



KING EDWARD THE THIRD—CROWNED 1327

hand was required. Yet, as one historian expresses it, "a more complete ninny than Edward II has seldom occupied a throne." An unworthy favourite, Gaveston, a false wife, turbulent barons, and Edward's devotion to amusements instead of business, soon brought disaster. You are shown to-day the tower-room in Berkeley Castle where the wretched king, deposed, friendless and tortured, was hideously done to death. If your credulity will stand the test, the iron weapon which was plunged red-hot into the victim's vitals and the bed on which he lay are still to be seen. Shown also is the dark dungeon where Edward was kept before his murder. There is perhaps in all history no example of such severe punishment for mere indolence and incapacity. The king, practically with his own consent, was deposed. Parliament passed a bill

and his subjects were formally absolved from their allegiance. Even his authority over his servants was taken away and the steward of the royal household broke his staff of office. There was nothing left but to get rid of a king shorn of all place and power, so this was done with revolting cruelty and 13th century despatch.

The strong type reappears with Edward III, whose reign is another period of importance in English history. By his vigour, and the aid of his martial son, the Black Prince—another national hero bearing the name of Edward—the king waged war against France and Scotland. The battles of Crecy and Poitiers belong to this period, and the Hundred Years' War with France begins. These wars, causing intense misery in three countries, were only useful in promoting the growth of Parliamentary influence