

martial spirits of the north. To national defeat succeeded domestic trouble. The reign of Edward II is one of the unhappiest in English history. During the twenty years he had the misfortune to rule, English misery and disgrace seemed approaching a climax. Yet he seems to have been an amiable and cultured man, who would likely have proved a popular and exemplary monarch, had he reigned in the latter half of the 19th century, but was utterly unfitted for rule in the stern age in which his lot was cast. But when his wretched life was brought to its fearful close, there mounted the throne of England, one of the most brilliant and warlike princes who ever swayed her sceptre.

The reign of Edward III is one of the longest and, in a sense, one of the most brilliant in our history. He raised the English name from the depths to which it was falling. He inaugurated a period of strong government at home and of brilliant victory abroad. He made his Court the most splendid in Europe. He fostered and encouraged that spirit of chivalry and romantic devotion to the fair sex, which tended so much to soften the rigor of an iron age.

Yet in the true sense of the term "greatness," the student of history may well hesitate to call the reign of Edward III a great reign. He was not nearly as able a man as his grandfather, though much more brilliant.

He was a strong man, and succeeded a weak one. He re-established order, where, for a time, disorder had prevailed. He was, undoubtedly, an infinitely abler man than his father, or than his successor, Richard II. He was a soldier, a knight-errant by nature. His wars abroad were useless wars, but they were conducted with consummate military ability, and were most brilliant in their wonderful successes. In the glamor thrown over those wars by the marvellous achievements of English arms, men forgot, and now forget, their folly and worse than folly. The misery, the debt, the wretched closing years of the brilliant monarch himself, are over-looked in the glare of his earlier triumphs. The chivalry of his time was gorgeous, but it was of a meretricious type. The 14th century was a cruel, and unreal, insincere century. The outward form and show of chivalry were there, its soul had fled. It lacked the solidity, the reality of the two preceding centuries. Yet it dazzled. It appealed to men's vanity. It was pleasing; it was inspiring to a martial race. Its hollowness was not seen till ages had elapsed. Combined with the causes I have already referred to, and with others I propose to briefly point out later on, it was a powerful influence in producing the literary period, now about to dawn. And there can be no doubt as to the wonderful military performances of this time. The long series of English successes, gained by