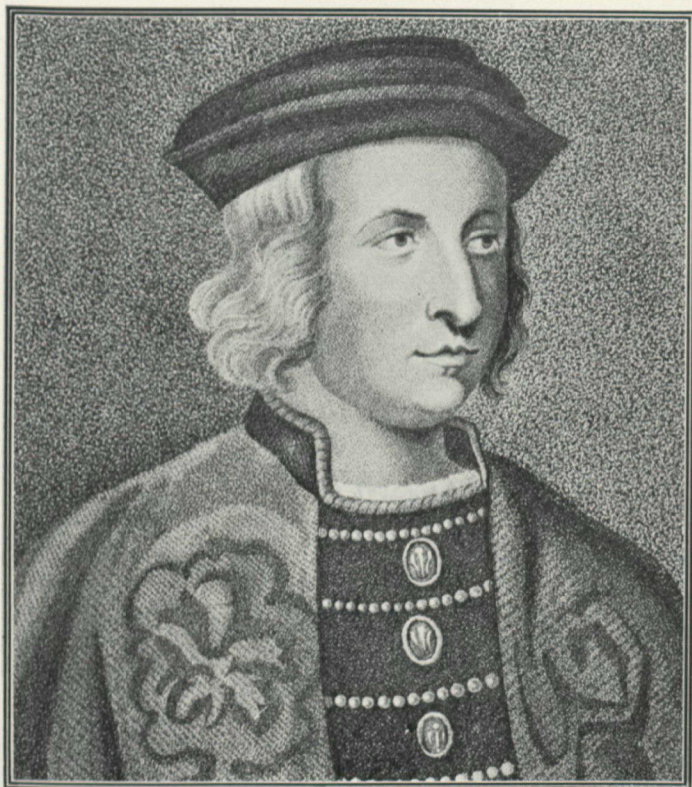




KING EDWARD THE FOURTH—CROWNED 1461

and stirring up the people against the evils in the Church. If the Black Prince had outlived his father, England would probably have enjoyed the rule of another Edward as able and enlightened as the first. But it was not to be. Edward III in his old age fell under the sway of Alice Perrers, and fell from his former high estate. In contemporary opinion he was a great king, as a warrior, a promoter of large enterprises; a lover of the chase, and a patron of architecture. Froissart the chronicler, dazzled by his exploits, thought no English king so distinguished had sat on the throne since the days of Arthur. But Edward III left a fatal legacy to his successors in the claim to the French throne. His death-bed is a painful climax to a career so stirring and brilliant. Alone with the priest, deserted by his mistress, who fled with the very rings from

the king's fingers, Edward heard at last the plain truth from his confessor, that he had grievously sinned against his people, his country, his God. It was safe to say these things to an old warrior dying and speechless. He ought to have heard them earlier.

With the death of Edward III, this first century of the Edwards, 1274 to 1377, came to an end, and there was the space of another hundred years before a king of that name appeared on the scene. Many things had happened meanwhile. The attempt to conquer France had failed. England was seething with revolt and discontent. The civil war between the Yorkist and Lancastrian factions had broken out, and in 1461, by the aid of Warwick the King-maker, Edward IV ascended the throne. He possessed military genius enough to regain and hold his throne when Warwick's treachery re-