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THE

CABINET PORTRAIT GALLERY

OF

BRITISH WORTHIES.

VOLUME I.

LONDON:
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1845.

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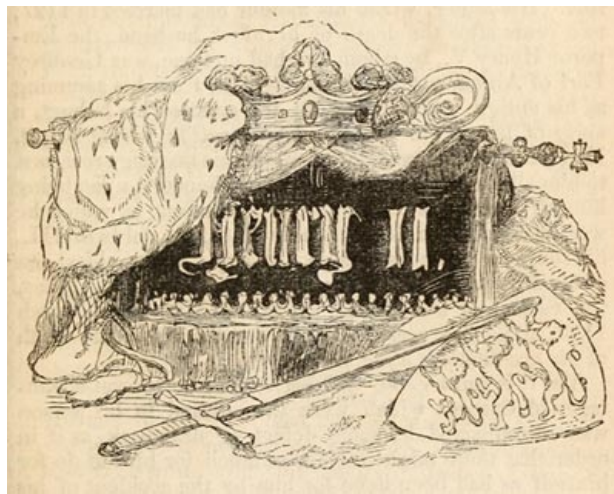
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CABINET PORTRAIT GALLERY

OF

BRITISH WORTHIES.



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[Pg 5] Among the histories of eminent kings, that of our Henry II. is one of the most remarkable both in its beginning and its end, both in the character of the man and in his fortunes; and, mostly tragic as the annals of human ambition are, there are few such histories that exemplify more impressively the instability and vanity of all earthly greatness.

[Pg 6] Nature and fortune joined to make him great. The son of Matilda, daughter of the English king Henry I., he was through that descent, after the death of his grandfather, the undoubted male representative of William the Conqueror, the founder of the reigning English dynasty, and as such the legitimate heir, at least after his mother, both of the crown of England and of the dukedom of Normandy, the older acquisition of his heroic race. His grandmother, the wife of Henry I., was Matilda, daughter of Queen Margaret of Scotland, herself the daughter of Edward the Outlaw, in the veins of whose descendants now flowed the main stream of the blood of Egbert and Alfred and the old Saxon royal line. His father, whom his mother had married in 1127, two years after the death of her first husband, the Emperor Henry V., by whom she had no issue, was Geoffrey Earl of Anjou, surnamed Plantagenet, from his assuming as his ensign, and wearing on the crest of his helmet, a sprig of broom (in French *plante genêt*); whose father, Earl Fulk, had immediately before this marriage resigned to him all his French possessions and honours, upon being himself elected to the throne of Jerusalem, in which he was succeeded, on his death in 1143, by Baldwin III., his son by a second marriage. Henry was the eldest son of Geoffrey and the empress, and was born at Le Mans, the capital of his father's county of Maine, in March 1133, about two years and nine months before the death of his grandfather King Henry.

[Pg 7] Yet it is remarkable that each of these several advantages of descent which were thus united in his person was accompanied by some defect or drawback, as if in order that there might remain as much for him to do for himself as had been done for him by the accident of his birth. His Saxon lineage gave him no claim to call himself the heir of the old race of English kings while there existed male descendants of his great-grandmother, Queen Margaret of Scotland, whose son David the First was now seated on the throne of that country, and was undoubtedly the true representative of King Edmund Ironside and the Saxon royal line. Even between him and his legal right by inheritance to the English sceptre of the Conqueror there stood his mother, to whom and not to her son it was that Henry I. had made his barons swear fealty as his successor. Nor did he on the death of his father obtain more than a qualified right to the earldom of Anjou, Geoffrey having directed in his will that he should resign it to his next brother Geoffrey if he should ever come into the possession of the English crown, and having also made his bishops and barons take an oath that they would not suffer his body to be buried till Henry should have sworn to perform whatever the will might be found to enjoin; which, accordingly, though with much reluctance, he did. Geoffrey died on the 10th of September, 1151, in his forty-first year, being younger than his wife the empress, who had long ceased to be an object of his affections, by seven or eight years.

Ere this, however, his son, styled by the French, Henry Fitz-Empress (that is, son of the empress), had passed through other changes of position and fortune. On the death of his grandfather, in December 1135, the English throne had been usurped by Stephen of Blois, whose mother Adela was a daughter of the Conqueror: she had been married to the Earl of Blois, by whom she had four sons, of whom Stephen was the third. In the course of the contest that ensued between Stephen and Matilda, young Henry was in the latter part of the year 1142 entrusted by his father to Robert, Earl of Gloucester, his mother's illegitimate brother and faithful partisan, and was by him brought over to England. They landed, the boy and his uncle, about the middle of November, at Wareham in Dorsetshire, a town and castle belonging to the earl, but now held by the king's troops. The garrison, however, agreed to surrender to Gloucester, who had brought with him from the continent a force of three or four hundred knights, if they should not be relieved within three weeks; and soon after, upon being informed from Stephen that he had no intention of relieving them, they gave up the place. Matilda had never, since she landed in England three years before, been in such peril as she was in at this moment—not even when, in the summer of the preceding year, she was surprised in London by Stephen's queen, and only saved herself by springing into her saddle from the table at which she was dining—nor a few weeks after when

[Pg 8] flying from Winchester, early on a Sunday morning, she and her escort were overtaken by the enemy at Stourbridge, and, while the Earl of Gloucester and all the rest were either taken prisoners or slain, she made her way, attended by a single follower, to Luggershall, and thence, after a rest of a few hours, by getting again upon horseback and continuing her rapid flight, to the castle of Devizes. She was now shut up in the castle of Oxford, which Stephen besieged with his whole army, disregarding in the meantime every other object, and determined to effect its reduction either by force or famine. All hope seemed to be gone; but, after she had endured the greatest privations, on the night of the 20th of December, she left the castle by a postern gate, with four knights, crossed the Thames, which was frozen over, and reached Abingdon on foot, having walked all the way through a deep snow, and having been enabled to escape the notice of the enemy, some accounts say, in part by herself and her attendants having clothed themselves in white linen. At Abingdon she took horse, and rode to Wallingford Castle. Hither a few days after the Earl of Gloucester, having started as soon as he heard the news, brought her her son. The sight of the boy, says an old chronicler, made her forget all her toils and dangers, and think all she had suffered nothing. Matilda, with all her haughtiness of temper, was not without other good qualities, besides her share in the intrepidity and tough invincible spirit of her race; if prosperity made her insolent and tyrannical, she bore adversity admirably; and to her son she was from the first to the last the best of mothers, not only in the affection she bore him, but in all other respects. Henry was soon after this carried to Bristol, and "continued there four years," says Lord Lyttelton, "under the care of his uncle, who trained him up in such exercises as were most proper to form his body for war, and in those studies which might embellish and strengthen his mind. The Earl of Gloucester himself had no inconsiderable tincture of learning, and was the patron of all who excelled in it; qualities rare at all times in a nobleman of his high rank, but particularly in an age when knowledge and valour were thought incompatible, and not to be able to read was a mark of nobility. This truly great man broke through that cloud of barbarous ignorance, and, after the example of his father King Henry, enlarged his understanding and humanized his mind by a commerce with the muses, which he assiduously cultivated, even in courts and camps, showing by his conduct how useful it was both to the statesman and general. The same love of science and literature he likewise infused into his nephew, who under his influence began to acquire what he never afterwards lost, an ardour for study and a knowledge of books not to be found in any other prince of those times. Indeed the four years he now passed in England laid the foundation of all that was afterwards most excellent in him; for his earliest impressions were taken from his uncle, who, not only in learning but in all other perfections—in magnanimity, valour, prudence, and all moral virtues,—was the best example that could be proposed to his imitation."^[1] Henry's father, who after a long contest had now acquired complete possession of Normandy, recalled his son from England in the latter part of the year 1146; and in the beginning of November of that year, very soon after he had parted with his nephew, the Earl of Gloucester was carried off by a fever. This was to his sister the empress the loss of her right hand. "Courage and resentment," we quote again Lord Lyttelton's account, "still combated in her heart with despair; nor was it without the greatest and most painful reluctance that she gave way to the necessity of leaving a country over which she had so long expected to reign. But, in less than four months after the death of her brother, seeing no possibility of supporting her party, and fearing to fall into the hands of her enemy, she was constrained to abandon England and go into Normandy, to live with a husband whom she never had loved, and who did not love her, but was generous or prudent enough to receive her with kindness in this decline of her fortune, when her pride was humbled by her sorrow. Nevertheless, he retained to himself the dominion of that duchy, as he had held it in her absence; that is, without any dependence upon her. Instead of submitting to this, she would perhaps have stayed in England, and buried herself under the ruins of her own greatness, if the anguish of her mind had not been soothed by the hope that Prince Henry, her son, might, when he should attain to an age of maturity, be able to revenge her on Stephen, and recover the crown which she had lost. Her whole care was therefore employed upon his education. She laboured to inspire him with thoughts as high as her own; to give him an ardour for glory, an ambition for empire, and a spirit of conquest. His genius was very suitable for such instructions; but the fire he drew from her was happily tempered with the lessons of prudence and humanity which he had been taught in England by his uncle; and which his father, a prince of great discretion and judgment, continued to fix in his mind."^[2]

[Pg 10] Henry remained in Normandy till the year 1149. Meanwhile his friends in England had been gradually recovering heart and strength; and it was arranged that the young prince, whom, although as yet only sixteen, they now looked to as their head, should show himself among them. From this time his mother may be regarded as having withdrawn her pretensions in his favour; no express act of resignation ever took place, but both she and her husband (for Geoffrey also gave up something in abandoning the hope of a crown for his wife) were too much attached to their son, and too sensible, besides, of the present state of circumstances, and of what the exigency demanded, to stand in his way. He landed early in the year at the head of a considerable force, probably at Wareham, marched through the western counties, where he was joined by the Earl of Chester, the Earl of Hereford, and other barons; and made his way to his great-uncle King David of Scotland, who had been for some time in possession of the three northern counties of Northumberland, Cumberland, and Westmoreland, and whom he found at the head of an army in the town of Carlisle. During the festivities of Whitsuntide, which were distinguished on this occasion by extraordinary magnificence, Henry received the honour of knighthood from his uncle; but he had no opportunity of gaining his spurs, a disappointment which vexed him the more that Stephen's son Eustace, who had been knighted about the same time, had been already put by his father in command of a military force, with which he was ravaging the lands of some of the very barons who were now lying in idleness with their retainers at Carlisle.

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It must apparently have been during this visit that Henry met with his first mistress, so famous in song and story, the beautiful Rosamund de Clifford. Of the two sons which she bore to him it is known that the younger, Geoffrey, was older than Henry, his first-born by his queen, and also that he was nearly twenty when he was made Bishop of Lincoln in 1173; he was therefore probably born in 1153; and his elder brother William, surnamed Long-sword, who, having married the daughter and heiress of the Earl of Salisbury, succeeded to the estates and title of his father-in-law, may have been born in 1150. Both of them were educated along with Henry's legitimate sons: William survived till 1226; and Geoffrey, who resigned his bishopric in 1182, and was then made Lord Chancellor by his father, to whom he steadily adhered in all fortunes, became in the next reign Archbishop of York, but resigned that see also in 1207, after holding it for about six years, and died in 1212. As for their mother, who was daughter of Walter de Clifford, a baron of Herefordshire, it is hardly necessary to say that there is no foundation for the story of the labyrinth in which she was concealed by her royal lover at Woodstock, and of her being discovered and forced to drink poison by Queen Eleanor, which has made her so renowned in popular romance. It is known that she spent her last years in the nunnery of Godstow, near Oxford, which she was probably induced to select for her retreat from her father having been a benefactor to that house: there she is said to have lived a life of devotion and penitence; but all that is known as to the time of her death is, that it took place before that of her father, and he was still alive in 1165.

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Henry, finding that nothing could be done at present in England, returned, in the beginning of the year 1150, to Normandy; and soon after that duchy was resigned to him by his father, the French king Louis VII. (Le Jeune) having come thither in the autumn of this year, according to an agreement among all the parties concerned, and as feudal sovereign formally delivered it up to the young prince, reserving to himself, as the price of his compliance, the border district called the Vexin, which had always been a subject of contention between the dukes of Normandy and the kings of France. Some months afterwards, indeed, Louis, repenting of what he had thus done, made an attempt to wrest the fief again out of the hands of the Angevin prince, with the view of transferring it to Stephen's son, Eustace; but upon Henry showing a bold front, and a determination to defend his own, he soon desisted, and the quarrel was settled by his abandoning Eustace, and by Henry coming to Paris and renewing his homage there. This then was Henry's first acquisition. His next was that of the three earldoms of Anjou, Touraine, and Maine, into which he came into possession by the death of his father about a year after. This was not long in being followed by another, for which he was still more directly or materially indebted to King Louis than he had been for his duchy of Normandy. That well-meaning but somewhat weak monarch had long been dissatisfied with his queen, Eleanor, or, as she is more commonly called in the chronicles of the time, Alienor or Aanor, daughter and heiress of William, Duke of Guienne or Aquitaine and Earl of Poitou, countries extending along the whole of the western coast of France, from the Loire to the Pyrenees, which her marriage, celebrated immediately after her father's death, in the year 1137, when she was only sixteen, had annexed to the French crown. It seems amazing that any considerations should have blinded Louis to the impolicy of allowing possessions of such extent and importance, constituting more than a third of his kingdom, to pass out of his hands after he had once got hold of them; yet so it was; he had been tormented by feelings of jealousy ever since Eleanor had been with him, in the year 1148, in the Holy Land, where he imagined she had had a variety of intrigues both with Christian and infidel lovers; she on her part had come to look with contempt upon her husband, the character of whose mind seemed in her eyes to make him fitter for being a monk than a king; and the end was that in the beginning of the year 1152 she submitted to a divorce, or rather their marriage was dissolved by mutual consent; for, although at the council of bishops which assembled at Beaujency-sur-Loire to take the matter into consideration, and before which Eleanor made her appearance, Louis asked for a divorce on the plea of his suspicions of her fidelity, the council pronounced no opinion upon that point, but simply declared the marriage to have been null from the beginning, on the common and convenient ground of the consanguinity of the parties, who were fourth cousins, the canons of the Church forbidding marriage, without a previous dispensation from the pope, even between persons related within the seventh degree. The scandalous chronicles of the time affirm that Eleanor had already, before her separation from her husband, given way to a passion for young Henry Plantagenet, whom indeed she had seen at the French court on two recent occasions; first when he came, as just related, to renew his homage for the duchy of Normandy, and again when he returned soon after to receive investiture of the earldoms he inherited from his father. They at least were not long in finding out one another after she was at liberty to dispose of herself. The nullification of Eleanor's marriage with Louis immediately produced two consequences; it bastardized two daughters that she had borne to him, and, as we have already intimated, it severed from the French crown the extensive dominions forming her inheritance. It was natural that she should now return to her own country, and accordingly she set out for Poitou as soon as the council had pronounced its sentence. But there were several aspirants to the rich prize which Louis had resigned or cast away, notwithstanding that he is said to have assured himself that she would never get another husband, declaring that her behaviour had made her too infamous for the poorest gentleman in his dominions to be willing to marry her. When she reached Blois, she received proposals from the young Thibaud, Earl of Blois, who had just succeeded to that fief on the death of his father, the elder brother of King Stephen; and, when she declined his suit, it is affirmed that he formed a design of detaining her, and compelling her to marry him by force, which she only escaped by being warned of it and taking her departure in the middle of the night for Tours. Here another danger of the same kind met her. Henry Plantagenet's younger brother Geoffrey had been left by his father only the castles of

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Chinon and Loudon in Touraine, and that of Mirabeau in Anjou, with their dependencies, and he could hardly therefore, even with his dubious prospect of succeeding at some future time to the chief possessions of his family, flatter himself that if he should set about wooing the Duchess of Aquitaine in the common fashion he would, in present circumstances, have much chance of success. But either not being aware of or disregarding his brother's pretensions, and thinking that such an opportunity of making his fortune was not likely again to present itself, he also, like Thibaud of Blois, resolved to try force, and posted himself at a port on the Loire, called Le Port de Piles, by which he supposed that Eleanor would pass, for the purpose of waylaying her and carrying her off. She received intelligence of his scheme, however, and, changing her route, got safe to her own town of Poitiers. From this she sent to Henry, then in Normandy, to tell him of her arrival, and of the perils through which she had made her way. He instantly set out to join her, taking with him only a few attendants, and travelling so as to attract as little observation as possible; and they were married on Whitsunday (May the 18th), not quite six weeks after Eleanor's separation from Louis. Henry was not yet twenty years of age, and his bride was full thirty; "but with a good share of beauty," observes Lord Lyttelton, "and more of vivacity, she had still youth enough to gain the heart of a young man, though not to preserve it very long." His lordship nevertheless declines affirming that Henry was really in love,—that his acceptance of Eleanor's offer of her hand was prompted by any other passion than his ambition. There were certainly some strong considerations to be got over, apart altogether from their difference in age.

Thus was Henry already lord of nearly the half of France. From the situation of his previous possessions, he was of all the vassals of the French crown the one whom a union with Eleanor was fitted the most to aggrandize. As the duchy of Normandy, which he derived from or through his mother, was conterminous on the south with his three paternal earldoms of Anjou, Touraine, and Maine, so his wife's states of Poitou and Guienne lay immediately to the south of these last, the whole forming an unbroken continuation of territory extending from the English Channel to the Pyrenees. To these acquisitions, maternal, paternal, and matrimonial, he soon added another much more splendid than any or all of them, which he may be said to have mainly won for himself by his own right hand. For a brief space he was detained on the continent by having to take arms against a formidable confederacy organized by King Louis, who had now at length opened his eyes, and turned them with amazement and consternation upon his youthful vassal, suddenly become his rival and almost his equal, and had got his own brother the Earl of Dreux, Henry's brother Geoffrey, Eleanor's other disappointed suitor the Earl of Blois, and King Stephen's son Eustace, to join him in an invasion of Normandy. But this attack was repulsed in a campaign of less than six weeks' duration; not only were the invaders driven out of the country to the last man, and an insurrection which they had excited of some of the Anjevin barons effectually crushed, but Henry, pursuing his enemies into France, laid waste a part of that country without Louis daring to turn round and give him battle. This work done, and a peace arranged with the French king, he lost no time in setting about the great enterprise to which all things now seemed to concur in calling him. He landed in England on the 6th of January, 1153, at the head of a force of three thousand foot and a hundred and forty knights. There was some fighting, but no considerable action; and, after the principal impediment in the way of an accommodation had been removed by the death of Stephen's son Eustace by a fever, the effect in all probability of the agitation and rage into which he was thrown by the pending negotiation in which he was about to be sacrificed, an agreement was made on the 7th of November, by which Stephen adopted Henry for his son and successor, giving the kingdom of England, as it was expressed, after his own death, to him and his heirs for ever. Stephen did not survive this treaty quite a year; he died at Canterbury on the 25th of October, 1154; and Henry became king. He was in Normandy when Stephen's death occurred; and he was detained at Barfleur for some weeks by adverse weather; but he set sail at last while the storm still raged with little abatement, and after a dangerous passage he landed in the New Forest, not far from Hurst Castle, on the 7th of December. He was crowned, with his queen, at Westminster, on Sunday the 19th; and the commencement of his reign, according to what was then the custom, is reckoned from that day.

Of course, in the circumstances, Henry did not now think of resigning Anjou to his brother Geoffrey, whose late confederacy with the French king and attack upon Normandy, an act amounting to rebellion in him, could not but be considered as depriving him of any claim he might have under his father's will and Henry's forced engagement to fulfil its provisions. To obviate all objections, however, Henry obtained from the pope a dispensation releasing him from that compulsory oath. A few years after this he recovered the ceded district of the Vexin for Normandy by the arrangement of marriage between his eldest son and a daughter of King Louis; and he subsequently acquired what amounted to the actual possession of Bretagne by the negotiation of another marriage between his third son, Geoffrey, and the Lady Constantia, or Constance, daughter and heiress of Conan, prince of that country. The extent of territory subject to the English king even in France was now greater than that which acknowledged the sway of Louis. If a line had been drawn from north to south only a few miles to the west of Paris, or nearly about the meridian of Boulogne, all to west of it would have been found to belong to Henry, from the English sea to the Spanish mountains; while the dominion of Louis on the other side of Gaul scarcely extended farther south than to the Loire, all the region beyond that river being in possession of the Earls of Toulouse. Henry, besides, almost as soon as he came to the throne, had recovered the three northern counties of England from the Scottish king, and even compelled him to do homage for the whole of Scotland to the south of the Forth; he soon after reduced Wales; and finally, in 1172, he effected the conquest of Ireland. The details of the valour and policy by which all this was done, of the patience, the foresight, the vigilance, the incessant exertion, the utter disregard of toil and danger, by which so many additions to his original

inheritance were won and preserved, and by which all his states, old and new, were governed, and the authority of law and order maintained in them, must be sought for in the records of history. Those were the days in which a king of England, to hold his place, really required to be, in all senses, about the ablest man in his dominions; if he was not of such heroic mould, he was almost sure to be thrown down, in that convulsive and stormy condition of things which had not yet subsided since the breaking up of the Roman empire had thrown Europe into a state of social chaos. Nothing, in fact, was fixed and stable; nowhere was the ground firm beneath men's feet; hardly any political arrangement or part of the mechanism of government was brought to such working order as to go on in any degree of itself or as a matter of course; all rights and claims were disputed and in conflict with one another; the boundaries of states, public and private inheritances, the provinces of the civil and ecclesiastical powers, the positions and privileges of the different classes of the community, all remained as yet in many respects unsettled and the subject of fierce contention both by argument and occasionally by force. Of all this confusion the king had to be, as far as possible, the ruler or moderator; and to hold his own besides, often in harness and the battle-field, and when nothing would stand him in much stead if he had not a strong arm and a stout heart. Let us now see how Henry was furnished in body and mind, in capacity and moral disposition, for this post in the front and at the head of the community, according to the testimony of those who knew him best and were the best qualified to understand and describe him.

He has been drawn at full length, and with much elaboration, by the famous letter-writer of the twelfth century, Peter of Blois (so styled from the place of his birth), who appears to have come over to England about 1169 or 1170, and was afterwards for many years in habits of daily and intimate intercourse with the king as his private secretary. The account occurs in a letter from Peter to his friend Walter, Archbishop of Palermo, who had requested from him a complete and exact picture of the great English king, both in his outer and inner man, a theme which his correspondent declares would, in his opinion, overtask the powers of the Mantuan (that is, Virgil) himself, or, as he afterwards still more strongly puts it, would be too much for either Maro or Tully. So far, however, he adds, as the subject is within his capacity, he will speak without envy or detraction. The letter has no date, but appears to have been written about the year 1180. He begins by remarking that, as it is related to the commendation of David that he was ruddy, so it might still be seen that King Henry had in earlier life been in a moderate degree of that complexion, although his colour was now somewhat gone, and his hair also touched with grey,

from his advanced years.^[3] His head was compact and round-shaped—"spherical" is the rhetorical secretary's term—of fitting form and dimensions, according to the craniological philosophy of that day, "to be the seat of great wisdom, and the special sanctuary of deep counsel." Yet its size was perfectly proportioned to that of the sustaining neck and the general frame. The eyes also were round, and of soft expression—"dove-like and simple, or single" (in the Scriptural sense), are the terms employed—while he was unexcited; but under the emotion of anger or any other disturbing passion they flashed fire, and, as it were, lightened. His hair as yet showed no signs of becoming bald, but he prevented it from growing long by clipping. The general form of the face was quadrangular, like that of a lion. His nose was handsome and of suitable size, his chest broad, his arms muscular, his legs of the proper shape for a good rider,^[4] his instep arched and high. Some deformity, however, had been produced in one of his feet by the nail of a toe having grown into the flesh; and his hands also, upon which he never wore a glove, except when he carried a falcon, gave token of his neglect of them by a certain clumsiness or grossness of appearance. He discarded all ornament alike in boots and bonnet, and all his clothes

were disencumbered of everything superfluous. ^[5] A characteristic of his mother's race that he inherited was a strong tendency to corpulency; but he appears to have succeeded in keeping it down much more than his great-grandfather, the Conqueror, both by frequent fastings and by a life of movement and activity almost without example. His habit was scarcely ever to sit down, except while he was upon horseback or at his meals. Whether at mass or at council, or in whatever business he had to transact, he kept upon his feet from morning to night. When engaged in war, he would, if necessary, get over as much ground in one day as would take an ordinary commander four or five; and in this way he often got the better of his enemies by coming upon them when they did not look for him. Both in mounting his horse and in riding he had still preserved to this, the latter part of his life, all the alacrity of youth. During peace his favourite recreation was hunting or hawking; and bows, swords, arrows, and hunting tackle were almost constantly in his hands, except when he was reading and when he was at council, or occupied with affairs of state. But both business and books had their full share of his time. "For he does not," says his secretary, "lie still, like other kings, in his palace, but, journeying rapidly from province to province, inquires into the conduct of all his officers, especially judging those whom he has constituted the judges of others. No man is more sagacious in counsel, gifted with a greater flow and rush of elocution, more firm in dangers, less confident in prosperity, in adversity more constant.... As often as he can obtain a breathing time from the cares and anxieties of state, he spends it either in reading by himself, or in labouring to untie the knot of some difficult question in converse with a circle of learned clerks." Such literary assemblages and discussions, it is added, were held in the palace every day. In the rest of the letter Henry is warmly praised, though in general terms, for his moderation both in eating and drinking, his liberality and charity, his magnificence in the construction, on the one hand, of warlike defences and strongholds, on the other of palaces, lakes for fish, and enclosures for wild animals, his kindness to the afflicted and affability to the poor, although he bore himself with a more lordly mien, it is subjoined, to the high and proud—always, with a certain resemblance to the divinity, endeavouring to depress the haughty and to raise up the depressed. A remarkable sentence

follows, to the effect that, although in conformity with the custom of his kingdom, Henry exercised the most potent and effectual influence in elections (*in electionibus faciendis potissimas et potentissimas habeat partes*), yet he ever kept his hands pure and free from all venality. The elections here referred to are of course elections to bishoprics and other dignities or benefices in the church; for there were as yet no elections to civil offices in England. The steadiness of the king both in his likings and dislikings is also noted: if he had once loved anyone, we are assured, he scarcely ever withdrew his regard; but he was as rarely known to admit to his familiarity or favour anyone to whom he had once conceived an aversion.

Peter of Blois was an ecclesiastic; he held, among other preferments both in England and abroad, the archdeaconries both of London and Bath; and he was, like the generality of his profession, firmly attached to the great cause of the independence of the church, and the supremacy of the spiritual over the temporal power. It might, and probably would, have been different a few years before; but at the time when this letter was written he had no quarrel with the English king even on such questions; on the contrary, he lauds him warmly for his piety, and his zealous maintenance of the rights of the clergy, and especially for the reverence in which he held the memory of the blessed and glorious martyr—the murdered and since canonized Becket, or St. Thomas—whom, says the archdeacon, in all straits he looks up to as his chief patron. In the position he occupied at court, also, he would of course be disposed to take a favourable view of the character of his royal master. The picture he has drawn, indeed, may be admitted to be somewhat sparingly shaded; some features may be softened down, and others may be altogether concealed. But, so far at least as his evidence is positive, it may be safely received; and, in fact, it is confirmed in all the main particulars by other contemporary testimony, or by what Henry's history and conduct throughout his life show him to have been. It is true that other writers of his own age,—Giraldus Cambrensis, for instance, and Radulphus Niger—have delineated him in much darker colours; but their animosity is at least as evident and as strong as Peter of Blois's partiality; and they, and others who join them in the same strain, had individually as much reason to dislike Henry, as the archdeacon had to feel grateful and attached to him. His chief habitual defect appears to have been a tendency to violent explosions of rage. It is several times alluded to in the letters of Peter of Blois, from whose notices we learn that there were times when his majesty was not to be spoken to without considerable risk or great caution; but some of the exhibitions of his fury, as reported by other authorities, almost go beyond credibility. "When his wrath is fairly kindled," says Peter in one place, "he is a lion, or something yet more truculent." Giraldus Cambrensis tells us, that in the paroxysms of his passion, to quote his description as translated by Lingard, "his eyes were spotted with blood, his countenance seemed of flame, his tongue poured a torrent of abuse and imprecation, and his hands were employed to inflict vengeance on whatever came within his reach." On one occasion, we are told, the learned modern historian proceeds, referring to a letter of Thomas of Becket's, "When Humet, a favourite minister, had ventured to offer a plea in justification of the king of Scots, Henry, in a burst of passion, called Humet a traitor, threw down his cap, ungirt his sword, tore off his clothes, pulled the silk coverlet from his couch, and, unable to do more mischief, sate down, and gnawed the straw on the floor." Another time, it is added, on the same authority, "when a page presented a letter, the king attempted to tear out his eyes, nor did the boy escape without severe scars." These were doubtless demonstrations, supposing them not exaggerated in the recital, that had better have been avoided; but Henry had often that to contend with which was enough to make the wisest mad; such outbreaks do not appear to have been frequent; and, if the storm was sufficiently terrific while it lasted, it never lasted long. Nor were the rash and furious words usually followed by any corresponding ferocity of action. If Henry was passionate, he was certainly neither vindictive nor cruel. He may have put little restraint upon his passions in other respects as well as in giving way to excesses of rage, and he had probably his share in the general licentiousness of his time; but he nowhere revolts us by showing either want of heart or any thing of coarseness or baseness of nature. It is probable, from all that history and tradition tell us of him, that there was always as much of sentiment as of sensuality in his licentiousness. His affection for his children, so long as they would suffer him to love them, seems to have been only too tender and indulgent; and even after their repeated ingratitude he was always to the last ready to forgive them and to take them again to his heart. Ambitious he was, indisputably, and fond of power; and as such, he was necessarily unscrupulous, and in pursuing his great and aspiring schemes, would at times break his way in a somewhat reckless and startling fashion through restraints that checked more timid spirits. Having also frequently to act by policy as well as by force, and to contend with the one as much as with the other—for it was an age of overreaching and trickery—he may have sometimes gone farther in the way of artifice and deception than would now be thought correct. But a fair consideration of his conduct as recorded does not at all bear out the charge made against him by some hostile declaimers—principally or exclusively ecclesiastics—during his contest with the church, that he was a shameless and systematic liar, that he never pledged his word except with the intention of breaking it at the first opportunity. This is the mere extravagance of party malice or passion. When Cardinal Viviani, after conversing with Henry, declared that he had never known his equal in lying, we can only conclude that the churchman found himself no match in diplomatic subtlety and stratagem for the king.

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Henry's course of prosperity and success encountered no check, scarcely anything to disturb for a moment its even and onward flow, till after he had been between seven and eight years King of England. The portion of his reign from the middle of the year 1162 till the end of 1170 was mostly spent in a contest with one of his own subjects. The famous Thomas-à-Becket is said to have been born in London in 1117, and his legendary history, which may have some foundation in

fact, makes him to have been the son of a citizen of English race, Gilbert Beck, Beckie, or Becket, by the daughter of a Saracen chief, who, when he had been taken prisoner in the east, whither he had followed his Norman lord to the holy wars, had fallen in love with him, contrived to release him from his captivity, and afterwards followed him to England, and found him out by inquiring wherever she went for London and Gilbert, the only two English words she knew. Thomas-à-Becket, like his father, attached himself to the Norman conquerors of his native land; his accomplishments and his obsequiousness had before the end of the reign of Stephen raised him to high favour with Theobald, the Archbishop of Canterbury, who induced him to take deacon's orders, and made him archdeacon of his metropolitan church; he was presented to Henry soon after his accession, and he was almost immediately appointed to the high office of chancellor of the kingdom, to which were speedily added the custody of the castle of Berkhamstead, the government of the Tower of London, and other preferments. He was now the most powerful subject in England, the man whom the king most delighted to honour, the familiar friend of his sovereign, and his constant and intimate associate in his private life, in his amusements and pleasures, as well as in the government of the realm. One of Becket's biographers tells us that after they had finished their serious affairs they would often play together like two boys of the same age. This continued till Henry crowned his long unvarying favour by making Becket Archbishop of Canterbury, in May, 1162. From that moment his former friend, who had been indebted to him for so much, for all that he had and all that he was, became his rival and his enemy. Becket, indeed, was now in every respect a changed man. The gay, careless, luxurious layman (for as such he had been hitherto considered, notwithstanding his deacon's orders), the man of gallantry in every sense of the term (for he had also borne arms with distinguished reputation), was transformed at once into a cold, rigid, ascetic priest, hard and unimpressible as a man of stone. All that he had hitherto appeared, all that had seemed his nature and very self, was thrown off as if it had been a masque or disguise. It is unnecessary, however, to assume that Becket was insincere or dishonest either in the part he had made a show of sustaining till now, or in this sudden metamorphosis. It is rather proof of his inherent honesty, as well as of his force of character, that he would not seem to be what he was not, that he would not become a churchman in name without becoming one in reality. But, with this spirit, his new position brought him immediately into collision with Henry. A contest for supremacy between the church and the state was not a new thing in England. Ever since the Conquest the subjugation of the spiritual to the temporal power had been a prominent and steadily pursued part of the policy of the crown. The Conqueror had placed the Archbishop of Canterbury upon an eminence of rank and political position, such as was scarcely occupied by any other subject in Christendom; but in doing this he had strenuously aimed at the same time at making the church part and parcel of the state; so that the primate, with all the splendour of his station, and the other bishops, should in fact form rather a baronage or nobility, the supporters and servants of the crown, than a separate power. This system, however, was entirely opposed to the pretensions and aims of the court of Rome, and to the notions generally entertained by all orders of ecclesiastics in that age. The papal power, professing to consider all legitimate royalty and other civil authority to be derived from itself, and even to be resumable at its will and pleasure, and maintaining the state to be everywhere thus the creation of the church, always resolutely refused to acquiesce, except occasionally in the way of compromise, in any arrangements which seemed to proceed upon an opposite idea or principle. Hence in the time of Rufus and Henry I. the contest between these kings and Archbishop Anselm about investitures, or the right of nominating to offices in the church, which the archbishop and the clergy held to be in the pope, but which the crown insisted upon retaining in its own hands. The first Henry had made good his claims in regard to this matter, and the other subjects of difference between the two interests had not since occasioned any serious disagreement. It is probable, however, that during the weak irregular government of Stephen the spiritual power had made some encroachments, if not in regard to investitures, in another direction. It was a still more important question upon which Henry now found himself opposed by Becket. This king was as little likely as anyone of his predecessors to tolerate such of the pretensions of the clergy as would have either allied them as a body with a foreign power, or withdrawn them as individuals from subjection to the ordinary laws of the realm. It can hardly be doubted that so long as Becket held the office of chancellor (which he threw up as soon as he obtained the primacy) he had gone vigorously along with his royal master in discountenancing, and, where necessary, resisting, all such pretensions. Now, however, when Henry insisted that clerks, or ecclesiastical persons, when charged criminally, should be tried in the king's courts, and punished, if found guilty, in the same way with other subjects, the archbishop declared this to be a violation of the rights of the church, and set himself to oppose what he denounced as a sacrilegious innovation with all the powers of his office. Whether the system which Henry wished to enforce was in conformity with the ancient customs of the kingdom, as he maintained that it was, may indeed be disputed. It was manifestly, at any rate, the only system compatible with the good government of the kingdom. The highest punishments that the ecclesiastical courts could inflict were flagellation, fine, imprisonment, and degradation; and the crime of murder itself, when committed by a clergyman, was usually expiated by a whipping when the case was left in their hands. On the other hand the archbishop probably also conceived himself to be bound in duty to make the stand he did for the claims set up by the church. There is no difficulty in understanding how the two parties should see the question differently from their opposite points of view; and they both gave by the whole course of their conduct all possible evidence of their sincerity. After other proceedings, Henry assembled a great council at Clarendon, in Wiltshire, at Christmas, 1163, and there demanded the assent of Becket and the other prelates to sixteen constitutions or articles, embodying what he maintained to be the ancient law or custom of the realm upon the matters in dispute. Becket, who had before refused to promise obedience to a much less comprehensive enactment, was now prevailed upon by the entreaties of his brethren to

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sign these constitutions; but he would not affix his seal to them. Even his signature, which had been wrung from him by importunity, was no sooner given than it was bitterly repented of, and he made no scruple openly to accuse himself of the most criminal weakness in doing what he had done. The contest was now renewed with greater animosity on both sides than ever, and before the end of the year Becket had clandestinely withdrawn himself from England, and taken refuge in France, under the protection of King Louis. He remained abroad, firmly refusing to make any concession; but at last, in July, 1170, he and Henry held a conference in a meadow near Freitville, or Freteval, on the borders of Touraine, when the form of a reconciliation was gone through, and the archbishop soon after set out on his return to England. He reached Canterbury on the 3rd of December, and with the exception of making a visit to London, remained there in quiet for the next three weeks. Meanwhile, however, accounts had been brought to Henry in Normandy, that before he had embarked at Wissant, he had sent forward letters of excommunication or suspension against the archbishop of York, the bishop of London, and others of the prelates who had stood by the king in the late controversy. Several of these prelates instantly came themselves over to Rouen, and informed the king of this extraordinary proceeding. Furious with indignation Henry hastily exclaimed, "Of the dastards who eat my bread is there no one who will deliver me from this ungrateful, turbulent, incorrigible priest?" Four knights who heard the words, soon after suddenly and secretly started for England. On that same day, Saturday the 25th, the archbishop was present in his cathedral, at the performance of the solemnities of Christmas, and preached to a crowded auditory from the words "I am come unto you to die in the midst of you." After his sermon he excommunicated some individuals who, he said, had for the last seven years been busy in wronging and insulting himself and the church. On the Tuesday following, being the 28th, the four knights arrived from Normandy. On the afternoon of the next day, accompanied by twelve others, they made their way into the archbishop's house; he was prevailed upon by his friends to proceed to the Church; thither, however, the conspirators followed him; they demanded that he should absolve the excommunicated bishops, but, unbending to the last, he bid defiance to their menaces; upon which he was struck down by repeated blows at the foot of the altar. Henry was still keeping his Christmas festival at Bure, in Normandy, when tidings of the event were brought to him. There can be no reasonable doubt that he was profoundly affected with horror at the crime that had been committed almost in his name, as well as alarmed for the consequences. He shut himself up in his closet for three days, admitting no one and refusing all nourishment. It was not till after a negotiation of two years that he obtained from the Court of Rome, a full absolution, on his appearing in the cathedral of Avranches, and there publicly taking his solemn oath on the Gospels, that he was innocent of the murder of the archbishop both in word and deed. Meanwhile, he had acquired new power and glory by the conquest of Ireland; circumstances were also changed in other respects; new objects had in part withdrawn him from the controversy with the church which had occupied him almost to the exclusion of everything else, for the preceding six or seven years; and now that Becket was removed the pretensions of the clergy, although they may have remained the same in words, had actually become something very different and much less formidable. Henry therefore now also engaged, that if any customs hostile to the liberties of the ecclesiastical order had been introduced into his kingdom since his accession, they should be abolished. And four years after, in a great council held at Northampton, the constitutions of Clarendon were so far repealed as that, among other concessions of less moment, clergymen were exempted from being personally arraigned before a secular judge for any crime, unless it were against the forest laws, or regarded a lay fee for which they owed service to a lay lord. But, although we learn this from a letter written by the king to the pope, Alexander III., which is preserved by the contemporary Latin annalist Ralph de Diceto (himself a churchman), it may be doubted if the satisfaction thus given to the clergy proved, after all, much more than a form of words.

Before this, however, Henry had become involved in new troubles, and had encountered the first gust of the storm that was to wrap the afternoon of his reign and his life in darkness and ruin. In the year 1170, in the midst of his contest with Becket, he had had his eldest son Henry consecrated and crowned as conjoint king with himself. The ceremony was performed in Westminster Abbey by the Archbishop of York; and a theory that has satisfied some modern historians is, that Henry's object in this proceeding was simply to spite Becket and to diminish the authority he derived from his station, by showing that a King of England could be crowned without the assistance of the Archbishop of Canterbury. It is certain, indeed, that Becket resented what had been done as an invasion of the privileges of his see, and this was the principal ground on which he had applied for, and obtained from the pope, the letters of excommunication against the Archbishop of York and the other prelates who had assisted him at the coronation, his display and threatened employment of which had probably been the occasion of his murder. But all the circumstances seem to show that Henry was principally actuated by affection for his son, and a desire to place him in a position of honour and of splendour, although his age, only fourteen, of course precluded him from being as yet entrusted with any share in the government. The young prince, however, or, as he was now called, the young king, or sometimes Henry III., made no creditable return, whether it was fondness or policy that had chiefly moved his father thus to advance him. He appears to have been rather weak than ill-disposed; his new title probably made him giddy; and, easily led in any direction, he was much more likely, in his position, to be led wrong than right. All cordiality between Henry and Queen Eleanor had long been at an end; his infidelities and her jealous temper had completely divided and alienated them; and Eleanor's natural resource was to endeavour to gain over her sons to make common cause with her against their father. About the end of the year 1172, the young king Henry, who was married to the daughter of the French king, Louis VII., and had just been crowned a second time along with his wife, startled his father by a sudden demand, that he should immediately

resign to him either the dukedom of Normandy or the sovereignty of England. At this time the boy was not yet sixteen, and his father was himself still under forty. The preposterous proposal is believed to have been prompted by Queen Eleanor and King Louis; from the day on which it was made, and of course instantly rejected, the young king, we are told, spoke not one word more of peace to his father; a few months after, while he was with his father at Chinon, on their way back to Normandy from Limoges, he arose during the night and secretly withdrew himself to the court of his father-in-law; his flight was speedily followed by that of his two younger brothers Richard and Geoffrey, upon the former of whom their father had conferred the earldom of Poitiers, upon the latter the dukedom of Bretagne, and, who had been left with their mother in Guienne; and lastly their mother set out to join her sons, but, being caught as she travelled in man's attire, was by her husband's orders put into immediate confinement, nor was she afterwards released, except once for a short space, while Henry lived.

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The war that followed between Henry and his sons, aided by King Louis, did not last long. Attacked as he was on every side at once—in Brittany, in Normandy, in Anjou, in Guienne, in England; from France, from Toulouse, from Scotland—the vigour of the old king, as he was called, carried everything before it; and a peace and reconciliation were arranged after a few months. It was during this contest that Henry performed his famous penance at the tomb of Becket. The desire to see, in the quarrel between Becket and Henry, a struggle between the old Anglo-Saxon population and their Norman conquerors has probably been carried much too far by the eminent living French historian Augustin Thierry: the controversy was in the main and essentially, there can be no doubt, a trial of strength between the church and the state, between the temporal and the spiritual powers, between the crown and the pope, between the laity and the clergy; nor do we believe that the accident of Becket being of Anglo-Saxon lineage went for anything in the case. There is no good evidence that the circumstance ever was appealed to or taken notice of either on the one side or the other. It may be conceded, however, that both parties would naturally wish to secure whatever support could be derived from the sympathy of the great body of the people, and that in this way the native English, who had been already for some time rising again from the state of prostration to which they were struck down by the Conquest, would both be led to take the greater interest in the dispute, and may have been benefited by it. Their devotional and superstitious feelings also were, no doubt, strongly excited by many of the proceedings to which the clergy resorted; and we may well conceive that they would be transported to a state of the highest enthusiasm, first, by horror at the barbarous and sacrilegious murder of Becket, and afterwards, by the miracles with which the kingdom resounded as having been performed at his tomb. But these were feelings which there is every reason to believe were shared in an equal degree by the generality of their Norman masters. The king himself was probably by no means exempt from them. With all the licence that he allowed himself in some respects, he was neither without the piety nor above the superstition of his age; and the circumstances in which he now stood, with troubles gathering around him, and the consciousness pressing upon him that he had, by his hasty and passionate words, materially contributed to Becket's death, were very likely to awaken his devotion and penitence. It seems impossible to regard him as merely acting a part, assuming the outward appearance of a reverence and contrition which he did not feel, in this penitential pilgrimage, when the whole proceeding and his demeanour throughout are fairly considered. He set sail from Barfleur early on the morning of the 8th of July, 1174. It blew fresh at the time, and, the gale increasing after the ship had got under way, some apprehension began to be felt, upon which Henry, coming forward so as to be seen by all, exclaimed, with eyes uplifted to heaven, "If what I have in my mind be for the peace of my clergy and my people, if God have determined to restore such peace by my arrival, then may he in his mercy bring me safe into port; but, if he have resolved still further to scourge my kingdom in his wrath, may it never be given me again to set my foot on land." He landed at Southampton on the morning of the 10th, and instantly getting on horseback, set out for Canterbury, pursuing his journey all night, and taking no other sustenance than a little bread and water. He came within sight of the metropolitan church at the dawn of the next day, Friday the 11th, and then dismounting, and throwing off both his silk apparel and his boots, he walked in the garb of a pilgrim, and barefoot, over the flinty road for the three remaining miles of the way. When he entered the city, his footsteps were observed to leave their marks in blood upon the pavement. Proceeding forthwith to the cathedral, he entered it along with the thronging inhabitants of the city, collected by the ringing of the bells, and, prostrating himself with his face to the ground, wept and sobbed aloud, while the Bishop of London announced from the pulpit that Henry King of England was here come to invoke God and the holy martyr for the salvation of his soul; to protest that he never either ordered or desired the death of the martyr; and to submit his naked flesh to be scourged for the hasty and imprudent words uttered by him, by which the murderers might pretend that they had been excited to the act. After this the king descended to the crypt where the archbishop's body was interred, and there, stripping off his clothes and kneeling down on the tombstone, he submitted his bare back to be scourged with a knotted cord by all the bishops and monks that were present, each giving him three, four, or five strokes, while he pronounced the words, "As the Redeemer was scourged for the sins of men, so be thou for thy own sin." He spent all the rest of the day and the following night in the crypt in prayer and fasting; and the next morning, after hearing mass, he left Canterbury without tasting anything save a draught of the holy water kept at the martyr's tomb. He rode to London; but when he had finished his journey he was taken ill, and he was confined for some days by fever. On the fifth night of his illness a messenger arrived at the palace and insisted upon instant admission to the king. He brought the news of the capture of the king of Scotland at Alnwick, by Ranulf de Glanville. And it turned out that this great event had taken place on the very Saturday on the morning of which Henry had risen an absolved and reconciled man from the shrine of the martyr.

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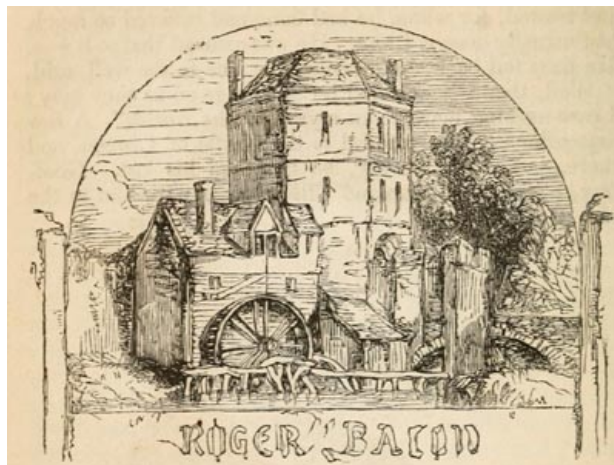
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For some years from this time Henry was left at peace, although in 1179 his two eldest sons, Henry and Richard, took arms against each other, and Poitou and Guienne were for a time disturbed and devastated by their dissension. But in 1183 war again broke out between the sons and the father. Sometimes he was opposed to one, sometimes to two of them; sometimes to Henry, Richard, and Geoffrey, all at once. Both the two elder were soon cut off; Henry, by fever, on the 11th of June, at Chateau Martel, near Limoges; Geoffrey, early in 1185, by being thrown from his horse and trampled to death, in a tournament at the court of the new French king Philip II. (Augustus), whose aid he had sought against his father. Richard, however, continued in rebellion, or rather, repeatedly defeated and forgiven, still again and again took up arms, whenever a favourable moment seemed to present itself. He had a story that he was fond of relating, about a countess of Anjou, one of his ancestry, who never went to church, and at last, on being taken there one day by force, flew out of the window, on the elevation of the host, and was never more seen; and he used to ask if it was to be wondered at that, sprung from such a stock, the household to which he belonged should be divided against itself. "What comes from the devil," said he, "to the devil must return." Mutual hatred, he professed to believe, was the doom of his family—the fatal inheritance which none of them would ever renounce. At last, at a conference held at La Ferté Bernard, in Maine, on the 18th of November, 1188, Richard, on his father's refusal to comply with his demands, turned round in indignation to the French king, who stood by, and, having ungirt his sword and fallen upon his knees, offered his homage to Philip, in Henry's presence, for all the territories that the latter held in France. Philip accepted his allegiance, and the war was renewed as soon as the term of the truce expired. By this time Henry's spirits, as well as his health, seem to have been broken; his operations in the field were languid and ineffectual, and he was soon reduced to the necessity of suing for peace. The matter in regard to which Richard and Philip had pretended to feel most keenly was Henry's detention of Alice, the sister of the French king, who many years before had been affianced to Richard, and his refusal to allow their marriage to take place. He professed to wish to marry her to his youngest son John; but it was suspected that he loved the young and beautiful princess himself, and that her heart, too, was his. Now, however, he offered to resign everything, Alice included; he proposed that she should, in the meantime, be placed in such custody as might be thought fittest, and delivered either to Richard or Philip, on their return from their projected expedition to the Holy Land. The French princess, we may mention, after all was not married to Richard. Though he had demanded her so clamorously before, when he became king he refused to have her; and she eventually became the wife of William Earl of Aumale and Ponthieu, by whom she had a daughter, who married Ferdinand III. King of Castile, and was the mother of Eleanor, the queen of our Edward I. Henry and Philip met to arrange a peace on the 28th of June, 1189, on a plain between Tours and Azay-sur-Cher. Henry agreed to everything that was demanded of him. He became very ill before the conference closed, and was carried from the place in a litter to his quarters, where a few days after the articles of the treaty were sent to him for his ratification. They were read to him one by one as he lay on his bed; and when he had heard the one which secured from punishment all who had been engaged on the side of Richard in the late war, either openly or secretly, and allowed them, although they had hitherto been his own subjects, liberty to continue the vassals of his son, he asked how many and who were the persons whose faith and allegiance he would thus have to lose. The first that was named to him was his youngest son John, his favourite son, of whose affection and fidelity he had never had a doubt, for whose sake, in great part, it had been that he had resisted the demands of Richard, and brought himself to the state in which he was. When he heard it pronounced he raised himself convulsively half up in the bed, and, with a wild look, asked if it was true that this son, whom he had so loved and trusted, for whom he had done and suffered so much, had actually deserted him. He was assured that so it was. He then fell back, and, turning his face to the wall, said, "Well, then! henceforth let all things go as they may; I care nothing more about myself or the world." A few days after he was removed to the Castle of Chinon, and there, on the 6th of July, he breathed his last. Geoffrey, his son by Rosamund Clifford, was with him to the end.

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[Pg 38] Some part of this biography will make the rest more intelligible if made a preliminary explanation. Before the appearance of Wood's History of Oxford (1674), no one had added anything to the summaries of Leland, Bale, and Pits, which are little more than ill-understood lists of works. The name of Bacon was known far and wide as a magician; and the better informed could only judge from such fragments as had been published, and from the traditional reputation of what remained in manuscript, that he was a philosopher of the highest genius. These printed fragments are as follows, so far as we can collect them, being all that was published down to the appearance of Dr. Jebb's edition of the 'Opus Majus:' which closes the list—

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[Pg 39] 1. 'De mirabili Potestate Artis et Naturae et Nullitate Magiae,' Paris, 1542, 4to.; Basil., 1593, 8vo.; in English, ^[6] Lond., 1597, 4to.; Hamb., 1608 and 1618, 8vo.; in French, Par., 1612, 8vo.; also in French, by Girard, Par., 1557 and 1629; in vol. v. of Zetzner's 'Theatrum Chemicum,' Argent., 1622, 8vo., and 1659 (?); in English, by T. M., Lond., 1659, 12mo.

2. 'Perspectiva,' 'Specula Mathematica,' and 'De Speculis Ustoriiis,' Francof., 1614, 4to., whether as one book or three we do not know; the 'Perspectiva' was reprinted in 1671, also at Frankfort.

3. 'De Retardatione Senectutis,' Oxon., 1590, 8vo.; translated, 'The Cure of Old Age,' by R. Browne, M.D., Lond., 1683, 12mo.

4. 'De Secretis Operibus Artis et Naturae,' Hamb., 1618, 8vo., edited by John Dee.

5. The 'Thesaurus Chemicus,' Franckfort, 1603 and 1620, 8vo. (?) contains the 'Specula Mathematica,' the 'Speculum Alchymiae,' and some other tracts, which Tanner puts down altogether as 'Scripta sanioris medecinae in arte chemiae.'

6. 'Speculum Alchymiae,' Norimb., 1581, 4to.; Basil., 1561, 4to.; Ursellis, 1602, 8vo.; in English, in 'Collectanea Chymica,' Lond., 1684, 8vo.; also ^[7] in English, Lond., 1597, 4to.

7. 'Practica Magistri Rogerii,' Venet., 1513 and 1519.

8. 'Epistolas Notis illustratas' (we take the title from Tanner), Hamb., 1618, 8vo.

9. 'Fratris Rogeri Bacon, Ordinis Minorum, Opus Majus, ad Clementem IV. Pontif. Rom.,' Londini, 1733, fol. By Dr. Jebb.

[Pg 40] The little that is known of the greatest of English philosophers before the time of his celebrated namesake, shows how long the effects of contemporary malice might last, before the invention of printing had made an appeal to posterity easy. His writings, destroyed or overlooked, only existed in manuscript or mutilated printed versions, till nearly the middle of the last century. In the mean time tradition framed his character on the vulgar notions entertained in his day of the results of experimental science; and the learned monk, searching for the philosopher's stone in his laboratory, aided only by infernal spirits, was substituted for the sagacious advocate of reform in education, reading, and reasoning; and—what was equally rare—the real inquirer into the phenomena of nature.

Roger Bacon died in 1292, in about the seventy-eighth year of his age, which places his birth near the year 1214; roughly speaking, he lived from the time of the Interdict in the reign of John, to the beginning of the interference with Scotland in that of Edward I. His age is that of Cardinal Cusa, Thomas à Kempis, Matthew Paris, Albertus Magnus, Raymond Lully, Sacrobosco, &c., to whom we add, as they are sometimes confounded with him, and not for their own note, two theologians, Robert Bacon and John Bacon (died about 1346.) The former was a priest of the thirteenth century, whom it would be hardly necessary to notice but for the fact that some of our historians have made him the brother of Roger Bacon, and the two have been often confounded. He is stated to have studied successively at Oxford and Paris; and in 1233, when his friend and teacher, Edmund Rich, was removed from the treasurership of Salisbury Cathedral to the archbishopric of Canterbury, Robert Bacon was his successor. The archbishop was canonized by the title of St. Edmund; and Bacon wrote his life. Matthew Paris states that in 1233 Robert Bacon preached before Henry III. at Oxford, and spoke openly against the favourite, Peter des Roches

(or De Rupibus), of Poiton, Bishop of Winchester, who had given great offence by the introduction and promotion of many of his countrymen. Serious disturbance was apprehended, and the king appeared to waver; on which, says the historian, a witty court chaplain, called *Roger Bacon*, asked his Majesty what was most dangerous to seamen. The king answered that seamen best knew, on which the chaplain rejoined. "Petrae et Rupes; acciceretur, Petrus de Rupibus." This story is the likely origin of the connexion between Robert and Roger, and also of the account which states that Roger Bacon, the subject of this article, preached before the king on the same occasion. Robert Bacon joined the order of preaching friars in his old age, and died in 1248, whence the story (certainly false) that Roger died in that year. ('Biogr. Britann.;' Tanner, 'Biblioth. Britan. Hibern.;' Wood, 'Hist. et Ant. Oxon.')

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Roger Bacon was born near Ilchester, in Somersetshire, of a respectable family. He was educated at Oxford, and, according to the usual custom of his day, proceeded to Paris, which was then the first university in the world. The course of study in vogue, however unfavourable to independence of thought, did not give so great a preponderance to the works of Aristotle as was afterwards the case. The theology of the day had set strongly against philosophy of every species. In 1209 a council at Paris condemned and burnt, if not the works of Aristotle, at least the mutilated and interpolated translations from the Arabic which then existed. But when, towards the middle of the century, Latin versions from the Greek began to appear, and the philosophy contained in them to be warmly advocated by the new orders of Franciscans and Dominicans, and particularly by Albertus Magnus (died 1282), the reputation of Aristotle advanced so rapidly, that he had gained the exclusive title of "the Philosopher" by the time Roger Bacon wrote his 'Opus Majus.' But Bacon in no sense became an Aristotelian, except in that which comprehends all who are acquainted with the opinions and methods of the Greek philosopher. Better versed in the original than most of his contemporaries, he freely criticises all he meets with (especially the merit of the translations, which he says he would burn, if he could), and is himself an early and sufficient proof that the absurdities of his successors ought not to be called "Aristotelian," any more than Aristotle himself "the Philosopher." Bacon could read Aristotle without danger of falling into idolatry: his antagonists could have erected a system of verbal disputes upon the Principia of Newton, if they had possessed it.

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After his return to Oxford, with a doctor's degree granted at Paris, which was immediately also confirmed by the former university, he took the vows of a Franciscan in a convent possessed by that order at Oxford, on the persuasion, it is said, of Robert Greathead or Grostête, bishop of Lincoln, of whom we shall presently speak. It has been conjectured that he had already done so before his return to Oxford, but this appears to have arisen from his having been known to have resided in a Franciscan convent while at Paris. From the time of his return, which is stated to have been A.D. 1240, he applied himself closely to the study of languages, as well as to experimental philosophy. In spite of the vow of poverty, he does not appear to have wanted means, for he says himself that in twenty years he spent 2000 livres (French) in books and instruments; a very large sum in those days.

The vow of the Franciscans was poverty, manual labour, and study; but the first two were soon abandoned. On this subject we notice a writing of Bacon, of which (except in Dr. Jebb's list) we can find only one casual notice (in Vossius, 'De Hist. Lat.' art. "Bacon.") It is said that he answered a work of St. Bonaventure, general of his order, which treated of the above-mentioned vow; but which side either party adopted is not stated.

The enmity of his brethren soon began to show itself: the lectures which he gave in the University were prohibited, as well as the transmission of any of his writings beyond the walls of his convent. The charge made against him was that of magic, which was then frequently brought against those who studied the sciences, and particularly chemistry. The ignorance of the clergy of that time as to mathematics or physics was afterwards described by Anthony-a-Wood, who says that they knew no property of the circle except that of keeping out the devil, and thought the points of a triangle would wound religion. Brought up to consider philosophy as nearly allied to, if not identical with, heresy itself, many of them might perhaps be honest believers in its magical power; but we can hardly doubt that there were a few more acute minds, who saw that Roger Bacon was in reality endeavouring to evoke a spirit whose influence would upset the power they had acquired over the thoughts of men, and allow them to read and reflect, without fear of excommunication, or the necessity of inquiring what Council had authorized the book. Not that we mean to charge those minds in every instance with desiring such power for their own private ends: there has always been honest belief in the wickedness of knowledge, and it is not extinct in our own day. The following detached passages of the 'Opus Majus' no doubt contain opinions which its author was in the habit of expressing:—

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"Most students have no worthy exercise for their heads, and therefore languish and stupefy upon bad translations, which lose them both time and money. Appearances alone rule them, and they care not what they know, but what they are thought to know by a senseless multitude.—There are four principal stumbling-blocks in the way of arriving at knowledge—authority, habit, appearances as they present themselves to the vulgar eye, and concealment of ignorance combined with ostentation of knowledge.—Even if the first three could be got over by some great effort of reason, the fourth remains ready.—Men presume to teach before they have learnt, and fall into so many errors, that the idle think themselves happy in comparison; and hence both in science and in common life we see a thousand falsehoods for one truth.—And this being the case, we must not stick to what we hear and read, but must examine most strictly the opinions of our ancestors, that we may add what is lacking, and correct what is erroneous, but with all modesty

and allowance.—We must, with all our strength, prefer reason to custom, and the opinions of the wise and good to the perceptions of the vulgar: and we must not use the triple argument; that is to say, this has been laid down, this has been usual, this has been common, therefore it is to be held by. For the very opposite conclusion does much better follow from the premises. And though the whole world be possessed by these causes of error, let us freely hear opinions contrary to established usage."

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As might be supposed, Roger Bacon cultivated the acquaintance of men who held sentiments similar to the above, which could not please his brethren. Among them we have mentioned Grostête, bishop of Lincoln, who usually resided at Oxford. This prelate, who was a good mathematician, and a resolute opponent of undue interference on the part of the see of Rome (*terrificus papae redargutor*, says Camden), had opposed Innocent IV., who attempted to appoint his nephew, a boy, to a prebend at Lincoln. On being excommunicated, Grostête appealed from the tribunal of Rome to that of Christ; and so prevalent was the opinion of his antipathy to the pope, that a story is gravely told by Knyghton (cited by Blount, 'Censura,' &c.), that the Bishop of Lincoln, after his death, appeared to Innocent in a dream, and exclaiming "*Surge, miser, veni in judicium!*" actually stabbed his Holiness, who was found dead next morning. It is needless to say that Innocent IV. died a natural death, and useless to speculate upon the means by which such a circumstance as the preceding, if true, could come to be known. But perhaps the memory of Grostête may have been one reason of the willingness with which succeeding popes continued Bacon's imprisonment, to which we shall soon come; for though they might hold his spirit guiltless of the death of Innocent, they long remembered what he had done in the flesh; and when Edward I. and the University of Oxford, long after, applied to Clement V. for the canonization of Grostête, they received for answer that the pope would rather his bones were thrown out of consecrated ground.

In the mean time a pope was elected, to whom we owe the production of the 'Opus Majus.' This was Clement IV. (elected 1265), who had previously, when cardinal-bishop of Sabina, been legate in England. Here he had heard of Bacon's discoveries, and earnestly desired to see his writings; but, as before stated, the prohibition of the Franciscans prevented his wish being complied with. After his election as head of the Church, Bacon, conceiving that there would be no danger nor impropriety in disobeying his immediate superiors at the command of the pope, wrote to him, stating that he was now ready to send him whatever he wished for. The answer was a repetition of the former request; and Bacon accordingly drew up the 'Opus Majus,' of which it may be presumed he had the materials ready. It appears that he had mentioned the circumstances in which he stood; for Clement's answer requires him to send the work with haste, any command of his superiors or constitution of his order notwithstanding, and also to point out, with all secrecy, how the danger mentioned by him might be avoided. The book was sent in the year 1267, by the hands of John of London, a pupil of whom he speaks highly, and who has usually obtained some notice from the very great praise which Bacon in one place appears to give him, when he says that he only knows two good mathematicians, one of whom he calls John of London. But from some other circumstances Dr. Jebb concludes, with great probability, that this John was not the pupil above mentioned, but John Peccam, a London Franciscan, afterwards Archbishop of Canterbury, who was well known as a mathematician, and whose treatise on Optics, '*Perspectivae communis libri tres*,' was printed at least six times between 1542 and 1627, at Nuremberg, Venice, Paris, and Cologne.

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Before the 'Opus Majus,' Bacon, according to his own account, had written nothing except a few slight treatises, "*capitula quaedam*." Before he took the vows he wrote nothing whatever; and afterwards, as he says to Clement, he would have composed many books for his brother and his friends, but when he despaired of ever being able to communicate them, he neglected to write.

With the 'Opus Majus' he sent also two other works, the 'Opus Minus' and the 'Opus Tertium,' the second a sort of abstract of the first, and the third a supplement to it. These exist in manuscript in the Cottonian Library, but have not been printed. It appears that, after the death of Clement, which took place in November, 1268 (not 1271, as stated by some; the latter date is that of the election of Clement's successor, the see having been vacant two years and three-quarters), he revised and augmented the second of these works. What reception Clement gave them is not known: some say he was highly gratified, and provided for the bearer; others, that he at least permitted an accusation of heresy against the writer. Both stories are unlikely: for Clement could hardly have received the work before he was seized with his last illness.

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Till the year 1278 Bacon was allowed to remain free from open persecution; but in that year Jerome of Ascoli, general of the Franciscan order, afterwards pope, under the title of Nicholas IV., being appointed legate to the court of France, this was thought a proper opportunity to commence proceedings. Bacon, then sixty-four years old, was accordingly summoned to Paris (Dr. Jebb implies that he had already removed his residence there, to another convent of his order), where a council of Franciscans, with Jerome at their head, condemned his writings, and committed him to close confinement. According to Bale, or Balaeus (cited by Dr. Jebb), the charge of innovation was the pretext, but of what kind was not specified: according to others, the writings of Bacon upon astrology were the particular ground of accusation. We cannot learn that any offer of pardon was made to the accused upon his recantation of the obnoxious opinions, as usual in such cases; which, if we may judge from the 'Opus Majus,' Bacon would have conceived himself bound to accept, at least if he recognised the legality of the tribunal. A confirmation of the proceeding was immediately obtained from the court of Rome. During ten years, every effort made by him to procure his enlargement was without success. The two succeeding pontiffs had

short and busy reigns; but on the accession of Jerome (Nicholas IV.), Bacon once more tried to attract notice. He sent to that pope, it is said, a treatise on the method of retarding the infirmities of old age, the only consequence of which was increased rigour and closer confinement. But that which was not to be obtained from the justice of the pope, was conceded to private interest, and Bacon was at last restored to liberty by the intercession of some powerful nobles, but who they were is not mentioned. Some say he died in prison; but the best authorities unite in stating that he returned to Oxford, where he wrote a compendium of theology, and died some months, or perhaps a year and a half, after Nicholas IV. (who died April, 1292). We have adopted 1292 from Anthony-à-Wood, as the most probable year of his death, though foreign works frequently state that he died in 1284. He was buried in the church of the Franciscans at Oxford. The manuscripts which he left behind him were immediately put under lock and key by the magic-fearing survivors of his order, until, not so lucky as those of another wizard, Michael Scott, they are said to have been eaten by insects.

Of the asserted works of Bacon there is a very large catalogue, cited mostly from Bale and Pits, in the preface to Dr. Jebb's edition of the 'Opus Majus.' They amount to five on grammar, six on pure mathematics, seventeen on mechanics and general physics, ten on optics, six on geography, seven on astronomy, one on chronology, nine on chemistry and alchemy, five on magic, eight on logic and metaphysics, nine on medicine, six on theology, twelve miscellaneous; a hundred and one in all. But it is most likely that the greater part of these were extracts from the 'Opus Majus,' &c., with separate titles, that some are not genuine, and that others are more properly attributable to the two other Bacons already mentioned. The principal manuscripts of the 'Opus Majus' are, one in Trinity College Library, Dublin, discovered by Dr. Jebb, which forms the text of his edition, two in the Cottonian Library, one in the Harleian, one in the library of Corpus Christi College, Cambridge, one in that of Magdalen College, two in the King's Library, all containing various parts of the work. These are independent of the 'Opus Minus' and 'Opus Tertium' in the Cottonian Library, already mentioned, of some in Lambeth Palace, in the Bodleian Library at Oxford, and a host of others at home and abroad which we cannot specify. The Dublin manuscript is the only entire one with which Dr. Jebb was acquainted. It is a folio of 249 leaves, beautifully written on thick paper, with a good margin, and in double columns. It is not dated, but from the character of the writing it is judged to be of the reign of Henry VIII., or perhaps the early part of that of Elizabeth. The geometrical figures are neatly drawn in the margin. Pope Clement's letters are in the Vatican Library.

It only remains for us to take a general view of the character of Roger Bacon's writings, and of the contents of the 'Opus Majus.' It is surprising how little is known of this work, the only one in print to which we can appeal, if we would show that philosophy was successfully cultivated in an English university during the thirteenth century. It is of course in Latin, but in Latin of so simple a character, that we know of none in the middle ages more easy to read: and it forms a brilliant exception to the stiff and barbarous style of that and succeeding times. We think we see the thoughts of the author untranslated, though the idiom is often that of an Anglo-Norman; by which we mean that we frequently find Latin words used in their modern English sense, as, for instance, *intendere* for *in animo habere*, meaning the same as our word to *intend*; *praesumere* for *sibi arrogare* in the sense of to *presume*. We should perhaps rather say that the English words receive their meaning from the corrupted Latin, and not *vice versá*, in which case the work of Roger Bacon may become useful in tracing the change, and the more so on account of the great simplicity of the style.

The charge of heresy appears to be by no means so well founded as a Protestant would wish. Throughout the whole of his writings Bacon is a strict Roman Catholic, that is, he expressly submits matters of opinion to the authority of the Church, saying (Cott. MSS. cited by Jebb) that if the respect due to the vicar of the Saviour, "vicarius Salvatoris," alone, and the benefit of the world, could be consulted in any other way than by the progress of philosophy, he would not, under such impediments as lay in his way, proceed with his undertaking for the whole church of God, however much it might entreat or insist. His zeal for Christianity, in its Latin or Western form, breaks out in every page; and all science is considered with direct reference to theology, and not otherwise. But at the same time, to the credit of his principles, considering the book-burning, heretic-hunting age in which he lived, there is not a word of any other force except that of persuasion. He takes care to have both authority and reason for every proposition that he advances: perhaps, indeed, he might have experienced forbearance at the hand of those who were his persecutors, had he not so clearly made out prophets, apostles, and fathers to have been partakers of his opinions. "But let not your Serenity imagine," he says, "that I intend to excite the *clemency* of your Holiness, in order that the papal majesty should employ force against weak authors and the multitude, or that my unworthy self should raise any stumbling-block to study." Indeed the whole scope of the first part of the work is to prove, from authority and from reason, that philosophy and Christianity cannot disagree; a sentiment altogether of his own revival, in an age in which all philosophers, and mathematicians in particular, were considered as at best of dubious orthodoxy.

The reasoning of Bacon is generally directly dependent upon his premises, which, though often wrong, seldom lead him to the prevailing extreme of absurdity. Even his astrology and alchemy, those two great blots upon his character, as they are usually called, are, when considered by the side of a later age, harmless modifications, irrational only because unproved, and neither impossible nor unworthy of the investigation of a philosopher, in the absence of preceding experiments. His astrology is *physical*. "With regard to human affairs, true mathematicians do not presume to make certain, but consider how the body is altered by the heavens, and the body

[Pg 50] being altered, the mind is excited to public and private acts, free will existing all the same." An age which is divided upon the question of the effect of the moon upon lunatics, and of which the philosophers have collected no facts decisive against many alleged effects of the same planet upon plants, can ask no more of a philosopher of the thirteenth century than that he should not be too positive. The fame of Leibnitz has not suffered from the *pre-established harmony* one half as much as that of Bacon from his astrology and alchemy, which were believed in to a much greater extent by many of the learned of his time, and the united effect of which would seem to us sense and logic, compared with the metaphysical folly, all his own, of the eminent philosopher just cited.

This planetary influence appears to have been firmly believed in by Bacon, and in particular the effect of the constellations on the several parts of the human body. Perhaps he was rather prejudiced in favour of a doctrine which was condemned by the same men who thought mathematics and philosophy savoured of heresy. And it must be remembered that the pretended science was almost universally allowed existence, even by those who considered its use unlawful; nor can we infer that the church disbelieved it, because that body discouraged it, any more than that it rejected infernal spirits, because it anathematized magic.

[Pg 51] We must draw a wide distinction between the things which Bacon relates as upon credible authority, and the opinions which he professes himself to entertain from his own investigations. In almost every page we meet with something now considered extremely absurd, and with reason. But before the day of *printing* there was very little *publishing*: a book which was written in one country, found its way but slowly into others, one copy at a time; and a man of learning seldom met those with whom he could discuss the probability of any narrative. The adoption of the principle that a story must be rejected because it is strange, would then have amounted to a disbelief of all that had been written on physics; a state of mind to which we cannot conceive any one of that age bringing himself. Nor can we rightly decide what opinion to form of Bacon as a philosopher, until we know how much he rejected, as well as how much he believed. These remarks apply particularly to his alchemy: he does not say he had made gold himself, but that others had asserted themselves to have made it; and his account of the drink by which men had lived hundreds of years is a relation taken from another. Voltaire, in his Philosophical Dictionary, has overlooked this distinction, and has much to say in consequence. It was, however, no very strange matter that Bacon, who (if the 'Speculum Alchemiae' be really his, of which, from the style, we doubt) believed with many others that sulphur and mercury were the first principles of all bodies, should endeavour to compound gold, or should give credit to the assertions of those who professed to have done so. But there is not in Bacon's alchemy any direction for the use of prayers, fasting, or planetary hours.

The great points by which Bacon is known are his reputed knowledge of gunpowder and of the telescope. With regard to the former, it is not at all clear that what we call gunpowder is intended, though some detonating mixture, of which saltpetre is an ingredient, is spoken of as commonly known. The passage is as follows:—

"Some things disturb the ear so much, that if they were made to happen suddenly by night, and with sufficient skill, no city or army could bear them. No noise of thunder could compare with them. Some things strike terror on the sight, so that the flashes of the clouds are beyond comparison less disturbing; works similar to which Gideon is thought to have performed in the camp of the Midianites. And an instance we take from a childish amusement, which exists in many parts of the world, to wit, that with an instrument as large as the human thumb, by the violence of the salt called saltpetre, so horrible a noise is made by the rupture of so slight a thing as a bit of parchment, that it is thought to exceed loud thunder, and the flash is stronger than the brightest lightning."—*Opus Majus*, p. 474.

[Pg 52] There are passages in the work 'De Secretis Operibus,' &c. (cited by Hutton, 'Dictionary,' article "Gunpowder"), which expressly mention sulphur, charcoal, and saltpetre as ingredients. But, independently of the claim of the Chinese and Indians, there is an author, Marcus Graecus, whose work, 'Liber Ignium' (now existing only in Latin translations from the Greek), is cited by Dr. Jebb from a manuscript in the possession of Dr. Mead, and who appears to have been considered by both as older than Bacon. Dr. Hutton, into whose hands Dr. Mead's manuscripts passed, found this writer mentioned by an Arabic physician of the ninth century. Graecus gives the receipt for gunpowder, namely, one part of sulphur, two of willow-charcoal, and six of saltpetre. Two manuscript copies of Graecus were also found in the Royal Library of Paris. But it does not appear that Graecus was known for a long time after Bacon: even Tartaglia knew nothing of him; for he says, in his work on Artillery, that the oldest writers known to him use equal parts of the three ingredients.

With regard to the telescope, it must be admitted that Bacon had *conceived* the instrument, though there is no proof that he carried his conception into practice, or *invented* it. His words are these:—"We can so shape transparent substances, and so arrange them with respect to our sight and objects, that rays can be broken and bent as we please, so that objects may be seen far off or near, under whatever angle we please; and thus from an incredible distance we may read the smallest letters, and number the grains of dust and sand, on account of the greatness of the angle under which we see them; and we may manage so as hardly to see bodies, when near to us, on account of the smallness of the angle under which we cause them to be seen: for vision of this sort is not a consequence of distance, except as that affects the magnitude of the angle. And thus a boy may seem a giant, and a man a mountain, &c." The above contains a true description of a telescope; but if Bacon had constructed one, he would have found that there are impediments to

the indefinite increase of the magnifying power; and still more that a boy does not appear a giant, but a boy at a smaller distance.

That the remarks of Bacon are derived from reflection and imagination only, is further apparent from his asserting that a small army could be made to appear very large, and that the sun and moon could be made to descend, to all appearance, down below, and stand over the head of the enemy. At the same time it is worth notice, that these ideas of Bacon did, in after times, produce either the telescope, or some modification of it, consisting in the magnifying of images produced by reflection, and that before the date either of Jansen or Galileo. Thomas Digges, son of Leonard Digges, in his 'Stratiticos,' London, 1590, page 359 (second edition, the first being 1579), thus speaks of what his father had done, in the presence, as he asserts, of numerous living eye-witnesses:—

"And such was his Felicitie and happie successe, not only in these conclusions, but also in y^e Optikes and Catoptikes, that he was able by Perspective Glasses, duely seituete upon conuenient angles, in such sort to discouer every particularitie of the country round about, wheresoeuer the Sunne beames might pearse: as sithence Archimedes (Bakon of Oxford onely excepted) I have not read of any in action euer able by means natural to perform the like. Which partly grew by the aid he had by one old written book of the same Bakon's Experiments, that by strange aduenture, or rather Destinie, came to his hands, though chiefly by conioyning continuall laborious Practise with his Mathematicall Studies."

And the same Thomas Digges, in his 'Pantometria,' London, 1571, Preface (republished in 1591), had previously given the same story, with more detail, omitting, however, all mention of Bacon. He says that his father—"sundrie times hath by proportionall Glasses duely situate in conuenient angles, not onely discovered things farre off, read letters, numbred peeces of money with the very coyne and superscription thereof, cast by some of his freends of purpose upon Downes in open Fields, but also seuen miles off declared what hath beene doone at that instant in priuate places. There are yet living diuerse (of these his doings) *Oculati Testes*."

The question has been agitated whether the invention of spectacles is due to Bacon, or whether they had been introduced just before he wrote. He certainly describes them, and explains why a plane convex glass magnifies. But he seems to us to speak of them as already in use. "Hence this instrument is useful to old persons and those who have weak eyes."

The 'Opus Majus' begins with a book on the necessity of advancing knowledge, and a dissertation on the use of philosophy in theology. It is followed by books on the utility of grammar and mathematics; in the latter of which he runs through the various sciences of astronomy, chronology, geography, and music. The account of the inhabited world is long and curious, and though frequently based on that of Ptolemy, or the writings of Pliny, contains many new facts from travellers of his own and preceding times. His account of the defects in the calendar was variously cited in the discussions which took place on the subject two centuries after. The remainder of the work consists of a treatise on optics and on experimental philosophy, insisting on the peculiar advantages of the latter. The explanation of the phenomena of the rainbow, though very imperfect, was an original effort of a character altogether foreign to the philosophy of his day. He attributes it to the reflection of the sun's rays from the cloud; and the chief merit of his theory is in the clear and philosophical manner in which he proves that the phenomenon is an appearance, and not a reality. Between the two last-mentioned books is a treatise, 'De Multiplicatione Specierum,' entirely filled with discussions somewhat metaphysical upon the connexion and causes of phenomena.

Our limits will not allow us to enter further into details: nor could we, in any moderate space, do justice to the varied learning of the author, or distinctly mark even the chief of the numerous singular and now exploded notions which are introduced; nor, as far as we know, does there exist any full account of the contents to which we can refer the reader.

The following amusing extract will show the sort of reputation which Roger Bacon acquired:—

"How Friar Bacon made a brazen head to speak, by the which he would have walled England about with brass.

"Friar Bacon reading one day of the many conquests of England, bethought himself how he might keep it hereafter from the like conquests, and to make himself famous hereafter to all posterities. This (after great study) he found could be no way so well done as one; which was to make a head of brass, and if he could make this head to speak (and hear it when it speaks) then might he be able to wall all England about with brass. To this purpose he got one Friar Bungey to assist him, who was a great scholar and a magician (but not to be compared to Friar Bacon), these two, with great pains, so framed a head of brass that in the inward parts thereof there was all things like as in a natural man's head: this being done, they were as far from perfection of the work as they were before, for they knew not how to give those parts that they had made motion, without which it was impossible that it should speak. Many books they read, but yet could not find out any hope of what they sought, that at the last they concluded to raise a spirit, and to know of him that which they could not attain to by their own studies. To do this they prepared all things ready, and went one evening to a wood thereby, and, after many ceremonies used, they spake the words of conjuration, which the devil straight obeyed, and appeared unto them, asking what they would. Know, said Friar Bacon, that we have made an artificial head of brass, which we would have to speak, to the furtherance of which we have raised thee, and, being raised, we will here keep thee, unless thou tell to us the way and manner how to make this head to speak.

The devil told him that he had not that power of himself. Beginner of lies, said Friar Bacon, I know that thou dost dissemble, and therefore tell it us quickly, or else we will here bind thee to remain during our pleasures. At these threatenings the devil consented to do it, and told them, that with a continual fume of the six hottest simples it should have motion, and in one month's space speak, the time of the month or day he knew not: also he told them, that if they heard it not before it had done speaking all their labour should be lost; they, being satisfied, licensed the spirit for to depart.

"Then went these two learned friars home again, and prepared the simples ready, and made the fumes, and with continual watching attended when this brazen head would speak. Thus watched they for three weeks without any rest, so that they were so weary and sleepy that they could not any longer refrain from rest. Then called Friar Bacon his man Miles, and told him that it was not unknown to him what pains Friar Bungey and himself had taken for three weeks' space, only to make and to hear the brazen head speak, which, if they did not, then had they lost all their labour, and all England had a great loss thereby: therefore he intreated Miles that he would watch whilst that they slept, and call them if the head speak."

Miles then begins his watch, and keeps himself from sleeping by merrily singing.

"After some noise the head spake these two words, *Time is*. Miles, hearing it to speak no more, thought his master would be angry if he waked him for that, and therefore he let them both sleep, and began to mock the head . . . After half an hour had passed, the head did speak again two words, which were these, *Time was*. Miles respected these words as little as he did the former, and would not wake them, but still scoffed at the brazen head, that it had learned no better words, and have such a tutor as his master . . . Miles talked and sung till another half hour was gone, then the brazen head spake again these words, *Time is past*, and therewith fell down, and presently followed a terrible noise, with strange flashes of fire, so that Miles was half dead with fear. At this noise the two friars awaked, and wondered to see the whole room so full of smoke; but that being vanished they might perceive the brazen head broken and lying on the ground. At this sight they grieved, and called Miles to know how this came. Miles, half dead with fear, said that it fell down of itself, and that, with the noise and fire that followed, he was almost frightened out of his wits. Friar Bacon asked if he did not speak? Yes, quoth Miles, it spake, but to no purpose; I'll have a parrot speak better in that time that you have been teaching this brazen head. Out on thee, villain, said Friar Bacon, thou hast undone us both: hadst thou but called us when it did speak, all England had been walled round about with brass, to its glory and our eternal fames. What were the words it spake? Very few, said Miles; and those were none of the wisest that I have heard, neither. First he said, *Time is*. Hadst thou called us then, said Friar Bacon, we had been made for ever. Then, said Miles, half an hour after it spake again, and said, *Time was*. And wouldst thou not call us then? said Bungey. Alas, said Miles, I thought he would have told me some long tale, and then I purposed to have called you: then after an hour after he cried, *Time is past*, and made such a noise that he hath waked you himself, methinks. At this Friar Bacon was in such a rage that he would have beaten his man, but he was restrained by Bungey; but, nevertheless, for his punishment he, with his art, struck him dumb for one whole month's space. Thus the great work of these learned friars was overthrown, to their great griefs, by this simple fellow."—From 'The Famous Historie of Fryer Bacon.'



HENRY II. was succeeded on the English throne by his eldest surviving son, Richard I.; he by his younger brother John; he by his son Henry III.; he by his son the first and greatest of the Edwards. The reigns of these four kings fill the whole of the thirteenth century, with a few years

of the end of the twelfth, and a few of the beginning of the fourteenth: Richard I. having reigned from 1189 to 1199; John from 1199 to 1216; Henry III. from 1216 to 1272; Edward I. from 1272 to 1307. Old Froissart observes that it was an opinion commonly entertained by Englishmen, and the truth of which had been often exemplified from the days of King Arthur, that between every two valiant kings of England there was most commonly one of less sufficiency both of wit and of prowess. How far this rule may have obtained in more antient times we shall not stop to inquire, but from the Norman Conquest it may be said to have held good, with but slight exception, for nearly four centuries and through a succession of more than a dozen sovereigns. From the Conqueror to Henry IV. inclusive, the only interruption to such a regular alternation of the good and the bad, or at least of the strong and the weak, had been the coming together of Henry II. and his son Richard I., followed by that of John and his son Henry III. Even here there was the balance of the two valiant kings against the two of less prowess and wisdom.

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At any rate there can be no question about the old notion having proved true in the case of the first and second Edwards; for, as Froissart says, "the good King Edward the First was right valiant, sage, wise, and hardy, adventurous and fortunate in all feats of war, and had much ado against the Scots, and conquered them three or four times; for the Scots could never have victory nor endure against him: and after his decease his son of his first wife was crowned king and called Edward the Second, who resembled nothing to his father in wit nor in prowess, but governed and kept his realm right wildly, and ruled himself by sinister counsel of certain persons, whereby at length he had no profit nor laud; for, anon after he was crowned, Robert Bruce, King of Scotland, who had often before given much ado to the said good King Edward the First, conquered again all Scotland, and brent and wasted a great part of the realm of England, a four or five days' journey within the realm, at two times, and discomfited the king and all the barons of England at a place in Scotland called Stirling, by battle arranged the day of St. John Baptist, in the year of our Lord 1314." And many other were the disasters and disgraces of Edward of Carnarvon's unhappy twenty years' reign, besides the loss of Scotland and the defeat and rout of Bannockburn.

On the 24th of January, 1308, about six months after his accession, Edward II. was married at Boulogne to Isabella, daughter of the French king, Philip IV. (surnamed le Bel, or the Fair); five kings in all, and four queens, including the bride and bridegroom, being present at the ceremony. Edward was in his twenty-fourth year; the French princess was only in her thirteenth, but was already famous as the greatest beauty in Europe. "One of the fairest ladies of the world," Froissart calls her. In tradition and history, however, she lives as little less than a beautiful demon. Never has beauty, never has a marriage been more fatal than hers was to herself, to her husband, to both their native lands. The radiant girl who now gave Edward her hand was in the end to deprive him of his crown and of his life; a long imprisonment of eight and twenty years was to be the dower of her own widowhood; and from their union was to spring a quarrel between their two countries, which it was to take nearly a century of bloodshed and desolation to fight out:—

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"Mark the year, and mark the night,
When Severn shall re-echo with affright
The shrieks of death through Berkeley's roofs that ring;
Shrieks of an agonizing king!
She-wolf of France, with unrelenting fangs,
That tear'st the bowels of thy mangled mate,
From thee be born who o'er thy country hangs
The scourge of heaven!

He who was thus to prove "the scourge of heaven," to his mother's land and race was her eldest son Edward, born at Windsor Castle on Monday the 13th of December, 1312. Young Edward appears to have been known till near the end of his father's reign as Earl of Chester; he was summoned to parliament by that title in 1320, and in each of the four following years. In May, 1325, Isabella proceeded to France on the pretence of negotiating a treaty of peace between her husband and her brother Charles IV., the new king of that country; and in September following she was joined there by her son Edward, who with his father's consent set sail, splendidly attended, to be invested by the French king with the dutchy of Guienne and the earldom of Ponthieu, which his father had consented to resign to him. He did homage for the two fiefs, and received investiture; but, although he had promised his father to hasten his return, he remained abroad till the 24th of September of the next year, when he landed at Orwell in Suffolk with his mother, come, with her paramour Mortimer, to make open war upon her husband. The last instrument issued in the name of Edward II. was on the 20th of January, 1327; on the next day he is understood to have formally resigned his crown in the castle of Kenilworth to commissioners sent to him by the parliament; his son was proclaimed as Edward the Third on Saturday the 24th. His reign, however, for some reason which is not known, was reckoned as having commenced on the 25th. His father is supposed to have been murdered in his dungeon in Berkeley Castle on the 21st of September.

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The new king, a boy of fourteen when he was thus raised to the throne, was of course at first king only in name, and all power and authority were in the hands of his mother and Mortimer. He was marvellously alert, however, in assuming manhood in various ways. If he was not allowed any share in the government of the country, he was thought already old enough both to rule an army and to rule a wife. Within a few months after his accession, he put himself at the head of a great force, and went forth to fight the Scots; and in the beginning of the next year he was married at

York to Philippa, the second daughter of William Count of Hainault, to whom he had been contracted by his mother shortly before their return from the continent.

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Edward's first campaign, however, must detain us for a little; for the incidents were both remarkable in themselves, and they have been recorded in much detail by the writer to whom we must be principally indebted throughout our sketch. Froissart, indeed, is not so much a great historian as a great historical painter—the greatest that ever painted in words. He is extremely inaccurate in dates and names, and other such prosaic matters, and even in his own proper line he may be suspected of having sometimes intermixed a little fancy with his facts; yet he may be always trusted, better than almost any other writer, for what is after all the most important truth, the characteristic spirit or inner life of what he describes; and even in this part of his chronicle, which relates to events that happened before he was born, and in which therefore he writes to a greater extent than in the latter portions of it from report, he has thrown in much of what he had actually seen along with what he had only heard, and, if the sketching be in so far a copy, the colouring at least is his own. The account of the demonstration (for it was hardly more) which Edward made on the northern border is a great deal too long to be extracted in full; but we will select some of the more striking incidents, or those in which the young English king figures the most conspicuously. As we abridge the narrative, we will retain as much as possible of our author's style and manner, adhering for the most part to the excellent old English translation by Lord Berners.

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When Robert de Bruce, King of Scotland, we are told, heard how that the old king, Edward the Second, was taken and deposed down from his regality and his crown, and certain of his counsellors beheaded and put to destruction, then, although he was himself become very old and ancient, and sick (as it was said) of the great evil and malady, he bethought him that he would defy the young king, Edward the Third, because he was young, and that the barons of the realm were not all of one accord, as it was said. So about Easter, 1327, he sent his defiance to the young Edward and to all the realm, sending them word how that he would enter into the realm of England, and bren before him, as he had done before time. When the King of England and his council perceived that they were defied, they caused it to be known all over the realm; and commanded that all the nobles, and all other, should be ready apparelled, every man after his estate; and that they should be, by Ascension-day next after, at the town of York, standing northward. An embassy was sent to Sir John of Hainault, lord of Beaumont, by which his assistance was obtained with a body of foreigners for the sum of fourteen thousand pounds. This was a brother of the Earl of Hainault, who had the preceding year accompanied Queen Isabella on her expedition to England, and had only recently returned to his own country. He and his men of war now landed at Dover, whence they rode straight to the town of York, where the king, and the queen his mother, and all his lords, with a great host, were tarrying their coming. They arrived at York within three days of Pentecost. The English were lodged two or three leagues off, all about in the country; the foreigners in the suburbs of the city, an abbey of monks being assigned to Sir John for himself and his household. Then the narrative proceeds:—"The gentle King of England, the better to feast these strange lords and all their company, held a great court on Trinity Sunday in the Friars, where he and the queen his mother were lodged, keeping their house each of them apart. All this feast the king had well five hundred knights, and fifteen were new made. And the queen had well in her court sixty ladies and damozelles, who were there ready to make feast and cheer to Sir John of Hainault and to his company. There might have been seen great nobles, plenty of all manner of strange victual. There were ladies and damoselles, freshly apparelled, ready to have danced if they might have leave. But incontinent after dinner there began a great fray between some of the grooms and pages of the strangers and of the archers of England, who were lodged among them in the same suburbs; and anon all the archers assembled them together with their bows, and drove the strangers home to their lodging; and the most part of the knights and masters of them were as yet in the king's court, but, as soon as they heard tidings of the fray, each of them drew to their own lodging, in great haste such as might enter, and such as might not get in were in great peril. For the archers, who were to the number of three thousand, shot fast their arrows, not sparing masters nor varlets.... And the Englishmen that were hosts to these strangers shut fast their doors and windows, and would not suffer them to enter in to their lodgings: howbeit some got in on the back side, and quickly armed them, but they durst not issue out into the street for fear of the arrows. Then the strangers broke out on the back side, and brake down pales and hedges of gardens, and drew them into a certain plain place, and abode their company, till at last they were a hundred and above of men of arms, and as many unharnessed, such as could not get to their lodgings. And, when they were assembled together, they hasted them to go and succour their companions, who defended their lodgings in the great street." At the lodging of the Lord D'Enguien, where there were great gates both before and behind, opening into the great street, the English archers were shooting fiercely at the house, and many of the foreigners were hurt; but three good knights, whose names are given, although they could not get into their lodgings to arm them, yet did as valiantly as though they had been armed. "They had great levers in their hands, the which they found in a carpenter's yard, with the which they gave such strokes that men durst not approach to them. They three beat down that day, with such few company as they had, mo than sixty. For they were great and mighty knights." In the end the English archers were discomfited and put to the rout, after about three hundred men had been slain on both sides. "I trow," concludes the hearty old chronicler, "God did never give more grace and fortune to any people than he did as then to this gentle knight, Sir John of Hainault, and to his company. For these English archers intended to none other thing but to murder and to rob them, for all that they were come to serve the king in his business. These strangers were never in so great peril all the season that they lay, nor they were

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never after in surety till they were again at Wissant in their own country. For they were fallen in so great hate with all the archers of the host, that some of the barons and knights of England showed unto the lords of Hainault, giving them warning that the archers and other of the common people were allied together to the number of six thousand, to the intent to bren or to kill them in their lodgings, either by night or by day. And so they lived at a hard adventure; but each of them promised to help and aid other, and to sell dearly their lives or they were slain. So they made many fair ordinances among themselves by good and great advice; whereby they were fain oftentimes to lie in their harness by night, and in the day to keep their lodgings, and to have all their harness ready and their horses saddled. Thus continually they were fain to make watch by their constables in the fields and highways about the court, and to send out scout-watches a mile off, to see ever if any such people were coming to themward as they were informed of, to the intent that, if their scout-watch heard any noise, or moving of people drawing to the cityward, then, incontinent, they should give them knowledge, whereby they might the sooner gather together, each of them under their own banner, in a certain place, the which they had advised for the same intent. And in this tribulation they abode in the said suburbs by the space of four weeks, and in all that season they durst not go far fro their harness, nor fro their lodgings, saving a certain of the chief lords among them, who went to the court to see the king and his council, who made them right good cheer. For, if the said evil adventure had not been, they had sojourned there in great case, for the city and the country about them was right plentiful. For, all the time of six weeks that the king and the lords of England, and mo than sixty thousand men of war, lay there, the victuals were never the dearer; for ever they had a penny worth for a penny, as well as other had before they came there; and there was good wine of Gascoign, and of Anjou, and of the Rhine, and plenty thereof; with right good cheap, as well of pollen^[8] as of other victuals; and there was daily brought before their lodgings hay, oats, and litter, whereof they were well served for their horses, and at a meetly^[9] price."

How admirably in this way does the garrulous, graphic, picturesque old chronicler bring before us England and the English five hundred years ago! Immediately after we have an equally curious picture of the Scots, and how they went to war, no doubt drawn or at least filled up from Froissart's own observation when he visited the northern part of the island some years later. About four weeks after the fray at York, the army set out and marched forward to the city of Durham, "a day's journey within the country called Northumberland, the which at that time was a savage and a wild country, full of deserts and mountains, and a right poor country of everything saving of beasts; through the which there runneth a river, full of flint and great stones, called the water of Tyne." It was now found that the Scots had effected the passage of the Tyne without being noticed. They had passed at Haydon, about fifteen miles above Newcastle. "These Scottish men," says Froissart, "are right hardy, and sore travelling in harness and in wars. For, when they will enter into England, within a day and a night they will drive their whole host twenty-four mile, for they are all on horseback, without it be the traundals and lagers of the host, who follow after a-foot. The knights and squires are well horsed, and the common people and other on little hackneys and geldings; and they carry with them no carts nor chariots, for the diversities of the mountains that they must pass through in the country of Northumberland. They take with them no purveyance of bread nor wine, for their usage and soberness is such in time of war that they will pass in the journey a great long time with flesh half sodden, without bread, and drink of the river water without wine; and they neither care for pots nor pans, for they seethe beasts in their own skins. They are ever sure to find plenty of beasts in the country that they will pass through. Therefore they carry with them none other purveyance, but on their horse, between the saddle and the panel, they truss a broad plate of metal, and behind the saddle they will have a little sack full of oatmeal, to the intent that, when they have eaten of the sodden flesh, then they lay this plate on the fire, and temper a little of the oatmeal; and, when the plate is hot, they cast of the thin paste thereon, and so make a little cake, in manner of a cracknel or biscuit, and that they eat to comfort withal their stomachs. Wherefore it is no great marvel though they make greater journeys than other people do. And in this manner were the Scots entered into the said country, and wasted and brent all about as they went, and took great number of beasts. They were to the number of four thousand men of arms, knights, and squires, mounted on good horses; and other ten thousand men of war were armed after their guise, right hardy and fierce, mounted on little hackneys, the which were never tied nor kept at hard meat, but let go to pasture in the fields and bushes."

The account that follows of the movements and counter-movements of the two hosts is one of the most curious and characteristic passages in Froissart, and a pretty full abstract of it will introduce the reader better than can be done in any other way both to Edward and his historian, and to at least one leading department of life in England in the fourteenth century.

The English, infuriated by what they saw and heard of the devastations of the invaders, followed them for two whole days by the guidance of the smoke that marked their destructive course; but, although they were wasting, burning, and pillaging only five miles ahead, they could not be overtaken. It was then determined to make for the Tyne, and, crossing that river, to wait on its northern bank for the return of the Scots. The march or ride is described as in the highest degree toilsome and dangerous, many men and horses being lost among the mountains, rocks, and marshes, and through the continual alarms that were occasioned by the shouting of those that were foremost at the harts, hinds, and other savage beasts, they were continually starting, when those in the rear thought they had got engaged with the enemy, upon which they hastened to their assistance over all impediments, "with helm and shield ready appareled to fight, with spear and sword ready in hand, without tarrying for father, brother, or companion." "Thus,"

continues the chronicler, "rode forth all that day the young King of England, by mountains and depths, without finding any highway, town, or village. And, when it was against night, they came to the river of Tyne, to the same place whereas the Scots had passed over into England, weening to them that they must needs repass again the same way. Then the King of England and his host passed over the same river, with such guides as he had, with much pain and travail, for the passage was full of great stones. And, when they were over, they lodged them that night by the river side. And by that time the sun was gone to rest, and there was but few among them that had either axe or hook, or any instrument to cut down any wood to make their lodgings withal; and there were many that had lost their own company, and wist not where they were. Some of the foot-men were far behind, and wist not well what way to take; but such as knew best the country said plainly they had ridden the same day twenty-four English miles; for they rode as fast as they might, without any rest, but at such passages as they could not choose. All this night they lay by this river side, still in their harness, holding their horses by their reins in their hands, for they wist not whereunto to tie them: thus their horses did eat no meat of all that night nor day before; they had neither oats nor forage for them: nor the people of the host had no sustenance of all that day nor night, but every man his loaf that he had carried behind him, the which was sore wet with the sweat of the horses; nor they drank none other drink but the water of the river, without it were some of the lords that had carried bottles with them; nor they had no fire nor light, for they had nothing to make light withal, without it were some of the lords that had torches brought with them. In this great trouble and danger they passed all that night; their armour still on their backs, their horses ready saddled." All the next day it rained so that neither sustenance nor forage could be procured, so that they themselves were forced to fast; and their horses had nothing but leaves of trees and herbs. About noon they learned from some country people that they were fourteen miles from Newcastle and eleven from Carlisle, and that these were the nearest towns. Upon this it was determined to send to Newcastle: and there was a cry, we are

told, in the king's name made in that town, that whosoever would bring bread, or wine, or any other victual, should be paid for it forthwith at a good price; it being at the same time proclaimed that the king and his host would not depart from the place where they were till they had heard some tidings of the enemy's whereabouts. By the next day at noon the purveyors returned with what they had been able to procure in this way: it was not over much. But "with them," it is added, "came other folks of the country, with little nags, charged with bread, evil baken, in paniers, and small pear wine in barrels, and other victual, to sell in the host, whereby great part of the host were well refreshed and eased." In this state they remained for eight days, including the three in which they had been in a manner without bread, wine, candle or other light, fodder, forage, or any manner of purveyance; the scarcity even after this being still so great that a penny loaf of bread was sold for sixpence, and a gallon of wine, that was worth but sixpence, for six groats. "And yet, for all that, there was such rage of famine, that each took victuals out of other's hands, whereby there rose divers battles and strifes between sundry companions; and yet beside all these mischiefs it never ceased to rain all the whole week, whereby their saddles, panels, and countersingles were all rotten and broken, and most part of their horses hurt on their backs; nor they had naught wherewith to shoe them that were unshod, nor they had nothing to cover themselves withal from the rain and cold, but green bushes and their armour; nor they had nothing to make fire withal, but green boughs, the which would not burn because of the rain." All this while they had heard nothing of the enemy; discontent began to spread in the camp; it was determined to repass the river, and proclamation was made that whosoever should first bring to the king certain information of where the Scots were should be made a knight and have land to the value of a hundred pounds a year settled upon him and his heirs for ever. On the fourth day,

about three in the afternoon, a squire, one of fifteen or sixteen who had set forth in the hope of winning this reward, came riding at a quick pace up to the king, and, beginning, "An it like your grace, I have brought you perfect tidings of the Scots your enemies," stated that he had actually been taken prisoner by them, and brought before the lords of their host, who, when he told them his object, had dismissed him without ransom, that he might inform Edward that they were only three miles off, stationed on a great mountain, and as desirous to find and fight with the English as the English could be to meet with them. The name of the lucky squire was Thomas de Rokesby. "As soon," continues our author, "as the king had heard this tidings, he assembled all his host in a fair meadow to pasture their horses; and besides there was a little abbey, the which was all brent, called in the days of King Arthur, Le Blanch Land. There the king confessed him, and every man made him ready. The king caused many masses to be sung, to houzel all such as had devotion thereto; and incontinent he assigned a hundred pounds sterling of rent to the squire that had brought him tidings of the Scots, according to his promise, and made him knight with his own hands before all the host. And, when they had well rested them,^[10] and taken repast, then the trumpet sounded to horse, and every man mounted, and the banners and standers^[11] followed this new-made knight, every battle by itself in good order, through mountains and dales, ranged as well as they might, ever ready appareled to fight; and they rode and made such haste that about noon they were so near the Scots that each of them might clearly see other." The Scots were posted in three battles, or divisions, on the lower part of the hill, with a rocky river at their feet, and precipitous rocks on each flank. This new river was the higher part of the Wear, and the Scots were on its right or south bank, not far from Stanhope. The English commanders immediately drew up their forces on their own or the north side. "And when their battles were set in good order, then some of the lords of England brought their young king a horseback before all the battles of the host, to the intent to give thereby the more courage to all his people; the which king in full goodly manner prayed and required them right graciously that every man would pain them to do their best, to save his honour and common weal of his realm. And it was commanded upon pain of death, that none should go before the marshals' banners, nor break their array,

without they were commanded. And then the king commanded that they should advance toward their enemies fair and easily." The Scots, however, though formally invited by a deputation of heralds-at-arms to come down from their vantage ground, and have the battle fought fairly in the plain, either that or the following day, as they might themselves choose, wisely refused to stir. "Sirs," they answered, "your king and his lords see well how we be here in this realm, and have brent and wasted the country as we have passed through; and, if they be displeased therewith, let them amend it when they will, for here we will abide so long as it shall please us." On this it was resolved by the English to remain where they were all that night. It was the night of St. Peter's day, in the beginning of August. They lay in their arms on the hard and stony ground. "They had no stakes nor rods," continues Froissart, "to tie withal their horses, nor forage, nor bush withal to make any fire. And when they were thus lodged, then the Scots caused some of their people to keep still the field whereas they had ordained their battles, and the remnant went to their lodgings, and they made such fires that it was marvel to behold. And between the day and the night they made a marvellous great bruit with blowing of horns all at once, that it seemed properly that all the devils of hell had been there." This mere show and bravado was repeated on both sides for three days, all the fighting being a little skirmishing between small parties that occasionally came forth from either army, and crossed the stream, some on horseback, some on foot; and the English, who learned from their prisoners that the Scots, though they had plenty of beef, were run short of meal, had made up their minds to remain till famine should force their cautious and unassailable enemy either to fight or surrender. But behold! on the morning of the fourth day, when they looked at the mountain, no Scots were to be seen; they had quietly made off in the middle of the night. About noon, however, they were discovered not far off, upon another mountain, in a still stronger position, by the same river side, having now a great wood on one of their flanks, enabling them to go and come secretly whenever they chose. The English immediately took their station on an eminence over against them,—in Stanhope Park, according to the common account; the enemy were again repeatedly invited to come over and fight fairly in the intermediate plain; but they were deaf to all such proposals; and thus the two hosts remained looking at one another for the long space of eighteen more days. The first night, however, the Lord William Douglas, taking with him about two hundred men of arms, crossed the river at a distant point, and suddenly breaking into the English host about midnight, with the cry of "A Douglas! A Douglas! ye shall all die, thieves of England!" slew or carried off no fewer than three hundred men: the gallant leader spurring on, and still alarming the night with his family battle-cry, had even advanced to the king's tent, two or three of the cords of which he struck asunder before he was driven off. This surprise made the English afterwards keep strict watch and ward. At last the Scots again made their escape during the night; and it was determined to pursue them no farther. The young king is said to have wept bitterly in yielding to this necessity. Before they commenced their retreat, or their return to the south, "diverse of the English host," we are told, mounted on their horses and passed over the river, and came to the mountain whereas the Scots had been, and there they found more than five hundred great beasts ready slain, because the Scots could not drive them before their host, and because that the English men should have but small profit of them; also there they found three hundred cauldrons made of beasts' skins, with the hair still on them, strained on stakes over the fire, full of water and full of flesh to be sodden, and more than a thousand spits^[12] full of flesh to be roasted; and more than ten thousand old shoes made of raw leather, with the hair still on them, the which the Scots had left behind them; also there they found five poor Englishmen prisoners bound fast to certain trees, and some of their legs broken." On the second day about noon the English army, well nigh worn out with fatigue, reached a great abbey two miles from Durham; on the morrow the king went forward to that city, and visited the venerable old cathedral and made his offering; and here every man found his carriage which he had left thirty-two days before in a wood at midnight, when they first started in pursuit of the Scots. "The burgesses and people of Durham had found and brought them into their town at their own costs and charges. And all these carriages were set in void granges and barns in safeguard, and on every man's carriage his own cognizance or arms, whereby every man might know his own. And the lords and gentlemen were glad when they had thus found their carriages. Thus they abode two days in the city of Durham, and the host roundabout, for they could not all lodge within the city; and there their horses were new shod. And then they took their way to the city of York; and so within three days they came thither, and there the king found the queen his mother, who received him with great joy, and so did all other ladies, damozelles, burgesses, and commons of the city."

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Before the end of the year a peace was made with Scotland; and in a parliament assembled at York in March following, Edward renounced for himself and his successors all claims of superiority over the crown of that country; and shortly after, his sister the Princess Jane or Joanna (called De la Tour, from having been born in the Tower of London) was carried to Berwick by her mother, and there affianced to David, the Prince of Scotland, as yet only in his fifth year. The great Bruce died within a year after (on the 7th of July, 1329), and was succeeded by his infant son as David the Second; about two years after whose accession Edward Baliol made a sudden inroad into the country, and got himself crowned at Scone, but was driven out again in a few weeks. In a second invasion, however, in the following year, 1333, in which he was assisted by the English king, the Scots were defeated by Edward, on the 19th of July, in the great battle of Halidon Hill, near Berwick; upon which that town was forced to surrender, nearly every other stronghold in the kingdom immediately followed its example, and the young King David took refuge in France. Baliol, however, whom these events had again seated on the throne, was again driven out within a year; the war was carried on for some years, in the course of which Edward once, in the summer of 1336, proceeded as far north as to Inverness, carrying fire and sword wherever he appeared; but no permanent occupation or subjugation could be effected; as soon as

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the English army disappeared the Scots were again in arms; in May 1341 David and his queen returned from France; and at last, in the beginning of 1343, a truce was concluded which left the two countries at peace for nearly four years.

But long before this time a great domestic revolution had changed every thing at the court of England. The arrogance of Isabella and Mortimer, who had early in the new reign been created Earl of March, and the general conviction of their criminal intimacy, had very soon begun to disgust the nation; and the alarm of a powerful party had been excited by the condemnation and execution, in the beginning of 1330, of Edmund earl of Kent, one of the king's uncles, on pretence of high treason, his real crime being, as was universally believed, that he was hated and dreaded by the favourite. Even Edward himself, now eighteen, was staggered by after-reflection upon this act, though he had been induced, in the persuasion of the earl's guilt, to give his consent to it at the time. Already married, too, and a father, for his son Edward, afterwards so famous as the Black Prince, had been born at Woodstock on the 15th of June, 1330, he no doubt felt the state of tutelage, or at least of exclusion from all share in the government, in which he was kept by his mother and Mortimer, every day more galling. It is said that the king confided his feelings to the Lord Montacute; and by his advice it was resolved to make an attempt to seize Mortimer at a parliament which was to be held at Nottingham in October. At this parliament the favourite appeared "in such glory and honour," says Stow, "that it was without all comparison. No man durst name him any other than Earl of March; a greater rout of men followed at his heels than on the king's person; he would suffer the king to rise to him, and would walk with the king equally, step by step and cheek by cheek, never preferring the king, but would go foremost himself with his officers." While he took up his own lodgings with the queen and her son in Nottingham Castle, he directed that the highest of the other nobility, including the king's cousin, the Earl of Lancaster, should be lodged in the most distant parts of the town or without it. The conspirators, however, opened their design to Sir William Eland, who had long been keeper of the castle; and he engaged to admit them during the night by a subterraneous passage, leading from a point at a considerable distance on the west side of the rock, of the existence of which Mortimer was not aware. On the night of the 19th of October, accordingly, having concerted their plans with the king, Montacute and his associates entered by this passage. They were joined by Edward on the principal staircase. Advancing in silence, and with their naked swords in their hands, they soon came to a room, where the voice of Mortimer was heard conversing. Leaving the king without, they rushed in, and slaying two knights, who endeavoured to oppose them, laid hold of the earl. The queen, who was in bed in the adjoining chamber, the door of which was open, cried out "Bel filz, Bel filz, Ayez pitié de gentil Mortimer" (Fair son, fair son, have pity upon gentle Mortimer); she then rose, and, rushing into the room, passionately exclaimed that he was a worthy knight, her well-beloved cousin, her dearest friend; but he was quickly secured and hurried off. At a parliament held at Westminster about a month after, he was condemned, with little form of trial, to die the death of a traitor; and he and one of his confederates were hanged together at the Elms at Tyburn, on the 29th of November. "He hung," Stow tells us, "two days and two nights by the king's commandment, and then was buried in the Grey Friars' Church," now Christ's Hospital, in Newgate Street. Yet Mortimer's attainder was reversed in 1352, and his honours restored to his grandson; his great-granddaughter married Lionel Duke of Clarence, the third son of Edward III.; his great-great-granddaughter and ultimately sole heir, Ann Mortimer, by her marriage with Richard Plantagenet Earl of Cambridge, conveyed her right to the crown thence derived to the House of York; her grandson mounted the throne as Edward IV.; and it has been occupied ever since the death of Henry VII. by her descendants. As for Queen Isabella, she was, upon her fall from power, reduced to an income of 3000*l.* a year (which was afterwards increased to 4000*l.*), and ordered to confine herself in what some authorities call her manor of Risings near London, others Rising Castle, on the coast of Norfolk, where once a year her son paid her a visit of ceremony, and where she survived almost forgotten by the world for nearly eight and twenty years. She died on the 22nd of August, 1358, and was then buried in the choir of the same church of the Grey Friars where the body of Mortimer had been laid.

In 1328, an event occurred which suddenly gave a new direction to the exertions and ambition of the English king, and changed altogether the policy of the remainder of his reign. Hitherto, the object that may be said to have mainly occupied him had been that inherited from his father and his grandfather, the subjugation of Scotland; his efforts were now to be withdrawn to a much more extraordinary, daring, and magnificent scheme, that of the conquest of France. Upon this attempt he adventured on the strength of a right which he professed to derive through his mother. Isabella, it will be recollected, was the daughter of the French king Philip IV. Philip died in 1314, and was succeeded by his eldest son Louis X. (styled Le Hutin, or the Quarrelsome). Louis died in 1316, and was in the first instance succeeded by a posthumous son, named John, who, however, as he lived only a few days, is not usually reckoned among the kings of France. It was then determined, for the first time, that the French crown, by what was called the Salic law, did not descend to females; and, to the exclusion of the daughter of Louis, Joanna, Countess of Evreux, afterwards Queen of Navarre, his brother became king as Philip V. (surnamed the Long). In like manner, when Philip died in 1322, although he left four daughters, he was succeeded by his next brother, Charles IV. (styled Le Bel, or the Fair). The event which happened in 1328, and which we have described as having been attended with important consequences both to France and to England, was the death of Charles IV. He also left two daughters, but no son. In these circumstances, according to the two last precedents, it seemed that the heir to the crown was to be sought for in the nearest male who could claim through an unbroken male descent; the principle apparently being, as in other cases in which male descent only was recognised, that females should be regarded as nullities, or should not be introduced into the genealogical tree at

all. The individual thus circumstanced was indisputably Philip of Valois, whose father, Charles of Valois, was the second son of Philip III. (the Hardy), and the younger brother of Philip IV. (the Fair). Against his right, however, Edward III. set up a principle or rule of succession which was at least new. He admitted that females were excluded from actually reigning in France, otherwise the Queen of Navarre would have succeeded her father Louis X., and would have excluded not only both himself and his present competitor, but also the two last kings, Philip V. and Charles IV. But he contended that, although females could not be called to the throne themselves, they nevertheless conveyed a right of succession to their male descendants; and that he therefore, as the grandson, through his mother, of Philip IV., had a preferable claim to Philip of Valois, who was only the grandson of Philip III. If this had been the whole case, Edward's pretensions might have had some plausibility; it might have been conceived and understood how, in conformity with the general principles of feudalism, a female, though excluded in her own person from a certain office or possession, might still serve as a link for transmitting a right to it to her male descendant. She might be held only as it were to step aside and allow him to take her place in a function which her sex was deemed to disqualify her from discharging. But the real weakness and inadmissibility of Edward's claim lay in the necessity he was under of qualifying this principle upon which he founded it by a limitation entirely opposed to the genius and spirit of the feudal system, and which would have made the law of descent a self-contradictory mass of confusion and absurdity. For, if a female universally might transmit a right which she could not herself exercise or enjoy to her male descendant, then in the present case, before Edward, who was the grandson, through a female, of Philip IV., would come all the existing and possible male descendants of the three subsequent kings, Louis X., Philip V., and Charles IV., all of whom left daughters, though no sons. To this conclusion the principle upon which Edward took his stand, stated broadly and without limitation, would incontrovertibly have led. He therefore drew an ingenious distinction, and maintained his own right as the son of the daughter of Philip IV. to be preferable to that of the son of any daughter of any of the kings that had since reigned, on the ground that he alone had been born in the lifetime of his grandfather. The novelty and gratuitous nature of this assumption would alone have formed its sufficient answer and refutation. But it was fraught with the most absurd and inconvenient consequences. If there be one principle which more than another may be said to belong to the essence of the feudal system of descent, it is that the position and rights of a line in relation to other lines are not to be affected by the date of the birth of any individual forming a link of it. Thus, no priority of birth can enable a nephew to come in before a son. So absolutely does this principle operate, that, even if there be no son in existence at the time of the death of a married man, his next relation does not inherit, or only inherits conditionally, till the time has passed within which it is possible that his widow should bring him a son. We had an instance in the case of the descent of the English crown on the death of the late king, William IV., when the present queen assumed the government at first only as it were provisionally, or with reservation of the rights of any possible unborn cousin. But the claim set up to the crown by Edward III., on the death of Charles IV., would have contravened this essential principle in the most flagrant and wholesale manner. It would have excluded in his favour more than half a dozen lines, all otherwise entitled to come in before that to which he belonged—those, namely, of the descendants, actual or possible, of the two daughters of Charles IV., of the four daughters of Philip V., and of the daughter of Louis X., all of which kings had reigned since his ancestor Philip IV. And this transposition it would have made permanently; these seven lines would all have been extruded out of their proper places by his for ever, or at any rate until some one of them, possibly the last of all, should be again suddenly lifted over the heads of all the rest, and made the first, by the operation of the same strange principle which Edward contended had now produced that effect in his favour.

Strange as were the principles or grounds upon which Edward advanced his claim to the French crown, his means of enforcing it seemed at least proportionally inadequate, and his chances of success still more slight and visionary. It was not a case of the heads of two great national parties, dividing between them the adherence and support of the community. Edward had no party in France; the kingdom the succession to which was disputed was wholly with his opponent. The English crown had even been stripped in the course of the last century and a half of the greater part of the territories which it anciently possessed in France. Bretagne, Normandy, Anjou, Maine, and Touraine had all been wrested from it in the disastrous reign of John; and the loss of Poitou had followed in that of his equally unfortunate son Henry III. Of all the vast continental possessions of that great king the second Henry, there remained only the Duchy of Aquitaine or Guienne; and even that had fallen more than once into the hands of the French monarchs, and the prevalent popular feeling was probably already more French than English. Edward's bold project, therefore, was nothing less than to effect the conquest of France by the sole force of England; and that, too, while he had already upon his hands the war with Scotland, the object of which was also the subjugation of that kingdom, and the annexation of its crown to his own. The latter scheme, indeed, he found himself obliged to abandon soon after he had involved himself in his contest with France. But Scotland continued, nevertheless, for a time to divide his attention, if not his ambition; and at least, it may be said, to occupy his left arm.

Strangest of all was the measure of success he attained. In September, 1339, he entered France from Flanders, with a small army of fifteen thousand men, and immediately proceeded to lay waste the country. In January following, by the advice of his ally Jacob von Artaveldt, the famous brewer of Ghent, and leader of the democratic interest in Flanders, he publicly assumed the title of King of France, and quartered the French lilies with the English lions. On the 24th of June, 1340, he obtained a great naval victory over the fleet of Philip off Blakenberg. Hostilities were then for some time suspended: but arms were resumed in the summer of 1345 with much

more formidable preparations on both sides. On the 26th of August, 1346, was won the ever memorable victory of Creci by seven or eight thousand English from a hundred or a hundred and twenty thousand French, in which eighty of the enemy's banners were captured, while in the carnage of that and the following day above thirty thousand of them were slain, including twelve hundred knights and eleven persons of princely rank, among the rest the aged John, King of Bohemia, from whom the Princes of Wales are said, though doubts have been lately cast upon the old story, to have borrowed their plume of three ostrich feathers, with the motto *Ich dien* (I serve). The young Prince of Wales, called the Black Prince from the colour of his armour, shared, at any rate, among the foremost, boy as he was (he had just entered his fifteenth year), in the peril and glory of the day. Assisted by the Earls of Warwick and Oxford, he commanded the first division of the little army which bore the brunt of the battle. The king himself remained with the reserve. Pressed by the multitude of the enemy, "they with the prince," says Froissart, "sent a messenger to the king, who was on a little windmill hill. Then the knight said to the king, Sir, the Earl of Warwick and the Earl of Oxford, Sir Reynold Cobham, and other such as be about the prince your son, are fiercely fought withal and are sore handled; wherefore they desire you that you and your battle will come and aid them; for if the Frenchmen increase, as they doubt they will, your son and they shall have much ado. Then the king said, Is my son dead or hurt, or on the earth felled? No, Sir, quoth the knight; but he is hardly matched; wherefore he hath need of your aid. Well, said the king, return to him, and to them that sent you hither, and say to them that they send no more to me for any adventure that falleth, as long as my son is alive; and also say to them that they suffer him this day to win his spurs; for, if God be pleased, I will this journey^[13] be his, and the honour thereof, and to them that be about him." The king's answer, when it was brought to them, only gave new life and courage to the heroic combatants. "This Saturday," the old chronicler further writes, "the Englishmen never departed fro their battles for chasing of any man, but kept still their field, and ever defended themself against all such as came to assail them.

This battle ended about evensong time. On this Saturday, when the night was come, and that the Englishmen heard no more noise of the Frenchmen, then they reputed themself to have the victory, and the Frenchmen to be discomfited, slain, and fled away. Then they made great fires, and lighted up torches and candles, because it was very dark. Then the king availed^[14] down from the little hill whereas he stood, and of all that day then his helm came never off on his head. Then he went with all his battle to his son the prince, and embraced him in his arms and kissed him, and said, Fair son, God give you good perseverance: ye are my good son: thus ye have acquitted you nobly: ye are worthy to keep a realm. The prince inclined himself to the earth, honouring the king his father. This night they thanked God for their good adventure, and made no boast thereof; for the king would that no man should be proud, or make boast, but every man humbly to thank God." As for Philip of Valois, he had only been able to escape with his life from this disastrous field. "In the evening," says Froissart, "the French king, who had left about him no mo than a threescore persons, one and other, whereof Sir John of Hainault was one, who had remounted once the king, for his horse was slain with an arrow, then he said to the king, Sir, depart hence, for it is time; lese^[15] not yourself wilfully; if ye have loss at this time, ye shall recover it again another season. And so he took the king's horse by the bridle, and led him away in a manner per force. Then the king rode till he came to the castle of La Broyes; the gate was closed, because it was by this time dark. Then the king called the captain, who came to the walls, and said, Who is it that calleth there this time of night? Then the king said, Open your gate quickly, for this is the fortune of France. The captain knew that it was the king, and opened the gate, and let down the bridge. Then the king entered, and he had with him but five barons, Sir John of Hainault, Sir Charles of Montmorency, the Lord of Beauvieu, the Lord Daubigny, and the Lord of Montford. The king would not tarry there, but drank and departed thence about midnight; and so rode by such guides as knew the country, till he came in the morning to Amiens, and there he rested."

Within two months after the defeat and rout of the French at Creci, another great victory broke the power of the Scots. As soon as King David found Edward fairly engaged in his continental war, he made preparations for crossing the borders. Setting out from Perth at the head of an army of three thousand men-at-arms, and thirty thousand others mounted on hackneys, he advanced by Edinburgh and Roxburgh, entered Cumberland, took the pile, or castle, of Liddel, and then, burning and wasting as he passed, directed his course into the bishopric. The energetic English king allowed no one of his family to be idle, any more than himself, and seems to have made it a principle to accustom his sons at the earliest possible age to at least the consciousness of the duties of their high position, and the sense if not the actual exercise of authority and power; he had left the nominal guardianship of the kingdom in the hands of his second son Lionel, a boy only eight years old; the actual charge and direction of affairs he had intrusted to his queen, the admirable Philippa. In those days, when the chivalrous spirit was at its height, heroism was the virtue of both sexes, as well as of all classes; a few years before this, the principal military personage that had figured in a war for the possession of the duchy of Bretagne was the famous Jane, Countess de Montfort; while her husband, one of the rival claimants, lay fast bound in a French prison, she took what would have been his place in the

command of fortresses, at the head of armies, and in the thick of battles;^[16] and now Queen Philippa was to do the same thing in the absence of Edward. The English force that had been hurriedly assembled to meet the Scots amounted to a body of fifteen or sixteen thousand men, and a considerable part of it was composed of the clergy of the northern counties—the class of persons that could be most easily spared or got at, and quite as ready and as apt for the work to be done as any others. "The queen of England," says Froissart, "who desired to defend her country, came to Newcastle-upon-Tyne, and there tarried for her men, who came daily fro all

parts. When the Scots knew that the Englishmen assembled at Newcastle, they drew thitherward, and their couriers came running before the town; and at their returning they brent certain small hamlets thereabout, so that the smoke thereof came into the town of Newcastle; some of the Englishmen would a issued out to have fought with them that made the fires, but the captains would not suffer them to issue out." The two armies, however, at last encountered, on the 17th of October, at Nevil's Cross, in the neighbourhood of the city of Durham. On the English side, after the divisions were all drawn up in array—the first under the command of the Bishop of Durham, the second under that of the Archbishop of York, the third under that of the Bishop of London, the fourth under that of the Archbishop of Canterbury, each warlike prelate, however, having a lay lord as his coadjutor—"the queen," Froissart informs us, "went fro battle to battle, desiring them to do their devoir,^[17] to defend the honour of her lord the King of England, and, in the name of God, every man to be of good heart and courage, promising them that, to her power, she would remember them as well, or better, as though her lord the king were there personally. Then the queen departed fro them, recommending them to God and to Saint George. Then, anon after, the battles of the Scots began to set forward, and in like wise so did the Englishmen; then the archers began to shoot on both parties; the shots of the Scots endured but a short space, but the archers of England shot fiercely, so that when the battles approached there was a hard battle; they began at nine and endured till noon. The Scots had great axes, sharp and hard, and gave with them many great strokes; howbeit, finally the Englishmen obtained the place and victory." The slaughter was considerable on both sides, but far the greatest on that of the Scots, fifteen thousand of whom, including many of their chief nobility, were left dead on the field. The greatest loss of all, however, was the capture of their young and gallant king. Refusing to fly, he had, after receiving two dangerous wounds from arrows, one of which pierced his head, been dragged or fallen from his horse; but still he fought on; till at last, overpowered by numbers, he was disarmed and carried off by John Copland, a gentleman of Northumberland, who did not, however, secure his prize without a violent struggle, in which the king, deprived of his sword, wounded him with his gauntlet. David Bruce remained in captivity in England for more than ten years.

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Meanwhile Edward was engaged abroad in the memorable siege of Calais, the garrison of which, after a blockade of nearly a year, was forced to surrender by famine, on the 4th of August, 1347. All our readers are no doubt familiar with the scene of the appearance in the English camp of Eustace de St. Pierre and his five fellow-townsmen, come to offer themselves, barefoot and bare-headed, and with halters about their necks, as sacrifices to appease the anger of their long-baffled conqueror, in which Queen Philippa again shines forth so nobly. The story rests upon the authority of Froissart, but has no air of improbability or even of much fanciful embellishment. When Sir Walter Manny, we are told, "presented these burgesses to the king, they kneeled down, and held up their hands and said, 'Gentle king, behold here, we six, who were burgesses of Calais, and great merchants, we have brought to you the keys of the town and of the castle, and we submit ourself clearly into your will and pleasure, to save the residue of the people of Calais, who have suffered great pain: Sir, we beseech your grace to have mercy and pity on us through your high nobless.' Then all the earls and barons, and other that were there, wept for pity. The king looked felly on them, for greatly he hated the people of Calais for the great damages and displeasures they had done him on the sea before. Then he commanded their heads to be stricken off. Then every man required the king for mercy, but he would hear no man in that behalf. Then Sir Walter of Manny said, 'Ah, noble king, for God's sake, refrain your courage; ye have the name of sovereign nobless, therefore now do not a thing that should blemish your renown, nor to give cause to some to speak of you villainy; every man will say it is a great cruelty to put to death such honest^[18] persons, who by their own wills put themself into your grace to save their country.' Then the king wried away from him, and commanded to send for the hangman, and said, 'They of Calais had caused many of my men to be slain; wherefore these shall die in like wise.' The queen, being great with child, kneeled, down, and sore weeping said, 'Ah! gentle sir, sith I passed the sea in great peril, I have desired nothing of you: therefore now I humbly require^[19] you, in the honour of the son of the Virgin Mary, and for the love of me, that ye will take mercy of these six burgesses.' The king beheld the queen, and stood still in a study a space, and then said, 'Ah, dame, I would ye had been as now in some other place; ye make such request to me that I cannot deny you; wherefore I give them to you to do your pleasure with them.' Then the queen caused them to be brought into her chamber, and made the halters to be taken fro their necks, and caused them to be new clothed, and gave them their dinner at their leisure; and then she gave each of them six nobles, and made them to be brought out of the host in safeguard, and set at their liberty." Calais, thus won, remained an English town for more than two centuries—till it was lost in the reign of Mary, in the year 1558.

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The remaining course of the war with France may be very summarily sketched. After the fall of Calais a succession of armistices or truces suspended hostilities for about six years. Meanwhile King Philip had died in 1350, and been succeeded by his eldest son John. By this time Edward had come to perceive how little impression his brilliant but insulated successes had made upon the real strength of his adversary—how little a way—or, rather, no way at all—he had advanced towards the conquest of France by the mere winning of a great battle or two, and the capture and retention of a single town. In the end of the year 1353, therefore, he renewed more formally an offer which he had already made to Philip, of renouncing his claim to the French crown on condition of being acknowledged as sovereign of Guienne, Poitou, and the other territories in France which the English kings had hitherto held as vassals. The negotiations consumed some time, but ended in nothing: several months were then spent in preparations for the renewal of the war; at last, in October, 1355, the Black Prince, who had been for some years intrusted with

the government of Guienne, took the field at the head of an army of sixty thousand men, with which, advancing from his capital of Bordeaux, he made a circuit through Armagnac and Languedoc, spreading devastation wherever he went, and laying, it is affirmed, more than five hundred towns and villages in ashes in the space of seven weeks. In the summer of the next year he proceeded to repeat the same experiment in a different direction: this time the force with which he set out amounted to only about twelve thousand men, and with these he boldly crossed the Garonne, and penetrated into the heart of France. For some weeks he pursued his destructive course without opposition; but, at last, when making for Poitiers, and within a short distance of that city, he suddenly found himself enveloped by a French army, commanded by King John, more than four times as numerous as his own. Then, on the 19th of September, was fought the battle of Poitiers, making that other name worthy to be associated for ever in story and in song with Creci, of which both the extremity of peril and the glorious deliverance were now more than renewed. The French host was beaten back at all points, and in the end utterly routed, scattered, and annihilated by Prince Edward and his handful of English. Most of the chief nobility of France were either slain or captured: King John himself fell into the hands of the victors. The illustrious captive was treated with noble courtesy both by the Black Prince and by the king his father; but, although the extraordinary fortune of Edward had now placed in his power the persons of the kings of both the countries which he had so long been endeavouring to subdue, it soon appeared that he was still as far from the conquest of either as ever. King David was liberated by a treaty concluded in 1357; and in 1360 peace was made with France by the treaty of Bretigny, in which Edward renounced his claim both to the French crown and to the possession of Normandy, Anjou, Touraine, and Maine, on condition of being acknowledged the full sovereign of Guienne, Poitou, and Ponthieu. This treaty set King John at liberty; but three years after, on finding himself unable to pay the instalments due upon the sum that had been agreed upon for his ransom—three million gold crowns—he honourably returned to his imprisonment; and he died in England, in the palace of the Savoy, London, in the beginning of April, 1364.

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His eldest son immediately mounted the throne of France as Charles V. Charles, from the commencement of his reign, had betrayed a disposition to extricate himself as soon as an opportunity should occur from the obligations of the treaty of Bretigny, the renunciations stipulated by which had never, in fact, been actually made on either side. Meanwhile the course of circumstances favoured his views. The King of England was no longer the man he had been either in ardour or in energy; his heroic son had also fallen into ill health, the effect of exposure in an expedition, to be lamented on every account, which he had made in the winter of 1366-7 into Spain, to assist Pedro the Cruel in his contest for the throne of Castile with his illegitimate brother Enrique; and much disaffection had been excited both in Poitou and Guienne by the severe exactions of the English government, rendered necessary by the expenses of this expedition, and by the debts incurred in the late war. In the beginning of the year 1369 Charles openly took his ground by summoning the Black Prince, as Duke of Aquitaine, to appear in his court as a vassal, and answer the complaints of the people of that duchy. The most memorable event of the short war that followed was the sad and atrocious massacre by the English prince of the inhabitants of Limoges, the capital of his country of the Limosin, after he had recovered the town, which had a short time previously been taken by, or had given itself up to, the French general, the Duke of Berri. "It was great pity," says Froissart, "to see the men, women, and children that kneeled down on their knees before the prince for mercy, but he was so inflamed with ire that he took no heed to them, so that none was heard, but all put to death as they were met withal, and such as were nothing culpable: there was no pity taken of the poor people, who wrought never no manner of treason, yet they bought it dearer than the great personages, such as had done the evil and trespass. There was not so hard a heart within the city of Limoges, an if he had any remembrance of God, but that wept piteously for the great mischief that they saw before their eyes; for mo than three thousand men, women, and children were slain and beheaded that day. God have mercy on their souls! for I trow they were martyrs." Disease by this time seems to have debilitated and perverted the very moral nature of the prince. He was soon after obliged to sheathe his sword, and come home to England, where he lingered, in such debility and suffering as allowed him to take very little actual share in public affairs, although his name remained influential, till his death on the 8th of June, 1376. The war in France, meanwhile, had prospered so ill, that by the year 1374 Edward, who had retained and still used the title of king of that country, had lost all the territory he had ever possessed there, with the exception only of Calais, Bordeaux, and Bayonne, and a few detached localities between those two last-named towns. No peace, however, was ever made while Edward lived. After the death of the Black Prince the chief ascendancy in the government was acquired by his younger brother John of Gaunt (that is, Ghent, the place of his birth), Duke of Lancaster. The king himself, who had lost Queen Philippa in 1369, had, in the weakness of old age, sunk under the dominion of a female favourite, Alice Perrers or Piers. She was a married woman, and had been lady of the bedchamber to Queen Philippa; and she is said to have been eminently distinguished by her wit and talent, as well as by her beauty, an influence to which Edward had all his life been extremely sensible, although in his better days he had at least never allowed it to master the soldier or the king. This artful woman, however, soon acquired so much power over him, and abused it with so much insolence, that shortly before the death of the Black Prince the parliament had passed an ordinance declaring that, whereas complaint had been made before the king that some women had pursued causes and actions in the king's courts by way of maintainance, and for hire and reward, which thing displeased the king, the king forbade that any woman should do it hereafter, "and in particular Alice Perrers, under the penalty of forfeiting all that the said Alice can forfeit, and of being banished out of the realm." Alice, notwithstanding, still remained about the king's person; while Edward, wasting with disease, lay, to quote the words of Stow, "neglecting the benefit of time that God had given him, like as he should never have died; trusting the fond fables of the oft-named Alice when she affirmed he should recover his health, so that at that time he

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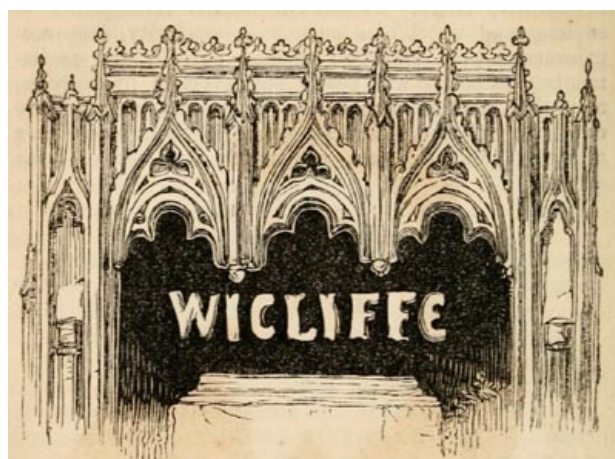
talked rather of hawking and hunting than of any thing that pertained to the saving of his soul; only he granted pardon of death for offences throughout his kingdom to the inhabitants." "Being now," continues this old chronicler, "suddenly taken with the day of his death, he began to have manifest signs thereof; what Alice Piers then did any man may judge, although we set them not down in writing; for, as soon as she saw the king had set foot within death's door, she bethought her of flight; yet before she went, that all men might perceive that she loved not the king for himself, but for that which was his, she took the rings from his fingers which for the royalty of his majesty he was wont to wear. Thus yielding him such thanks for his benefits, she bade him adieu, and so withdrew herself from him. The king, keeping thus at the point of death, was left not only of her the said Alice Piers, but of other the knights and esquires, who had served him, allured more with his gifts than his love. Amongst a thousand, there was only present at that time a certain priest (other of his folks applying the spoil of what they could lay hands on), who, lamenting the king's misery, and inwardly touched with grief of heart for that, amongst so many counsellors which he had, there was none that would minister to him the word of life, came boldly unto him, and admonished him to lift up the eyes as well of his body as of his heart unto God, and with sighs to ask mercy of him, whose majesty he well knew he had grievously offended; whereupon the king, listening to the words of the priest, although he had a little before wanted the use of his tongue, yet then taking strength to him, seemed to speak what was in his mind; and then, what for weakness of his body, contrition of his heart, and sobbing for his sins, his voice and speech failed him, and, scarce half pronouncing the word Jesu, he with this last word made an end of his speech, and yielded up the ghost." He died at Richmond in Surrey (then called Shine or Sheen), about seven o'clock on the evening of Sunday the 21st of June, 1377; leaving the throne to his grandson, Richard II., son of Edward the Black Prince, by his wife Joan, called the Fair Maid of Kent, the daughter of his great uncle Edmund, Earl of Kent, and previously the wife of Thomas Holland, who in her right had assumed the title of Earl of Kent in 1360, but died in the end of the same year, upon which his widow immediately gave her hand to the Prince of Wales.

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The children borne to Edward III. by his wife Queen Philippa were, Edward the Black Prince, in 1330; Isabel, who became the wife of Ingelram de Coucy, in 1332; Joan de la Tour, in 1335; William of Hatfield, in 1336; Lionel, afterwards Duke of Clarence, in 1338; Blanche de la Tour, who died in childhood in 1340; John of Ghent, afterwards Duke of Lancaster, in 1340; Edmund, afterwards Duke of York, in 1341; Mary, afterwards Duchess of Bretagne, probably in 1342; Margaret, afterwards Countess of Pembroke, in 1346; William, in 1349; and Thomas, afterwards Duke of Gloucester, in 1355.

It has been observed, in regard to Edward III., by Sir James Mackintosh, that "though his victories left few lasting acquisitions, yet they surrounded the name of his country with a lustre which produced strength and safety; which perhaps also gave a loftier tone to the feelings of England, and a more vigorous activity to her faculties." "During a reign of fifty years," it is added, "Edward III. issued writs of summons, which are extant to this day, to assemble seventy parliaments or great councils: he thus engaged the pride and passions of the parliament and the people so deeply in support of his projects of aggrandisement, that they became his zealous and enthusiastic followers. His ambition was caught by the nation, and men of the humblest station became proud of his brilliant victories. To form and keep up this state of public temper was the mainspring of his domestic administration, and satisfactorily explains the internal tranquillity of England during the forty years of his effective reign. It was the natural consequence of so long and watchful a pursuit of popularity, that most grievances were redressed as soon as felt, that parliamentary authority was yearly strengthened by exercise, and that the minds of the turbulent barons were exclusively turned towards a share in their sovereign's glory. Quiet at home was partly the fruit of fame abroad."

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Beyond that of most of our great men, has the fame of Wiclif^[20] undergone fierce dispute within the last few years. From regarding him with reverence as "the Morning Star of the Reformation," it has come to be more than questioned whether he was a reformer at all, or whether a certain superior craft was not the motive that incited him throughout his career. It will be convenient to leave the consideration of this matter till we have looked at the leading events of his life, when we shall be better prepared to estimate his character. To assume a controversial tone—as it would be scarcely possible to avoid doing if we entered into the discussion of the various views and statements that have been put forth respecting him—is not at all our intention.

We have examined the several statements; we shall be content with expressing our own opinions.

There is some uncertainty about both the year and the place of John Wiclif's birth: the place which seems most probable, however, is a little village pleasantly situated near the junction of the rivers Greta and Tees, about six miles from Richmond in Yorkshire; the year 1324. What is known of his life commences with the year 1340, when he entered as a commoner at Queen's College, Oxford, then newly founded: his name is in the list of the first scholars. From Queen's he soon removed to Merton College, at that time highest in repute at the University; where he greatly distinguished himself. The theology taught at this period was that of the schoolmen, who, as Bacon afterwards said of them, "did, out of no great quantity of matter, spin out those laborious webs of learning which are extant in their books...admirable indeed for the fineness of the thread, but of no substance or profit." In this scholastic discipline Wiclif became so deeply versed, that his contemporary Knighton, a bitter enemy and a competent judge, declared he was without an equal (*in scholasticis disciplinis incomparabilis.*) Nor was he skilled in this alone; he appears to have pursued, with almost equal success, the whole round of moral, philosophical, and legal studies as then taught. According to the standard of his time he was an eminently learned man.

The earliest of Wiclif's publications, so far as is known, was written in 1356; it was first printed in 1840. The work itself does not occupy more than fourteen small pages, and is of little value on its own account, but deserving attention, as Wiclif's first work, written when he was thirty-two years old, a period in a man's life when his character is fixed and his tone of thought determined, and when consequently the opinions he has formed will almost certainly colour the actions of the remainder of his life. We may therefore spend a few minutes in looking at this production and at the circumstances which called it forth. In 1349 a fearful pestilence occurred in England. It had marched slowly from the east, ravaging every country it passed through. Nearly the whole of Europe was visited by it. The voice of the terrified nations affirmed that only a tithe of the human race had escaped; that all children born since it were deficient in the number of their teeth; that even the brute creation was not spared, their corpses being so many as to fill the air with a horrible taint. So severe indeed was the visitation, that, in this country at least, it long served as an epoch from which legal documents were dated. The Scriptures told that pestilence had of old been the scourge wherewith an offended God had punished the sins of the nations; and the people devoutly believed that this had been sent for such a purpose. The plague ceased, but sober men saw with sorrow that the rulers and the priests had not heeded the heavenly warning, and to the faithful the wickedness that stalked abroad seemed like an awful defiance of the divine power. Under such circumstances and prompted by some such feelings was it that Wiclif wrote 'The Last Age of the Church.' Taking for his guide the prophecies of Abbot Joachim, a mystic who lived in the twelfth century, and combining therewith a cabalistic computation of the Scriptural prophecies, and turning also to the verses of the Sybil, he thought the end of the world was at hand, and announced its speedy dissolution. He was mistaken, and lived to see that he was mistaken. But although his prophecy failed, there is much in the tract that shows the man as he then was, and throws a bright light on his future career. It proves that he had thus early come to have identified in his mind religion with the whole life of man, to look upon it as reaching to all his duties and employments, that he, indeed, regarded it as the animating principle of the whole of the political and social institutions. It proves that he had cast an anxious look around him, and, dissatisfied with the state of the world, he was more dissatisfied with the ministers of religion, whom he boldly and broadly charges with a disregard of their higher functions, and an indulgence in a greedy and unholy rapacity. It may in a word be said, that the object of the tract is to declare the troubles that will fall upon the church and the world, on account of the simony of the priests, and the encroachments and exactions of the papal power.

These feelings were brought out more strongly a few years later. In 1360 he engaged in what a recent historian calls "a fierce but ridiculous controversy with the different orders of friars." To the stern moral dignity of Wiclif the controversy did not seem a ridiculous one, and indeed it hardly seems to us more ridiculous than that of Luther with Tetzl and the Dominicans. These friars had been established in England for more than a century, and had obtained considerable influence. Although vowing poverty, they had acquired great wealth; under the guise of sanctity they had concealed, it was affirmed, gross depravity. They had almost from the first been at enmity with the secular clergy, and were especially obnoxious to the University of Oxford. Before Wiclif, they met with a steady opponent in Fitz-Ralph, chancellor of Oxford, and afterwards Bishop of Armagh, who carried his charges against them to the papal throne. Fitz-Ralph died in 1360, from which time Wiclif pursued the war fiercely, and only ceased to prosecute it with his life. Of the works he produced against them at this period it is not certain that any remain. Two pieces, one which he presented to the court of Richard II., and the other which seems to have been written a year or two before his death, were printed by Dr. James in 1608, and serve to

show the nature of his quarrel. It was not, as Dr. Lingard implies, merely a charge against them for depending upon alms, which Wiclif asserted to be repugnant to the Gospel; though upon that he strongly insisted, but rather that they misled the unwary, by holding out to them false hopes of pardon, and by their untrue representations obtained their property from them, leading them to trust to these worthless pardons thus purchased by money, instead of setting before them the great Gospel truth. He charges them with doing this that they might obtain the wealth of their dupes. They become, he says in his bitter and plain-spoken language, "confessors, preachers, and rulers commonly of all men, and they teachen them not their foul sins, for winning of stinking muck and lusts of their own bellies, that is foul worm's meat and a sack of dirt." And elsewhere, "St. James directs to visit the fatherless and motherless children, and widows in their tribulation, and to keep man unfouled from the world, that is, from pride, covetise, and vanities. But friars do all the contrary, for they visiten rich men, and by hypocrisy getten falsely their alms, and withdraw from poor men; but they visiten rich widows for their muck, and maken them to be buried at the Friars, but poor men come not in there." This was Wiclif's quarrel, and this continued to be his quarrel with them, that while intent only on driving a lucrative and disgraceful trade, they were deceiving the souls of those who trusted to them: no ridiculous controversy that, to a man of Wiclif's mind! As he said, so doubtless he thought—"Friars be worse enemies and slayers of man's soul, than is the cruel fiend of hell by himself. For they under the habit of holiness lead men and nourish them in sin, and be special helpers of the fiend to strangle men's souls." It is not our business to palliate the violence of Wiclif's language, but only to represent his feelings, and a cold statement in the calm phraseology of our day would poorly express the vehemence of his indignation. These words were not probably written till long afterwards, but these were no doubt his sentiments then. His controversy with the friars marks the commencement of his career as a reformer.

The year following that in which he engaged in this controversy he was chosen master of Baliol College, and presented to the living of Fillingham, a valuable benefice in the diocese of Lincoln. Four years afterwards he was appointed warden of Canterbury Hall, by Archbishop Islip, the founder of that college. ^[21] Originally the archbishop had appointed Woodhall, a friar, to be warden, and had founded eleven scholarships, three to be held by monks, and eight by clerks, or secular clergymen. At this time the dispute between these orders was at its height, and the peace and security of the infant establishment were soon disturbed by the bickerings of its inmates. To such a length were they carried, that Islip felt himself called upon to interfere, and he determined to prevent the probability of a recurrence of the quarrel by removing the monks, and substituting for them seculars. Islip did not live long after this change; and, on the succession of Langham to the vacant see, Woodhall appealed to him, as visitor of Canterbury Hall, to remove Wiclif, who, he affirmed, had procured his appointment at a time when Islip was incapable from sickness of judging aright. He was successful; but Wiclif in his turn appealed from the new archbishop to the pope; his holiness, however, ratified the decision of Langham, but not till after a delay of nearly four years. Meanwhile Wiclif had done nothing to propitiate the papal power, but he had done some things to offend it. In 1365 Urban V. renewed the papal claim to a domination over the sovereignty of England, which had been conceded to the holy see by John; and he demanded the payment of an annual tribute of a thousand marks, together with the arrears of the last thirty years. Edward III. was little disposed either to acknowledge his subjection or to pay the money. He submitted the claim of the pontiff to his parliament, which on the next day, and without dissent from laymen or clergy, declared his submission to the pope to be beyond the power of any sovereign to render, and engaged, if the demand were persisted in, to oppose it with the whole power of the nation. Urban was intimidated by an opposition so much more resolute than he expected. A monk, however, published a tract, in which he reasserted the right of the pontiff to the tribute, and ventured to declare, that England was justly forfeit on account of the non-payment of it; and hence he presumed to assert that the clergy were absolved from their subjection to the English king. To controvert his argument he challenged Wiclif by name. The reformer was not the man to submit quietly to such a challenge. He speedily replied to it, though, as he declared, he was not ignorant that the object of his antagonist was to involve him in difficulties with the pope, and to obtain for himself, and his order, the papal favour. Wiclif gives a statement of the debate in parliament, and of the reasons there adduced against the grant; and then, in his own name, shows that the papal claim, and the grant on which it was founded, were dishonest, and that therefore, as the conditions were bad, the consequences that were asserted to result logically from them were bad also. Wiclif in this tract calls himself the king's chaplain, and it is a proof of the eminence to which he had attained, that he should be singled out for this encounter, unless it arose from his prior controversy.

In 1368, before the dispute respecting the wardenship of Canterbury Hall was determined, Wiclif exchanged the rectory of Fillingham for that of Ludgershall, also in the diocese of Lincoln. After the award of the pontiff was received, Woodhall remained two years before he could obtain the king's confirmation, which was, it is said, then only procured by a bribe of two hundred marks. But another and more important dignity was at this time conferred upon Wiclif by the University. In 1372 he was elected Professor of Theology, and at the same time he took the degree of D.D. This is a most important period in his life. It is evident that he had already attained a high position in the esteem of those who were most competent to judge of his abilities, but it is probable that his election to this office may have arisen from their gratitude for his services in opposition to the growing influence and power of the monks, and his fervid declaration against the continuous encroachment of the pope. But if it were for these less immediately *religious* services that he received the appointment of professor of divinity, it is not to be doubted but, in accordance with his repeatedly declared sentiments of the responsibility of

the ministers of religion, he would address himself devoutly to the important duties of the office he had undertaken. He appears, indeed, from this time to have more earnestly and more rigorously set himself to the study of the Scriptures. In those days the Scriptures were not unknown to the teachers of religion, as has been sometimes asserted, but the knowledge of them does not appear to have been general or exact. Wiclif's quotations from them were now more frequent; his expositions of them always exhibited them as the ultimate rule. It is probable that from this time we may date the establishment of his main doctrinal views, and also his departure from the received theology. It is not possible in our brief space to extract from the works that appear to belong to this period, but we may say that, if they have been correctly dated, he now distinctly set forth those truths which caused him to be branded as a heretic. His lectures on the Decalogue afford striking proofs of the clearness and vigour of his powers, and exhibit his leading views of religion with much distinctness. These views were very different from those generally received, and must have excited much surprise—much enmity, and much deep attachment. As we shall have to speak of his opinions more hereafter, we may conveniently leave any further remarks upon them for the present.

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The papal claims occupied much of the attention of Edward III., especially in the latter part of his reign. An embassy had been sent to the pope, Gregory XI., in 1373, respecting the appointment of bishops, the reservation of benefices, and other matters in which Edward and his parliament declared that the pontiff had largely encroached on the ancient customs. Some partial concessions were made, but the English king was far from being satisfied with the extent of them, and it was resolved in 1374 to send another embassy. The name of Wiclif stands second on the list of commissioners, the first name being that of the Bishop of Bangor, who had been employed in the previous negotiation; with them were united five other persons. The conference was held at Bruges, where the papal nuncios met them. Wiclif appears to have stayed in this city from August, 1374, till July, 1376. What results were obtained are not exactly known. For Wiclif himself the consequences were probably of much importance. At this time, it will be remembered, the pope's residence was at Avignon, and the papal court had attained to a rather bad eminence. It is not probable that, with his strong feelings of the responsibility of the office of a minister of religion, Wiclif would become more attached to the dignitaries of the church from the closer intercourse he would now have with them. His visit to Bruges may have produced as strong an impression on his mind as was wrought on that of Luther by his journey to Rome. In fact, according to Dr. Vaughan, "his rebukes, which had hitherto been directed toward the head of the church but distantly and by implication, are applied in that quarter, soon after this time, with unsparing severity."

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During his absence at Bruges the king marked his satisfaction with his conduct, by conferring on him the rectory of Lutterworth in Leicestershire, and a prebendal stall in the collegiate church of Westbury, in the diocese of Worcester. The principal commissioner, on the other hand, received his reward from the pope, who translated him to the see of Hereford, and a few years after to that of St. David's. A few months only elapsed after the return of Wiclif, when he was summoned to appear before a convocation to answer the charge of holding heretical doctrines. What was the exact nature of the heresies does not appear; they were probably not definitely stated, owing to a strange scene that occurred. The convocation was held at St. Paul's, February 19, 1377, and that edifice was crowded by the populace, as well as by the clergy, long before the reformer made his appearance. When he arrived it was between two of the most powerful nobles in the land, one the king's eldest surviving son, the celebrated John of Gaunt, the other Lord Percy, the Lord Marshal of England. With Gaunt Wiclif had probably become acquainted at Bruges, for, during his stay there, the duke had visited that city, as ambassador, to conduct some negotiations with the minister of the French monarch; and no doubt Wiclif, from his official position, would have some intercourse with him. The support of the duke and of Lord Percy arose most likely from political rather than religious motives. The dignity of these nobles scarcely sufficed to procure an approach through the crowd to Courtney, bishop of London, who presided on the occasion. Some slight tumult occurred in making their way, which, being perceived by the bishop, he called out "Lord Percy, if I had known beforehand what masteries you would have kept in the church, I would have stopt you out from coming hither." To this rough salutation the Duke of Lancaster replied, "He shall keep such masteries here, though you say nay." Percy desired Wiclif "to sit down, as he had many things to answer to, and needed to repose himself;" but the bishop declared it to be unreasonable that one cited before his ordinary should sit, and peremptorily affirmed that "he must and should stand." Gaunt replied that Percy's motion was but reasonable, and continued, "As for you, my Lord Bishop, who are grown so proud and arrogant, I will bring down the pride not only of you, but of all the prelaty in England." The bishop told him to "do his worst;" and after some further bickering, the duke vowed that sooner than submit to such words he would "pluck the bishop by the hair out of the church." The bystanders had been growing excited by these outrageous proceedings; and now, fancying the duke would proceed to violent acts, they rose in a body for their bishop, and the duke and his followers were compelled to a speedy flight. The Londoners, not content with driving the duke and his friends from the church, assembled in a tumultuous mob and proceeded to his palace, but he had made his escape, and they contented themselves with reversing his arms. They then proceeded to the house of Lord Percy, which they damaged, but they did not succeed in finding its owner: an unlucky priest, however, whom they found, and imagined to be Percy in an assumed habit, they hung. The mayor and aldermen were afterwards removed from their offices for not suppressing the riot, but none of the rioters appear to have been punished. It does not seem that Wiclif took any part in these discreditable proceedings, nor that the mob attempted to injure him. Of course, he would be far more obnoxious than ever to his opponents, and from this period they

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appear to have pursued him with more determined hate.

After this meeting Wiclif devoted himself to his parochial duties, but in a few months he was summoned from them to answer new charges. Probably some of his more inveterate enemies had forwarded to Rome statements of his heterodox notions, for on the 22nd of May, 1377, the pope issued four bulls against him, addressed respectively to the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Bishop of London, and the University of Oxford, and with these was sent a letter to the king, stating that information had been received from creditable persons that John Wiclif, rector of Lutterworth, and professor of theology, had been actively engaged in propagating certain detestable and erroneous notions utterly subversive of the church. These bulls authorise the incarceration of Wiclif, and his examination upon the various matters stated: the results of the examination were to be transmitted to the pope for his determination. The charges preferred are probably nearly similar to those that would have been brought forward at the convocation but for the unexpected disturbances. These charges, or "conclusions" as they are called, show that the pontiff was most moved by their appearing to question his pre-eminence. They state that Wiclif denied the political supremacy of the pope, and asserted that the whole race of men agreeing had not power to ordain such supremacy—that it was beyond the power of God himself to confer it. That he denied the efficacy alike of benediction and of excommunication assumed by priests; that absolutions are valueless except as they agree with the law of God; and that the spiritual power of the ministers of religion does not differ in degree. These bulls vary only in trifling particulars. They impress alike on all to whom they are sent the urgent necessity of extirpating such detestable heresies, which they liken to those of Ganduno and Marcillus, condemned fifty years before by Pope John XXII. These men opposed the papal see on political grounds; and it is plain from the tone of the bulls that it was the attack on his temporal authority that disconcerted Gregory. Before these documents could arrive Edward III. had ceased to live, and his decease afforded Wiclif a little breathing time. The other parties to whom they were addressed did not take any public proceedings in connexion with them till several months had elapsed. The University of Oxford seriously demurred at receiving the bull, and, when they had received it, took no steps for furthering the object of it. The Archbishop of Canterbury, however, had no such scruples; he addressed a letter to the Chancellor of Oxford, directing him to make inquiries respecting the errors referred to in the papal mandate, and to forward to him the result of his investigations, with his own judgment thereon, sealed with the University seal: he also directs him to cite Wiclif to appear at St. Paul's to answer the charges, on the thirtieth court-day from the 18th of December, 1377. Wiclif appeared not at St. Paul's, but at Lambeth; but the result was not more hurtful to him than on the previous occasion. Gaunt was no longer supreme in the court, but the reformer had now another friend there. The Dowager-Princess of Wales, the king's mother, at this time possessed much influence, and she used it on this occasion on Wiclif's behalf. The Londoners, too, appear to have been now as much opposed to the bishops as they had before been to Wiclif's friends. They attended, and, by their clamours against the proceedings, created much confusion; and before the tumult could be appeased, a messenger from the princess commanded the bishops to abstain from any decision injurious to Wiclif; they, as Walsingham indignantly says, "became soft as oil in their speech; so were they stricken with fear, you would think them as a man who hears not, or one in whose mouth are no reproofs." Before this convocation was held Wiclif had circulated an answer to the papal "conclusions;" which, somewhat altered or corrected, he put in at his trial. These modifications, and his answers or explanations to the "conclusions," have been declared to be "quibbles and evasions unworthy of a sensible or of an honest man." But the proofs adduced by the reverend historian, especially as coming from one so learned in the theology of the schools, are strangely inadequate to sustain so grave a charge. The explanations are undoubtedly strained, but the conclusions are strained too, and the whole bears the appearance of a scholastic wrangle. It would not be worth while to examine these answers here, could we afford the space, but we must repeat that to us they appear anything but evasive, although not consistent with our modes of reasoning. It does not appear that Wiclif had really expressed his opinions in anything like the form they bear in the pope's mandate; they were "conclusions" gathered out of his writings. In judging Wiclif in this matter it should not be forgotten either, that the only authority for the paper ascribed to him is Walsingham, who was most unfriendly to him, and it may be not literally exact. Wiclif concludes his paper by assuring his judges that he is a true son of the church; that he has not advanced any opinions without warrant from Scripture and the writings of holy doctors, as he is ready to show; but that he is most willing to retract whatever can be proved to be erroneous. The answers were admitted as sufficient by the bishops, and he was dismissed with a warning to avoid in future such questionable matters. By Wiclif the result was considered as a triumph, and the warning disregarded. He was immediately afterwards attacked on the subject of the papal infallibility by an anonymous writer whom he calls a "Motley divine" (Mixtus theologus), who appears to have been not a little startled by Wiclif's daring, and in consequence to have thought it necessary to reassert the authority and infallibility of the pontiff in the strongest terms. Among other things he declared, according to Wiclif, that as the pope could not commit mortal sin, whatever he ordained must be just. To which Wiclif replied, that if so, he might remove any book from the Scripture, and introduce any novelty in its place; and thus, making the very Scripture heresy, establish heresy in its stead. From this Wiclif advances to more direct and stronger attacks on a power so enormous and so capable of abuse, and urges the more influential classes to cast off so intolerable a thralldom. He attacks with equal vigour his other positions, but the full swell of his indignation is reserved for the impious declaration that the pope and clergy could as fully absolve from sin as the Almighty himself. It is evident that he had now arrived at the point when he was prepared to oppose to the utmost the papal power.

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That this power would soon have been brought to bear upon him, if Gregory had lived, is not to be doubted, but he was saved by the breaking out of the "Great Schism of the West." Pope Gregory XI. died on the 27th of March, 1378, and while the Italian cardinals elected and obeyed Urban VI., those attached to the interests of France chose Clement VII. Urban was acknowledged in England, but he had too much employment at home to prosecute an English heretic. For the next three years, therefore, Wiclif was left undisturbed. He spent most part of this time at Lutterworth, diligently pursuing the course he had already commenced.

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The comparative tranquillity in which he now found himself, he left not unimproved. He had now resolutely bent the whole of his energy against the doctrine of the pope's infallibility, and he gladly seized the opportunity of exhibiting the absurdity of the tenet, afforded by the rival claimants. His 'Schism of the Popes,' which he now published, is a keen piece of controversy, and from the circumstances must have been very effective at the time it was produced. All reserve is now cast aside in his attacks on the rival heads of the church, whom he contrasts with Christ and his apostles, and assimilates to Simon Magus.

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From this time it may be said that he left the consideration of the political bearings of the papal usurpation, and directed his attention to the religious aspect of it. Henceforth, indeed, his writings and teaching were almost entirely religious. Very much of the confusion respecting Wiclif's opinions at various periods, and the support they gained for him from different parties of influence in the country, has arisen from inattention to the ground on which he received that support. The commencement of his career was signalized by his attacks on the mendicant friars. At that time they were opposed, as they had long been, as interlopers by the secular clergy, and Wiclif was hailed as a powerful champion by them and by the University of Oxford. Their admiration of him arose from *party* considerations, though his dislike to the friars rested on a far wider basis. During the greater part of the reign of Edward III. the king and the parliament were engaged in a determined struggle against papal encroachments. It was prolonged through the whole of his reign and the greater part of the reign of his successor, before it terminated successfully for the English monarch. When so learned and able a clergyman stepped forth as an opponent of the pope's supremacy, it is not surprising that he should be received with welcome, and be firmly upheld by the sovereign and his advisers, so long as he confined himself to the *political* bearings of the subject; and if he exceeded those limits a little, it would not in such an age be taken much heed of. Again, when with a more earnest zeal he set his face against the corruptions of the clergy of all ranks—when he denounced as hirelings such as sought after "filthy lucre" and neglected the spiritual advancement of their charges, and pronounced them the most desperate of sinners, backed as his animadversions were by the purity and even austerity of his own life—he would be sure to obtain the suffrages of serious men of all classes, who would bitterly regret the contradiction between the lives and the profession of such priests. Nor is this an imaginary sketch. It appears to have been exactly the course of events in his life and teaching. His doctrinal views were either not propagated, or they did not attract much attention till the latter part of his life. Then a devoted band rallied round him, and, when those who had used him for temporary purposes had cast him off, they clung to him with an ever growing intensity of affection.

Nothing is more manifest in tracing his opinions than the increasing attention he gave to the Scriptures. In his last years they were the test to which he brought every doctrine, almost every opinion, or matter of practice. As his regard for the Scriptures increased, his anxiety to impart a knowledge of them to others increased also. At this time, of course, the version used in the church was the Latin Vulgate. There had been at various times portions of the Old and New Testament translated into the Saxon and English languages, but no complete translation had, it is probable, been made. Wiclif resolved to enable his countrymen to read the Word of God in their own tongue—a noble resolution nobly performed. Aided no doubt by some of the learned disciples who now surrounded him, he diligently commenced his undertaking, and in due time completed it. Before the invention of printing the publication of a book was a very different matter to what it now is. The only mode of making known the contents of a work then was by transcribing and circulating many copies, and this was the way in which Wiclif published his Bible. That it was diligently circulated there can be no question—from the number of copies of it remaining; and from the certainty that he would be anxious to diffuse as widely as possible the authority to which he so constantly appealed, and on the acknowledgment of which the acceptance of his views depended.^[22]

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Wiclif's version was not made from the original Greek, but from the Vulgate, of which it is a faithful representation. The language is firm and nervous, and was no doubt perfectly intelligible at the time it was written. But nearly five centuries have passed since then, and many changes have taken place in our English. There is however, even now, little difficulty in understanding it, if the uncouth spelling be disregarded, and it is read with the pronunciation of the northern counties, as we have ascertained in several trials with different listeners. The New Testament has been three times printed: by the Rev. J. Lewis, the author of his Life, in 1731; by the Rev. H. H. Baber, in 1810; and again, and more carefully, in Bagster's 'Hexapla,' 1841. This last work contains the six principal English translations from that of Wiclif to the Authorized Version; and it is interesting to trace the influence of Wiclif's on all the succeeding versions. Most who examine them in this work, as they stand side by side, will agree with Professor Blunt, that "on comparing it with the authorized version of King James, it will be found that the latter was hammered on Wiclif's anvil." Besides its vast importance in a higher point of view, there can be no doubt that Wiclif's translation of the Scriptures did very much to fix our language. Except Mandeville's 'Travels,' it was the first English prose work of any importance. Wiclif's Old Testament has never

been printed—it has been spoken of for some years as in preparation for printing at the Clarendon Press.

[Pg 111] But the translation and publication of the Scriptures was not the only object that occupied his thoughts. Among the plans he had devised for spreading abroad his views of truth, was the formation of a band of what he termed his "poor priests." Wiclif had assumed a plain coarse garb, and they were clad like him. Their duty was to go about instructing the poor in the truths of the Gospel. They were to be unencumbered by worldly goods themselves, and they were not to acquire wealth for their order. They had no benefices, and the reasons for it he explained in a tract he promulgated, entitled 'Why poor priests have no benefices.' His principal reasons are—1. The fear of simony. 2. The danger of misspending the money of the poor. 3. The hope of doing more good by moving from place to place. Allowing for the difference of the times, they bear a strong resemblance to John Wesley's original "preachers;" and they were as effective. Wiclif was untiring in his labours; the amount of tracts he wrote is surprising, even allowing that he was much assisted in preparing them. His position and employment at this time were very similar to Luther's the years preceding his death. His pen was ever employed, and ever ready for fresh employment. But, important as were his own labours, it is probable that his poor priests did even more to diffuse his doctrines; and how widely they were diffused may be guessed from Knighton's angry assertion—taken as it may and ought to be with considerable abatement—that "his followers so increased that they everywhere filled the compass of the kingdom; insomuch that a man could not meet two people on the road, but one of them was a disciple of Wiclif." This, he affirms, arose from "the respect they always pretended for what they call 'Goddis Law,' to which they profess themselves to be in their opinions and actions strictly conformable."

[Pg 112] While thus zealously employed in furthering the great purpose to which he had devoted himself, his life was an example of what he upheld as the character of a true priest. His conduct was unblameable, his attention to his pastoral duties unremitting. Three hundred of his sermons are said to be still remaining, and they fully prove his energy, fervour, and devotion—*he* was no idle, careless priest. Like Milton—who in many respects greatly resembled him—he believed that he who attempts a great work must live a life worthy of his undertaking; and the whole of his own conduct, and the judgment he formed of others, were moulded by his exalted notion of the dignity of the priestly office.^[23]

[Pg 113] So long as Wiclif confined himself, in his attacks on the popes and their agents, to their political claims or their immoral conduct, he met with the support of the secular authorities; and also of the people, whose dislike of the papal supremacy was a national far more than a religious feeling. They could not endure that an Italian or a French priest should domineer over their country and their king, and they little liked that his representatives, though Englishmen, should usurp such power. They would not have a priest to rule over them. When Wiclif preached against the doctrinal errors of the popes, he was regarded with suspicion by those who had before most strenuously supported him, and soon indeed encountered from them strong opposition. In 1381 he published at Oxford his twelve "conclusions," in which he appears for the first time to have questioned the doctrine of transubstantiation. His view of it much resembled that of Luther, and which is still that of the Lutheran church. The Chancellor of Oxford immediately summoned a meeting of twelve doctors, who condemned the "conclusions" as heterodox, and adjudged that all who should teach them in the University should be placed under the ban of the greater excommunication, suspended from all their offices and privileges, and imprisoned—and, that the chance of such errors spreading might be at once cut off, they condemned those who listened to them to a similar punishment. Wiclif was lecturing in the school of the Augustinians when their sentence was communicated to him. He appealed from them to the civil magistrate. Until the parliament, to which the matter was now referred, should meet, which was not till the next year, it is probable that Wiclif abstained from teaching his views at the University, but he developed them more clearly and fully in some tracts which he now published: one of them, entitled the 'Wicket,' has been three or four times printed, and is a powerful piece of controversial writing.

[Pg 114] The year 1381 was signalized by the revolt of the commons under Wat Tyler, and many of Wiclif's enemies have with small success endeavoured to connect his name with that affair. It arose from causes sufficiently known to all acquainted with our history, and Wiclif is as little responsible for it, as Luther for the famous rise of the peasants after the publication of his doctrines. In May, 1382, Courtney, now Archbishop of Canterbury, summoned a council to consider the doctrines attributed to Wiclif. Eight bishops and fourteen doctors, with other learned persons, met on the 17th of May, at Grey Friars in London. The proceedings had scarcely commenced when the place in which they were assembled was shaken by an earthquake, to the great alarm of the doctors, who were disposed to attribute it to the Divine displeasure—an opinion in which Wiclif coincided. The archbishop, however, explained it differently, and the doctors, reassured, proceeded with their deliberations.^[24] After three days' careful consideration they pronounced ten of the "conclusions" to be heretical, and the remaining fourteen to be erroneous. The heretical notions being those on the eucharist, his denial of the need of priestly absolution, his declaration that clerical endowments were unlawful, and his condemnation of the papal infallibility. Everything was done that appeared likely to impart force and solemnity to this decision. After an imposing procession through London, a friar was appointed to explain to the people from St. Paul's the enormity of the heresy. Copies of the sentence were forwarded to the leading bishops; and even to the clergy about Lutterworth. Messengers were dispatched to the king, and to the University of Oxford. Wiclif again appealed to the secular power. This appeal has been complained of as opposed to his principles: after all, it has been said, "the new apostle was

in no haste to grasp the crown of martyrdom."^[25] But Wiclif did not depart from his own principles. He held and taught that the secular power ought to preserve the lives and liberties of the subjects, and it does not seem that he asked the parliament to affirm the truth of his doctrines. The archbishop called on the king to put down by force the growing heresy; and the monarch readily answered the call, by issuing a writ to the Chancellor of Oxford, directing him to search out such as were suspected of holding these opinions, and to seize and imprison any who harboured Wiclif or his followers. In his appeal to the parliament Wiclif had somewhat more success. The king, at the instigation of the bishop, had promulgated an ordinance in the form of an act of parliament, directing all sheriffs, &c. to arrest any persons found preaching any of the doctrines condemned at the convocation; but on the meeting of parliament this ordinance was declared to be illegal, the parliament itself having had no share in framing it—and they would not, they said, subject themselves to the jurisdiction of the prelates in a manner unknown to their fathers. It was, in fact, a bold attempt of the bishop to introduce something very like the Holy Office into England.

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But Wiclif's success ended here. He was now left to sustain the unequal conflict alone. His principal supporters at Oxford had been summoned before a synod to answer for their own delinquencies, and had been compelled to retract or explain away their obnoxious sentiments. John of Gaunt no longer stood by him. Perhaps sincerely shocked at his venturing to question so sacred a doctrine as transubstantiation was then generally believed to be, he earnestly recommended Wiclif to submit to his diocesan—and left him to his fate. Wiclif was soon summoned to appear before a convocation at Oxford, at which the archbishop presided, and several bishops were present. He delivered in two statements of his sentiments on the eucharist; one in Latin, the other in English. The former is declared to be unintelligible—it is fenced about with all the forms of scholastic dialectics, and may be passed by; the other, as it is in English, was probably meant for the unlearned, and is plain and perfectly comprehensible. It is evident that his matured and deliberate views were the same as we have already stated them to be. His bearing before the assembly was firm and manly—his enemies say haughty and obstinate. He did not retract. The result was that his opinions were again condemned, and himself deprived of his professorship of divinity, and banished from the University.

He was not further molested,—at least for the next two years. This interval was busily employed. A host of opponents sprung up against him after the adjudication at Oxford, and he was not of a temper to let them pass unanswered. His intense energy was little impaired by age or anxiety, and his opponents still found him a ready antagonist. Bowed down by persecution, his life by illness made a living death, he wavered not, nor ceased from his labours. During his last years Wiclif suffered much from paralysis—the effect, no doubt, of his anxious and stormy life. His first attack was in 1379. Perhaps the knowledge of his weak state prevented his enemies from pressing for the infliction of physical punishment. But a few months before his death he was cited by Urban II. to appear before him at Rome, to answer for his heresies. Wiclif was unable from illness to go, but he addressed a letter to his holiness in which he "tells his belief." The main points of it are his declaration of his entire dependence on Christ as the Son of God, and of his assurance of the supreme authority of Scripture. He acknowledges the pope to be Christ's chief vicar on earth—but adds, that he ought to follow the example of his master, who was the poorest of men when in this world. "This I take as wholesome counsel that the pope leave his worldly lordship to worldly lords, as Christ gave (charged) him, and move speedily all his clerks (clergy) to do so: for thus did Christ, and taught thus his disciples, till the fiend had blinded this world." He declares that if he were able he would go to the pope; but as he cannot, he supposes the pope will not show himself open anti-Christ by commanding him again to do that which God had rendered him unable to do. If his opinions can be prayed to be wrong, he is ready to recant; if it be necessary to die for them, he is willing, "for that I hope were good for me."

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As he was assisting at the celebration of mass by his curate in his parish church of Lutterworth, on the 29th of December, 1384, another and more fatal stroke of paralysis deprived him of the use of speech and of motion. He lingered two days, when his spirit ascended to that world where misapprehension and strife are alike unknown. His corpse was buried in the church; and there it rested, till forty years afterwards the Council of Constance, at the same time that it crowned itself with eternal infamy by its treacherous murder of John Huss and of Jerome, condemned Wiclif's doctrines, and directed that his corpse should be exhumed and burnt, "if it could be discerned from those of the faithful." The order was obeyed. Richard Fleming, bishop of Lincoln, in whose diocese Lutterworth was situated, directed the process. The reformer's remains were taken up, burnt, and the ashes cast into the Swift, a little stream that runs at the foot of the hill on which the town is built. "Thus this brook," says Fuller, "hath conveyed his ashes into Avon, Avon into Severn, Severn into the narrow seas, they into the main ocean. And thus the ashes of Wiclif are the emblem of his doctrine, which now is dispersed all the world over."

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We have endeavoured, as far as our limits would allow us, to exhibit Wiclif according to his own principles. It remains for us to add a few words on his sentiments, and express our own impression of his character. His opinions have been the subject of much disputation, and it is often said that they are so enwrapped in explanations and mystifications, that it is difficult to make out what they really were. But to one desirous to understand them, the difficulty soon disappears. The contemporary notices of him do not imply that there was any obscurity: the charges brought against him; his own defences; the references his followers make to him, do not suggest it. That his opinions will appear contradictory to one who extracts from his different writings, without regard to the circumstances and the time in which each was written, there can be no doubt; but if it be borne in mind that his creed, like that of every reformer, and especially

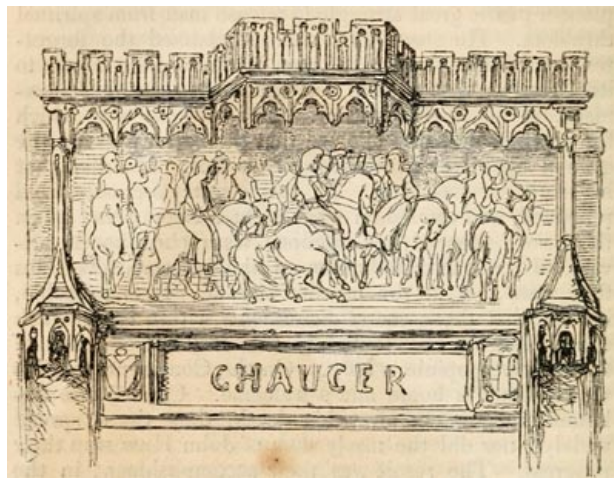
of every religious reformer, was progressive—that his opinions were slowly formed, often forced upon his conviction after a long struggle against them—so that he would more than any other lament the necessity imposed upon him to admit, and especially to diffuse them,—if this gradual formation of his creed be remembered, the difficulty of reconciling the articles of it with the statements and reasonings to be found in others of his writings, will not surprise any candid inquirer, whether he admit the truth of the opinions or not. To us it appears he might truly be called the first Protestant—the first who boldly and firmly protested against the papal domination, both in relation to society and to individual man. His doctrinal views were in the main those afterwards adopted by Luther and the reformed churches—in others, he went far beyond them, verging closely upon Puritanism; while to the last he held many things now only retained by the Romish church.

His moral character was unimpeached. His sincerity has been questioned, but to us it seems to stand firm and unshaken. His faults, however, are manifest. Living up to the lofty character he set before him, he stooped not to one who was unable to attain to the same elevation. A fierce polemic, he is unmeasured in the expression of his wrath against all whom he opposed. But we must not let our dislike of such violence lead us too far. A wise man has told us "not to condemn bitter and earnest writing." In truth, a man cannot beat down idols with a feather broom: and Wiclif's task was not merely to sweep the dust off those about the holy place. After all, Wiclif was abundantly repaid in his own coin. For every handful of mud he flung, a cart-load was thrown back upon him. Let him not be condemned for a fault common to every one who has undertaken so apparently hopeless a task as the destruction of a mighty system of evil. It is a fault that seems to spring out of the vehemence of temper natural and almost necessary to the character of a reformer. The vehemence of his language in some instances, and its cautiousness at other times, appear to have arisen from the fact that, *seeing* palpably the evil practices of the religious orders about him, and the consequences that resulted from them, he attacked them with an overflowing asperity—while in matters of *doctrine* he formed his opinions deliberately, was conscious of all the difficulties of the question, and spoke cautiously, moderately, and with an honest desire not to obtrude extreme opinions. This, at least, appears to us the true explanation.

We regard Wiclif as one of the noblest of our Worthies; and as long as true manly earnestness and Christian worth are honoured by his countrymen, his name will live in their remembrance, and be cherished with devout gratitude. A true, honest, noble-hearted man, he recognised the divinity within him, and followed its bidding—through evil and through good report. With him worldly honours were nought; the fear of man he knew not; he had a work to accomplish, and he turned not aside from it. As long as he had a hand or a tongue to labour with, he ceased not to labour. Wiclif was the pioneer in the great struggle to release man from spiritual thralldom. He stood forth and proclaimed the forgotten truth, that the soul of man is responsible alone to its Creator; that no man can stand between his fellowman and his Divine Master. The welcome with which his doctrine was met showed that the hollowness of the ground upon which men stood was felt. He died, but his work survived him. In this country a goodly band remained, and carried on what he had begun; and when they were silenced, his opinions were cherished in private, till on the introduction of the reformed doctrines they were lost in the broader stream. It is probable, indeed, that these secret dissentients within the English church largely contributed to the easy introduction of the reformed opinions here. On the Continent, too, his views found a home and a welcome. Carried into Bohemia immediately after his death, they there spread widely; nor did the martyrdom of John Huss stop their progress. The result was their accomplishment in the great Reformation.

The number of writings attributed to Wiclif, from tracts of a page up to large and elaborate works, which remain in MS. scattered through public libraries, is very great. Few of them have been printed, and it is not creditable to our literature that while the various societies established for the republication of the works of our earlier writers are loading their shelves with much worthless rubbish, only one work attributed to Wiclif (and that not known to be his) should have been printed. The Religious Tract Society, a few years back, published a volume of selections from his writings; but the language is modernized with very little judgment, and the work is of course of no value.

The authorities we have consulted for this sketch are Wiclif's own writings, so far as accessible to us; Walsingham, Knighton, and Wilkins; the Lives by Lewis and Vaughan; the Introduction to the 'Hexapla;' the various ecclesiastical histories; and the papers and prefaces by Dr. Todd.



[Pg 120] Two undertakings of more than ordinary importance mark the second half of the fourteenth century, and suggest on various grounds an interesting and useful parallel. Pursuing one of these undertakings, the chief actor in it collected vast sums of treasure by the taxation of the people of England, drew from the peaceful and profitable avocations of industry the materials for army after army of English citizens, and poured them upon the soil of a neighbouring country, which he was determined at all costs to conquer. To found for England a new empire on the Continent, was the undertaking on which the brave, able, accomplished, but grasping and unscrupulous Edward III. concentrated the energies of a life. About the very same time that Edward began in earnest to prosecute this undertaking, there was a youth, buried in the seclusion of study, not less actively engaged in the promotion of another undertaking; that—too gigantic in its character probably to be determined upon, or even rightly estimated then—was doubtless dawning little by little upon his mind. For this undertaking, he too drew supplies from all quarters, but his levies were of books, his treasure the accumulated stores of thought that time had bequeathed to the world. And when he had mastered all that could thus be obtained, he went forth into the world to study men, as well as man, before he attempted the conquest of the empire *he* meditated, over the hearts and minds of his fellows. And how fared these respective undertakings? Failures of course affected the ambitious student as well as the ambitious warrior, but we have not in the one case, as in the other, a record of them; let us therefore look simply at the successes of both, and the results. The battle of Creci, the first great encounter between the two nations, was won in 1346, and in the same year the first important poem of the first great English poet is understood to have been produced. Ten years later, Creci had been followed by Poitiers; the 'Court of Love,' by the noble 'Troilus and Cressida;' and by an announcement contained in the concluding lines of that work, which showed the poet had essayed and was satisfied as to his powers, and was preparing to give to England a work that should rival the divine comedy of the illustrious Italian (Dante) lately deceased. "Go, little book," wrote the poet—

"go, little tragedy,
Where God my maker, yet ere that I die.
So send me might to make some comedy."

[Pg 122] Sixteen or seventeen years more elapse, and the iron-willed sovereign bends beneath a fiat even more potent than his own, and in deep humiliation feels that he is utterly defeated; about the same time the poet is receiving from the lips of an illustrious contemporary an addition to the materials for the work that is to form the culminating point of his life and fame, the last of a long series of productions destined to be as permanent as the language itself which they have done so much to create, the 'Comedy,' in short, of which he has so long dreamed;—he is hearing from Petrarch the exquisitely pathetic story of Griselda. Edward dies in 1377, a broken-hearted man; deserted, even on his palace-hearth, at the last hour, by those he had fed and clothed and honoured; he who would have conquered France cannot even now command the presence of a single lackey: when Chaucer dies, it is amidst the profound regrets of all who knew him personally or through his works; and as he goes "home" and takes his "wages," it is with the conviction that he has indeed done his "worldly task," in the foundation of what, all things considered, it is no national vanity to call the mightiest of Literatures. The parallel we have thus ventured to draw does not even end here. Whilst we still drink refreshing draughts from Chaucer's "well of English undefiled," and wonder to see how little of essentially differing qualities his greatest successors have infused into the national literature, the only effect, if there be any one now perceptible, of Edward's unjust attempt, or of his brilliant victories, is in the unhappy jealousy which these and similar events have left in the minds of the people who most suffered from them. Truly if the sword in its day is honoured at the expense of the pen, the pen in the long run repays itself with sweeping interest. We have said nothing in these remarks of the connexion between the two personages whose respective undertakings we have placed in juxtaposition with each other, but that connexion is not the least interesting or least important portion of the biography of either: we do not know whether Edward intentionally forwarded Chaucer's poetical undertakings, but it is clear that by his patronage they *were* forwarded—and greatly; whilst Chaucer, on the other hand, was one of the most trusted and valued of the king's servants; promoting Edward's views by his personal services in the field as a soldier, and still more influentially by his experience and wisdom in the cabinet as a diplomatist.

It is a curious though a very common characteristic of certain biographers, in dealing with cases where information is as desirable as it is meagre, to make the little less, by throwing all sorts of doubts upon the facts that we thought had been settled and realized. They have, in short, a horror of all speculations but those which may tend to disturb existing beliefs. Unable to build themselves, they would deny to others the use of the necessary foundations. Why, for instance, must there be a doubt excited as to the date of Chaucer's birth? Most of the old writers say it took place in the second year of the reign of Edward III., 1328, and their statement is supported by a host of indirect evidences, which show that it must have been about the time they mention. But it is urged, that when Chaucer, in 1386, gave his deposition in the controversy between Lord Scrope and Sir Robert Grosvenor relative to the right of using a certain coat-of-arms (an important part of Chaucer's biography, to which we shall subsequently refer), he described himself "of the age of forty and upwards," and as having borne arms for twenty-seven years. Do the doubters therefore abide by their own necessary inference that he was born in 1345, and became a soldier at the ripe age of thirteen? Not a whit; they acknowledge that such a date cannot be correct; it has even been pointed out that other persons who were examined at the same time are known to have been from ten to twenty years older than the depositions make them. Whatever, therefore, the explanation of the phrase "forty and upwards," it is clear that it is not to be received in contradiction of the date that makes the poet to have been in his fifty-fifth year. Yet the doubt is raised just the same! So again as to the place of Chaucer's birth. In his prose work, the 'Testament of Love,' where the poet is as evidently and avowedly referring to himself as poet well can, he speaks of the City of London that is "to me so dear and sweet, in which I was forth grown; and more kindly love have I to that place, than to any other in earth; as every kindly creature hath full appetite to that place of his kindly engendure, and to wiln [wish] rest and peace in that stead [place] to abide." But then as some biographers have mistaken various other passages in that work, this passage also is to be doubted, nay, the whole production laid aside as one that cannot be relied on. It is true, that for a comprehensive and trustworthy Life of Chaucer greater care must be shown in the use of the somewhat perplexing materials that wait the biographer's disposal than ever yet has been shown, but it is not by a system of wholesale negation that the work will be accomplished. Nothing can come of nothing, and, trite as the observation may be, there are some few for whom it still seems requisite to be asserted. Not simply useless, but mischievous, is that kind of biography which delights to reduce what at all events looks like flesh and blood to a pure skeleton, and has no objection to take away even a bone or two from that.

Chaucer then was born in 1328, in London; and there doubtless he spent his earliest years, until, as he says, he was "forth-grown." Of his parents we know nothing direct. A long list of persons has been collected, who during the period in question bore the name of Chaucer, which was derived from the old Norman word *Chaucier* or *Chaussier*, signifying a shoemaker; and used in that sense during the poet's life by Richard of Hampole, a hermit, who translated the Gospel of St. Mark, and died in 1394. The passage, "There cometh one mightier than I after me, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to stoop down and unloose," is thus rendered by Richard: "A stalworthier man than I shall come after me, of whom I am not worthy, downfalling or kneeling, to loose the thong of his chawcers." But that the poet's parents were certainly persons of wealth, probably also of consideration, may be assumed from the excellence of the education given to their son, and from the ready access which he found, on entering into public life, to the very person and favour of the sovereign. Chaucer, in a word, was born a gentleman; and the fact is of importance, not only for the incalculable benefit that it involved through the instrumentality of that education, but as showing us still more plainly than otherwise could have been shown the true nobility of the poet's mind. It is Chaucer who tells us, in the 'Wife of Bath's' tale, that he who ever intendeth to perform all kinds of gentle deeds is the greatest gentleman, and that he who will perform none of them—

"He is not gentle, be he duke or earl;"

and that the poet here speaks his own sentiments, while relating the sentiments of the knight's apparently aged and hideous bride, is clear from his ballad on the same subject, where it is inculcated that unless a man love virtue and fly vice,

"He is not gentle, though he riche seem,
All wear he mitre, crown, or diademe."

Where Chaucer was educated is uncertain; but the assertions of the older biographers that he was both at Cambridge and Oxford, and that he subsequently went to Paris, then the most famous and flourishing of all the European universities, is supported by the known facts in the lives of other eminent men, who became, like him, distinguished by their scholastic attainments. Grostête, Roger Bacon, and Michael Scott, all pursued the exact route ascribed to Chaucer. The poet is supposed to refer to himself under the designation of "Philogenet of Cambridge, clerk," in the 'Court of Love,' and the indications of a correct knowledge of the locality exhibited in the Reve's Tale are referred to as an additional corroboration of his residence in the neighbourhood. Even the very college is named—Clare Hall—at which he studied, and where he may have written his earlier poems, including the 'Court of Love.' Clare Hall, Speght says, is the same with that mentioned in the Reve's Tale, under the denomination of the Soleres or Scholars'. It is to be hoped the licentious freaks of the scholars, as described in that tale, are not to be received as characteristic of the order at the period that Chaucer was a member.

Two of Chaucer's most intimate friends appear to have been the "moral Gower" and the "philosophical Strode," whose names he has thus embalmed in his verse; and both were members

of the University of Oxford at the time that all three must have been engaged in the business of mental culture. To them he dedicated his 'Troilus and Cressida;' and the poem itself, which is said to have been written at Oxford, may have been composed while in the daily enjoyment of their society. But whether it was Oxford, or some other place, that the poet left at the termination of his English academical studies, we may rest assured that Leland was essentially correct in his general statement when he wrote, "At the period of his leaving Oxford, he was already an acute dialectician, a persuasive orator, an eloquent poet, a grave philosopher, an able mathematician, and an accomplished divine. These no doubt are lofty appellations; but whoever shall examine his works with a curious eye, will admit that I have sufficient ground for my panegyric." But the touches of the "finishing school," it appears, from the same authority, were still requisite, and were obtained. Chaucer went to Paris, where "he imbibed all the beauties, elegance, charms, wit, and grace of the French tongue, to a degree that is scarcely credible." And thus accomplished, and possessing a handsome person, which must have been trained and developed into strength and activity by martial exercises, the young poet returned to England, and prepared to enter into the ordinary business of life, from which alone, it is probable, he thenceforward derived his chief or entire support. At first he entered into the study of the law, and became a member of the Inner Temple; but the only result was, an affair in which he became subject to the law, instead of an expounder of it. Some friar having offended the poet in Fleet Street, he is said to have given him a beating, and to have been fined five shillings for the offence. But it was not in the time of the Third Edward that a young ambitious man, in the possession of all that nature could possibly confer upon her greatest favourites—whether of personal or mental advantages, and whose acquisitions were as remarkable as his endowments,—it was not then such a man could shut himself up in the dusty solitudes of the Temple chambers, and pore over legal treatises from morn to noon—from noon to dewy eve. It was not the moths of fashion that the dazzling radiance of the court of King Edward attracted, but England's bravest and ablest men, her noblest and most virtuous women, whose beauty, however conspicuous, formed the least of their qualifications. It was with such as these that the palace halls of Windsor were thronged. To mention but two names, each sufficient to immortalize any court—there were then among the brilliant groups that surrounded Edward, his queen Philippa, the saviour of the illustrious citizens of Calais, and the Countess of Salisbury, the heroine of Froissart's charming narration, who not only resisted the king's unlawful love, but so purified the heart of the lover, that when the well-known accident happened at a ball, he founded the order of the Garter in her eternal honour: an act, all things considered, unequalled for its combination of chivalrous, poetical, and lover-like feeling.

It was among such personages the young poet desired to be, and his wishes were speedily gratified. And it is evident that he was at least as much admired as he could admire, notwithstanding his modest and retiring, if not even reserved habits. A pleasant tradition tells us that the Countess of Pembroke, the king's daughter, one of his patronesses, told him his silence created more mirth than his conversation; for he was very bashful and reserved in company, notwithstanding that life and spirit which appeared in his writings. But Chaucer had no desire to play the courtier—and he was understood. More than one of his poems are believed to have originated in conversations between the poet and the noble women who honoured themselves and him by taking an interest in his career. Thus, to appease them generally, when they professed to be offended by the strictures contained in some of his writings, he produced, at the command of Queen Philippa, 'The Legend of Good Women,' which, it has been pointedly observed, should rather be called 'The Legend of Bad Men.' Lydgate says—

"The poet wrote, at the réquest of the queen,
A Legendè of perfect holiness;
Of good women to findè out nineteen
That did excel in bounty and fairèness;"

and the sly monk adds, for all his labour he found it impossible

"In all this world to find so great a number."

How the poet obtained admittance to the court we know not. In the absence of any facts tending to show that he was by birth entitled to expect as a matter of course the remarkable favour that was accorded to him, we do not see why we may not fall back upon the agreeable hypothesis that it was not social rank (though he had as much of it as was indispensable), but intellectual merit that really introduced him there. At all events such a supposition is supported in a remarkable manner by the known nature of his connexion with the man who, next to Edward and his son the Black Prince, occupied in his time the largest share of the attention of the people of England: we refer to John of Gaunt, Duke of Lancaster, the fourth son of Edward, and of course, therefore, the brother of the prince just named.

Among the poems of Chaucer there are three which have been looked upon, and no doubt correctly, as illustrating the personal history of the duke as a lover and a husband. In the first of these, 'The Complaint of the Black Knight,' the poet, in a charming passage, describes himself as walking forth on a May morning, and meeting in an arbour the Black Knight, who is bewailing the cruelty of his mistress. It is worthy of observation, that the poem shows how much better the poet felt what did concern him, the beauty of the time and season, than what did not touch very deeply his sympathies, the love-distresses of his friend and patron John of Gaunt. The second work of the series, 'Chaucer's Dream,' shows that the lady's obduracy was, as usual, more apparent than real. The royal lover has married the lady of his heart, Blanche, daughter of the Duke of Lancaster. The third poem, the 'Book of the Duchess,' records the premature death of

Blanche in 1369, and the profound grief of her husband. The historical facts relating to John of Gaunt, "time-honoured Lancaster," harmonize so completely with the poetical ones contained in this trio of poems, that there can be no reasonable doubt as to the scope and origin of the latter. And this conviction is of greater value than may be at first apparent. The 'Complaint of the Black Knight,' referring to the duke's courtship, and 'Chaucer's Dream,' referring to the duke's marriage, must have been written—the one a little before and the other a little after that marriage, which took place at Reading, in May, 1359, and was solemnized with great splendour. Knowing then the period and the circumstances of the production of these poems, we shall find, on looking at the one named 'Chaucer's Dream,' that we also know the essential history of the poet's own courtship and marriage. In the other two poems he is thinking chiefly of his friend and patron; in this one he makes all turn toward the expression of his own heartfelt wishes. In the 'Dream' he imagines himself in a lodge, beside a well in the forest, reposing after the fatigues of a hunt. The difficulties attending the courtship of the duke and duchess are then shadowed forth by an account of their death, and revival, ending in their union. Then follows a long and highly important passage, evidently, up to a certain point, narrating facts. After the marriage was determined upon, the royal lovers sent out messengers in all directions

"To kinges, queenes, and duchesses,
To divers princes, and princesses,"

inviting them to be present at the solemnity. Then, says the poet, they ordered that certain knights and squires and officers—

"In manner of an embassade,
With certain letters clos'd and made,
Should take the bargè and depart,
And seek *my lady* every part
Till they her found."

The duke and duchess^[26] (Blanche) tell them to charge her to be there at the day; again and again Blanche desires to be commended to her, and she is to be told that, unless she come, all will be wasted,

"And the feast but a business,
Withouten joy or lustiness."

The embassy departs, and, after fourteen days, returns with the object of their search in the barge. The duchess, in her delight, cannot wait for her arrival at the court, but, says the poet, she met my lady on the sand, and clasped her in her arms. And for twelve hours after they parted not, but wandered alone, talking of their joys and troubles, with the pleasure natural to their young and tender years. And when night came, they still remained together. On the morrow the prince of lords

"Came, and unto my lady said
Of her coming glad, and well apaid^[27]
He was, and full right cunningly
Her thankèd, and full heartily,
And laugh'd and smil'd, and said, 'Ywis
That^[28] was in doubt, in safety is.'"

The marriage takes place, and then, continues the poet,

"The prince, the queen,^[29] and all the rest
Unto my lady made request
And her besought oftén, and pray'd
To me-wards to be well apaid
And cónsider mine olde truth,
And on my paines haven ruth,
And me accept to her servíce
In suche form and in such wise
That we both mighten be as one;
Thus pray'd the queen and every one,
And, for there should ne be no Nay,
They stinten jousting all a day
To pray my lady, and requere
To be content and out of fear,
And with good heart make friendly cheer,
And said it was a happy year;
At which she smiled, and said 'Ywis
I trow well he my servant is,
And would *my* welfare, as I trist,^[30]
So would I *his*; and would he wist
How; and I knewe that his truth
Continue would, withouten sloth,
And be such as ye here report.
Restraining both couráge and sport,
I could consent at your request

To be ynamèd of your feast,
 And doen after your usánce
 In obeying of your pleásance.
 At your request this I consent,
 To pleasen you in your intent:
*And eke the sovèrèign above,
 Commanded hath me for to love,
 And before others him prefer;*
 Against which prince may be no wer;^[31]
 For his power o'er all reigneth,
 That other would for nought him paineth;
 And sith his will and yours is one,
 Contráry in me shall be none."

Here we have passed the boundaries of fact. That the lady had not yet said what the poet so delicately tells her she should say, much less that the marriage had taken place amidst all the ceremonies and gladness and splendour that he next so picturesquely describes, the poet presently proceeds to tell us. The sounds

"Round about, and in all the tents,
 With thousandès of instruments,"

trouble him in his sleep; he wakes, and finds no lady, alas! And now the mask, assumed for the moment, is dropped; he avows his prayer that his lady will accept of his service in such a manner that the substance of his dream may prove true, or that he may return into the same pleasant isle of fancy. And then, in direct appeal to her for grace (under the title of L'Envoy), he concludes the poem.

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If we need any other evidence of the correctness of the idea that this poem records the poet's own feelings and position, and the position of the lady loved by him, we have only to inquire who it was that is known to have inspired such sentiments in his breast. She was the daughter of Sir Payne Roet, Guienne, king-of-arms, who is supposed to have come over from Hainault with Queen Philippa, after whom she may have been named, and in whose service she remained up to the day of the queen's death. This lady therefore was a member, and, as we know, a highly favoured one, of the household of the wife of John of Gaunt's brother. But the connexion may be traced still closer. Philippa Roet's sister Katherine, widow of Sir Hugh Swynford, was in the household of the duchess Blanche herself, the queen of Chaucer's dream, and it was that Katherine whom the great duke, later in life, married.

And what did the lady say, on the receipt of this poem, so exquisitely contrived and carried out? We know not, but may guess from subsequent circumstances that it was not very unfavourable. Suddenly, however, the sound of war rouses the lovers from all such dreamy delights. Edward, like a losing gamester, growing only the more desperate, is fitting out a new army for the conquest of France. The poet must accompany him. It is Chaucer's first military expedition. We must for a while forget the poet in the soldier.

Our knowledge of this important incident in the poet's career is derived from the deposition before mentioned, and forms the chief value of that document. Though delivered, therefore, many years subsequent to the period in question, we may here fitly transcribe it. Chaucer, among a host of other witnesses, was called by Richard, Lord Scrope, to bear testimony to his right to certain arms, in opposition to a similar claim on the part of Sir Robert Grosvenor.

"Geoffrey Chaucer, Esquire, of the age of forty and upwards, armed for twenty-seven years, produced on behalf of Sir Richard Scrope, sworn and examined: Asked, whether the arms 'Azure, a bend Or' belonged or ought to belong to the said Sir Richard? Said yes, for he saw him so armed in France, before the town of Retters [apparently the village of Retiers, near Rennes, in Brittany], and Sir Henry Scrope armed in the same arms with a white label, and with a banner; and the said Sir Richard armed in the entire arms 'Azure, with a bend Or,' and so he had seen him armed during the whole expedition, until the said Geoffrey was taken. Asked, how he knew that the said arms appertained to the said Sir Richard? Said that he had heard say from old knights and esquires, that they had been reputed to be their arms, as common fame and the public voice proved; and he also said that they had continued their possession of the said arms; and that all his time he had seen the said arms in banners, glass, paintings, and vestments, and commonly called the arms of Scrope. Asked, if he had heard anyone say who was the first ancestor of the said Sir Richard who first bore the said arms? Said no, nor had he ever heard otherwise than that they were come of ancient ancestry, and of old gentry, and used the said arms. Asked if he had heard any one say how long a time the ancestors of the said Sir Richard had used the said arms? Said no, but he had heard say that it passed the memory of man. Asked, whether he had ever heard of any interruption or challenge made by Sir Robert Grosvenor, or by his ancestors, or by any one in his name, to the said Sir Richard, or to any of his ancestors? Said no; but he said that he was once in Friday Street, in London, and as he was walking in the street, he saw hanging a new sign made of the said arms, and he asked what inn that was that had hung out these arms of Scrope, and one answered him and said, No Sir, they are not hung out for the arms of Scrope, nor painted there for those arms, but they are painted and put there by a knight of the county of Chester, whom men call Sir Robert Grosvenor; and that was the first time he ever heard speak of Sir Robert Grosvenor, or of his ancestors, or of any other bearing the name of Grosvenor."

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Chaucer says he had been armed twenty-seven years; this means, according to the then prevalent mode of speaking of such matters, that in 1359, twenty-seven years before the date of the deposition, 1386, Chaucer had *first* borne arms. He says also, he was in France, in one of the military expeditions of the time. Now as 1359 is the very year in which Edward took a great army into that country, and as for three years before and for ten years after, there was no other such expedition set on foot, and as when fresh ones were despatched we know the poet was not concerned in them, but was differently engaged—why, on the whole, the inference is irresistible, that it was in Edward's expedition of 1359 that Chaucer first became a soldier.

And that expedition was one calculated to test most searchingly his possession of the soldier's best quality, fortitude, though not at all calculated to make him enamoured of the vocation. The expedition throughout exhibited to him only the shades of military life, without a glimpse of its sunshine. A more formidable army had never perhaps left the English shores—certainly had never left it to meet so melancholy a fate; it comprised a hundred thousand men, and filled a thousand ships during the passage from coast to coast. And if for a time it seemed as irresistible as it had promised to be, that was because no army came forth to meet it. From Calais Edward moved on through Artois to Picardy; and thence to Rheims, which he besieged with the intention, it is said, of having himself crowned king of France in the cathedral, the usual place of coronation for the sovereigns of the country. But the garrison was brave, the place strong, and the season winter. In the end he raised the siege, and marched into Burgundy, and then, turning towards Paris, he moved forwards till the dismayed Parisians beheld an English army encamped without their walls. The French, however, had learned wisdom from the success with which they had often defended their fortified places, and from the failure that attended their efforts in the open field. So they were not to be drawn outside the walls of the capital, not even by a challenge; and at the same time Edward was quite unable to force his way in; so, harassed by insufficient supplies of provisions, he presently retreated towards Brittany. Every step of his way was marked by falling horses and men, who died from hunger or the intolerable fatigue to which they were subjected. No wonder that the spirits of the troops sank, and that Edward's own mind was so affected that he became superstitious, and yielded, beneath the terror of a great storm, the peace that not all the miseries of his own subjects, and the infinitely greater miseries they had inflicted on the French people, could wring from him. On the 8th of May, 1360, the treaty of Bretigny was concluded; Bretigny being a village near to Chartres. Of the greater part of the horrors of the expedition Chaucer was an eyewitness and participator, with the additional pang added that, as he himself tells, he was "taken" prisoner. How long he remained in captivity it is impossible to say; but there is reason to fear that the period may have even extended to five or six years. From 1359-60 to a little before 1366 his history is a blank to us; and the next circumstance we find related of him looks very like the greetings of his friends and of his sovereign after a prolonged and painful absence. In or before 1366 he received the hand of Philippa Roet, who, on the 12th of September in that year, was granted, by Edward, a pension of ten marks for life, by the name of Philippa Chaucer; and on the 20th of June in the following year, we find her husband holding a post (that of valet) in the king's household, corresponding to hers in the queen's, and enjoying that king's especial favour, as expressed by a grant of twenty marks yearly, in consideration of his former and future services. It is tolerably evident from all this, that it was not through the exertions of his own friend and patron John of Gaunt, or through the existence of any particular private desire to aid him in the minds of the still more influential friends and patrons of his wife, that the poet thus succeeded in establishing a position for himself in the world. The reward looks as though it were apportioned simply to the amount of the desert; and through all Chaucer's subsequent and highly distinguished career we shall find the same characteristic prevailing in the treatment of him. Or if there be any discrepancy, it is that the rewards on the whole seem to fall short rather than to exceed what might be supposed the legitimate amount. The king's grant to Chaucer was to last for life, or until he should be otherwise provided for. The promise here held out to the poet was not long left unredeemed. In 1370 he was sent abroad on the king's service; and—having been raised to the rank of one of the king's own squires—again in 1372, when he went to Genoa, to treat on the subject of the choice of a port in England where the Genoese might form an establishment. In 1376 a secret mission, and the nature of which still remains secret, was intrusted to him and Sir John Burley. In 1377 he accompanied Sir Thomas Percy on another secret mission to Flanders, and in the same year is supposed to have been concerned in the negotiations for peace with France; all missions of an important nature, and all comprised within the period of the life of Edward. But change of monarchs made no change in this respect; the poet's abilities, character, and services were sufficient to command the respect and attention of Edward's successor. One of the earliest events of the new reign was the appointment of an embassy to treat of the marriage of Richard II. with the daughter of the king of France: Chaucer was one of the ambassadors. This was in January, 1378, and the poet could scarcely have fulfilled his duty and returned, before he was again despatched, in May of the same year, to Lombardy, to treat with the lord of Milan and the famous free commander Sir John Hawkwood. An interesting circumstance marks this embassy. Gower was one of the two representatives who acted for the poet in England during his absence. This is one of the numerous valuable facts that Sir Harris Nicholas has made known for the first time in his (as yet unpublished) 'Life of Chaucer.'

It was in the embassy to Genoa, of 1372, that Chaucer is supposed to have met Petrarch, and to have heard from him the story of Griselda. This supposition, the truth of which one would be glad to be satisfied of, rests upon the following evidence:—Chaucer, in the prologue to the Clerk's Tale, makes the clerk say,

"I will you tell a talè, which that I

Learned at Padua, of a worthy clerk,
 As proved by his wordès and his work.
 He is now dead and nailèd in his chest;
 I pray to God so give his soule rest.
 Francis Petrarch, the laureate poète,
 Highte this clerk, whose rhetóric sweet
 Illumined all Itaille of poetry."

Now Boccaccio was the author, in the Italian language, of the story in question, 'Griselda;' and why did Chaucer, if he is not referring to an actual and highly interesting incident of his own history, make the clerk go out of his way to speak of Petrarch, who only translated, in Latin, Boccaccio's work? No one supposes that Chaucer was ignorant of the existence or nature of the writings of Boccaccio; and the only answer given to Godwin, who put the foregoing question, is, that Chaucer may not have been acquainted with the Italian language, and therefore preferred acknowledging an obligation to Petrarch, whose translation alone had enabled him to become familiar with the tale. It might be so; though it is not very likely. Not only was Chaucer, as we have seen, distinguished in youth for the depth and universality of his attainments, but had been at least twice an ambassador to Italy. The strong probability therefore is, that he did know the language, and was perfectly well acquainted with the 'Decameron' (the exemplar of his own Canterbury Tales) in its mother tongue, but that having met Petrarch, *who was at Arquà near Padua* at the very time that Chaucer was in the neighbourhood, he could not tell the tale he had then heard, under such remarkable circumstances, without a passing record of them.

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That same Genoese embassy involved important consequences as regarded the fortunes of the poet. On the 8th of June, 1374, only a few months after his return, Edward conferred upon him the lucrative and distinguished office of comptroller of the customs for wool, &c. But the king had not waited until that time to show what he thought of Chaucer's conduct; he had already conferred upon him a marked testimony of his approbation; and at a time and under circumstances that make the blood stir, and the imagination busy itself in a thousand vain attempts to picture what might have been from the knowledge of what was. On St. George's day, the 23rd of April, 1374, when the king would be sitting in high and solemn festival, surrounded by all the chief nobility of the land, and when Chaucer, as one of his own squires, would, as a matter of duty and office, be in attendance on him, Edward conferred upon the poet the grant of a pitcher of wine to be supplied to him daily for life. In the very same year, and after the appointment to the customs, John of Gaunt, as if desiring to show how deeply he sympathised in the poet's prosperity, still further swelled his income by a grant of ten pounds for life. The following year, 1375, brought also its own good gifts, in the shape of two wardships, granted by Edward; from one of which Chaucer received 104*l.*, equivalent, according to Godwin's estimate of the comparative value of money then and now, to about some eighteen hundred pounds of the nineteenth century.

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And now for some years the poet's life appears to have rolled on smoothly, usefully, happily. And although it was a condition expressly made by Edward, that the poet should keep the accounts of the comptrollership with his own hand, and not put off his duties upon a deputy (a wise provision, and fitly made by a king who knew so well how to pay for real services), it is supposed that it was during these busy years that Chaucer produced some of his best miscellaneous poems. The 'Romaunt of the Rose,' a translation from the French work that enjoyed so long a period of popularity, had probably been written long before, in the days when the poet imitated previous writers rather than drew from himself; the dates of the 'Cuckoo and the Nightingale' and some others are unknown; but the 'House of Fame,' a noble poem, and worthy of its suggestive title, bears internal evidence that it was written while its author held the office of comptroller: and some very agreeable information it gives to us of the poet's habits. Jupiter, who addresses the poet personally, tells him he is aware he attends nothing now to tidings of love, nor of nothing else—not even

"of thy very neighebour
 That dwellen almost at thy doors,
 Thou hearest neither that nor this
For when thy labour all done is,
And hast made all thy reckonings,
 Instead of rest, and of new things,
 Thou goest home to thine house anon,
 And all so dumbe as a stone
 Thou sittest at another book,
 Till fully dazèd is thy look,
 And livest thus as a hermíte,
 Although thine abstinence is lite,"^[32] &c.

In the love of good living, here acknowledged, we may see the origin of that goodly bulk upon which Harry Bailley, in the 'Canterbury Tales,' banters the poet. "Now," he calls out to the pilgrims,

"Ware yon, sirs, and let this man have place;
 He in the waist is shapen as well as I:
 This were a poppet in an arme to embrace
 For any woman."

Through the same medium the poet describes himself as accustomed to look on the ground, to be "elvish" of countenance, silent, and reserved. We need only add to these traits another, also on the best of authorities—his own—namely, the love of walking, and enjoyment of all the sights and sounds of natural phenomena. In his 'Legend of Good Women' he writes—

"And as for me, though that I can but lite,^[33]
On bookes for to read, I me delight,
And to them give I faith and full credence
And in mine heart have them in reverence,
So heartily, that there is game none
That from my bookes maketh me to gone;
But it be seldom on the holyday,
Save certainly when that the month of May
Is comen, and that I hear the fowles^[34] sing,
And that the flowres 'ginnen for to spring,
Farewell my book and my devotïon."

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In 1386 the people emphatically marked their approbation of him whom kings had delighted to honour, by electing Chaucer to parliament as a knight of the shire for Kent. But, in all probability, that honour destroyed the poet's peace. Misfortunes began from this time to fall thickly upon him. Within two months after the meeting of parliament he was deprived of the comptrollership, as well as the comptrollership of the petty customs, that had been conferred by Richard II. four years before; and we are utterly in the dark as to the cause. Tyrwhitt, Godwin, and others have built up an elaborate hypothesis, as to his connexion with the civic commotion in London in 1384, when John of Northampton stood for the office of mayor in opposition to the court candidate; and which ended, they say, as concerned the poet, in his expatriation to Zealand, in his enduring great sufferings there, in his return to England in 1386, and in his committal to the Tower, until 1389. All these presumptions, founded on various passages of the 'Testament of Love,' the right key to which has evidently not yet been found, have been utterly set at rest by Sir Harris Nicholas's discovery of records showing that from 1380 to 1388 Chaucer received his pension regularly as it became due, in London, *with his own hands*. And, indeed, we have only to weigh for a moment the character and doings of the parliament to which he was elected, to satisfy us that there need be no surprise excited at the treatment experienced by Chaucer. Legislation, in the dictionary of the leading politicians of the day, meant intrigues for the possession of power. The parliament was divided into two parties; one supporting the king, and the king's favourites, De la Pole and De Vere, and the other determined to drive those favourites from power. The opposition was headed by the Duke of Gloucester, a brother of John of Gaunt, and it succeeded; De la Pole was dismissed, impeached, and imprisoned; and, finally, the successful party demanded and obtained from Richard a council for the government of the nation. There would be little relish then for the advice, little sympathy with the conduct of a man who in his writings was accustomed, whilst bidding the people to obey the king and the law, also to say to their governors

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"Knight, let thy *deedes worship détermine*,"

and

"Go forth, king, and rule thee by sapience;"

and who was in religion a Wickliffite.

In struggles between ambitious nobles and a king who desired to be despotic, a man of independent character might easily give deep offence to those against whom he acted, and without particularly pleasing those who might look upon him generally as their supporter; and that Chaucer appears to have done. He was made the victim of the one, and received no compensating benefits from the other. So, in 1388, he was compelled to sell two of his pensions, which were accordingly assigned to John Scalby. His wife's pension had ceased with the life of her to whom it had been granted. The last payment to Philippa Chaucer took place in June, 1387. She died therefore within a twelvemonth after the events that plunged them both in adversity.

In 1389, Richard, then in his twenty-second year, suddenly dismissed Gloucester, and confided the administration to another uncle, the Duke of York, and to a cousin, Henry of Bolingbroke, the son of John of Gaunt, who during all these changes was on the Continent endeavouring to establish for himself a Spanish sovereignty. Within two months after that change, Chaucer was appointed Clerk of the Works at the king's chief palaces, at a salary of two shillings a day, and in the course of his duties he had to superintend the onerous but honourable and gratifying task of repairing St. George's Chapel, Windsor. But again he was dismissed, after about two years' service; unless, indeed, which is possible rather than probable, that he, in order to carry out his literary views, had himself determined to retire finally from all public employment. He was now sixty-three years old; the "Comedy" over which he had so long pondered, and which was to contain the accumulated wealth of his genius, wisdom, and experience, was still unwritten, except in parts, and he had evidently long desired to abstract himself from mere worldly avocation. Thus in 1384 he had obtained from Richard a relaxation of Edward's stringent regulation, that he should not nominate a deputy, and in the very year that he ceased to hold his architectural appointments he had caused John Elmhurst to officiate for him. At all events, the years 1393, 1394, 1395, are supposed to have been those of the production of the 'Canterbury

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Tales' (which are known to have been produced after Jack Straw's insurrection, as that occurrence is mentioned in them), and we see no reason to disturb the supposition. Woodstock, a royal seat, was, according to tradition, the scene of the poet's labours on this his greatest work, as well as of others of an earlier date. In the scientific treatise addressed by Chaucer to one of his two sons, Lewis, who appears to have died young, there does appear something like evidence that Chaucer was living in the neighbourhood of Oxford when he composed that piece, which contains the date of 1391. Chaucer there speaks of the astrolabe he has "compounded after the latitude of Oxford." But there is really so little tangible knowledge concerning the poet's residence either at Woodstock or at Donnington Castle, that it is best to rest content with the fact that tradition does say Chaucer resided at both, and that at Donnington he planted the three oaks known respectively as Chaucer's oak, the king's oak, and the queen's. But then tradition must not be too exacting—must not also ask us to believe that the poet wrote several of his poems beneath the shade of one of the trees he had planted. It must have been a most precocious tree else.

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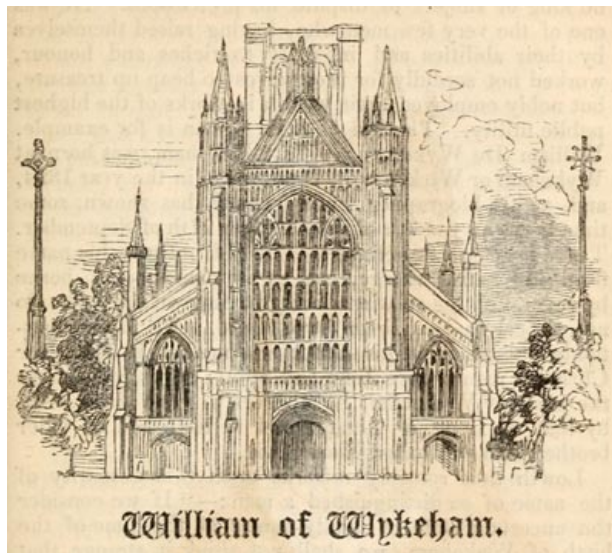
In deep gloom, much we fear, the poet spent the latter hours of his day of life, though not without a sudden lighting up of the horizon ere the close, as if to surround his passage into the grave with something of the glory that should attend the sunset of such a life. Sir Harris Nicholas has collected together in his work (to which we must refer for the particulars) facts of the deepest interest, as showing that he was in poverty, sheer unmistakable poverty, from 1394 to 1398. And yet John of Gaunt had not only returned to England, but had married the sister of the poet's wife, through which marriage therefore Chaucer became connected with the royal family of England. Was the poet too proud to make known the real state of his affairs? In 1398 Richard, with whom sympathy and admiration for Chaucer seem to have been the mere occasionally recurring whim of the moment, did again so far remember the poet as to confer on him another grant of wine, more valuable than the first, to be delivered by the poet's own son, Thomas, who had then risen to the rank of chief butler. In 1399 Richard was deposed, and Bolingbroke became king of England; and within *four* days the pension of twenty marks that Richard had granted to Chaucer in 1394 (six years after the sale of the two pensions formerly possessed by him) was *doubled*, leaving him, on the whole, the recipient of an income from the crown amply sufficient for all his wants. He now took a lease of a house situated in a garden adjoining Westminster Abbey, and there probably he died, on the 25th of October, 1400. He was buried in Westminster Abbey, and it is only fitting that Poets' Corner, like English poetry itself, should date its foundation from Geoffrey Chaucer. As a poet, he needs no epitaph, but whenever we do—what has been often talked of—rebuild his monument in the Abbey, we need desire no nobler testimony of his character as a man to be inscribed on it, than the ballad with which we conclude, and which was written by him, as the affecting title states, when he lay upon his death-bed in "great anguish:"—

"Fly from the press,^[35] and dwell with soothfastness,^[36]
Suffice unto thy good, though it be small,
For hoard hath hate, and climbing tickleness;
Praise hath envý, and weal is blent over all;
Savour^[37] no more than thee behovè shall;
Rede^[38] well thyself that other folk canst rede
And truth thee shall deliver, it is no drede.

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Paine thee not each crookèd to redress,
In trust of her that turneth as a ball,
Great rest standeth in little business;
Beware also to spurn against a nall,^[39]
Strive not as doth a crocke with a wall;
Doomé thyself that doonest others dede,
And truth thee shall deliver, it is no drede.

That^[40] thee is sent, receive in buxomness,^[41]
The wrestling of this world asketh a fall;
Here is no home, here is but wilderness;
Forthe pilgrim, forthe beast out of thy stall,
Look up on high, and thanke God of all,
Waivè thy lusts, and let thy ghost^[42] thee lead,
And truth thee shall deliver, it is no drede."



[Pg 145] There is an old tradition, perhaps not worthy of much credit, that upon the wall of a tower in Windsor Castle, known as the Winchester Tower, was inscribed "This made Wykeham." The great churchman raised this tower as the architect of Windsor Castle, working under the commands of his patron Edward III. It is further said, that the king being offended at this inscription, its more obvious meaning was dexterously explained away, seeing that it should be interpreted to record that the building of the castle was "the making" of the architect. There are other proud edifices still remaining upon which might be inserted "This made Wykeham" in the most complete sense. No man ever left more permanent traces of his course and character. The founder of Winchester College, and of New College, Oxford,—the builder of the noblest part of Winchester Cathedral,—had a title to be called their "maker," with no king or subject to dispute his pretensions. He was one of the very few men who, having raised themselves by their abilities and integrity to riches and honour, worked not sordidly for themselves to heap up treasure, but nobly employed their wealth in works of the highest public utility. The life of such a man is for example. William De Wykeham, or Of Wykeham, was born at Wykeham or Wickham, in Hampshire, in the year 1324, and, as his biographer Bishop Lowth has shown, some time between the 7th of July and the 27th of September. There is reason to believe that he did not take his name from his native village, the same name being borne by several of his relations living in his own day, who do not appear to have been born there. All that is certainly known about his father and mother is that their Christian names were John and Sybil: if his father bore the name of Wykeham, he appears to have also passed by that of Long or Longe, and to have had an elder brother who was called Henry Aas.

Lowth thus sensibly remarks upon this obscurity of the name of so distinguished a man:—"If we consider the uncertain state of family-names at the time of the birth of Wykeham, we shall not think it strange that there should be such doubt with regard to the surname of his family; or even if it should appear that he had properly no family-name at all. Surnames were introduced into England by the Normans at the Conquest: 'But certain it is,' says Camden, 'that as the better sort, even from the Conquest, by little and little, took surnames; so they were not settled among the common people fully until about the time of Edward the Second.'"

The parents of Wykeham are held to have been poor, but of creditable descent and reputable character. When their son became a dignitary of the church, he employed a seal with heraldic bearings and a quaint motto; but it is believed that these honours were not hereditary. Lowth holds that his relations were of the common people, and adds, "I am even inclined to think that he himself disclaimed all farther pretensions. The celebrated motto which he added to his arms (of which probably he might have received a grant when he began to rise in the world) I imagine was intended by him to intimate something of this kind: *Manners makyth Man*: the true meaning of which, as he designed it, I presume to be, though it has commonly been understood otherwise, that a man's real worth is to be estimated not from the outward and accidental advantages of birth, rank, and fortune, but from the endowments of his mind and his moral qualifications. In this sense it bears a proper relation to his arms, and contains a just apology for those ensigns of his newly acquired dignity. Conscious to himself that his claim to honour is unexceptionable, as founded upon truth and reason, he in a manner makes his appeal to the world; alleging that neither high birth, to which he makes no pretensions, nor high station, upon which he does not value himself, but

"Virtue alone is true nobility."

He was put to school at Winchester, not by his father, who had not the means, but by some wealthy patron, who is traditionally said to have been Nicholas Uvedale, lord of the manor of Wykeham and governor of Winchester Castle. The tradition further asserts that, after leaving school, he became secretary to Uvedale; and that he was secretary to the constable of Winchester Castle is stated in a written account compiled in his own time. Afterwards he is said to have been recommended by Uvedale to Edyngton, bishop of Winchester, and then by those two friends to have been made known to King Edward III. There seems to be no reason for supposing

that he ever studied at Oxford, as has been affirmed by some of the later writers of his life. It is evident, indeed, that he had not had a university education, and that he never pretended to any skill in the favourite scholastic learning of his age. His strength lay in his natural genius, in his knowledge of mankind and talent for business; and probably the only art or science he had much cultivated was architecture.

[Pg 148] He is said in an ancient contemporary account to have been brought to court when he was no more than three or four and twenty, which would be about the year 1348; but the earliest office which there is the evidence of records for his having held, is that of clerk of all the king's works in his manors of Henle and Yesthampsted, his patent for which is dated 10th of May, 1356. On the 30th of October in the same year he was made surveyor of the king's works at the castle and in the park of Windsor. It is affirmed by a contemporary writer to have been at his instigation that King Edward pulled down and rebuilt great part of Windsor Castle. Wykeham had the sole superintendance of the work. Queenborough Castle, in the Isle of Sheppy, was also built under his direction.

The king now began to reward him bountifully. He had probably taken deacon's orders at an early age; Lowth finds him designated 'clericus,' or clerk, in 1352. It was not, however, till the 5th of December, 1361, that he was admitted to the order of acolyte: he was ordained sub-deacon on the 12th of March, 1362, and priest on the 12th of June following. Meanwhile his first ecclesiastical preferment, the rectory of Pulham in Norfolk, had been conferred upon him by the king's presentation on the 30th of November, 1357. On the 1st of March, 1359, he was presented by the king to the prebend of Flixton, in the church of Lichfield. On the 16th of April following he had a grant of 200*l.* a year from the crown, over and above all his former appointments, till he should get quiet possession of the church of Pulham, his induction into which living had been opposed by the court of Rome. On the 10th of July in the same year, he was appointed chief warden and surveyor of the king's castles of Windsor, Leeds, Dovor, and Hadham, and of the manors of Old and New Windsor, Wichemer, and sundry other castles and manors, with the parks belonging to them. On the 5th of May, 1360, he received the king's grant of the deanery of the royal free chapel or collegiate church of St. Martin-le-Grand, London. In October, 1360, he attended upon the king at Calais, probably in quality of public notary, when the treaty of Bretigny was solemnly confirmed by the oaths of Edward and King John of France. Numerous additional preferments in the church were heaped upon him in the course of the next three years. By June, 1363, moreover he had been appointed to the office of warden and justiciary of the king's forests on this side Trent. On the 14th of March, 1364, he had by royal grant an assignment of twenty shillings a-day out of the exchequer. On the 11th of May, 1364, he was made keeper of the privy seal, and soon after he is styled secretary to the king, or what we should now call principal secretary of state. In May, 1365, he was commissioned by the king, with the chancellor, the treasurer, and the Earl of Arundel, to treat of the ransom of the King of Scotland (David II., taken at the battle of Nevil's Cross in 1346), and the prolonging of the truce with the Scots. And not long after this he is designated, in a paper printed in the 'Faedera,' chief of the privy council and governor of the great council, which phrases, however, Lowth supposes do not express titles of office, but only the great influence and authority which he had in those assemblies. "There are several other preferments, both ecclesiastical and civil," adds Lowth, "which he is said to have held; but I do not mention them, because the authorities produced for them are such as I cannot entirely depend upon. And, as to his ecclesiastical benefices already mentioned, the practice of exchanging them was then so common, that 'tis hard to determine precisely which of them he held altogether at any one time." There is extant, however, an account given in by himself on occasion of the bull of Pope Urban V. against pluralities, of the entire number and value of his church benefices, as the matter stood in the year 1366; and from this statement, in which Wykeham calls himself "Sir William of Wykeham, clerk, archdeacon of Lincoln, and secretary of our lord the illustrious King of England, and keeper of his privy seal, it appears that the total produce of those which he had held when the account was demanded, was 873*l.* 6*s.* 8*d.*, and of those of which he remained in possession when it was given in, 842*l.*"

Froissart, speaking of the English court at this period, says, "At this time reigned a priest called William of Wykeham. This William of Wykeham was so much in favour with the King of England, that everything was done by him, and nothing was done without him."

Upon the death of William de Edyngton, on the 8th of October, 1366, Wykeham was immediately, upon the king's earnest recommendation, elected by the prior and convent of Winchester to succeed him as bishop of that see. He was not consecrated till the 10th of October in the year following; but this delay, till an adjustment was effected of the conflicting pretensions of the royal authority and the court of Rome, was evidently occasioned, as Lowth has shown, only by a contention between the king and the pope as to which of them should have the largest share in Wykeham's promotion. Meanwhile he had been appointed by the king lord high chancellor of England; he was confirmed in that office on the 17th of September, 1367.

He continued chancellor till the 14th of March, 1371, when he delivered back to the king both the great and the privy seals, on the change of ministry made in compliance with a petition presented shortly before by the Lords and Commons, complaining of the mischiefs which had resulted from the government of the kingdom having for a long time been in the hands of men of the church, and praying that secular men only might be appointed to the principal offices both in the king's courts and household. There is no appearance, however, of this complaint being specially directed against any part of the conduct of the Bishop of Winchester, who assisted at the ceremony of constituting his successor in the chancellorship, and seems to have for years

after this continued to retain both the favour of the king and the goodwill of the parliament, and even to have remained in habits of intimate and confidential connexion with the Duke of Lancaster, to whose influence the removal of the clergy from the offices of state is said to have been owing.

With reference to the complaint that men of the church filled high civil offices, Lowth observes, "The truth of the matter seems to be, that the laity in general looked with an evil eye upon the clergy, who had of late filled for the most part the great posts of honour and profit in the state; which, as it was obvious to remark, neither lay within their province nor were suitable to their function and character. The practice, however improper in itself and liable to objection, yet seems to have taken its rise from the necessity of the times: the men of abilities had for a long time been chiefly employed abroad in the wars; this was the most open road to riches and honours, and every one was pushing forward in it. Besides, it was not at any time easy to find among the laity persons properly qualified, in point of knowledge and letters, to fill with sufficiency some of the highest offices. We see the king was now obliged to have recourse to the lawyers: they gave as little satisfaction as the churchmen had done; and in a few years it was found necessary to discharge them, and to call in the churchmen again."

At the period of Wykeham's election to the see of Winchester, the bishops of that diocese had no fewer than twelve different castles or palaces, all furnished and maintained as places of residence. Wykeham's first undertaking after he found himself in possession of the see was to set about a thorough repair of these episcopal houses.

To these palaces or castles the bishops of Winchester resorted in turns, "living, according to the custom of those times, chiefly upon the produce of their own estates. So great a demand as the bishop had upon his predecessor's executors for dilapidations could not very soon or very easily be brought to an accommodation; however, the account was at last settled between them without proceeding on either side to an action at law. In the first place they delivered to him the standing stock of the bishopric due to him by right and custom: namely, 127 draught-horses, 1556 head of black cattle, 3876 weathers, 4777 ewes, 3521 lambs: and afterwards for dilapidations, in cattle, corn, and other goods, to the value of 1662*l.* 10*s.* sterling."

Before his repairs were accomplished, Wykeham had disbursed twenty thousand marks of his own revenue. This energetic improver also applied himself with great zeal and diligence to the reformation of abuses in the monasteries and religious houses of all sorts throughout his diocese. The ancient hospital of St. Cross, at Sparkeford, near Winchester, founded in 1132 by the famous Bishop Henry de Blois, brother to King Stephen, in particular engaged much of his attention, and the objects of the charity were indebted to his persevering exertions for the restoration of many rights and benefits which they had originally enjoyed, but of which they had been for a long time defrauded.

In 1373 a school at Winchester, founded wholly by the munificence of this high-minded prelate, was first opened. The history of the endowment and completion of Winchester College, and of New College at Oxford, for which Winchester is preparatory, is so well told by Lowth, that we transcribe his narrative and just remarks without abridgment:—

"At the same time that Wykeham was thus engaged in the reformation of these charitable institutions, he was forming the plan of a much more noble and extensive foundation of his own, and taking his measures for putting it in execution. He had long resolved to dispose of the wealth which the Divine Providence had so abundantly bestowed upon him to some charitable use and for the public good, but was greatly embarrassed when he came to fix his choice upon some design that was like to prove most beneficial, and least liable to abuse. He tells us himself that upon this occasion he diligently examined and considered the various rules of the religious orders, and compared with them the lives of their several professors; but was obliged with grief to declare that he could not anywhere find that the ordinances of their founders, according to their true design and intention, were at present observed by any of them. This reflection affected him greatly, and inclined him to take the resolution of distributing his riches to the poor with his own hands, rather than employ them in establishing an institution which might become a snare and an occasion of guilt to those for whose benefit it should be designed. After much deliberation and devout invocation of the Divine assistance, considering how greatly the number of the clergy had been of late reduced by continual wars and frequent pestilences, he determined at last to endeavour to remedy, as far as he was able, this desolation of the church, by relieving poor scholars in their clerical education; and to establish two colleges of students, for the honour of God and increase of his worship, for the support and exaltation of the Christian faith, and for the improvement of the liberal arts and sciences; hoping and trusting that men of letters and various knowledge, and bred up in the fear of God, would see more clearly and attend more strictly to the obligation lying upon them to observe the rules and directions which he should give them. Wykeham seems to have come to this resolution, and in some measure to have formed in his mind his general plan, as early as his becoming Bishop of Winchester; for we find that in little more than two years after, he had made purchases of several parcels of ground in the city of Oxford, which make the chief part of the site of his college there. His college of Winchester, intended as a nursery for that of Oxford, was part of his original plan; for as early as the year 1373, before he proceeded any further in his design for the latter, he established a school at Winchester, of the same kind with the former, and for the same purpose. He agreed with Richard de Herton, that for ten years, beginning from Michaelmas of the year above mentioned, he should diligently instruct in grammatical learning as many poor scholars as the bishop should send to him, and no others without his leave; that the bishop should provide and allow him a proper assistant; and that

Herton, in case of his own illness or necessary absence, should substitute a proper master to supply his place.

"Wykeham's munificence proceeded always from a constant generous principle, a true spirit of liberality. It was not owing to a casual impulse or a sudden emotion, but was the effect of mature deliberation and prudent choice. His enjoyment of riches consisted in employing them in acts of beneficence, and while they were increasing upon him, he was continually devising proper means of disposing of them for the good of the public, not delaying it till the time of his death, when he could keep them no longer, nor leaving to the care of others what he could better execute himself; but forming his good designs early, and, as soon as he had the ability, putting them in execution, that he might have the satisfaction of seeing the beneficial effects of them, and that by constant observation and due experience he might from time to time improve and perfect them, so as to render them yet more beneficial."

The pious and patriotic exertions of the good bishop were interrupted for a time by a political storm which rose against him in 1376, the last year of the reign of Edward III. He had been appointed one of the council established to superintend the conduct of affairs on the petition of the parliament which met in April of that year; and in consequence became a principal object of the resentment of the Duke of Lancaster and his party, who, after the death of the Black Prince in June, and the rise of the parliament in July, took possession of the superannuated and dying king, and proceeded to overthrow all the reforms that had been lately made in the government, and to effect, as far as they could, the ruin of all concerned in them. By the duke's contrivance eight articles were exhibited against the bishop at the beginning of the next Michaelmas term, charging him with various acts of pecuniary defalcation, oppression, and other sorts of misgovernment while he had been in office many years before as keeper of the privy seal and lord chancellor. He was heard in his defence, before a commission of bishops, peers, and privy councillors, about the middle of November, when judgment was given against him upon one of the articles, involving at the utmost a mere irregularity; and upon this, under the influence that then prevailed at court, an order was immediately issued for the sequestration of the revenues of his bishopric, and he was at the same time forbidden, in the king's name, to come within twenty miles of the court. The next parliament, which met on the 27th of January, 1377, was wholly devoted to Lancaster; and when, soon after, on the petition of the Commons, an act of general pardon was issued by the king, in consideration of its being the year of his jubilee, the Bishop of Winchester alone was specially excepted out of its provisions. All this, in the circumstances of the time, may be taken as the best attestation to Wykeham's patriotism and integrity. His brethren of the clergy, however, assembled in convocation, now took up his cause with great zeal; and, whether in consequence of their bold representations on the subject to the king, or for some other reason, it was soon deemed expedient to drop the proceedings against him, and on the 18th of June his temporalities were restored to him, on condition of his fitting out three ships of war for the defence of the kingdom and maintaining them at sea for a quarter of a year. And even from this mulct he was released on the accession of Richard II., a few days after. But the loss nevertheless to which he had been subjected by his prosecution is said to have amounted to ten thousand marks.

The instrument by which, on the accession of the young king, Wykeham was relieved from the pains and penalties which a dominant party had imposed upon him, is very full and explicit. It sets forth "that the king, reflecting upon the great damages and hardships that the Bishop of Winchester hath sustained on occasion of the said impeachment, and revolving in his mind the many acceptable, useful, and laudable services which the said bishop with great labour and expense hath long performed for his grandfather, the many high offices which he hath held under his grandfather and father, and the special affection and sincere love which his father while he lived always bore towards the said bishop, out of his special favour and with his certain knowledge, and also by advice and consent of his uncle the Duke of Lancaster and other prelates and lords of his council, remits and pardons all the aforesaid articles, and all other crimes and offences whatsoever in the amplest terms, and in the fullest manner, the exception of the said bishop in the Act of Grace passed in the last parliament of the late king, and all other statutes to the contrary notwithstanding; concluding with a clause to this effect: 'Willing that all men should know that, although we have granted to the Bishop of Winchester the said pardons and graces, nevertheless we do not think the said bishop to be in anywise chargeable, in the sight of God, with any of the matters thus by us pardoned, remitted, or released unto him, but do hold him to be, as to all and every of them, wholly innocent and guiltless.'"

His pardon was immediately followed by his employment in offices of trust and authority, where his great abilities and force of character gave assurance of a just and wise administration. As soon as Wykeham was released from his troubles he hastened to apply himself anew to the carrying forward and completion of his two colleges. The business of teaching appears to have commenced both at Winchester and at Oxford in 1373; Pope Urban VI.'s bull of licence for founding Winchester College was granted 1st June, 1378; the building of the College at Oxford, which he called "St. Mary College of Winchester in Oxford," was begun in 1380, and was finished in 1386; that of the College at Winchester was begun in 1387, and was finished in 1393. The papal bull confirming the statutes of the college at Oxford is dated 19th July, 1398. As soon as his two colleges were erected, he entered upon another great work, which still remains a monument of his taste and munificence: he resolved to rebuild his cathedral in the greater part of its extent. This undertaking he commenced in 1395, and he just lived to see it brought to a close in about ten years after.

The Bishop of Winchester was one of the fourteen persons appointed in 1386, on the petition of the parliament, instigated by the king's uncle, the Duke of Gloucester, to be a council to the king for one year, and in fact for that term to exercise all the powers of government. As soon as the parliament was dismissed. Richard made an attempt to break from the yoke thus imposed upon him; the commission and statute appointing the council were declared by the judges, on the royal command, to be illegal and null, and to have involved all who had been concerned in procuring them in the guilt of treason. Upon this the Duke of Gloucester and his friends raised an army of forty thousand men. Having encamped before London, they sent a deputation, of which the Bishop of Winchester was a member, to the king; the deputies were graciously received, and returned with proposals for an accommodation; but in the mean time a body of forces which had been raised for the king in Wales and Cheshire, under the command of his minion the Duke of Ireland, was encountered by the Earl of Derby and a part of the army of the confederated lords at Radcott Bridge in Oxfordshire, and entirely defeated. This blow compelled Richard to yield for the present. But in May, 1389, another revolution in the government was effected by the king suddenly declaring himself to be of age, and removing the Duke of Gloucester and his friends from the council-board. He did not, however, dispense with the services of the Bishop of Winchester, but, on the contrary, forced him again to accept the great seal. Wykeham remained chancellor till the 27th of September, 1391, when he retired from office, Gloucester having by this time been restored to his place in the council, and all parties having been for the present again reconciled, in a great measure, it is probable, through the bishop's mediation. From this date Wykeham appears to have taken little or no share in public affairs. In 1397, when the Duke of Gloucester was put to death, and several of those who had joined him in taking arms in 1386 were attainted for that treason, the Bishop of Winchester and others were, at the intercession of the Commons, declared by the king from the throne in parliament not to have been implicated in what their fellow-commissioners had done. Wykeham was present in the parliament held 30th September, 1399, when Richard was deposed, and also in the first parliament of Henry IV., summoned a few days after; but this was the last which he attended. He continued, however, in the active discharge of his episcopal duties for two or three years longer, and was able to transact business till within four days of his death, which took place at South Waltham, about eight o'clock on the morning of Saturday the 27th of September, 1404.

We conclude with Lowth's just eulogium upon the high-minded munificence of this remarkable man:—"We frequently hear of men who, by the force of their genius, by their industry, or by their good fortune, have raised themselves from the lowest stations to the highest degrees of honour, power, and wealth; but how seldom do we meet with those who have made a proper use of the advantages which they have thus happily acquired, and considered them as deposited in their hands by Providence for the general benefit of mankind? In this respect Wykeham stands an uncommon and almost singular example of generosity and public spirit. By the time that he had reached the meridian of life, he had acquired great wealth; and the remainder of his days he employed not in increasing it to no reasonable end, but in bestowing it in every way that piety, charity, and liberality could devise. The latter half of a long life he spent in one continued series of generous actions and great designs, for the good of his friends, of the poor, and of his country. His beneficence was ever vigilant, active, and persevering: it was not only ready to answer when opportunity called, but sought it out when it did not offer itself. No man seems to have tasted more sensibly the pleasure of doing good; and no man had ever a greater share of this exquisite enjoyment. The foundation of his colleges, the principal monuments of his munificence, was as well calculated for the real use of the public, and as judiciously planned as it was nobly and generously executed. Whatever Wykeham's attainments in letters were, he had at least the good sense to see that the clergy, though they had almost engrossed the whole learning of that age, yet were very deficient in real and useful knowledge; besides that by the particular distresses of the times, and the havoc that several successive plagues had made in all ranks of the people, but especially among the clergy, the church was at a loss for a proper supply of such as were tolerably qualified for the performance of the common service. It was not vanity and ostentation that suggested this design to him; he was prompted to it by the notorious exigence of the times and the real demands of the public. The deliberation with which he entered upon it, and the constant attention with which he pursued it for above thirty years, shows how much he set his heart upon the success of his undertaking, and how earnestly he endeavoured to secure the effectual attainment of the end proposed, the promotion of true piety and learning. In a word, as he was in his own time a general blessing to his country, in which his bounty was freely imparted to every object that could come within the reach of his influence, so the memory of this great man merits the universal regard of posterity, as of one whose pious and munificent designs were directed to the general good of mankind, and were extended to the latest ages."

FOOTNOTES:

- 1 'History of the Life of King Henry II.' i. 281.—Henry, when he first made his appearance in England, attracted observation, among other things, by being dressed, after the manner of boys in his native country, in a coat or jacket with short skirts, or perhaps without any skirts at all; whence they gave him the sobriquet of *curt-mantle*. This we learn from the writer of 'Brompton's Chronicle,' who, in giving an account of Henry's death, after telling us that those present, in their rapacity, stripped the royal corpse, and that it lay for a long time naked, till a boy threw over the lower part of it a short cloak, absurdly observes that thus was fulfilled the surname which the king had borne from his infancy, originally given to him because he had first brought the fashion of the short coat from Anjou into England.—Twisden, *Scriptores* x. 1150.
- 2 Twisden, *Scriptores*, p. 346.
- 3 The original is, "De David legitur, ad commendationem decoris ejus, quoniam rufus erat. Vos autem dominum regem subrufum hactenus exstitisse noveritis, nisi quia colorem hunc venerabilis senectus et superveniens canities aliquantulum alteravit." The writer of an amusing article on 'Ancient Collections of Private Letters,' in the 'Quarterly Review' for April, 1837 (vol. lviii, pp. 414-464), renders the latter of these sentences thus:—"You are aware that his complexion and hair were a little red, but the approach of old age has altered this somewhat, and the hair is turning grey." Peter of Blois's Latin is not purer than that of the generality of the writers of his age; but he would not have used *noveritis* for *novistis*, as this translation would imply that he did. As to the sense in which he uses *rufus* and *subrufus*, there may be more doubt. In our English version of the Bible, David is described as ruddy, or of a florid complexion; but the word in the Vulgate is *rufus*, which, at least in middle-age Latin, may signify either red-faced or red-haired. King William II., however, was certainly called Rufus from the redness of his complexion—either because it was excessive, or perhaps to distinguish him from his father of the same name, who may have been a man of a dark complexion. On the other hand, the immediately subsequent mention of the beginning greyness (*superveniens canities*) may seem to favour the notion that Peter of Blois means here to speak of David as having been red-haired, and of Henry as having also had originally hair of a reddish colour. Dr. Lingard, however, we observe, understands, as we have done, that what is indicated is Henry's florid complexion. (*Hist. Eng.*, ii. 194, edit. of 1837.) We may notice, by the bye, that the writer in the 'Quarterly Review' has throughout his article inadvertently designated Henry II. as Henry Beauclerc, whereas it was his grandfather, the first Henry, who was known by that name.
- 4 The Latin is "equestres tibiae," which the writer in the 'Quarterly Review,' amusingly enough, translates, "his shins like a horse's." We presume there can be no doubt that what we have given in the text is the true meaning. At any rate, the *tibiae* described as *equestres* must be equestrian, not equine, shins or shanks—those of a horseman, not of a horse.
- 5 The original is "Vestibus utitur expeditis;" and the Quarterly Reviewer's translation is, "He uses—a tight dress." *Vestis expedita* is not, we believe, a classical Latin phrase, and its signification may perhaps admit of some doubt; but it ought to mean rather a light than a tight dress.
- 6 These two are in the same book.
- 7 These two are in the same book.
- 8 Poultry.
- 9 Meet, fit, reasonable.
- 10 For the night, apparently.
- 11 Standards.
- 12 Lord Hailes says the French term, *hastiers*, means stands on each of which several spits were turned.
- 13 Day.
- 14 Descended
- 15 Lose, ruin.
- 16 When besieged in Hennebon by Charles of Blois, "the Countess herself," says Froissart, "ware harness on her body, and rode on a great courser fro street to street, desiring her people to make good defence; and she caused damozelles and other women to cut short their kirtles, and to carry stones, and pots full of chalk, to the walls, to be cast down to their enemies. This lady did there an hardy enterprise; she mounted up to the height of a tower to see how the Frenchmen were ordered without; she saw how that all the lords and other people of the host were all gone out of their field to the assault; then she took again her courser, armed as she was, and caused three hundred men a horseback to be ready, and she went with them to another gate, whereas there was not assault; she issued out, and her company, and dashed into the French lodgings, and cut down tents and set fire in their lodgings; she found no defence there, but a certain of varlets and boys, who ran away." On another occasion, in a sea-fight, we are told, "the Countess that day was worth a man; she had the heart of a lion, and had in her hand a sharp glaive, wherewith she fought fiercely."
- 17 Duty.
- 18 Honourable.
- 19 Request.

- 20 There are about twenty variations of the mode of spelling the name. Wiclif, Wicliffe, and Wycliffe are the most common modes. In strict propriety we ought to write *De Wiclif*.
- 21 In the Gentleman's Mag. 1841, an attempt was made to show that the warden of Canterbury Hall was another John Wiclif (or *Wiclive*). The writer proves that there was another of that name, then rector of Mayfield in Sussex, for which living he was indebted to the friendship of Islip, but he does not succeed in identifying him with the warden of Canterbury; if the wardens of Canterbury and Baliol could be shown to be different persons, it would, however, remove some difficulties that had been pointed out long before this curious discovery was made (see Vaughan's 'Life of Wycliffe,' i. 272, note). Wiclif nowhere mentions his connexion with Canterbury Hall himself, but it seems to be referred to by his contemporaries.
- 22 It is said, on the authority of Sir Thomas More, who asserts that he had seen Bibles of an earlier date than Wiclif's, that the Scriptures had been translated long before his time, but although parts had been at different times translated, there is good reason to doubt whether any *complete* translation had been made. See an excellent summary of the information on the subject in the Introduction to Bagster's 'Hexapla,' p. 5 et seq.
- 23 Milton's tracts on 'Church Government,' 'Removing Hirelings from the Church,' &c., might have been written by Wiclif if he had lived in that day. Their views were very similar in these matters, and there is an approximation in Wiclif to Milton's opinions on Divorce. The men were greatly alike in character—stern, uncompromising, each gave himself up with his whole heart to the promotion of the objects he had in view, and both measuring other men by their own lofty standard, dealt out the harshest censure on such as fell short of it.—Milton, by the way, obliquely defends the violence of his own language by the example of Wiclif. The genius of the two was so different as obviously to prohibit comparison—it is in their inflexibility of purpose, their moral and religious severity of character, that the resemblance consists.
- 24 Courtney said it was a symbol of the need there was of purifying the church from the pestiferous vapours that hung over it; Wiclif, that the earth trembled because they were about to put a heresy upon Christ, as it before trembled when they put his body to death.
- 25 Dr. Lingard is hard to please: he sneers at Wiclif for *not* seeking the martyr's crown, yet when one of his followers, a few years later, obtains it, he coolly says, "The enthusiast aspired to the crown of martyrdom, and had the satisfaction to fall a victim to his own folly!"—'Hist. of England,' iv. 188 and 332.
- 26 Chaucer, perhaps to avoid letting the poems appear to the public too strict a narration of actual facts, calls them here, and in various other places, the king and queen.
- 27 Pleased.
- 28 That which.
- 29 Blanche. (See previous note.)
- 30 Trust.
- 31 War.
- 32 Little.
- 33 Little.
- 34 Birds.
- 35 Crowd.
- 36 Truth.
- 37 Taste.
- 38 Counsel.
- 39 Nail.
- 40 That which.
- 41 Obedience, patience.
- 42 Spirit, or inward monitor.

ERRATA:

- Pg. 111 - Typo corrected: entiled changed to entitled
- Pg. 113 - Typo corrected: attribute changed to attributed
- Pg. 114 - Typo corrected: doctines changed to doctrines
- Pg. 115 - Typo corrected: adjudicaiton changed to adjudication
- Pg. 148 - Removed an extra 'other'.

END OF VOL. I.

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