow at liberty. Setting aside the usage of loans sanctioned by the authority of Parliament, Edward called before him the merchants of the city and requested from each a present of “benevolence,” in proportion to the need. Their compliance with his prayer was probably aided by his popularity with the merchant class, but the system of “benevolence” was soon to be developed into the forced loans of Wolsey and the ship-money of Charles the First. It was to Edward that his Tudor successors owed their elaborate spy-system, the introduction of the rack into the Tower, and the practice of Royal interference with the purity of justice. In the history of intellectual progress alone his reign takes a brighter colour, and the founder of the New Monarchy presents his one solitary claim to our regard as the patron of Caxton.

Literature indeed seemed at this moment to have died as utterly as freedom itself. The genius of Chaucer, and of the one or more poets whose works have been confounded with Chaucer’s, defied for a while the pedantry, the affectation, the barrenness of their age; but the sudden close of this poetic outburst left England to a crowd of poetsasters, compilers, scribblers of interminable moralities, rimeres of chronicles, and translators from the worn-out field of French romance. Some faint trace of the liveliness and beauty of older models lingers among the heavy platitudes of Gower, but even this vanished from the didactic psalms, the prosaic commonplaces, of Occleve and Lydgate. The literature of the Middle Ages was dying out with the Middle Ages themselves; in letters as in life their thirst for knowledge had spent itself in the barren mazes of the scholastic philosophy, their ideal of warlike nobleness faded away before the gaudy travestie of a spurious chivalry, and the mystic enthusiasm of their
devotion shrunk at the touch of persecution into a narrow orthodoxy and a flat morality. The clergy, who had concentrated in themselves the intellectual effort of the older time, were ceasing to be an intellectual class at all. Their monasteries were no longer seats of learning. "I found in them," said Poggio, an Italian traveller twenty years after Chaucer's death, "men given up to sensuality in abundance, but very few lovers of learning, and those of a barbarous sort, skilled more in quibbles and sophisms than in literature." The erection of colleges, which was beginning, could not arrest the quick decline of the universities both in numbers and learning. The students at Oxford amounted to but a fifth of those who had attended its lectures a century before, and "Oxford Latin" became proverbial for a jargon in which the very tradition of grammar had been lost. All literary production was nearly at an end: there is not a single work, for instance, either in Latin or English which we can refer to the last years of the reign of Edward the Fourth. Historical composition lingered on indeed in compilations of extracts from past writers, such as make up the so-called works of Walsingham, in jejune monastic annals like those of St. Albans, or worthless popular compendiums like those of Fabyan and Harding. But the only real trace of mental activity is to be found in the numerous treatises on alchemy and magic, on the elixir of life or the philosopher's stone, the fungous growth which most unequivocally witnesses to the progress of intellectual decay. On the other hand, while the purely literary class was thus dying out, a glance beneath the surface shows us the stir of a new interest in knowledge among the masses of the people itself. Books are far from being the only indication of a people's progress in knowledge, and the correspondence of the Paston family, which has been happily preserved, displays a fluency and vivacity as well as a grammatical correctness which would have been impossible in familiar letters a hundred years before. The very character of the authorship of the time, its love of compendiums and abridgements of the scientific and historical knowledge of its day, its dramatic performances of mysteries, the commonplace morality of its poets, the popularity of its rhymed chronicles are additional proofs that literature was ceasing to be the possession of a purely intellectual class and was now beginning to appeal to the people at large. The increased use of linen paper in place of the costlier parchment helped in the popularization of letters. In no former age had finer copies of books been produced; in none had so many been transcribed. Abroad this increased demand for their production caused the processes of copying and illuminating manuscripts to be transferred from the scriptorium of the religious houses into the hands of trade-guilds, like the Guild of St. John at Bruges, or the Brothers of the Pen at Brussels. It was, in fact, this increase of demand for books, pamphlets, or fly-sheets, especially of a grammatical or religious character, in the middle of the fifteenth century that brought about the introduction of
printing. We meet with it first in rude sheets simply struck off from wooden blocks, "block-books" as they are now called, and later on in works printed from separate and moveable types. Originating at Mainz with the three famous printers, Gutenberg, Fust, and Schöffer, the new process travelled southward to Strasburg, crossed the Alps to Venice, where it lent itself through the Aldi to the spread of Greek literature in Europe, and then floated down the Rhine to Cologne and the towns of Flanders. It was probably at the press of Colard Mansion, in a little room over the porch of St. Donat's at Bruges, that Caxton learnt the art which he was the first to introduce into England.

A Kentish boy by birth, but apprenticed to a London Mercer, Caxton William Caxton had already spent thirty years of his manhood in Flanders, as Governor of the English guild of Merchant Adventurers there, when we find him engaged as copyist in the service of the Duchess of Burgundy. But the tedious process of copying was soon thrown aside for the new art which Colard Mansion had introduced into Bruges. "For as much as in the writing of the same," Caxton tells us in the preface to his first printed work, the Tales of Troy, "my pen is worn, my hand weary and not steadfast, mine eyes dimmed with over much looking on the white paper, and my courage not so prone and ready to labour as it hath been, and that age creepeth on me daily and feebleth all the body, and also because I have promised to divers gentlemen and to my friends to address to them as hastily as I might the said book, therefore I have practised and learned at my great charge and dispense to ordain this said book in print after the manner and form as ye may see, and is not written with pen and ink as other books be, to the end that every man may have them at once, for all the books of this story here emprynted as ye see were begun in one day and also finished in one day." The printing press was the precious freight he brought back to England, after an absence of five-and-thirty years. Through the next fifteen, at an age when other men look for ease and retirement, we see him plunging with characteristic energy into his new occupation. His "red pale" invited buyers to the press established in the Almonry at Westminster, a little enclosure containing a chapel and almshouses (swept away since Caxton's time by later buildings) near the west front of the church, where the alms of the abbey were distributed to the poor. "If it please any man, spiritual or temporal," runs his advertisement, "to buy any pyces of two or three commemorations of Salisbury all emprynted after the form of the present letter, which be well and truly correct, let him come to Westminster into the Almonry at the red pale, and he shall have them good chepe." He was a practical man of business, as this advertisement shows, no rival of the Venetian Aldi or of the classical printers of Rome, but resolved to get a living from his trade, supplying priests with service books, and preachers with sermons, furnishing the clerk with his "Golden Legend," and knight and baron with "joyous
and pleasant histories of chivalry." But while careful to win his daily bread, he found time to do much for what of higher literature lay fairly to hand. He printed all the English poetry of any moment which was then in existence. His reverence for "that worshipful man, Geoffry Chaucer," who "ought eternally to be remembered," is shown not merely by this edition of the "Canterbury Tales," but by his reprint of them when a purer text of the poem offered itself. The poems of Lydgate and Gower were soon added to those of Chaucer. The Chronicle of Brut and Higden's "Polychronicon" were the only available works of an historical character then existing in the English tongue, and Caxton not only printed them but himself continued the latter up to his own time. A translation of Boethius, a version of the Æneid from the French, and a tract or two of Queero, were the stray first-fruits of the classical press in England.

Busy as was Caxton's printing-press, he was even busier as a translator than as a printer. More than four thousand of his printed pages are from works of his own rendering. The need of these translations shows the popular drift of literature at the time; but keen as the demand seems to have been, there is nothing mechanical in the temper with which Caxton prepared to meet it. A natural, simple-hearted literary taste and enthusiasm, especially for the style and forms of language, breaks out in his curious prefaces. "Having no work in hand," he says in the preface to his Æneid, "I sitting in my study where as lay many divers pamphlets and books, happened that to my hand came a little book in French, which late was translated out of Latin by some noble clerk of France—which book is named Eneydos, and made in Latin by that noble poet and great clerk Vergyl—in which book I had great pleasure by reason of the fair and honest terms and wordes in French which I never saw to-tore-like, none so pleasant nor so well ordered, which book as me seemed should be much requisite for noble men to see, as well for the eloquence as the history; and when I had advised me to this said book I deliberated and concluded to translate it into English, and forthwith took a pen and ink and wrote a leaf or twain." But the work of translation involved a choice of English which made Caxton's work important in the history of our language. He stood between two schools of translation, that of French affectation and English pedantry. It was a moment when the character of our literary tongue was being settled, and it is curious to see in his own words the struggle over it which was going on in Caxton's time. "Some honest and great clerks have been with me and desired me to write the most curious terms that I could find;" on the other hand, "some gentlemen of late blamed me, saying that in my translations I had over many curious terms which could not be understood of common people, and desired me to use old and homely terms in my translations." "Fain would I please every man," comments the good-humoured printer, but his sturdy sense saved him alike from the temptations.
of the court and the schools. His own taste pointed to English, but "to the common terms that be daily used" rather than to the English of his antiquarian advisers. "I took an old book and read therein, and certainly the English was so rude and broad I could not well understand it," while the Old-English charters which the Abbot of Westminster fetched as models from the archives of his house, seemed "more like to Dutch than to English." On the other hand, to adopt current phraseology was by no means easy at a time when even the speech of common talk was in a state of rapid flux. "Our language now used varieth far from that which was used and spoken when I was born." Not only so, but the tongue of each shire was still peculiar to itself, and hardly intelligible to men of another county. "Common English that is spoken in one shire varieth from another so much, that in my days happened that certain merchants were in a ship in Thames, for to have sailed over the sea into Zealand, and for lack of wind they turned at Foreland, and went on land for to refresh them. And one of them, named Sheffield, a mercer, came into a house and asked for meat, and especially he asked them after eggs. And the good wife answered that she could speak no French. And the merchant was angry, for he also could speak no French, but would have had eggs, but she understood him not. And then at last another said he would have eyren, then the good wife said she understood him well. Lo! what should a man in these days now write," adds the puzzled printer, "eggs or eyren? certainly it is hard to please everyman by cause of diversity and change of language." His own mother-tongue, too, was that of "Kent in the Weald, where I doubt not is spoken as broad and rude English as in any place of England;" and coupling this with his long absence in Flanders, we can hardly wonder at the confession he makes over his first translation, that "when all these things came to fore me, after that I had made and written a five or six quires, I fell in despair of this work, and purposed never to have continued therein, and the squires laid apart, and in two years after laboured no more in this work."

He was still, however, busy translating when he died. All difficulties, in fact, were lightened by the general interest which his labours aroused. When the length of the "Golden Legend" makes him "half desperate to have accomplisht it" and ready to "lay it apart," the Earl of Arundel solicits him in nowise to leave it and promises a yearly fee of a buck in summer and a doe in winter, once it were done. "Many noble and divers gentle men of this realm came and demanded many and often times wherefore I have not made and imprinted the noble history of the 'San Graal.'" We see his visitors discussing with the sagacious printer the historic existence of Arthur. Duchess Margaret of Somerset lends him her "Blanchadine and Eglantine;" the Archdeacon of Colchester brings him his translation of the work called "Cato;" a mercer of London presses him to undertake the "Royal Book" of Philip le Bel. The Queen's brother, Earl Rivers, chats with him
over his own translation of the “Sayings of the Philosophers.” Even kings showed their interest in his work; his “Tully” was printed under the patronage of Edward the Fourth, his “Order of Chivalry” dedicated to Richard the Third, his “Facts of Arms” published at the desire of Henry the Seventh. The Royal Houses of York and Lancaster, in fact, rivalled each other in their patronage of such literature as they could find. The fashion of large and gorgeous libraries had passed from the French to the English princes of the time: Henry the Sixth had a valuable collection of books; that of the Louvre was seized by Duke Humphrey of Gloucester, and formed the basis of the fine library which he presented to the University of Oxford. The great nobles took a far more active and personal part in the literary revival. The warrior, Sir John Fastolf, was a well-known lover of books. Earl Rivers was himself one of the authors of the day; he found leisure in the intervals of pilgrimages and politics to translate the “Sayings of the Philosophers” and a couple of religious tracts for Caxton’s press. A friend of far greater intellectual distinction, however, than these was found in John Tiptoft, Earl of Worcester. He had wandered during the reign of Henry the Sixth in search of learning to Italy, had studied at her universities, and become a teacher at Padua, where the elegance of his Latinity drew tears from one of the most learned of the Popes, Pius the Second, better known as Aeneas Sylvius. Caxton can find no words warm enough to express his admiration of one “which in his time flowered in virtue and cunning, to whom I know none like among the lords of the temporality in science and moral virtue.” But the ruthlessness of the Renascence appeared in Tiptoft side by side with its intellectual vigour, and the fall of one whose cruelty had earned him the surname of “the Butcher” even amidst the horrors of the civil war was greeted with sorrow by none but the faithful printer. “What great loss was it,” he says in a preface long after his fall, “of that noble, virtuous, and well-disposed lord; when I remember and advertise his life, his science, and his virtue, we thinketh (God not displeased) over great a loss of such a man, considering his estate and cunning.”

Richard the Third

Among the group who encouraged the press of Caxton we have already seen the figure of the King’s young brother, Richard, Duke of Gloucester. Able and ruthless as Edward himself, the Duke had watched keenly the increase of public discontent as his brother’s policy developed itself, and had founded on it a scheme of daring ambition. On the King’s death Richard hastened to secure the person of his Royal nephew, Edward the Fifth, to hurry the Queen’s family to execution, and to receive from the hands of Parliament the office of Protector of the realm. As yet he had acted in strict union with the Royal Council, but hardly a month had passed, when suddenly entering the Council chamber, he charged Lord Hastings, the favourite minister of the late King, who still presided over its meetings, with sorcery and designs upon
his life. As he dashed his hand upon the table the room was filled with soldiers. "I will not dine," said the Duke, addressing Hastings, "till they have brought me your head;" and the powerful minister was hurried to instant execution in the court-yard of the Tower. His colleagues were thrown into prison, and every check on the Duke's designs was removed. Edward's marriage had always been unpopular, and Richard ventured, on the plea of a pre-contract on his brother's part, to declare it invalid and its issue illegitimate. Only one step remained to be taken, and two months after his brother's death the Duke listened with a show of reluctance to the prayer of the Parliament, and consented to accept the crown. Daring, however, as was his natural temper, it was not to mere violence that he trusted in this seizure of the throne. The personal popularity of Edward had hardly restrained the indignation with which the nation felt the gradual approach of tyranny throughout his reign; and it was as the restorer of its older liberties that Richard appealed for popular support. "We be determined," said the citizens of London in a petition to the new monarch, "rather to adventure and to commit us to the peril of our lives and jeopardy of death, than to live in such thralldom and bondage as we have lived long time heretofore, oppressed and injured by extortions and new impositions against the laws of God and man and the liberty and laws of this realm, wherein every Englishman is inherited." The new King met the appeal by again convoking Parliament, which, as we have seen, had been all but discontinued under Edward, and by sweeping measures of reform. In the one session of his brief reign he declared the practice of extorting money by "benevolences" illegal, while numerous grants of pardons and remission of forfeitures reversed in some measure the policy of terror by which Edward at once held the country in awe and filled his treasury. The energy of the new government was seen in the numerous statutes which broke the slumber of Parliamentary legislation. A series of mercantile enactments strove to protect the growing interests of English commerce. The King's interest in literature showed itself in the provision that no statutes should act as a hindrance "to any artificer or merchant stranger, of what nation or country he be, for bringing unto this realm or selling by retail or otherwise of any manner of books, written or imprinted." His prohibition of the miquitous seizure of goods before conviction of felony, which had prevailed during Edward's reign, his liberation of the bondmen who still remained unfranchised on the Royal domain, and his religious foundations, show Richard's keen anxiety to purchase a popularity in which the bloody opening of his reign might be forgotten. But the gratitude which he had earned by his restoration of the older liberty was swept away in the universal horror at a new deed of blood. His young nephews, Edward the Fifth and his brother, the Duke of York, had been flung at his accession into the Tower; and the sudden disappearance of the two boys, murdered, as it was alleged, by their uncle's order,
The New Monarchy

united the whole nation against him. Morton, the exiled Bishop of Ely, took advantage of the general hatred and of the common hostility of both Yorkists and Lancastrians to the Royal murderer to link both parties in a wide conspiracy. Of the line of John of Gaunt no lawful issue remained, but the House of Somerset had sprung, as we have seen, from his union with his mistress Catherine Swynford, and the last representative of this line, the Lady Margaret Beaufort, had married Edmund Tudor and become the mother of Henry, Earl of Richmond. In the bill which legitimated the Beauforts a clause had been inserted by the king which barred their right of succession to the crown; but as the last remaining son of the line of Lancaster Henry's claim to it was acknowledged by the partizans of his House, and he had been driven to seek a refuge in Brittany from the jealous hostility of the Yorkist sovereigns. Morton, who had joined him in his exile, induced him to take advantage of the horror with which Richard was regarded even by the Yorkists themselves, and to unite both parties in his favour by a promise of marriage with Elizabeth, the eldest daughter of Edward the Fourth. The result of this masterly policy was seen as soon as the Earl landed, in spite of Richard's vigilance, at Milford Haven, and advanced through Wales. He no sooner encountered the Royal army at Bosworth Field in Leicestershire than treachery decided the day. Abandoned ere the battle began by a division of his forces under Lord Stanley, and as it opened by a second body under the Earl of Northumberland, Richard dashed, with a cry of "Treason, Treason," into the thick of the fight. In the fury of his despair he had already flung the Lancastrian standard to the ground and hewed his way into the very presence of his rival, when he fell overpowered by numbers, and the crown which he had worn, and which was found as the struggle ended lying near a hawthorn bush, was placed on the head of the conqueror.

With the accession of Henry the Seventh ended the long bloodshed of the civil wars. The two warring lines were united by his marriage with Elizabeth: his only dangerous rivals were removed by the successive deaths of the nephews of Edward the Fourth, the Earl of Warwick (a son of Edward's brother the Duke of Clarence) and John de la Pole, Earl of Lincoln (a son of Edward's sister), who had been acknowledged as his successor by Richard the Third. Two remarkable impostors succeeded for a time in exciting formidable revolts, Lambert Simnel, the son of a joiner at Oxford, under the name of the Earl of Warwick, and Perkin Warbeck, a native of Tournay, who personated the Duke of York, the second of the children murdered in the Tower. Defeat, however, reduced the first to the post of scullion in the Royal kitchen; and the second, after far stranger adventures, and the recognition of his claims by the Kings of Scotland and France, as well as by the Duchess-Dowager of Burgundy, whom he claimed as his aunt, was captured and hanged at Tyburn. Revolt only proved more
clearly the strength which had been given to the New Monarchy by the revolution which had taken place in the art of war. The introduction of gunpowder had ruined feudalism. The mounted and heavily-armed knight gave way to the meaner footman. Fortresses which had been impregnable against the attacks of the Middle Ages crumbled before the new artillery. Although gunpowder had been in use as early as Cressy it was not till the accession of the House of Lancaster that it was really brought into effective employment as a military resource. But the revolution in warfare was immediate. The wars of Henry the Fifth were wars of sieges. The "Last of the Barons," as Warwick has picturesquely been styled, relied mainly on his train of artillery. Artillery gave Henry the Seventh his easy victory over a rising of the Cornish insurgents, the most formidable danger which threatened his throne. The strength which the change gave to the Crown was, in fact, almost irresistible. Throughout the Middle Ages the call of a great baron had been enough to raise a formidable revolt. Yeomen and retainers took down the bow from their chimney corner, knights buckled on their armour, and in a few days an army threatened the throne. But without artillery such an army was now helpless, and the one train of artillery in the kingdom lay at the disposal of the King. It was the consciousness of his strength which enabled the new sovereign to quietly resume the policy of Edward the Fourth. He was forced, indeed, by the circumstances of his descent to base his right to the throne on a purely Parliamentary title. Without reference either to the claim of blood or conquest, the Houses enacted simply "that the inheritance of the Crown should be, rest, remain, and abide in the most Royal person of their sovereign lord, King Henry the Seventh, and the heirs of his body lawfully ensuing." But the policy of Edward was faithfully followed, and Parliament was only once convened during the last thirteen years of Henry's reign. The chief aim, indeed, of the King appeared to be the accumulation of a treasure which should relieve him from the need of appealing for its aid. Subsidies granted for the support of a war with France, which Henry evaded, were carefully hoarded by his grasping economy, and swelled by the revival of dormant claims of the crown, by the exaction of fines for the breach of forgotten tenures, and by a host of petty extortions. The discontinuance of Parliament was followed by the revival of Benevolences. A dilemma of his favourite minister, which received the name of "Morton's fork," extorted gifts to the exchequer from men who lived handsomely on the ground that their wealth was manifest, and from those who lived plainly on the plea that economy had made them wealthy. So successful were these efforts that at the end of his reign Henry bequeathed a hoard of two millions to his successor. The same imitation of Edward's policy was seen in Henry's civil government. Broken as was the strength of the baronage, there still remained lords whom the new monarch watched with a jealous solicitude.

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Their power lay in the hosts of disorderly retainers who swarmed round their houses, ready to furnish a force in case of revolt, while in peace they became centres of outrage and defiance to the law. Edward had ordered the dissolution of these military households in his Statute of Liveries, and the statute was enforced by Henry with the utmost severity. On a visit to the Earl of Oxford, one of the most devoted adherents of the Lancastrian cause, the King found two long lines of liveried retainers drawn up to receive him. "I thank you for your good cheer, my Lord," said Henry as they parted, "but I may not endure to have my laws broken in my sight. My attorney must speak with you." The Earl was glad to escape with a fine of £10,000. It was with a special view to the suppression of this danger that Henry employed the criminal jurisdiction of the Royal Council, which had almost fallen into desuetude, and whose immense development at a later time furnished his son with his readiest instrument of tyranny. A yet more dangerous innovation, the law which enabled justices of assize or of the peace to try all cases save those of treason and felony without a jury, may have been a merely temporary measure for the redress of disorder, and was repealed at the opening of the next reign. But steady as was the drift of Henry's policy in the direction of despotism, we see no traces of the originality or genius with which the fancy of later historians has invested him. His temper, silent, jealous, but essentially commonplace, was content to follow out, tamely and patiently, the plans of Edward, without anticipating the more terrible policy of Wolsey or of Cromwell. Wrapt in schemes of foreign intrigue, to which we shall afterwards refer, he looked with dread and suspicion on the one movement which broke the apathy of his reign, the great intellectual revolution which bears the name of the Revival of Letters.

SECTION IV—THE NEW LEARNING, 1509—1520

[Authorities.—The "Utopia" has been edited by Churton Collins; the "Letters of Erasmus" by P. S. Allen. Seebohm, "Oxford Reformers"; Froude, "Life and Letters of Erasmus"; and Hallam, "Literature of Europe," illustrate the literary revival. For more, see the biography by his son-in-law, Hooper.]

While England cowered before the horrors of civil war, or slumbered beneath the apathetic rule of Henry the Seventh, the world around her was passing through changes more momentous than any it had witnessed since the victory of Christianity and the fall of the Roman Empire. Its physical bounds were suddenly enlarged. The discoveries of Copernicus revealed to man the secret of the universe. The daring of the Portuguese mariners doubled the Cape of Good Hope and anchored their merchant fleets in the harbours of India. Columbus crossed the untraversed ocean to add a New World to the Old. Sebastian Cabot, starting
from the port of Bristol, threaded his way among the icebergs of Labrador. This sudden contact with new lands, new faiths, new races of men quickened the slumbering intelligence of Europe into a strange curiosity. The first book of voyages that told of the Western World, the travels of Amerigo Vespucci, were, at the time of Moro's Utopia, "in every body's hands." The Utopia itself, in its wide range of speculation on every subject of human thought and action, tells us how roughly and utterly the narrowness and limitation of the Middle Ages had been broken up. The capture of Constantinople by the Turks, and the flight of its Greek scholars to the shores of Italy, opened anew the science and literature of the older world at the very hour when the intellectual energy of the Middle Ages had sunk into exhaustion. Not a single book of any real value, save those of Sir John Fortescue and Philippe de Commines, was produced north of the Alps during the fifteenth century. In England, as we have seen, literature had reached its lowest ebb. It was at this moment that the exiled Greek scholars were welcomed in Italy, and that Florence, so long the home of freedom and of art, became the home of an intellectual Revival. The poetry of Homer, the drama of Sophocles, the philosophy of Aristotle and of Plato woke again to life beneath the shadow of the mighty dome with which Brunelleschi had just crowned the City by the Arno. All the restless energy which Florence had so long thrown into the cause of liberty she flung, now that her liberty was reft from her, into the cause of letters. The galleys of her merchants brought back manuscripts from the East as the most precious portion of their freight. In the palaces of her nobles fragments of classic sculpture ranged themselves beneath the frescoes of Ghirlandajo. The recovery of a treatise of Cicero or a tract of Sallust from the dust of a monastic library was welcomed by the group of statesmen and artists who gathered in the Rucellai gardens with a thrill of enthusiasm. Crowds of foreign scholars soon flocked over the Alps to learn Greek, the key of the new knowledge, from the Florentine teachers. Grocyn, a fellow of New College, was perhaps the first Englishman who studied under the Greek exile, Chalcondylas, and the Greek lectures which he delivered in Oxford on his return mark the opening of a new period in our history. Physical, as well as literary, activity awoke with the re-discovery of the teachers of Greece, and the continuous progress of English science may be dated from the day when Linaero, another Oxford student, returned from the lectures of the Florentine Politian to revive the older tradition of medicine by his translation of Galen. The awakening of a rational Christianity, whether in England or in the Teutonic world at large, begins with the Florentine studies of John Colet.

From the first it was manifest that the revival of letters would take a tone in England very different from the tone it had taken in Italy, a tone less literary, less largely human, but more moral, more religious, more practical in its bearings both upon society
and politics. The vigour and earnestness of Colet were the best proof of the strength with which the new movement was to affect English religion. He came back from Florence to Oxford utterly untouched by the Platonic mysticism or the semi-serious infidelity which characterized the group of scholars round Lorenzo the Magnificent. He was hardly more influenced by their literary enthusiasm. The knowledge of Greek seems to have had one almost exclusive end for him, and this was a religious end. Greek was the key by which he could unlock the Gospels and the New Testament, and in these he thought that he could find a new religious standing-ground. It was this resolve of Colet to fling aside the traditional dogmas of his day and to discover a rational and practical religion in the Gospels themselves, which gave its peculiar stamp to the theology of the Renaissance. His faith stood simply on a vivid realization of the person of Christ. In the prominence which such a view gave to the moral life, in his free criticism of the earlier Scriptures, in his tendency to simple forms of doctrine and confessions of faith, Colet struck the key-note of a mode of religious thought as strongly in contrast with that of the later Reformation as with that of Catholicism itself. The allegorical and mystical theology on which the Middle Ages spent their intellectual vigour to such little purpose fell at one blow before his rejection of all but the historical and grammatical sense of the Biblical text. The great fabric of belief built up by the mediæval doctors seemed to him simply "the corruptions of the Schoolmen." In the Life and Sayings of its Founder he found a simple and rational Christianity, whose fittest expression was the Apostles' creed. "About the rest," he said with characteristic impatience, "let divines dispute as they will." Of his attitude towards the coarser aspects of the current religion his behaviour at a later time before the famous shrine of St. Thomas at Canterbury gives us a rough indication. As the blaze of its jewels, its costly sculptures, its elaborate metal-work burst on Colet's view, he suggested with bitter irony that a saint so lavish to the poor in his lifetime would certainly prefer that they should possess the wealth heaped round him since his death, and rejected with petulant disgust the rags of the martyr which were offered for his adoration, and the shoe which was offered for his kiss. The earnestness, the religious zeal, the very impatience and want of sympathy with the past which we see in every word and act of the man, burst out in the lectures on St. Paul's Epistles which he delivered at Oxford. Even to the most critical among his hearers he seemed "like one inspired, raised in voice, eye, his whole countenance and mien, out of himself." Severe as was the outer life of the new teacher, a severity marked by his plain black robe and the frugal table which he preserved amidst his later dignities, his lively conversation, his frank simplicity, the purity and nobleness of his life, even the keen outbursts of his troublesome temper, endeared him to a group of scholars among whom Erasmus and Thomas More stood in the foremost rank.
“Greece has crossed the Alps,” cried the exiled Argyropulos on hearing a translation of Thucydidus by the German Reuchlin; but the glory, whether of Reuchlin or of the Teutonic scholars who followed him, was soon eclipsed by that of Erasmus. His enormous industry, the vast store of classical learning which he gradually accumulated, Erasmus shared with others of his day. In patristic reading he may have stood beneath Luther; in originality and profoundness of thought he was certainly inferior to More. His theology, though he made a far greater mark on the world by it than even by his scholarship, we have seen that he derived almost without change from Colet. But his combination of vast learning with keen observation, of acuteness of remark with a lively fancy, of genial wit with a perfect good sense—his union of as sincere a piety and as profound a zeal for rational religion as Colet’s with a dispassionate fairness towards older faiths, a large love of secular culture, and a genial freedom and play of mind—this union was his own, and it was through this that Erasmus embodied for the Teutonic peoples the quickening influence of the New Learning during the long scholar-life which began at Paris and ended amidst darkness and sorrow at Basle. At the time of Colet’s return from Italy Erasmus was young and comparatively unknown, but the chivalrous enthusiasm of the new movement breaks out in his letters from Paris, whether he had wandered as a scholar. “I have given up my whole soul to Greek learning,” he writes, “and as soon as I get any money I shall buy Greek books—and then I shall buy some clothes.” It was in despair of reaching Italy that the young scholar made his way to Oxford, as the one place on this side the Alps where he would be enabled through the teaching of Grocyn to acquire a knowledge of Greek. But he had not sooner arrived there than all feeling of regret vanished away. “I have found in Oxford,” he writes, “so much polish and learning that now I hardly care about going to Italy at all, save for the sake of having been there. When I listen to my friend Colet it seems like listening to Plato himself. Who does not wonder at the wide range of Grocyn’s knowledge? What can be more searching, deep, and refined than the judgment of Linacre? When did Nature mould a temper more gentle, enduring, and happy than the temper of Thomas More?” But the new movement was already spreading beyond the bounds of Oxford. If, like every other living impulse, it shrank from the cold suspicion of the King, it found shelter under the patronage of his minister. Immersed as Archbishop Warham was in the business of the State, he was no mere politician. The eulogies which Erasmus lavished on him while he lived, his praise of the Primate’s learning, of his ability in business, his pleasant humour, his modesty, his fidelity to friends, may pass for what eulogies of living men are commonly worth. But it is difficult to doubt the sincerity of the glowing picture which he drew of him when death had destroyed all interest in mere adulation. The letters indeed which passed between the
great Churchman and the wandering scholar, the quiet, simple-hearted grace which amidst constant instances of munificence preserved the perfect equality of literary friendship, the enlightened piety to which Erasmus could address the noble words of his preface to St. Jerome, confirm the judgment of every good man of Warham's day. In the simplicity of his life the Archbishop offered a striking contrast to the luxurious nobles of his time. He cared nothing for the pomp, the sensual pleasures, the hunting and dicing in which they too commonly indulged. An hour's pleasant reading, a quiet chat with some learned new-comer, alone broke the endless round of civil and ecclesiastical business. Few men realized so thoroughly as Warham the new conception of an intellectual and moral equality before which the old social distinctions of the world were to vanish away. His favourite relaxation was to sup among a group of scholarly visitors, enjoying their fun and retorting with fun of his own. But the scholar-world found more than supper or fun at the Primate's board. His purse was ever open to relieve their poverty. "Had I found such a patron in my youth," Erasmus wrote long after, "I too might have been counted among the fortunate ones." It was with Grocyn that Erasmus rowed up the river to Warham's board at Lambeth, and in spite of an unpromising beginning the acquaintance turned out wonderfully well. The Primate loved him, Erasmus wrote home, as if he were his father or his brother, and his generosity surpassed that of all his friends. He offered him a sinecure, and when he declined it he bestowed on him a pension of a hundred crowns a year. When Erasmus wandered to Paris it was Warham's invitation which recalled him to England. When the rest of his patrons left him to starve on the sour beer of Cambridge it was Warham who sent him fifty angels. "I wish they were thirty legions of them," the old man puns in his good-humoured way.

Henry the Eighth

The hopes of the little group of scholars were held in check during the life of Henry the Seventh by his suspicion and ill will, but a "New Order," to use their own enthusiastic term, dawned on them with the accession of his son. Henry the Eighth had hardly completed his eighteenth year when he mounted the throne, but the beauty of his person, his vigour and skill in arms, seemed only matched by the generosity of his temper and the nobleness of his political aims. The abuses of the previous reign, the extortion of the Royal treasury, were at once remedied. Empson and Dudley, the ministers of his father's tyranny, were brought to the block, and the rights of the subject protected by a limitation of the time within which actions for recovery of its rights might be brought by the Crown. No accession ever excited higher expectations among a people than that of Henry the Eighth. Pole, his bitterest enemy, confessed at a later time, that the King was of a temper at the beginning of his reign "from which all excellent things might have been hoped." His sympathies were from the first openly on the side of the New Learning; for Henry was not
only himself a fair scholar, but even in boyhood had roused by his
wit and attainments the wonder of Erasmus. The great scholar
hurried back to England to pour out his exultation in the "Praise
of Folly," his song of triumph over the old world of ignorance and
bigotry which was to vanish away before the light and knowledge
of the new reign. Folly, in his amusing little book, mounts a pulpit
in cap and bells and pelts with her satire the absurdities of the
world around her, the superstition of the monk, the pedantry of
the grammarian, the dogmatism of the doctors of the schools, the
cruelty of the sportsman. Gaily as it reads, the book was written
in More's house to while away hours of sickness. The irony of
Erasmus was backed by the earnestness of Colet. Four years
before he had been called from Oxford to the Deanery of St. Paul's,
and he now became the great preacher of his day, the predecessor
of Latimer in his simplicity, his directness, and his force. But for
the success of the new reform, a reform which could only be
wrought out by the tranquil spread of knowledge and the gradual
enlightenment of the human conscience, the one thing needful was
peace; and the young King to whom the scholar-group looked
was already longing for war. Long as peace had been established
between the two countries, the designs of England upon the French
crown had never been really abandoned. Edward the Fourth
and Henry the Seventh had each threatened France with invasion, and
only withdrawn on a humiliating payment of large sums by Lewis
the Eleventh. But the policy of Lewis, his extinction of the great
feudatories, and the administrative centralization which he was
the first to introduce, raised his kingdom ere the close of his reign
to a height far above that of its European rivals. The power of
France, in fact, was only counterbalanced by that of Spain, which
had become a great state through the union of Castile and Arragon,
and where the prudence of Ferdinand was suddenly backed by
the stroke of good fortune which added the New World to the
dominion of Castile. Too weak to meet France single-handed,
Henry the Seventh saw in an alliance with Spain, not merely a
security against his 'hereditary enemy,' but an admirable starting
point in case of any English attempt for the recovery of Guenee,
and this alliance had been cemented by the marriage of his eldest
son, Arthur, with Ferdinand's daughter, Catherine of Arragon.
The match was broken by the death of the young bridegroom; but
Henry the Eighth clung to his father's policy, and a Papal dispen-
sation enabled Catherine to wed the brother of her late husband,
the young sovereign himself. Throughout the first years of his
reign, amidst the tournaments and revelry which seemed to absorb
his whole energies, Henry was in fact keenly watching the opening
which the ambition of France began to afford for a renewal of the
old struggle. Under the successors of Lewis the Eleventh the
efforts of the French monarchy had been directed to the conquest
of Italy. Charles the Eighth, after entering Milan and Naples in
triumph, had been driven back over the Alps, but Lewis the
Twelfth had succeeded in establishing himself in Lombardy. A league of the Italian States was at last formed for his expulsion, with the Pope at its head, and to this league Spain and England gave their joint support. Of all the confederates, however, Henry alone reaped no profit from the war. "The barbarians," to use the phrase of Julius the Second, "were chased beyond the Alps;" but Ferdinand's unscrupulous adroitness only used the English force, which had landed at Fontarabia with the view of recovering Guienne, to cover his own conquest of Navarre. The shame of this fruitless campaign roused in Henry a fiercer spirit of aggression; he landed in person in the north of France, and a sudden rout of the French cavalry in an engagement near Guinegate, which received from its bloodless character the name of the Battle of the Spurs, gave him the fortresses of Tournon and Tournay. The young conqueror was eagerly pressing on from this new base of action to the recovery of his "heritage of France," when he found himself suddenly left alone by the desertion of Ferdinand and the dissolution of the league. The millions left by his father were exhausted, his subjects had been drained by repeated subsidies, and, furious as he was at the treachery of his allies, Henry was driven to conclude an inglorious peace.

The spirit of war, this change of the monarchical order into a vulgar conqueror, proved a bitter disappointment. Colet thundered from the pulpit of St. Paul's, that "an unjust peace is better than the justest war," and protested that "when men out of hatred and ambition fight with and destroy one another, they fight under the banner, not of Christ, but of the Devil." Erasmus quitted Cambridge with a bitter satire against the "madness" around him. "It is the people," he said, in words which must have startled his age, "it is the people who build cities, while the madness of princes destroys them." The sovereigns of his time appeared to him like ravenous birds pouncing with beak and claw on the hard-won wealth and knowledge of mankind. "Kings who are scarcely men," he exclaimed in bitter irony, "are called 'divine;' they are 'invincible' though they fly from every battle-field; 'serene' though they turn the world upside down in a storm of war; 'illustrious' though they grovel in ignorance of all that is noble; 'Catholic' though they follow anything rather than Christ. Of all birds the Eagle alone has seemed to wise men the type of royalty, a bird neither beautiful, nor musical, nor good for food, but murderous, greedy, hateful to all, the curse of all, and with its great powers of doing harm only surpassed by its desire to do it." It was the first time in modern history that religion had formally dissociated itself from the ambition of princes and the horrors of war, or that the new spirit of criticism had ventured not only to question but to deny what had till then seemed the primary truths of political order. We shall soon see to what further length the new specula-
tions were pushed by a greater thinker, but for the moment the
indignation of the New Learning was diverted to more practical
ends by the sudden peace. The silent influences of time were
working, indeed, steadily for its cause. The printing press was
making letters the common property of all. In the last thirty years
of the fifteenth century ten thousand editions of books and pam-
phlets are said to have been published throughout Europe, the most
important half of them of course in Italy; and all the Latin
authors were accessible to every student before it closed. Almost
all the more valuable authors of Greece were published in the first
twenty years of the century which followed. At the moment,
therefore, of the Peace the profound influence of this burst of the
two great classic literatures upon the world was just making itself
felt. "For the first time," to use the picturesque phrase of M.
Taine, "men opened their eyes and saw." The human mind
seemed to gather new energies at the sight of the vast field which
opened before it. It attacked every province of knowledge, and in
a few years it transformed all. Experimental science, the science
of philology, the science of politics, the critical investigation of
religious truth, all took their origin from this Renaissance—this
'New Birth' of the world. Art, if it lost much in purity and pro-
priety, gained in scope and in the fearlessness of its love of Nature.
Literature, if crushed for the moment by the overpowering attrac-
tion of the great models of Greece and Rome, revived with a
grandeur of form, a large spirit of humanity, such as it had never
known since their day. In England, the influence of the new
movement extended far beyond the little group in which it had
a few years before seemed concentrated. The great Churchmen
still remained its patrons. Langton, Bishop of Winchester, took
delight in examining the young scholars of his episcopal family
every evening, and sent all the most promising of them to study
across the Alps. Archbishop Warham, in a similar spirit, sent
Croke for education to Leipsic and Louvain. Cuthbert Tunstall,
and William Latimer, men destined to strangely different fortunes,
got to study together at Padua. Henry himself, bitterly as he had
disappointed its hopes, remained the steady friend of the New
Learning. Through all the strange changes of his terrible career
the King's Court was the home of letters. Even as a boy his son,
Edward the Sixth, was a fair scholar in both the classical languages.
His daughter Mary wrote good Latin letters. Elizabeth, who
spoke French and Italian as fluently as English, began every day
with an hour's reading in the Greek Testament, the tragedies of
Sophocles, or the orations of Isocrates and Demosthenes. Widely
as Henry's minsters differed from one another, they all agreed in
sharing and protecting the culture around them.

The war therefore was hardly over, when the New Learning
entered on its work of reform with an energy which contrasted
strangely with its recent tone of despair. The election of Leo the
Tenth, the fellow-student of Linacre, the friend of Erasmus,

The New Learning
The New Monarchy

seemed to give it the control of Christendom. The age of the turbulent, ambitious Julius was thought to be over, and the new Pope declared formally for a universal peace. "Leo," wrote an English agent at his Court, in words to which after-history lent a strange meaning, "would favour literature and the arts, busy himself in building, and enter into no war save through actual compulsion." England, under the new ministry of Wolsey, withdrew from any active interference in the struggles of the Continent, and seemed as resolute as Leo himself for peace. Colet seized the opportunity to commence the work of educational reform by the foundation of his own Grammar School, beside St. Paul's. The bent of its founder's mind was shown by the image of the Child Jesus over the master's chair, with the words "Hear ye Him" graven beneath it. "Lift up your little white hands for me," wrote the Dean to his scholars, in words which show the tenderness that lay beneath the stern outer seeming of the man,—"for me which prayeth for you to God." All the educational designs of the reformers were carried out in the new foundation. The old methods of instruction were superseded by fresh grammars composed by Erasmus and other scholars for its use. Lilly, an Oxford student who had studied Greek in the East, was placed at its head. The injunctions of the founder aimed at the union of rational religion with sound learning, at the exclusion of the scholastic logic, and at the steady diffusion of the two classical literatures. The more bigoted of the clergy were quick to take alarm. "No wonder," More wrote to the Dean, "your school raises a storm, for it is like the wooden horse in which armed Greeks were hidden for the ruin of barbarous Troy." But the cry of alarm passed helplessly away. Not only did the study of Greek creep gradually into the schools which existed, but the example of Colet was followed by a crowd of imitators. More grammar schools, it has been said, were founded in the latter years of Henry than in the three centuries before. The impulse grew happily stronger as the direct influence of the New Learning passed away. The grammar schools of Edward the Sixth and of Elizabeth, in a word the system of middle-class education which by the close of the century had changed the very face of England, were the direct results of Colet's foundation of St. Paul's. But the "armed Greeks" of More's apologue found a yet wider field in the reform of the higher education of the country. On the Universities the influence of the New Learning was like a passing from death to life. Erasmus gives us a picture of what happened at Cambridge, where he was himself for a time a teacher of Greek. "Scarcely thirty years ago nothing was taught here but the Parva Logica of Alexander, antiquated exercises from Aristotle, and the Questions of Scotus. As time went on better studies were added, mathematics, a new, or at any rate a renovated, Aristotle, and a knowledge of Greek literature. What has been the result? The University is now so flourishing that it can compete with the best universities of the age." Latimer and
Croke returned from Italy and carried on the work of Erasmus at Cambridge, where Fisher, Bishop of Rochester, himself one of the foremost scholars of the new movement, lent it his powerful support. At Oxford the Revival met with a fiercer opposition. The contest took the form of boyish frays, in which the young partisans and opponents of the New Learning took sides as Greeks and Trojans. The King himself had to summon one of its fiercest enemies to Woodstock, and to impose silence on the tirades which were delivered from the University pulpit. The preacher alleged that he was carried away by the Spirit. "Yes," retorted the King, "by the spirit, not of wisdom, but of folly." But even at Oxford the contest was soon at an end. Fox, Bishop of Winchester, established the first Greek lecture there in his new college of Corpus Christi, and a Professorship of Greek was at a later time established by the Crown. "The students," wrote an eye-witness, "rushed to Greek letters, they endure watching, fasting, toil, and hunger in the pursuit of them." The work was crowned at last by the munificent foundation of Cardinal College, to share in whose teaching Wolsey invited the most eminent of the living scholars of Europe, and for whose library he promised to obtain copies of all the manuscripts in the Vatican.

As Colet had been the first to attempt the reform of English education, so he was the first to undertake the reform of the Church. Warham still flung around the movement his steady protection, and it was by his commission that Colet was enabled to address the Convocation of the Clergy in words which set before them with unsparing severity the religious ideal of the New Learning. "Would that for once," burst forth the fiery preacher, "you would remember your name and profession and take thought for the reformation of the Church! Never was it more necessary, and never did the state of the Church need more vigorous endeavours." "We are troubled with heretics," he went on, "but no heresy of theirs is so fatal to us and to the people at large as the vicious and depraved lives of the clergy. That is the worst heresy of all." It was the reform of the bishops that must precede that of the clergy, the reform of the clergy that would lead to a general revival of religion in the people at large. The accumulation of benefices, the luxury and worldliness of the priesthood, must be abandoned. The prelates ought to be busy preachers, to forsake the Court and labour in their own dioceses. Care should be taken for the ordination and promotion of worthier ministers, residence should be enforced, the low standard of clerical morality should be raised. It is plain that Colet looked forward, not to a reform of doctrine, but to a reform of life, not to a revolution which should sweep away the older superstitions which he despised, but to a regeneration of spiritual feeling before which they would inevitably vanish. He was at once charged, however, with heresy, but Warham repelled the charge with disdain. Henry himself, to whom Colet had been denounced, bade him go boldly on. "Let every man have
his own doctor," said the young King, after a long interview, "and let every man favour his own, but this man is the doctor for me."

Still more marked than Warham's protection of Colet was the patronage which the Primate extended to the efforts of Erasmus. His edition of the works of St. Jerome had been begun under Warham's encouragement during the great scholar's residence at Cambridge, and it appeared with a dedication to the Archbishop on its title-page. That Erasmus could find protection in Warham's name for a work which boldly recalled Christendom to the path of sound Biblical criticism, that he could address him in words so outspoken as those of his preface, shows how fully the Primate sympathized with the highest efforts of the New Learning. Nowhere had the spirit of inquiry so firmly set itself against the claims of authority. "Synods and decrees, and even councils," wrote Erasmus, "are by no means in my judgment the fittest modes of repressing error, unless truth depend solely on authority. But on the contrary, the more dogmas there are, the more fruitful is the ground in producing heresies. Never was the Christian faith purer or more undefiled than when the world was content with a single creed, and that the shortest creed we have." It is touching even now to listen to such an appeal of reason and of culture against the tide of dogmatism which was soon to flood Christendom with Augsburg Confessions, and Creeds of Pope Pius, and Westminster Catechisms, and Thirty-nine Articles. The principles which Erasmus urged in his "Jerome," were urged with far greater clearness and force in a work which laid the foundations of the future Reformation, the edition of the Greek Testament on which he had been engaged at Cambridge, and whose production was almost wholly due to the encouragement and assistance he received from English scholars. In itself the book was a bold defiance of theological tradition. It set aside the Latin version of the Vulgate, which had secured universal acceptance in the Church. Its method of interpretation was based, not on received dogmas, but on the literal meaning of the text. Its real end was the end at which Colet had aimed in his Oxford lectures. Erasmus desired to set Christ himself in the place of the Church, to recall men from the teachings of Christian theologians to the teachings of the Founder of Christianity. The whole value of the Gospels to him lay in the vividness with which they brought home to their readers the personal impression of Christ himself. "Were we to have seen him with our own eyes, we should not have so intimate a knowledge as they give us of Christ, speaking, healing, dying, rising again, as it were, in our very presence." All the superstitions of mediæval worship faded away in the light of this personal worship of Christ. "If the footprints of Christ are shown us in any place, we kneel down and adore them. Why do we not rather venerate the living and breathing picture of him in these books? We deck statues of wood and stone with gold and gems for the love of Christ. Yet they only profess to represent to us the outer form of his body, while these
books present us with a living picture of his holy mind." In the
same way the actual teaching of Christ was made to supersede the
mysterious dogmas of the older ecclesiastical teaching. "As
though Christ taught such subtleties," burst out Erasmus:
"subtleties that can scarcely be understood even by a few theolo-
gians—or as though the strength of the Christian religion consisted
in man's ignorance of it! It may be the safer course," he goes on,
with characteristic irony, "to conceal the state-mysteries of
kings, but Christ desired his mysteries to be spread abroad as
openly as was possible." In the diffusion, in the universal knowl-
gedge of the teaching of Christ the foundation of a reformed
Christianity had still, he urged, to be laid. With the tacit approval
of the Primate of a Church which from the time of Wycliff had held
the translation and reading of the Bible in the common tongue
to be heresy and a crime punishable with the fire, Erasmus boldly
avows his wish for a Bible open and intelligible to all. "I wish that
even the weakest woman might read the Gospels and the Epistles
of St. Paul. I wish that they were translated into all languages, so
as to be read and understood not only by Scots and Irishmen, but
even by Saracens and Turks. But the first step to their being read
is to make them intelligible to the reader. I long for the day when
the husbandman shall sing portions of them to himself as he
follows the plough, when the weaver shall hum them to the tune
of his shuttle, when the traveller shall walk away with their
stories the weariness of his journey." The New Testament of
Erasmus became the topic of the day; the Court, the Universities,
every household to which the New Learning had penetrated, read
and discussed it. But bold as its language may have seemed,
Warham not only expressed his approbation, but lent the work—
as he wrote to its author—"to bishop after bishop." The most
influential of his suffragans, Bishop Fox of Winchester, declared
that the mere version was worth ten commentaries; the most
learned, Fisher of Rochester, entertained Erasmus at his house.

Daring and full of promise as were these efforts of the New Learning in the direction of educational and religious reform, its
political and social speculations took a far wider range in the
"Utopia" of Thomas More. Even in the household of Cardinal
Morton, where he had spent his childhood, More's precocious
ability had raised the highest hopes. "Whoever may live to see
it," the grey-haired statesman used to say, "this boy now waiting
at table will turn out a marvellous man." We have seen the spell
which his wonderful learning and the sweetness of his temper
threw at Oxford over Colet and Erasmus; and, young as he was,
More no sooner quitted the University than he was known through-
out Europe as one of the foremost figures in the new movement.
The keen, irregular face, the grey restless eye, the thin mobile lips,
the tumbled brown hair, the careless gait and dress, as they remain
stamped on the canvas of Holbein, picture the inner soul of the
man, his vivacity, his restless, all-devouring intellect, his keen and
even reckless wit, the kindly, half-sad humour that drew its strange veil of laughter and tears over the deep, tender reverence of the soul within. In a higher, because in a sweeter and more loveable form than Colet, More is the representative of the religious tendency of the New Learning in England. The young law-student who laughed at the superstition and asceticism of the monks of his day wore a hair shirt next his skin, and schooled himself by penances for the cell he desired among the Carthusians. It was characteristic of the man that among all the gay, profligate scholars of the Italian Renascence he chose as the object of his admiration the disciple of Savonarola, Pico di Mirandola. Free-thinker as the bigots who listened to his daring speculations termed him, his eye would brighten and his tongue falter as he spoke with friends of heaven and the after-life. When he took office, it was with the open stipulation "first to look to God, and after God to the King." But in his outer bearing there was nothing of the monk or recluse. The brightness and freedom of the New Learning seemed incarnate in the young scholar, with his gay talk, his winsomeness of manner, his reckless epigrams, his passionate love of music, his omnivorous reading, his paradoxical speculations, his gibes at monks, his schoolboy fervour of liberty. But events were soon to prove that beneath this sunny nature lay a stern inflexibility of conscientious resolve. The Florentine scholars who penned declamations against tyrants had covered with their flatteries the tyranny of the house of Medici. More no sooner entered Parliament than his ready argument and keen sense of justice led to the rejection of the Royal demand for a heavy subsidy. "A beardless boy," said the courtiers,—and More was only twenty-six,—"has disappointed the King's purpose;" and during the rest of Henry the Seventh's reign the young lawyer was forced to withdraw from public life. But the withdrawal had little effect on his buoyant activity. He rose at once into repute at the bar. He published his "Life of Richard the Third," the first work in which what we may call modern English prose appears written with purity and clearness of style and a freedom either from antiquated forms of expression or classical pedantry. His ascetic dreams were replaced by the affections of home. It is then when we get a glimpse of him in his house at Chelsea that we understand the endearing epithets which Erasmus always lavishes upon More. The delight of the young husband was to train the girl he had chosen for his wife in his own taste for letters and for music. The reserve which the age exacted from parents was thrown to the winds in More's intercourse with his children. He loved teaching them, and lured them to their deeper studies by the coins and curiosities he had gathered in his cabinet. He was as fond of their pets and their games as his children themselves, and would take grave scholars and statesmen into the garden to see his girls' rabbit-hutches or to watch the gambols of their favourite monkey. "I have given you kisses enough," he wrote to his little ones, in merry verse, when far away on political business, "but stripes
hardly ever." The accession of Henry the Eighth dragged him back into the political current. It was at his house that Erasmus penned the "Praise of Folly," and the work, in its Latin title, "Moriae Encomium," embodied in playful fun his love of the extravagant humour of More. More "tried as hard to keep out of Court," says his descendant, "as most men try to get into it." When the charm of his conversation gave so much pleasure to the young sovereign "that he could not once in a month get leave to go home to his wife or children, whose company he much desired, . . . he began thereupon to dissemble his nature, and so, little by little, from his former mirth to dissemble himself." More shared to the full the disappointment of his friends at the sudden outbreak of Henry's warlike temper, but the Peace again drew him to the Court, he entered the Royal service, and was soon in the King's confidence both as a counsellor and as a diplomatist.

It was on one of his diplomatic missions that More describes himself as hearing news of the Kingdom of "Nowhere," "On a certain day when I had heard mass in Our Lady's Church, which is the fairest, the most gorgeous and curious church of building in all the city of Antwerp, and also most frequented of people, and service being over I was ready to go home to my lodgings, I chanced to espay my friend Peter Giles talking with a certain stranger, a man well stricken in age, with a black sun-burnt face, a large beard, and a cloth cast trimly about his shoulders, whom by his favour and apparel forthwith I judged to be a manner." The sailor turned out to have been a companion of Amerigo Vespucci in those voyages to the New World "that be now in print and abroad in every man's hand," and on More's invitation he accompanied him to his house, and "there in my garden upon a bench covered with green turves we sate down, talking together" of the man's marvellous adventures, his desertion in America by Vespucci, his wanderings over the country under the equinoctial line, and at last of his stay in the Kingdom of "Nowhere." It was the story of "Nowhere," or Utopia, which More embodied in the wonderful book which reveals to us the heart of the New Learning. As yet the movement had been one of scholars and divines. Its plans of reform had been almost exclusively intellectual and religious. But in More the same free play of thought which had shaken off the old forms of education and faith turned to question the old forms of society and politics. From a world where fifteen hundred years of Christian teaching had produced social injustice, religious intolerance, and political tyranny, the humorist philosopher turned to a "Nowhere," in which the mere efforts of natural human virtue realized those ends of security, equality, brotherhood, and freedom for which the very institution of society seemed to have been framed. It is as he wanders through this dreamland of the new reason that More touches the great problems which were fast opening before the modern world, problems of labour, of crime, of conscience, of government. Merely to have seen and to have
examined questions such as these would prove the keenness of his intellect, but its far-reaching originality is shown in the solutions which he proposes. Amidst much that is the pure play of an exuberant fancy, much that is mere recollection of the dreams of bygone dreamers, we find again and again the most important social and political discoveries of later times anticipated by the genius of Thomas More. In some points, such as his treatment of the question of Labour, he still remains far in advance of current opinion. The whole system of society around him seemed to him "nothing but a conspiracy of the rich against the poor." Its economic legislation was simply the carrying out of such a conspiracy by process of law. "The rich are ever striving to pare away something further from the daily wages of the poor by private fraud and even by public law, so that the wrong already existing (for it is a wrong that those from whom the State derives most benefit should receive least reward) is made yet greater by means of the law of the State." "The rich devise every means by which they may in the first place secure to themselves what they have amassed by wrong, and then take to their own use and profit at the lowest possible price the work and labour of the poor. And so soon as the rich decide on adopting these devices in the name of the public, then they become law." The result was the wretched existence to which the labour-class was doomed, "a life so wretched that even a beast's life seems enviable." No such cry of pity for the poor, of protest against the system of agrarian and manufacturing tyranny which found its expression in the Statutes of Labourers, had been heard since the days of Piers Ploughman. But from Chrestendom More turns with a smile to "Nowhere." In "Nowhere" the aim of legislation is to secure the welfare, social, industrial, intellectual, religious, of the community at large, and of the labour-class as the true basis of a well-ordered commonwealth. The end of its labour-laws was simply the welfare of the labourer. Goods were possessed indeed in common, but labour was compulsory with all. The period of toil was shortened to the nine hours demanded by modern artisans, with a view to the intellectual improvement of the worker. "In the institution of the weal public this end is only and chiefly pretended and minded that what time may possibly be spared from the necessary occupations and affairs of the commonwealth, all that the citizens should withdraw from bodily service, to the free liberty of the mind and garnishing of the same. For herein they conceive the felicity of this life to consist." A public system of education enabled the Utopians to avail themselves of their leisure. While in England half of the population "could read no English," every child was well taught in "Nowhere." The physical aspects of society were cared for as attentively as its moral. The houses of Utopia "in the beginning were very low and like homely cottages or poor shepherd huts made at all adventures of every rude piece of timber that came first to hand, with mud walls, and ridged roofs thatched over with straw."
The picture was really that of the common English town of More's day, the home of squalor and pestilence. In Utopia, however, they had at last come to realize the connection between public morality and the health which springs from light, air, comfort, and cleanliness. "The streets were twenty feet broad; the houses backed by spacious gardens, and, curiously built after a gorgeous and gallant sort, with their stories one after another. The outsides of the walls be made either of hard flint, or of plaster, or else of brick: and the inner sides be well strengthened by timber work. The roofs be plain and flat, covered over with plaster so tempered that no fire can hurt or perish it, and withstand the violence of the weather better than any lead. They keep the wind out of their windows with glass, for it is there much used, and sometimes also with fine linen cloth dipped in oil or amber, and that for two commodities, for by this means more light cometh in and the wind is better kept out."

The same foresight which appears in More's treatment of the questions of Labour and the Public Health is yet more apparent in his treatment of the question of Crime. He was the first to suggest that punishment was less effective in suppressing it than prevention. "If you allow your people to be badly taught, their morals to be corrupted from childhood, and then when they are men punish them for the very crimes to which they have been trained in childhood—what is this but first to make thieves, and then to punish them?" He was the first to plead for proportion between the punishment and the crime, and to point out the folly of the cruel penalties of his day. "Simple theft is not so great an offence as to be punished with death." If a thief and a murderer are sure of the same penalty, he points out that the law is simply tempting the thief to secure his theft by murder. "While we go about to make thieves afraid, we are really provoking them to kill good men." The end of all punishment he declares to be reformation. "nothing else but the destruction of vice and the saving of men." He advises "so using and ordering criminals that they cannot choose but be good; and what harm soever they did before, the residue of their lives to make amends for the same." Above all, he urges that to be remedial punishment must be wrought out by labour and hope, so that "none is hopeless or in despair to recover again his former state of freedom by giving good tokens and likelihood of himself that he will ever after that live a true and honest man." It is not too much to say that in the great principles More lays down he anticipated every one of the improvements in our criminal system which have distinguished the last hundred years. His treatment of the religious question was even more in advance of his age. If the houses of Utopia were strangely in contrast with the halls of England, where the bones from every dinner lay rotting in the dirty straw which strewed the floor, where the smoke curled about the rafters, and the wind whistled through the unglazed windows; if its penal legislation had little likeness
to the gallows which stood out so frequently against our English sky; the religion of "Nowhere" was in yet stronger conflict with the faith of Christendom. It rested simply on nature and reason. It held that God's design was the happiness of man, and that the ascetic rejection of human delights, save for the common good, was thanklessness to the Giver. Christianity, indeed, had already reached Utopia, but it had few priests; religion found its centre rather in the family than in the congregation: and each household confessed its faults to its own natural head. A yet stronger characteristic was seen in the peaceable way in which it lived side by side with the older religions. More than a century before William of Orange. More discerned and proclaimed the great principle of religious toleration. In "Nowhere" it was lawful to every man to be of what religion he would. Even the disbelievers in a Divine Being or in the immortality of man, who by a single exception to its perfect religious indifference were excluded from public office, were excluded, not on the ground of their religious belief, but because their opinions were believed to be degrading to mankind, and therefore to incapacitate those who held them from governing in a noble temper. But even these were subject to no punishment, because the people of Utopia were "persuaded that it is not in a man's power to believe what he list." The religion which a man held he might propagate by argument, though not by violence or insult to the religion of others. But while each sect performed its rites in private, all assembled for public worship in a spacious temple, where the vast throng, clad in white, and grouped round a priest clothed in fair raiment wrought marvellously out of birds' plumage, joined in hymns and prayers so framed as to be acceptable to all. The importance of this public devotion lay in the evidence it afforded that liberty of conscience could be combined with religious unity.

The estimate of Henry VII. in the text should be compared with that in Busch, "England under the Tudors." The foreign policy of the two reigns may be studied in that work and in Pollard's "Henry VIII."