

**The Comic History
Of England
part (6)**

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First Edition 2017

ISBN:978-1544973517



Sphinx-Books

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www.sphinxagency.com

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The Comic History Of England

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CHAPTER THE SECOND. HENRY THE FIFTH, SURNAMED OF MONMOUTH.



HENRY the Fifth, on coming to the throne, pursued the policy of conciliation; but it so happened that his first act of magnanimity was bestowed in a quarter where it could do no good and excite no gratitude, The act in question, for which he has been greatly praised, was the removal of the body of Richard the Second from an obscure tomb in the Friars' Church, at Langley, to a place beside his first wife, the good Queen Anne, in the Abbey of Westminster. Had Richard the Second been aware of the honour reserved for him after his death, he might probably have requested the advance of a small instalment during his lifetime, when it would have been of some use to him.

The greatest magnificence that can be lavished on a tomb will scarcely compensate for an hour's confinement within the dreariness of a prison, Had Richard been living, there would have been some magnanimity in restoring him to his proper position, but giving to his remains the honours due to sovereignty was only a confession on the part of Henry that he

and his father had usurped the crown of one who, being dead, could no longer claim retribution for his injuries.

It was a mockery to pretend to uphold the deposed king by the agency of an upholsterer, and the funeral was nothing more than another black job added to the many that had already arisen out of the treatment of poor Richard.

The release of the Earl of March from captivity, and the restoration of the son of Hotspur to the honours of the Percies, were acts of more decided liberality; but, if we are to believe the gossip of the period, these two young gentlemen were a pair of spoons, wholly incapable of making a stir of any kind.

The Earl of March was, it is true, a spoon of the king's pattern, for he was a scion of a royal stock, but he nevertheless had enough of the fiddle-head about him to make it certain that he could be played upon, or let down a peg when occasion required. From the wildness of Henry's life during his Welsh principedom, it was expected that his career as king would have been a series of practical jokes upon his officers of state and his subjects in general. He had, when a young man, "scrupled not," according to Hume, "to accompany his riotous associates in attacking the passengers in the streets and highways, and despoiling them of their goods; and he found an amusement in the incidents which the tears and regret of these defenceless people produced on such occasions." It was feared, therefore, that he would have continued to riot in runaway knocks, not only at the doors, but upon the heads of the public. Happily, he disappointed these expectations, for from the moment of his ascending the throne, he became exceedingly well conducted and highly respectable. He did not exactly cut his old friends, but told them plainly that they must reform if they desired to retain the acquaintance of their sovereign. He stated plainly that it would not do for the king of England to be figuring at fancy balls, and kicking his heels about at casinos, as in former times, for he was now no longer a man about town, but the sovereign of a powerful country. Poor

Gascoigne, the Chief Justice, had approached the royal presence with fear and trembling, fully expecting to be paid off without any pension for having committed Henry, when Prince of Wales, but, to the surprise of everyone, the king commended the judge for his firmness, and advised him, in the words of the song "To do the same thing, were he in the same place," should he, the king, be placed to-morrow in another similar position.

In the first year of the new reign a commotion sprung up, which first developed itself in a violent fit of seditious bill-sticking. In the course of a night, some party succeeded in getting out an "effective poster," announcing the readiness of "a hundred thousand men to assert their right by force of arms, if needful." What those rights were the placards did not state, and probably this would have been the very last subject that the hundred thousand men would have proceeded to think about. They were supposed to have been instigated by the Lollards, one of whom, Sir John Oldcastle, their leader, was sent for by the king to have a little talk, in the course of which the wrongs of the Lollards might perchance be hit upon. Sir John Oldcastle, who was one of the old school, found plenty to say, but he never could find anyone to listen patiently to his rigmaroles. Henry the Fifth was obliged to cut the old gentleman short by hinting that the statute de heretico comburendo was in force, and Sir John, who had been about to fire up, cooled down very decidedly on hearing the allusion. Henry, finding nothing could be done with Oldcastle, who was as sturdy and obstinate as his name would seem to imply, turned him over to Archbishop Arundel. The prelate undertook to bring Sir John to his senses, but the junction could not be effected, for the objects were really too remote to be easily brought together. A writ was issued, but Oldcastle kept the proper officer at bay, and assailed him not only with obstructive missiles, but with derisive ridicule. At length, a military force was sent out to take the Oldcastle by storm, when Sir John unwillingly surren-

dered. Though taken, he refused to be shaken in his obstinate resolves, and he pleaded two whole days before his judges, in the hope of wearing them out and inducing them to stay the proceedings, rather than subject themselves to the fearful blow of his excessive long-windedness. He was, however, condemned, but the king granted a respite of fifty days, during which the old fellow either contrived or was allowed to escape from the Tower; and the probability is, that the gaolers had instructions to wink, in the event of his being seen to pass the portals of his prison.

Oldcastle, or Lord Cobham, as he was also called, had no sooner got out of prison than he rushed into the flames of sedition, and illustrated by his conduct the process of a leap from the frying-pan into the fire. He appointed a meeting of his followers at Eltham for the purpose of surprising Henry, but the king observing the moves of the knight determined if possible to avoid being check-mated. His majesty repaired to Westminster, when Cobham, changing his tactics, fixed upon St. Giles's Fields as the place of rendezvous.

The king thought to himself "Now we've got them there we'll keep them there," and shut the gates of the city.

This was on the feast of the Epiphany, or Twelfth Day, 1414, and in the evening the Lord Mayor of London arrested several disreputable Twelfth-night characters. On the next day, a little after midnight, Henry went forth expecting to find twenty-five thousand men assembled in St. Giles's Fields, but he met only eighty Lollards lolling about, expecting Sir John Oldcastle. Several of them were hanged

on the charge of having intended to destroy king, lords, commons, church, state, and all the other sundries of which the constitution is composed, and to turn England into a federal republic, with Sir John Oldcastle as president.



The idea of eighty enthusiasts meeting in a field near London to slice their country into republics, and make a bonfire of the crown, the sceptre, the throne, and the other appointments of royalty, is really too ridiculous to be entertained, though it is almost funny enough to be entertaining. Such, nevertheless, was the alarm the Lollards had inspired, that everyone suspected of Lollardism was condemned to forfeit his head first and his goods afterwards, though after taking a man in execution it was rather superfluous cruelty to take his property by the same process. Life, however, was held of so little account in those days that there was considered to be no such capital fun as capital punishment.

Henry had scarcely worn the English crown for a year, when, in the spirit of an old clothesman, who delights in a plurality of hats, he thought the crown of France might furnish a graceful supplement to his own head-dress. He therefore sent in his claim to the French diadem, making out a title in right of Edward the Third's wife, who had no right at all, or if she had, it is clear that Henry the Fifth had no right to the lady, whose heir was Edward Mortimer. France was in a wretched state when Henry put in his claim; for Paris was in one of its revolutionary fits, and intrigue was rampant in the royal family.

The dauphin, Louis, was continually fighting with his mother, and insulting his father, while the Duke of Orleans and his cousin the Duke of Burgundy were perpetually quarrelling. Each had his partisans, and those belonging to the latter were in the habit of declaring that an Orleans plum alluding, of course, to the duke's vast fortune was preferable to an entire dozen of Burgundy, In the meantime Paris was infested by a band of assassins, professing to be the friends of liberty, and wearing white hoods, which they forced on to everybody's head; and this act was no doubt the origin of the expression with reference to the hoodwinking of the people.

Before proceeding to arm, Henry proposed a compromise. He demanded two millions in cash, and King Charles's daughter, Catharine, in marriage The latter offered the lady in full, but only a moiety of the money, This arrangement was scornfully rejected, and Henry held a council on the 17th of April, 1415, at which he announced his determination to go "over the water to Charley" Having resolved upon what to do, the next question was how to do it; and the first difficulty that occurred was the refusal of his soldiers to stir a step without an advance of three months' wages He first tried the Parliament, and got a good supply, which was further increased by borrowing from or robbing his subjects. Even this would not do, and recourse was had to the common but disgraceful practice of unpicking the crown, for the purpose of sending the jewels to the pawnbroker's. A trusty officer was despatched to deposit with one of the king's relatives a brilliant, in the name of Bolinbroke.

The news of the preparations being made in England, spread terror in France, for the distant roaring of the British Lion came across the main, with portentous fury. The French King, Charles, was utterly useless in the emergency—for he was a wretched imbecile—and several artful attempts were made to get rid of

his authority. Every now and then he was made the subject of a commission of lunacy, as a pretext for placing power in the dauphin's hands; and that undutiful son, having turned his mother out of doors, seized the contents of the treasury, which made him at once master of the capital. At one time, while the pusillanimous Charles was lying at Arras, an attempt was made to burn him out, by setting fire to his lodgings; but, having all the essential qualities of a perfect pump, he does not appear to have been of a combustible nature.

He certainly was not of a very fiery disposition, and his enemies declared that he owed his escape from the flames to his being utterly incapable of enlightenment. Such was the king of France, and such the feeling entertained towards him by the majority of his subjects, when the English sovereign resolved on his aggressive enterprise.

Henry left London on the 18th of June, 1415, and proceeded to Winchester, where he was met by another offer of a compromise. This he refused, and rudely pushing the deputation aside, he pressed on to Southampton.

Here his fleet awaited him, but receiving news of a conspiracy to take his life he, instead of putting off to sea, put off his departure. Sir Thomas Grey, the Lord Scroop, and the Earl of Cambridge were all in the plot; and the two latter having claimed the privilege of being tried by their peers, took very little by their motion, for they were condemned by a vote of wondrous unanimity. Having heard the heads of the treason, Henry cut off the heads of the traitors, and embarked, on the 10th of August, on board his ship the "Trinity." The scene on the Southampton pier was animated and brilliant when the sovereign placed his foot upon the plank leading to the vessel that was to conduct him to the shores of his enemies.



Gentle breezes were in attendance to waft him on his way, and Neptune, who is sometimes ruffled on these occasions, presented an even calmness that it was quite delightful to contemplate.

An enthusiastic crowd on the shore burst forth into occasional cheers, which were succeeded now and then by the faint sob of some sentimental trooper, taking leave of the fond maid whose heart—and last quarter's wages—he was carrying away with him. The civic authorities were, of course, active in their demonstrations of loyalty on this occasion; and the Mayor of Southampton, in backing to make one of his sycophantic bows, sent one of the attendants fairly over the bows of the vessel. With this exception, no accident or mischance marked the embarkation of Henry, which seemed to proceed under the most favourable auspices. His fleet consisted of more than a thousand vessels, and some swans having come to look at it, he declared this little mark of cygnal attention to be a capital omen. We must request the reader to bear in mind, that though all the authorities justify us in announcing one thousand as the number of the ships constituting Henry's fleet, we should not advise anyone to believe the statement, who has not had an opportunity of counting the vessels. Either the ships in those days were very small, or South-

ampton harbour has been fearfully contracted by the contractors who have since undertaken to widen it. We have been accustomed to place implicit faith in the rule of arithmetic, that "a thousand into one won't go!" nor do we feel disposed to alter our impression in favour of a thousand of Henry's ships being able to go into Southampton harbour. We suspect that a hundred would have been nearer the mark, for posterity is greatly in the habit of putting on an O, and really believing there is nothing in it.

Whatever the numerical strength of Henry's fleet may have been, it is certain that he entered the mouth of the Seine, which made no attempt to show its teeth, and he landed on the 13th of August, three miles from Harfleur, without any resistance. He severely deprecated all excesses against the peaceful inhabitants, but he nevertheless besieged the fortress of Harfleur with tremendous energy; so that his conduct towards the natives was a good deal like that of the individual who knocked another downstairs with numerous apologies for being under the painful necessity of doing so.

The siege was under the conduct of "Master Giles," the Wellington of the period. Master Giles must have been somewhat of a bungler, for he was not successful until he had lost nearly all his men, and been six-and-thirty days routing out the garrison. Even then the foe surrendered through being too ill to fight, rather than from having got much the worst of it. Henry's army was also reduced to a pack of invalids, and his ships were turned into infirmaries for his soldiers. Though the troops were wretchedly indisposed, Henry himself was only sick of doing nothing, and he accordingly sent a challenge by a friend to the dauphin of France, inviting him to a single combat.

The feelings of Louis were not in correspondence with those of the English king, whose invitation to a hostile tête-à-tête was never answered. The friend sent by Henry was not by any means the sort of person to tempt the representative of Young France to a hostile meeting.



The bearer of the challenge was, in fact, a walking pattern of what the dauphin might expect to become in the event of his engaging in a duel. A countenance which looked more like a mug that had been cracked and riveted in twenty places, was the letter of recommendation presented by Henry's second. As the friend was evidently not a man to take a denial, Henry? (Louis) contented himself with scratching off a few hieroglyphics on a sheet of paper—to make believe that he was writing a note—and hastily seizing an envelope, he sealed and delivered the delusive missive. Henry's friend went away satisfied, with the full conviction that he was taking back an acceptance of his master's challenge, but when the communication came to be opened, the English king was indignant at the hoax that had been played upon him. Finding himself foiled in an attempt to settle his dispute by single combat, Henry called over the muster-roll of his troops, which presented a frightful number of vacancies since the making up of his last army list. He had lost several hands from his first foot, and he was compelled to say to his adjutant, "Really, if we go on at this rate we shall be compelled to notify that Nobody is promoted vice Everybody, killed, or retired." His entire force having dwindled down to the mere shadow

of its former self, he was advised to get home as speedily as possible. "No," he replied, "I have no notion of coming all this way for nothing, and I shall see a little more of this good land of France before I go back again" The army, which was nearly all under the doctor's hands, seemed, upon being drawn up in marching order, far fitter to go to bed than to go to battle.

Every regiment required medical regimen, and when the soldiers should have been sitting with their feet in hot water and comforters round their throats, they were required, with a callous indifference to their state of health, to march towards Calais.

The journey began on the 6th of October, when the French king and the dauphin had a large force at Rouen, while the Constable of France was in front of the English, with an army consisting of the very pick of Picardy. In passing through Normandy Henry met with no opposition, but his movements were watched by a large force, which kept continually cutting off stragglers, or in military language, clipping the wings of his army. Those who lingered in the rear, or, as it were hung out behind like a piece of a pocket-handkerchief protruding from the skirts of the main body, were cut off with merciless alacrity. The English continued to be dreadfully ill, and were proper subjects for the Hotel des Invalides, but they nevertheless pursued their march with indomitable courage. In crossing the river Bresle, beyond Dieppe, they made a decided splash; but the garrison of Eu interrupted them in their cold bath, though with very little effect, for the French leader was killed and his followers were driven back to the ramparts. On reaching the Somme the English army found both banks so strongly fortified, that had they resorted to the most desperate hazard, or played any other reckless game, breaking the banks would have been impossible. Henry consulted with his friends as to the best means of getting across, but nothing was suggested, except to tunnel under the banks and dive along the bottom of the stream; but this was objected to for divers reasons Henry kept marching up the left

bank of the river, in the hope of finding a favourable opportunity to dash across; but every attempt terminated in making ducks and drakes of his brave soldiers. Wherever a chance appeared to present itself he tried it, but without success, for the river had been filled with stakes, though the extent of the stakes did not prevent him from carrying on the game as long as possible. At length, on reaching Nesle he hit the right nail on the head, for running across a temporary bridge near the spot, he found the accommodation passable.

The Constable of France, on hearing what had occurred, retired to St. Pol, like a poltroon, and sent heralds to Henry, advising him to avoid a battle, for the French fully intended to give it him. The constable then fell back upon Agincourt, in which direction the English army prepared to follow him.

On the 24th of October, Henry and his soldiers came in sight of the enemy's outposts, and their columns served as advertising columns to indicate their position.

During the night it is said that the English played on their trumpets, so that the whole neighbourhood resounded with the noise; but as they were all very tired, and had gone to sleep, it is probable that the only music heard by the inhabitants emanated from the nasal organs of the slumbering soldiers. By the French the night was passed in noise and revelry; but the English were chiefly absorbed in repose, or occupied in making their last wills and testaments. These were far more suitable employments than the performance of those concerted pieces which would only have disconcerted the plans of their leaders.

The moon, which on that occasion was up all night, enabled the English officers to ascertain the quality of the ground that the French occupied. The constable stuck the royal banner into the middle of the Calais road, an achievement which the muddy nature of the soil, rendered softer by the drizzly rain, prevented from being at all difficult. The French took the usual means of counteracting the effect of external wet by internal

soaking. "Every man," says the chronicler, "dydde drynke lyke a fyshe," though the simile does not hold, for we never yet found one of the finny tribe who was given to the sort of liquor that the French were imbibing before Agincourt. They passed round the cup so rapidly that, what with the clayey nature of the soil and the whirl of excitement into which their heads were thrown, they found it almost impossible to preserve their respective equilibria. They floundered about in the most disgraceful manner, and there was "many a slip 'twixt the cup and the lip" on that memorable occasion. In addition to the excesses of the table, they availed themselves of the resources of the multiplication table, by calculating the amount of ransoms they should receive for the English king and the great barons, whom they made sure of capturing. Thus, in the agreeable but delusive occupation of turning their imaginations into poultry-yards, and stocking them with ideal chickens that were never destined to be hatched, did the French pass the night before the battle. Still, there was a melancholy mixed with the mirth in the minds of many, who, in the midst of the general counting of the phantom pullets, found sad thoughts to brood over. It so happened that there were scarcely any musical instruments among the French, and their horses, it was remarked, never once neighed during the night, which was thought to be ominous of bad, for if a dismal foreboding intruded, there was not even an animal to say "neigh" to it. Some of the older and more experienced officers were seized with gloomy anticipations, but they were either coughed, laughed, or clamoured down; and when the veteran Duke of Berri ventured to allude to Poitiers, on which occasion the French had been equally sanguine, he was tauntingly nicknamed the Blackberry for his sombre sentiments. To add to the discomfort of the troops, there was a deficiency of hay and straw for the use of the cavalry. The piece of ground where the horses had been taken in to bait was a perfect pool, in which the poor creatures could be watered,

it is true, but could not enjoy any other refreshment. The earth had proved itself indeed a toper, according to the song, and had moistened its clay to such a degree that everyone who came in contact with it found himself placed on a most uncomfortable footing. However resolved the French might have been to make a stand on the day of battle, it was impossible for them to make any stand at all on the night preceding it.

At early dawn Henry got up in excellent spirits, and declared himself ready to answer the communication of the French constable, which he had received some time before, advising him to treat or retreat, and which had hitherto remained unresponded to. A movement of astonishment was evinced by his followers at the announcement of the English king's intention to reply to the message he had received, but when he said, "I shall trouble him with three lines, which may extend to three columns," and proceeded to divide his army into that form, the gallant soldiers understood and cheered his meaning. The archers were placed in front, and every one of them had at least four strings to his bow, in the shape of a billhook, a hatchet, a hammer, and a long thick stake, in addition to his stock of arrows.

Having made these preparations, Henry mounted a little grey pony and reviewed his army. He wore his best Sunday helmet of polished steel, which had received, expressly for the occasion, an extra leathering, and on the top of that he wore a crown of gold richly set with jewels. In this headgear he presented such a dazzling spectacle to the enemy, that it would have been almost as difficult to take an aim at the sun itself as at the blazing and brilliant English leader. As he rode from rank to rank, he had an encouraging word for every soldier; and his familiar "Ha, Briggs," to one; his cheerful "What, Jones, is that you, my boy?" to another; and his invigorating "Up, Smith, and at 'em!" to a third, contributed greatly to increase the confidence of his men and strengthen their attachment to their general. "As for me," he said, "you'll have to pay no ransom for me, as I've fully made up my mind to die or to conquer."



On passing one of the divisions, he heard Walter Hungerford—the original proprietor of Hungerford Stairs—regretting there were not more of them. “What do we want with more?” exclaimed Henry. “I would not have an extra man if you would give him me. If we are to fall, the fewer the better, and if we are to conquer, I would not have one pair of additional hands to pick a single leaf of our laurels.” The French were at least six to one of the English, but the former were horridly out of condition on the night before the battle. They wore long coats of steel down to their knees, which gave them the look of animated meat screens, and the armour they carried on their legs served to complete the resemblance. “They wore a quantity of harness on the upper part of their bodies,” says M. Nicolas, but he does not tell us whether the harness consisted of horse collars, which by being grined through would have enabled them to advance towards the foe with a smiling aspect. The ground was remarkably soft, and the French troops being exceedingly heavy, they kept sticking in the mud at every step, while the ensigns, who had the additional weight of their flags, got planted in the ground like a row of standards. The horses

were up to their knees in no time, and when they attempted to pull up they found the operation quite impossible. Henry had declared he would roll the enemy in the dust, but the wet had laid all the dust, and he must have rolled them in the mud if he had rolled them in anything. The French are said by a recent historian * to have been suffering under a "moral vertigo," but as the vertigo had been brought on by drinking on the previous night, the morality of the "vertigo" will bear questioning. They had got themselves into a field between two woods, where they had no room to "deploy," and they were tumbling over each other like a pack of cards, or a regiment of tin soldiers. Though they had imbibed a large quantity of wine and spirits, the rain, which fell in torrents, only added water to what they had drunk, and threw them into what is technically termed a "groggy" condition. Henry compared them to so many tumblers of rum-and-water, so comical was their appearance as they fell about in a state of soaked stupidity. To increase their confusion, the Constable of France was unable to keep order, for several young sprigs of French nobility were all tendering their advice, and thus there were not only cooks enough to spoil the broth, but to make a regular hash of it.

* Macfarlane. Cabinet History, vol. v., p. 21.

At length, about the hour of noon, Henry gave the word to begin by exclaiming "Banners, advance!" and at the same moment Sir Thomas Erpingham, a grey old knight, who appears to have been a kind of military pantaloon, threw his truncheon into the air with true pantomimic activity. "Now, strike!" exclaimed the veteran, as he performed this piece of buffoonery, and followed it up with the words "Go it!" "At 'em again!" "Serve 'em right!" and "Give it 'em!" The French fought bravely, and Messire Clignet, of Brabant, charged with twelve hundred horse, exclaiming "Mountjoye, St. Denis!" when down he fell, on the soft and slippery ground, like a horse on the wooden pavement. Everywhere the French cavalry cut the

most eccentric capers; and even when there was an opportunity of advancing, the advantage seemed to slip from under them, for the ground was as bad as ground glass to stand upon. The English archers rushed among the steel-clad knights, who were as stiff as so many pokers—though not one of them could stir—and they were thus caught in their own steel traps, or trappings. The Constable of France was killed, and the flower of the French chivalry was nipped in the bud, or, rather, experienced a blow of a fatal character.

“This is a very hard case, indeed,” roared one of the victims, as he pointed to his suit of steel, which rendered him incapable of fighting or running away, though he was quite ready for either. But the hardest part of all was the softness of the ground, into which the French kept sinking so rapidly that they might as well have fought on the Goodwin Sands as on the field of Agincourt. The weight of their armour caused them to disappear every now and then, like the Light of All Nations, on the spot we have just named, and an old French warrior—one of the heavy fathers of that day—was seen to subside so completely in the mud, that in a few minutes he had left only his hair apparent. The English, who were lightly clad, kept up wonderfully under the fatigues of the day, and some of them performed prodigies of valour. Henry himself seems to have acquitted himself in a style quite worthy of Shaw, or Pshaw, the Life Guardsman. His majesty was charged by a band of eighteen knights, whom it is said he overcame, but it is much more likely that finding themselves ready to sink into the earth, they were compelled to knock under.

Their cause was desperate, it was neck or nothing with many; but as they became immersed in the soil by degrees, it was neck first, and nothing shortly afterwards. The Duke of Alençon made a momentary effort to be vigorous, in spite of his steel petticoats, and gave Henry a blow on the head that broke off a bit of the crown which he had been wearing over his helmet.

This *embarras des chapeaux*, or inconvenient superfluity of hats, was a weakness Henry was subject to, and there was no harm in his being made to pay for it. The Duke of Alençon had no sooner broken the king's crown than he received a fracture in his own, which proved fatal. The battle was now over, and the English began to secure prisoners, taking from each captive his cap, or hat, but it is to be presumed giving a ticket to each, by which all would get back their own helmets. Henry having taken it into his head that the battle was going to be renewed, ordered the prisoners to be killed; but he afterwards apologised for his mistake, though posterity has never been satisfied with the excuse he offered.

As far as we have been able to learn the particulars of this atrocious blunder, it arose in the following manner. The priests of the English army—with a sort of instinctive tendency to taking care of themselves—were sitting amongst the baggage. Henry, hearing a noise among the reverend gentlemen, looked round, and found them apparently threatened with an attack from what he thought was a hostile force, but which turned out to be a few peasants, who were scrambling with the priests for a share of the luggage. This attempted appropriation of church property was resisted by a vigorous ecclesiastical clamour, which led Henry to believe there had been a rally among the foe, and that the priests were giving the signal. Had he been aware that they were crying out before they were hurt, there is every reason to believe that he would not have issued the mandate which has so much compromised his otherwise fair average character. The French loss at the battle of Agincourt was quite incredible, but not a bit the less historical on that account, for if history were to reject all that cannot be believed its dimensions would be fearfully crippled.



The English, sinking under the weight of their booty, as well as the mud on their boots, marched towards Calais. Henry's army was reduced almost to a skeleton, but he used to say jocosely, that with that skeleton key he would find an opening anywhere.

Though rich in conquest, he was short of cash, and as England was always the place for getting money, he determined on hastening thither. The people received him with enthusiasm, and at Dover they rushed into the sea to carry him on shore, so that he literally came in on the shoulders of the people. Proud of this popular pickaback, he made a speech amid the general waving of hats, which was responded to by the gentle waving of the ocean. The tide, however, began to rise, when Henry cut short the proceedings of the meeting between himself and his subjects by exclaiming, "But on, my friends, to the shore, for this is not the place for dry discussion."

On his way up to town each city vied with the other in loyalty. Rochester contended with Canterbury, Chatham struggled with Gravesend, and Blackheath entered into a single combat

with Green-wich; Deptford ran itself into debt, which it retains nominally to this day; and the Bricklayers presented their arms to Henry as he passed into the metropolis. In London he was met by the Lords and Commons, the mayor, aldermen, and citizens; but the sweetest music was that made by the wine as it poured down the streets, and caught a guttural sound as it turned into the gutters. Many a bottle of fine old cruſted port was mulled by being thrown into the thoroughfare, and though it might have been good enough to have spoken for itself, it ran itself down through the highways with much energy. Nor was this enthusiasm confined to hollow words, for all the ſupplies which the king requested were freely voted him. It was only for Henry to ask and have, at this auspicious moment; and if, like ſome children, he had cried for the moon, it is not unlikely that his ſubjects, in the exceſs of their loyalty, would have promiſed to give it him.

In the ſpring of the year 1416, London was enlivened by a viſit from the Emperor Sigismund. He imparted conſiderable gaiety to the ſeaſon, and his entry into the city gave occaſion for a general holiday. His object was to endeavour to effect a coalition between the two rival popes, and to get the kings of France and England to make it up if poſſible. He was followed by ſome French ambaffadors who marred the harmony of the proceſſion by looking daggers at the Engliſh nobles. Occasionally they proceeded from glances to gibes, which naturally led to pushes, that were only prevented from coming to blows by the ſudden turning round of the emperor whenever he heard a diſturbance going on amongſt thoſe who followed him.

During Sigismund's ſtay in town, the French beſieged Harfleur, which was guarded by the Earl of Dorſet and a moſt unhealthy garrifon. Toothache, elephantiaſis, and ſciatica, had ſo reduced the ſpirit of the Engliſh force that the Duke of Bedford, the king's brother, was ſent to aid the Earl of Dorſet, and the poor old pump was grateful for this timely ſuccour. Bedford having put matters quite ſtraight, returned to Eng-

land, and Henry proposed a run over to Calais with his imperial visitor, Sigismund. Here a sort of Congress was held at which Henry made himself so popular, that his rights to the French throne were partially recognised. France was at this juncture in a very unpromising condition, for the royal family did nothing but quarrel and murder one another's favourites. Isabella, the queen, lived in hostility with the king, who arrested several of his wife's servants, and had one of them, whose name was Bois-Bourdon, sewn up in a leather-bag and thrown into the Seine, from which the notion of giving a servant the sack, on the occasion of his getting his discharge, no doubt takes its origin.

The Dauphin John having died, he was succeeded by his brother Charles, a boy of sixteen, who was continually fighting with his own mother, and getting a good deal the worst of it. This state of things tempted Henry to bring an army into France in August, 1417, when, after the surrender of a few smaller places, he took Caen by assault, or rather by a good Caen pepper. In the ensuing year he undertook several sieges at once, and played with his artillery upon Cherbourg, Damfront, Lonviers, and Pont de l'Arohe as easily as the musician who plays simultaneously on six different instruments. His next important undertaking was the siege of Rouen, before which he sat down, and having looked at it through his glass, he made up his mind that starving it out was the only method of taking it. The inhabitants held out for some time on their provisions, but these being exhausted, they began to devour all sorts of trash, that was never intended for culinary purposes. Soupe au shoe became a common dish, and though for a brief period they had mutton chop en papillotes they were at last reduced to the papillotes without the meat, but with their tremendous twists they of course could not be expected to make a satisfactory meal off curl-papers. They accordingly surrendered, and Henry, on the 16th of January, 1419, entered Rouen, where ambassadors from the various factions in France were sent to him. He was,

however, quite open to all, but decidedly influenced by none, and had a polite word for each, but a wink for those in his confidence, as he administered the blarney to the various legates. At length it was agreed that he should have an interview with the king and queen of France and the Duke of Burgundy.

The French sovereign was not presentable when the day came, for excessive indulgence in wine had reduced him to a state from which all the soda-water in the world could not, at that moment, have recovered him. Henry, therefore, met the queen, who was attended by her lovely daughter, the Princess Catherine, and her cousin of Burgundy, while the English king was supported by his brothers, Clarence and Gloucester. The meeting was exceedingly ceremonious, and was conducted a good deal in the style of a medley dance, comprising the minuet, the figure Pastorale in the first set of quadrilles, and Sir Roger de Coverley. At a signal announced by the striking up of some music, Henry advanced first, performing as it were the cavalier seul, when the Princess Catherine and the queen, with the Duke of Burgundy between them, also advanced, until all met in the centre. Henry bowed to the queen, and took her hand, and then did the same with the Princess Catherine, a movement resembling the celebrated *chaine des dames*—and Burgundy fell in gracefully with what was going on by an occasional *balancez* to complete the action of the second couple.

This was the first occasion upon which Henry had seen his intended bride, and whether in earnest or in sham he appeared to be at once struck by her surpassing beauty. He enacted the lover at first sight with a vigour that would have secured him a livelihood as a walking gentleman, had he lived in our own time, and been dependent for support on his theatrical abilities. The whole day was spent in formalities, and Henry sat opposite to the princess till the close of the interview, looking unutterable, things, for she was so far off that it would have been vain to have uttered anything. In two days afterwards Henry

and the queen paid each other a second formal visit; but the English king looked in vain for the young lady, who like a true coquette, seems to have kept away for the purpose of increasing the impatience of her lover. Her mother, with the tact of an old matchmaker, tried to get the best possible terms from Henry; but with all his affection, he would not stir from his resolution, to insist on having the possession of Normandy and a few other perquisites as the young lady's dowry.

The French queen pretended to take time to consider his proposal, and seven formal interviews were held; but all of them were of so dull, stately, and slow a character, that no progress was made at any one of them. The fact is, that Henry was being humbugged, and if he had suspected as much during the seven first meetings, he was convinced of it at that, which should have been the eighth, for on going to keep his appointment he found neither the queen, the duke, the princess, nor any of the attendants of either of them. All ceremony was at an end, the diplomatic quadrille parties were broken up, and Henry, disgusted at having been made to dance attendance for nothing at all, became so angry that his brain began to reel on its own account, and he set off to his own quarters in a galop. He ascertained the truth to be, that the queen and Burgundy had made it up with the dauphin, whom they had gone to join, and the precious trio having sworn eternal friendship to each other, added a clause to the affidavit for the purpose of swearing eternal hatred to all Englishmen.

Tired of kicking his heels about to no purpose, Henry determined on practising some entirely new steps; the first of which was to advance upon Pontoise and chassez the inhabitants. He then pushed on towards Paris, when Burgundy, fearful of a rencontre, retired from St. Denis, where he had taken up his position. Henry again offered to treat, but in sending in the particulars of his demand he added Pontoise to the list of places he should require to be transferred to his possession.

The alliance between the dauphin and the Duke of Burgundy was as hollow as the hollow beech tree rendered famous by a

series of single knocks at the hands, or, rather, at the beak, of the woodpecker. After a little negotiation, and a great deal of treachery, Burgundy, in spite of the warnings of several of his servants, was induced to visit the dauphin at Montereau. The duke went unarmed, on the assurance that he should return unharmed, and instead of his helmet he wore a velvet cap, which one of his attendants declared was a wonderful proof of soft-headedness. Burgundy, on coming into the presence of the heir to the throne of France, bent his knee; when the President of Provence whispered something in the dauphin's ear, and both began winking fearfully at a man with a battle-axe. The man with the battle-axe gave a significant nod, and dropped his weapon, as if by mistake, upon Burgundy; when the Sire de Navailles, a friend of the duke, pointing to the fearful dent the axe had made, exclaimed, "This is not a mere accident." This was immediately obvious; for several others rushed upon poor Burgundy, who devoted his last breath to exclaiming to the dauphin, "You are an ass—ass—" for he died before he could get the word ass—ass—in.

Young Philip, the heir of Jean Sans-peur—or Jack Drednought, as we should have translated this nickname of the Duke of Burgundy—succeeded to his father's estates, as well as becoming residuary legatee of the affections of most of his subjects. The dauphin's foul deed was execrated on all sides; for though the state of morals was low at the period of which we write, there was always a certain love of fair play inherent in the human character. The younger Burgundy was in a state of effervescence, and though he kept bottled up for a short time, his rage soon spirted out with fearful vehemence. He entered into a coalition with Henry, who stipulated for the hand of the Princess Catherine in possession, with the crown of France in reversion, and a few other trifling contingencies. In the year 1420, one day in the month of April—probably the first—the imbecile Charles, guided by Queen Isabella and the Duke of Burgundy, put his hand to the treaty. The unhappy

monarch was in his usual state, when a pen having been thrust into his grasp, and while somebody held the document, somebody else directed the motion of the royal fingers. The treaty thus became disfigured by a series of scratches and blots which were declared to be the king's signature. An appendix to this document contained a fulsome panegyric on the English king, which wound up with a declaration of his fitness to succeed to the French crown, because "he had a noble person and a pleasing countenance." This shallow argument was intended to lead to the conclusion that he would treat his subjects handsomely; or that, at all events, should he ever reign over France, his rule would not be without some very agreeable features.

In May of the same year—1420—Henry started for Troyes, where the young Duke of Burgundy and the French royal family were sojourning. The English king was all impatience to see his bride, and he found her sitting with her papa and mamma in the church of St. Peter. They had intended a little surprise for their illustrious visitor, and everything being ready beforehand, he was affianced on the spot to the lovely Catherine. They were regularly married. On the 2nd of June, and some of the gay young nobles hoped there would be a series of balls, dinner parties, and tournaments, in celebration of the wedding: Henry, however, declared he would have "no fuss," but that those who wanted to show their skill in jousting and tourneying might accompany him to Sens, which he purposed besieging on the second day after his marriage. He declined participating in the child's play of a tournament when there was so much real work to be done, "and as to feasting," he exclaimed, "let us give the people of Sens their whack, or, at all events, if we are to have a good blow-out, it must be by blowing the enemy out of the citadel." He proceeded at once with his beautiful bride from Troyes, and soon reaching Sens, he in two days frightened the inhabitants out of their Senses. They surrendered, and he then advanced to Montereau, which

he took by assault—or rather, as one of the merry old chroniclers hath it, “which he took, not so much by assault as by a pepper.” After besieging a few other places in France, Henry, in conjunction with Charles, the French king, made a triumphal entry into Paris. The inhabitants of that city gave him an enthusiastic reception, for, like the populace in every period, they were delighted at anything in the shape of change, and paid the utmost respect to those from whom they had experienced the greatest injury.

In January, 1421, Henry being very short of cash, determined on going home to England, which was even in those days the most liberal paymaster to popular favourites. Having with him a good-looking queen, his reception in his own country was most gratifying, for the old clap-trap about “lovely woman” was inherent from the earliest periods in the English character. This fascinating female was crowned at Westminster Abbey with tremendous pomp, and the happy couple went “starring it” about the country in a royal progress immediately afterwards. Their success in the provinces was immense; but their pleasant engagements in their own country were soon brought to an end by the announcement that France was still in a state of turbulence, requiring the immediate presence of Henry in Paris.

Having warmed his subjects’ hearts, he struck while the iron was hot, and took an aim at their pockets. Parliament was in a capital humour, and came out splendidly with pecuniary votes for a new expedition. He left the queen at Windsor Castle, where she shortly after gave birth to a son; and having landed a large but very miscellaneous army at Calais, Henry marched to Paris, to reinforce the Duke of Exeter, who had been left there as governor. The English were successful at all points, and Queen Catherine having joined her husband, they held their court at the Louvre, where they sat in their coronation robes, with their crowns on their heads, as naturally as if they had formed a part of “the Royal Family at Home” in Madame Tussaud’s far-famed collection of wax-work.

In the midst of his victorious career in France, Henry had started off to the relief of a town invested by the dauphin—an investment that was profitable to nobody. The English king had reached Corbeil, when he was taken suddenly ill, and throwing himself on a litter, he declared himself to be literally tired out with his exertions. Having been taken home to the neighbourhood of Vincennes, and put to bed, he summoned his brother, the Duke of Bedford, and some other nobles, to whom he recommended amity; but, above all, he advised them to continue the alliance with Burgundy, whose habit of sticking to his friends has given the name of Burgundy to the well-known pitch plaster. Having appointed his brothers Gloucester and Bedford regents, the one for England and the other for France, during the minority of his son, he seemed perfectly resigned; but his attendants literally roared like a parcel of children, so that he was compelled to tell them that crying would do no good to anybody. He died on the 31st of August, 1422, aged thirty-four, having reigned ten years with some credit to himself, and in full, as far as conquest may be desirable, with advantage to his country.

On the death of a king, it had been usual for the attendants to rush helter-skelter out of the room, and ransack the house of the deceased monarch, while his successor generally made the best of his way down to the treasury. Henry the Fifth was an exception to the rule, for he had earned so much respect in his lifetime, that at his death there was no indecorum, but a desire was manifested to give him the benefit of a decent, and indeed a magnificent, funeral. When a king of England had died abroad on previous occasions, his remains were seldom thought worthy of the expense of carriage to his own country; but in this instance no outlay was considered too extravagant to bestow on the funeral procession of the sovereign. Hundreds of mutes followed, with that mute solemnity which is the origin of their name: and on this occasion there were hundreds of knights, all in the deepest mourning. Several esquires had their

armour black-leaded, and their plumes dyed in ink, while the king of Scotland acted as chief mourner, and the widow of the deceased sovereign came in at the end of the gloomy retinue. On its arrival in England, when it drew near London, fifteen bishops popped on their pontifical attire, and ran to meet it; while the abbots, taking down their mitres from the hat-pegs in the halls of their houses, sallied forth to join the sad procession. The remains of the king were carried to Westminster Abbey, and consigned to the tomb with every token of esteem, and the reverence it had been customary to show to the rising sun alone, was on this occasion extended to the luminary that had just set in unusual glory. The queen, desirous of evincing her affection for such a prince, caused a silver-gilt statue as large as life to be placed on the top of his monument. This piece of extravagance was, however, before the invention of British Plate, or that "perfect substitute for silver," which is a perfect substitute in everything but value, strength, purity, appearance, and durability.

In painting the character of Henry the Fifth, the English historians have used the most brilliant colours, while the French writers have thrown in some shades of the most Indian-inky blackness. The former have been lavish in the use of *couleur de rose*, while the latter have selected the very darkest hues, and, indeed, produced a picture resembling those dingy profiles which give a hard outline of the features, but render it impossible for us to judge of the aspect or complexion of the original. It is for us to look at both sides, like the apparently inconsistent pendulum, which, by constantly oscillating from right to left, becomes the instrument of furnishing a faithful record of the time.

Henry the Fifth was devoted to the happiness of his people; but he had sometimes an odd way of showing his attachment, by ill-using the few for the satisfaction of the many. Thus, he persecuted the Lollards in the most cruel manner, out of the purest condescension towards the clergy, who had got up a clamour against the sect alluded to. This obliging disposition may be

carried too far, when it urges the commission of an injustice to one party, in order to favour another, and the persecution of the Lollards at the call of the clergy was a good deal like an acquiescence in a cry of “throw him over” got up in the gallery of a theatre, against some unfortunate who may have incurred the momentary displeasure of a “generous British audience.” The military exploits of Henry the Fifth have been praised by English historians, but the French writers have contrived to show that even the battle of Agincourt was nothing more than a mistake, s like the one which happened at Waterloo about four centuries afterwards.

“He ought to have been conquered at Agincourt,” say the annalists of France, but we are quite content that his conduct was not precisely what it ought to have been according to them on this great occasion.

Some praise, has been given him for his tact in negotiating with the Duke of Burgundy and the dauphin at the same time, but we must confess that our notions of honour do not permit us to approve the act of temporising with two parties for the purpose of joining that which might prove to be the strongest. He was brave, beyond a doubt, but he was cruel in the treatment of some of the prisoners who fell into his hands, and we cannot give him the benefit of the presumption suggested by a French historian, that if he hanged a quantity of unfortunate captives, he had probably very good reasons of his own for doing so. ** Pour les autres qui furent exécutés dans le même tempsj'en ignore les raisons, mais il est à présumer, Rapin, tom, iii, p. 504.

Among the other defects attributed to the character of Henry the Fifth is a degree of shabbiness towards the people in his employ, whom he is said to have paid very inadequately for their services. Considering, however, that the liberality of kings is often practised at the expense of the people, and that Henry was so crippled in his own means that the crown jewels were, on one occasion, pawned, we have no right to blame him

for refusing to reward his soldiers with what could only have been the proceeds of plunder.

In person Henry the Fifth was tall and majestic, but his neck was a little too long, which may have given him that supercilious air for which some of his biographers have censured him. In his social habits he resembled the celebrated Mynheer Von Dunk, of antiintoxication notoriety, for Henry “never got drunk,” even with success, which is of all things the most fatal to temperance.

CHAPTER THE THIRD. HENRY THE SIXTH, SURNAMED OF WINDSOR.



THE SIXTH was not out of his long frocks when he came to the throne, for he had not yet completed the ninth month of his little existence. Though he succeeded peacefully to the crown, he was in arms from the first hour of his reign; and though he

was not born literally with a silver spoon in his mouth, he had one there on his accession to the throne, for he was being fed at the very moment that the news of his father's death was announced in the royal nursery. It is easy to conceive the interesting proceedings that took place on its being proclaimed that the child, then in the act of having its food, had become the king of England. A clean bib was instantly brought, and he was apostrophised as a little "Kingsey Pingsey," a "Monarchy Ponarchy," and was addressed by many other of those titles of affectionate loyalty which are to be found nowhere but in the nursery dialect. A Parliament was summoned to meet in November, 1422, and, the regency being a good thing, there commenced a desperate struggle as to who should be allowed to have and to hold the baby. The Duke of Gloucester claimed the post of nurse, in the absence of his elder brother, the Duke of Bedford. The lords named the latter President of the Council, but while he was away the former was permitted to act as his deputy, and, what was more to Gloucester's purpose, he was allowed to receive the salary of £5333 per annum. Having got the money and the power, Gloucester was not particularly anxious to have the charge of the royal baby, who was accordingly handed over to the Earl of Warwick, jointly with Henry Beaufort, Bishop of Winchester, a half-brother of Henry the Fourth, who had also a high seat—convenient, by-the-way, for the infant king—in the council. This Beaufort was the second son of John of Gaunt, and founder of the illustrious family of the Beauforts, who derive their original nobility from an ancestor who was beau and fort—strong as well as good-looking. If aristocracy in these days were derivable from the same source, the handsome and brawny drayman might take his seat in the House of Lords, while ticket-porters, coalheavers, railway navigators, and other representatives of the physical force party would constitute an extensive peerage, of what dramatic authors, when they write for the gallery, are in the habit of apostrophising as "Nature's

noblemen." The Beauforts, besides the good looks and strength of their founder, had collateral claims to muscular eminence. The uncle of the first Beaufort was called John of Gaunt, from his gaunt or gigantic stature; and one of the family had been, in 1397, created Duke of Somerset, most likely on account of the somersets he was able to turn by sheer force of sinew.

We beg pardon for this slight digression, but as there are many who take a deep and reverential interest in everything appertaining to rank, it may be gratifying to them to know the precise origin of some of our most ancient and most aristocratic families. Let us then resume the thread of our history. Bedford was still in France, and, in the month of October, King Charles the Sixth expired at Paris. The dauphin was at Auvergne, with a set of six or seven seedy followers, who could not muster the means of proclaiming him in a respectable manner. They hurried off altogether to a little roadside chapel, and having one banner among the whole lot, with the French arms upon it, they raised it amid feeble shouts of "Long live the king," aided by a few "hurrahs" from some urchins on the exterior of the building. This farce having been performed, and the title given to it of "The proclamation of Charles the Seventh," the party repaired to luncheon at the king's lodgings. Having come into a little money by the death of his father, he went with a few friends to Poitiers, where a coronation, upon a limited scale, was performed, at an expense exceedingly moderate.

While this contemptible affair was going on in a French province, the Duke of Bedford was busy, in Paris, getting up a demonstration in favour of the infant Henry. Fealty was sworn towards the British baby in various great towns of France; and Bedford, anxious to cement the alliance with Burgundy, married the duke's sister, Anne; though it seems strange that he should have calculated upon a marriage as a source of harmony. He must have had a strong faith in wedded life, to have anticipated a good understanding as the effect of that which so

frequently opens the door to perpetual discord.

While Bedford was making strenuous exertions to promote the ascendancy of the English in France, the nominal king of that country, Charles the Seventh, had given himself up to selfish indulgences. His energies were diluted in drink; but a few vigorous men, who were about him, forced him occasionally into the field, from which he always sneaked out on the first opportunity. He was compelled to engage in two or three actions, and was defeated in all, though he had the benefit of about seven thousand Scotch, under the command of the Earl of Buchan; and threatened to cure his enemies of their hostility by administering a few doses of Buchan's domestic medicine. After two or three reverses, Charles thought his army strong enough to attempt to relieve the town of Ivry, which, in the summer of 1424, was besieged by the Duke of Bedford.

Charles's force consisted of a strange mixture of Scotchmen, Italians, and Frenchmen, who were all continually giving way to their national prejudices, and quarrelling in broken French, broken Italian, or broken Scotch,—which is a dialect something between a sneeze, a snore, and a howl, spiced with a dash of gutturalism, and mixed together in a whine of surpassing mournfulness. The French declared the Scotch were mercenaries, who had an “itching palm;” but the Scotch savagely replied, that “they came to the scratch with a true itch for glory.” While the three parties were engaged in a vigorous self-assertion, and were loud in praise of their own valour, they caught a glimpse of the English force—and, halting in dismay, retreated without drawing a sword. The garrison of Ivry, which had been waiting the approach of its friends, who were to do such wonders, and had been watching the scene with intense anxiety from the battlements, could only murmur out the words “pitiful humbugs,” and surrender at discretion.

By some lucky chance—or, as other historians have it, by the revolt of the inhabitants—Charles and his mongrel army

had got possession of the town of Vemeuil, which was a very strong position. They had scarcely got snugly in, when the Duke of Bedford presented himself before the walls, and a council was instantly held, to consider how they should get out again. Everybody talked at once, and a mixed jargon of Scotch and French, flavoured occasionally with a little Italian sauce, was the only result of the deliberation of the gallant army. At length, by common consent, they ran away, preferring to fight in an open field, if they must fight at all—for there would then be more margin for escape, or latitude for bolting, in the event of their getting the worst of it.

So rapid was their desertion of the town, that they left behind them all their luggage, which was perhaps a wise precaution, for they were thus enabled to run the faster, in case of having to execute a retreat, which was one of the military manouvres in which they had had the most experience.

The two armies were now in presence of each other, and on both sides the feeling was like that of the young lady who “wondered when them figures was a-going to move,” at an exhibition of wax-work. The Earl of Douglas, with Scotch caution, wanted to wait, but the Count of Narbonne, with French impetuosity, was for making a beginning, and rushed forward, shouting “Mountjoye St. Denis!”—which was synonymous, in those days, with “Go it!” in ours. The whole line followed, helter-skelter and pell-mell, so that when they got up to the stakes the English had run into the ground—to show, perhaps, they had a stake in the country—the French were out of breath, out of sorts, and out of order. They were miserably panting, but not panting for glory, and the punches in the ribs they got from the English, made them roar out like so many paviours in full work—as they always are—down Fleet Street. Their temporary want of wind was soon changed into permanent breathlessness, and thus, in spite of all their boasting, there was a miserable end to their puffing.

The battle was very severe, for they had been “at it” for three hours. Douglas, it being before the time when “the blood of Douglas could protect itself,” was slain. Buchan, who had been taunted by his allies with being nothing better than a buccaneer, also fell, and the French lost a countless number of counts, as well as a host of miscellaneous soldiers. The Italians, who had boastingly called themselves the Italian cream of the army, turned out to be the merest milksops, and kept as much out of harm’s way as possible. The Duke of Bedford ordered the heads of several prisoners to be cut off, and the Bedford executions were so numerous, that the heads-man’s axe got the name of “the Bedford level.”

The battle of Vemeuil had been fought on the 17th of August, 1424, and Charles the Seventh seemed on the eve of bankruptcy; both in cash and credit. His money was all gone, and his friends had—of course—gone after it. Fortune, however, favoured him, at the expense of his enemies, for they began to disagree with each other. To say that there was a quarrel is equivalent to saying that there was a woman in the case, and the woman was—upon this occasion—the celebrated Jacqueline of Hainault. This prize specimen of a virago was the daughter of the Count of Hainault, and the niece of John the Merciless, from whom she inherited all that coarse unwomanly bluster, which, in one of the fair sex, is called by courtesy “a proper spirit.” She had been married to a little bit of a boy of fifteen, her cousin-german and her godson,—an urchin commonly known as John Duke of Brabant. Jacqueline, who was beautiful and bold, was no match—or, rather, was more than a match—for a stripling not half way through his teens at the time of his marriage. The puny lad had got into bad company, and was surrounded by a set of low favourites. The masculine Jacqueline was not exactly the woman to submit tamely to any injury, and taking offence at one of her boy-husband’s friends, she had him murdered., This stamped her as that most objectionable of characters, an acknowledged heroine, and she became

“a woman of strong mind” in all the chronicles of the period. Her liliputian husband was persuaded to retaliate by dismissing all his wife’s ladies-in-waiting, upon which Jacqueline became a greater vixen than ever.

After a powerful scene of domestic pantomime, in which she alternately tore her hair and that of her husband, she declared her determination to leave him. “A thplendid riddanthe,” lisped the aggravating boy; upon which Jacqueline, making another rush at his hair, and taking a large lock of it in her hands—not, however, to be preserved as a pledge of affection—she hurried off to Valenciennes, and thence to Calais. The runaway next made for England, where she remained on a visit with Henry’s queen, Catherine, at Windsor Castle. Here she soon began flirting with the king’s brother, the Duke of Gloucester, and though the poor man was not deeply in love with her, he was persuaded to agree to a marriage.

Jacqueline being already the wife of another, was compelled to seek a dispensation from Pope Martin V., but he looked at the matter with an unfavourable eye, when Jacqueline, making a coarse allusion to her own eye and a female branch of the Martin family, despatched a messenger to the opposition pope, the thirteenth Benedict. Being a Benedict he could not consistently oppose a marriage, and he granted the dispensation immediately. Gloucester, who had determined on making his new wife profitable, if she could not be pleasant, claimed without delay her possessions in Hainault, Holland, and elsewhere, which she had inherited. It was a few weeks after the battle of Vemeuil, which we have recently described, that Gloucester and his considerably better-half—in quantity if not in quality—started off with a large army to take possession of Hainault. They soon frightened the inhabitants of the capital, of which they made themselves master and mistress, without any previous warning. Philip, Duke of Burgundy, the uncle of the boy-Duke of Brabant, was very angry at the lad’s wife coming to cheat the

boy, as it were, out of his property. After a good deal of hard struggling to keep his position at Hainault, Gloucester came to the determination that his wife was not worth the bother she occasioned him, and he accordingly went home, leaving her to defend herself as well as she could, when she was instantly besieged, given up to the Duke of Burgundy, by the inhabitants of Mons, and sent to Ghent in close imprisonment.

Neither bolts nor bars could restrain the impetuosity of this tremendous woman, who burst from her prison, and putting on male attire, which became her much better than her own, she escaped into Holland. It was not to be expected that a fighting woman would remain very long without followers, and the "Hainault Slasher"—as Jacqueline might justly be called—soon mustered a strong party in her favour. The novelty of going to battle with a woman for a leader told well at first, but as the attraction wore off her soldiers dwindled away by degrees, until her forces became utterly insignificant. Even her chosen Gloucester took advantage of her absence to treat his marriage as a nullity, and to unite himself with Miss Eleanor, the daughter of Lord Cobham. The desertion of the husband she preferred was in some degree compensated by the death of the husband she hated, for the boy-Duke of Brabant lived only until April, 1427, and thus, by the abandonment of one, and the decease of the other, she became doubly dowagered. Still she continued to struggle with the Duke of Burgundy, but she was now advancing in years, and her efforts became perfectly old-womanish. The summer of 1428 was the means of bringing her to her senses, for she was severely drubbed by the duke, and finally quelled in a career as unbecoming to her age and sex as it was inimical to her interest. She agreed to recognise Burgundy as direct heir, at her death, to all she possessed, and he made her hand over everything at once, which was a capital plan for making sure of his inheritance. We have, however, devoted to the Hainault vixen more time and space than she is perhaps

worth, but we have thought it better to dispose of her off-hand, to prevent so disagreeable a person from again intruding herself on the pages of our history.

From the time the English took possession of Paris, Orleans, like a ripe and tempting Orleans plum, had been the object of their desires. The French knew the importance of the place, and had concentrated within it ammunition, eatables, and stores of every description. Barrels of beef, and barrels of gunpowder—hams and jams—wine for the garrison and grape for the foe—preserves for themselves and destructives for their enemies, were laid up in abundance in the city of Orleans. In addition to all these articles, enormous supplies of corn had been poured into the place, which contained something superior even to the corn, for it held all the flower of the French nobility.

Regardless of these facts, the Earl of Salisbury began to attack the city, and the English commenced an attempt to scale the walls, but having some missiles thrown at them from above, those engaged in the scale soon lost their balance.

Salisbury, nevertheless, persevered by attacking some other point; but the garrison determined to pay him off, and having recourse to their shells, they shelled out with such effect as to kill the English leader. Salisbury was succeeded by the Earl of Suffolk, who employed the winter of 1428 in cutting trenches round the city, and throwing up redoubts, which rendered him very redoubtable.

Orleans was thus cut off from the chance of further supplies, and the awful words, "When that's all gone you'll have no more," began to be whispered into the ears of the inhabitants. Charles himself was for surrendering, and several mealy-mouthed courtiers, who feared they should soon be without a meal for their mouths, seconded the king in his pusillanimous project. Others were for holding out instead of giving in, and Charles's fortune seemed to be at the lowest ebb, when a letter arrived from one of the posts to announce the prospect of

an early delivery. This early delivery was not, however, to be looked for by the mail, but by that illustrious female, Joan of Arc, familiarly known as the Maid of Orleans.

Charles, who had little faith in the power of a female to get one out of a scrape, and who believed the tendency of the interference of the sex to be a good deal the other way, burst out into a fit of immoderate laughter at hearing the news that had been brought to him. "Never laughed so much in my life," occasionally ejaculated the French king, as the tears rolled down his cheeks, in double-distilled drops of the extract of merriment. He, nevertheless, granted her permission to give him a look-in when she was coming that way; but it was more from curiosity, or to have another hearty laugh at the Maid's expense, that he consented to an interview. Joan arrived, with her squires and four servants; but even this retinue, small as it was, must have been larger than her narrow circumstances could have fairly warranted. The two squires could have got in the service of two knights a certain sum per day, and the four servants, at a time when war was being waged, might have obtained better wages than a poor and friendless girl would possibly have paid to them. These, or similar reflections, occurred to some of the people about the court of Charles, who, considering that Joan must be an impostor, advised his majesty to have nothing to do with her. At all events, it was deemed as well that her previous history should be known; and as the reader may wish for the character of the Maid, before permitting her to engage even his attention, we will, at once, say what we know concerning her. Joan was the child of a brace of peasants, in a wild and hilly district of Lorraine, on the borders of Champagne, a country of which she seems in a great degree to have imbibed the qualities. Living in the neighbourhood of the sparkling and effervescent Champagne, her head became turned, or, at least, began to be filled with those bold aspirations which the genius loci might have had some share in engendering. It is undenia-

ble that when a mere child, she delighted to roam about for the purpose of drinking at the great fountain of inspiration, which Champagne so abundantly supplies, and she would often go on until she heard voices—or a sort of singing in her ears—which told her she was destined for great achievements.

Her birth-place was a short distance from the town of Vaucouleurs, at a little hamlet called Domremy, into which faction and dissatisfaction had so far forced their way, that the children used to pelt the children of the next village with mud and stones, on account of their political differences.

Joan's attachment to her native soil caused her to be among the foremost of those who took up earth by handfuls, and threw each other's birthplace in each other's faces.

Being in the habit of holding horses at a watering-house on the Lorraine road, she frequently heard the conversation of the waggons, and, amid their "Gee-wos!" the woes of France were sometimes spoken of. Invisible voices now began to tell her that she was destined to set everything to rights, and to be her country's deliverer.

Though her father called it "all stuff and nonsense," she had talked over an old uncle, a cartwright at Vaucouleurs, whom she persuaded of her fitness to repair the common weal, and the honest cartwright promised to assist her in putting a spoke into it. The brace of peasants were annoyed at the very high-flown notions of their offspring, and when she talked of going to King Charles, they asked her where the money was to come from for the purposes of her journey. Joan immediately had a convenient dream, appointing the governor of Vaucouleurs, one Sire de Baudricourt, her banker on this occasion.

Under the guidance of her uncle, she visited the Sire, and told him the high honour her visions had awarded him, in naming him treasurer to her contemplated expedition. The Sire, not at all eager to become a banker on such unprofitable terms, refused at first to hear her story, or indeed to allow her to open an

account, so that the first check she received was somewhat discouraging. He suggested that she should be sent home to her father with a strong recommendation to him to take a rod and whip all the rhodomontade completely out of her. Joan, however, cared little for what might be in pickle for herself while she was bent on preserving her country. She went constantly to the house of the Sire de Baudricourt, but he never allowed her to be let in, for he verily believed it would only have been opening the door to imposition.

At length, more out of pity to his hall-porter than from any other motive, the Governor agreed to see that troublesome young woman who had given no peace to his bell since the first day of her arrival at Vaucouleurs.

After the interview, Baudricourt came to the conclusion that Joan was crazed; but she declared she would walk herself literally off her legs, until they were worn down to the stump, if the Sire refused to stump up for the expenses of the journey. Some of the people beginning to believe the maid's story, she was enabled to get credit in Vaucouleurs for a few trappings as well as for a horse, and at the same time six donkeys, in the shape of two squires and four servants, consented to follow her.

On the 15th of February, 1429, the Maid began her journey, in the course of which her companions frequently came to the conclusion that she was a humbug, and on arriving at a precipice they often threatened to throw her over. At length, all difficulties being surmounted, she arrived at Chinon, near Orleans, where Charles was residing. "I won't see her," cried the king, upon hearing she had come; "I am not going to be bored to death by a female fanatic.

A man who believes himself to be inspired is bad enough, but there is not a greater plague on earth than a woman-prophet." At length, after being pestered for three days, he consented to grant an interview to Joan, who stood unabashed by the sneers of the courtiers. Every word that flowed from her lips had the

effect of curling fluid on the lips of those who listened. Some would have coughed her down, others began to crow over her, and the scene was a good deal like the House of Commons during the speech of an unpopular member, when Charles, who was a good deal struck by the assurance of the Maid, took her aside to have a little quiet talk with her.

“Well, my good woman,” he observed, “what is all this? Let me know your views as briefly as possible.” Joan explained that her views consisted of magnificent visions, but Charles declared them to be mere jack-o’-lanterns of the brain, which were not worth attending to.

Nevertheless, the earnestness of her manner had its effect, and the king sent her to Poitiers, where there was a learned university, and, though Joan was rather averse to the fellows, she allowed them to question her.

Some of them began to assail her with their ponderous learning, but she cut them short by acknowledging that she did not know a great A or a little a from a bouncing B. She declared herself, however, ready to fight, and the learned men, who were not anxious for a contest with the Maid in her own style, pronounced a favourable opinion on her pretensions.

To raise the siege of Orleans, and take the dauphin to be crowned at Rheims, were the feats she undertook to perform. As one trial would prove the fact, Charles consented to grant it. The soldiers, however, refused to follow her until they had seen how she would manage a horse, and they consequently all stood round her while she went through a few scenes in the circle. One of them, who acted as a kind of clown in the ring, put a lance into her hand, which she wielded with great dexterity, while she was still in the performance of her rapid act of horsemanship.

Joan having passed her examination with success, was invested with the rank of a general officer. In spite of her masculine undertaking, there was still enough of the woman in her

disposition to induce her to be very particular in ordering her own armour and accoutrements.

She had herself measured for an entirely new suit of polished metal, her banner was white, picked out with gold, and her horse was as white as milk when properly chalked for metropolitan consumption.

The Maid looked exceedingly well when made up, and people flocked round her with intense curiosity; for if even the man in brass at the Lord Mayor's Show will attract a mob, a woman regularly blocked in by block tin was a novelty that everyone would be sure to run after.

Full of enthusiasm, she started off to the relief of Orleans, and the garrison, encouraged by her approach,

sallied out upon the besiegers with unusual vigour, exclaiming "The Maid is come!" and the result realised the old saying that "where there's a will, there's a way," or in the Latin proverb, *possunt* (they can) *qui* (who) *videntur* (seem) *posse* (to be able).

With the aid of the *posse comitatus* the object was achieved, and it may, perhaps, have happened that the superstitious fears of the English had much to do with the result of the battle.

They declared that she was a witch, and some of them pretended to have seen her looking at them with great saucer eyes, which was, in those days, a test of sorcery.

The sentinels at night got so nervous, that they used to be startled by their own shadows in the moon, and would run away, declaring that they were pursued by black figures stretched on the ground, from which there was no escaping. Others declared the stars were all out of order, and that they heard the band of Orion playing, out of tune, at midnight.

Some declared they had seen a horse galloping along the Milky Way, and they inferred that Joan of Arc sent her steed along it at full speed to keep up his milky whiteness.

The English army had been completely panic-struck by the successes of Joan, which were owing nearly equally to the zeal

she inspired in her friends and to the superstition of her enemies. She caused a letter to be written to the latter, in her name, strongly advising them to "give it up," and now she determined to give them a bit of a speech from the ramparts of Orleans. Taking her place on the top of a ladder resting against a high wall, she advised them to "be off;" "that it was no use;" they were "only wasting their time there;" and recommended that, if they had business elsewhere, they had better go and attend to it. Sir William Gladesdale, an English leader, rose to reply amid cries of "Down, down!" "Off, off!" "Hear him!" "Oh, oh!" and the usual ejaculations which a difference of opinion in a crowd has always elicited. As soon as Sir William could obtain a hearing, he was understood to advise the Maid to "go home and take care of her cows;" upon which Joan cleverly replied, that if "a calf were an object of care as well as a cow, he (Sir William Gladesdale) ought to be placed at once in safe keeping."

The knight, finding the laugh against him, sat down without another word, and Joan became more popular than ever after this little incident.

It was part of the plan of the Maid to work upon the imagination of the foe, and an amanuensis was employed to write another threatening letter, in her name, to the

English soldiers, The communication was thrown into the midst of them, and Joan, being anxious to know what effect it produced, stood on the ramparts to overhear what they said to it. "Listeners never hear any good of themselves," and the Maid had the mortification of listening to some fearful abuse of herself, which, perhaps, served her right, for her behaviour was, to say the least of it, exceedingly unladylike.

Vanity became one of her most powerful incentives, and she took upon herself to disagree with the Governor of Orleans, the great captains, and all the military authorities, on points of military tactics. Joan was, in fact, a very impracticable person, but it was necessary to let her have her way to a considerable

extent, on account of her immense popularity with the soldiers. She insisted on making an attack which was considered very premature, and, while leading it in person, she got knocked over into a ditch by a dart, which set her off crying very bitterly. A valiant knight picked her up and placed her in the rear, consoling her by saying, "There, there I you're not a great deal hurt. Come, come—dry your eyes. Don't cry, there's a good girl," and other words of encouragement.

Joan, feeling that it would not do for a heroine to be found roaring and whimpering at the first scratch she received, soon recovered her self-possession, and was soon at the ditch again, but on this occasion it was less for the purpose of fighting herself than of urging on others to battle.

The English, though they did not know whether Joan was a witch or a what, were nevertheless ready to fight her on a fair field, if she would give them the opportunity.

Her voices had not, however, given her the word of command, and she found it advisable to put a poultice on her neck, which rendered it necessary that she should keep for some days as quiet as possible. Her voices were often exceedingly considerate in refraining from advising her to go to battle when she might have got the worst of it.

In this instance they were accommodating enough to give her the opportunity of nursing her neck for at least a limited period. The English waited a little time for the Maid, expecting that she would prove herself a "maid-of-all-work" by venturing to go single-handed into a very difficult place, but, as she did not make the attempt, they retired with flying colours.

These colours, had they been warranted not to run, might never have left Orleans, but on the 8th of May, 1429, the siege was raised, and the reputation of the English army considerably lowered. On the strength of this event, Joan went to meet King Charles, who received her very affably, and the courtiers proposed inviting her to a public dinner. This honour she

politely declined, for—like the celebrated Drummond—she was “averse to humbug of any description” but that which she had made for her own use, and after-dinner speeches were matters she held in utter abhorrence. She objected strongly to that festive foolery which induces people who never met before to express hopes that they may often meet again, and which is the source of at least twenty proudest moments of about as many existences. Joan, therefore, urged her previous engagements as an excuse for going out nowhere, for she felt assured that if she encouraged a spirit of jolly-doeism among the troops, they would soon become neglectful of all their duties.

Charles, urged by the example of Joan, determined to do a little soldiering himself, and had his armour taken out of his box, the rust rubbed off, the shoulder-straps lengthened, the leggings let down, the breastplate let out, and other alterations made, to adapt it to the change in his figure since he had last worn his martial trappings.

Though he took the field, it was in the capacity of an amateur, for his modesty—or some other feeling—kept him constantly in the background, and after the battle of Patay, which was fought and won by the French, the cries of “Where is Charles? What’s become of the king?” were loud and general.

The Maid found him reposing on his laurels, or, rather, under them, for he had concealed himself in a thick hedge of evergreens, from which he declined to emerge until his question of “Is it all right?” had received from Joan’s lips a satisfactory answer.

The object of her visit was to persuade him to accompany her to Rheims, to celebrate his coronation in the cathedral of that city. “It’s not a bad idea,” said Charles, “but premature, I’m afraid, and so at present we will not think of it.” Joan would, however, take no refusal. On the 15th of July, 1429, the French king made his solemn entrance into that city. He was crowned two days after, and, though not one of the peers of France were

present at the ceremony, it went off with quite as much spirit as anyone might venture to anticipate.

Philip, the Duke of Burgundy, declined an invitation from the Maid, who pointed out to him the folly of fighting against his own king, when, if he wanted war, the Turks were always ready to fight or be fought, to have their heads cut off, or oblige anyone else by making the thing reciprocal, The Duke of Burgundy still kept aloof, but Joan continued to be successful without his assistance, and took several towns, chiefly from the readiness with which they were given up to her. Many of the people looked upon her as something preternatural, and they even fancied her white banner was always surrounded by butterflies, though truth compels us to state that these fancied butterflies were probably harvest-bugs, which, at about the period of the year when the phenomenon was supposed to have been seen, were most likely to be fluttering blindly and blunderingly about the Maid's standard. Many of the French officers, jealous of her success, attempted to malign her character. No tiger could have stood up for his respectability more furiously than Joan defended her reputation; and, indeed, she made so much fuss, to vindicate her fair fame, that we might have suspected her of impropriety, had not all the historians agreed in coming to an opposite conclusion.

It was evident that Joan, having made one or two lucky hits, was anxious to back out before she damaged her reputation by failure. When asked what she would do if allowed to retire, she declared she would return and tend her sheep; nor did the cruel sarcasm of "Oh, yes, with a hook!" which some courtier would throw in—divert her at all from her humble purpose.

Having the rank of a general, she might perhaps have claimed the right to sell out or retire on half-pay, but she was anxious to return to her lowing herds, which caused Charles to say that for her to go and herd with anything so low, would be indeed ridiculous. Her voices, however, began to confuse her, and perhaps to talk

more than one at a time, as well as to say different things; for on one day she would speak of resuming her humble occupations, and on another day would make preparations for smashing the English. Fortune seemed to have deserted the English in France, and Bedford, the regent—like others of his countrymen, when they found their numbers inferior to those of the foe—had the coolness to propose settling the dispute by single combat.

This ingenious device is like that of the gamester who has but a single pound, which he proposes to stake against the pound of him who has a hundred more, with the understanding that if the party who makes the proposition shall win, he shall walk off with all that belongs to his antagonist. Charles was rude enough, to make no reply to this offer, but about the middle of August, 1429, the English and French armies found themselves very unexpectedly in sight of each other, near Senlis. How they came to such close quarters no one seemed to know; but it is agreed on all hands, that both sides would have been very glad to get back again. Neither would venture to begin, and Charles requested to know what Joan of Arc's voices had to say upon such an important occasion.

The Maid had unfortunately lost whatever voice she might have had, and could find nothing at all to say for herself.

The king was eager to know whether his army might commence the attack, but Joan's voices said not a word, and as their silence was not of the sort which Charles considered capable of giving consent, he did not permit any assault to be begun by his soldiers.

After looking at each other during three entire days, each army marched off the field by its own road, and nothing had taken place beyond the interchange of an occasional "Now then, stupid—what are you staring at?" between the advanced guards of either army.

Though our business, as an historian, has taken us a good deal abroad, we must now return home, lest, in our absence, the

thread of our narrative should have got into such a state of entanglement, as to cause ourselves and our readers difficulty in the necessary process of unravelling it.

The 6th of November, 1429, was set apart for the coronation of the baby king, at Westminster; and, in a spirit worthy of the rising generation of the present day, his infant majesty insisted on the abolition of the protectorship.

The notion that he could take care of himself had got possession of the royal mind; but the sequel of his reign afforded bitter proof of the extent of the fallacy. In 1430, he embarked for France, but the privy purse was again in such a disgraceful state, that the king had not the means of paying for his journey. The usual humiliating step was taken of sending the crown to the pawnbroker. We may here take occasion to remark, that though we frequently hear of the crown being put in pledge, we have no record of its being ever taken

regularly and honestly out again. There can be little doubt that the people were unscrupulously taxed to rescue the regal diadem, which was no sooner redeemed than royal extravagance, or necessity, placed it again in its humiliating position. Had the same crown been transmitted regularly from hand to hand—or, rather, from head to head—it would have been perforated through and through by the multiplicity of tickets that from time to time have been pinned on to it.

On this occasion, the jewels went to the pawnbroker's, as well as the crown, so that the regalia were huddled together as if they had been no better than a set of fire-irons. It is surprising, under all the circumstances, that the sceptre never figured in the catalogue of a sale of unredeemed pledges, and we cannot wonder that some of our sovereigns have chosen to rule with a rod of iron, as a cheap and durable, but a most disagreeable substitute. In addition to the means already alluded to, for filling his purse, the young king hit upon another mode of making money. Every one who was worth forty pounds a year,

was forced to take up the honour of knighthood, and made to pay exorbitant fees for the undesired privilege. In this manner, many persons were dubbed knights, for the express purpose of making them dub up; and there is every reason to believe that the word “dub” has taken its meaning in relation to pecuniary affairs, from the arbitrary practice we have mentioned. Those illustrious families who trace their genealogy up to some knight who flourished in the time of Henry the Sixth, will not, perhaps, after this disclosure, be so very proud of their origin. We have had in our own day one or two who have been dignified with knighthood by mistake, instead of somebody else, but those who had greatness thrust upon them only for the sake of the fees, were scarcely less contemptible.

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