

XIX.

EDUCATION OF RICHARD II.—HIS PATRONAGE OF GOWER.

This distinction of literature extended through the reign of Edward's successor, Richard, the son of Edward the Black Prince, born at Bordeaux, in 1366, and who succeeded to the throne when only in his twelfth year. His government and education were committed to Simon Burleigh, a schoolfellow of the Black Prince, who had been by him made a Knight of the Garter.

In a manuscript of the year 1385, we read that English began to be the language into which schoolboys construed their lessons in the reign of Richard the Second.

One of the bright lights of this reign, Gower, was patronized by Richard. Gower the poet was born a few years later than Chaucer, though he is believed to have been his college friend. Gower studied law; he possessed considerable landed property in the counties of Nottingham and Suffolk. He wrote his principal work, the *Confessio Amantis*, in consequence of Richard II. meeting him in his state barge on the Thames, and asking him to "book some new thing;" his gravity led to his being called "the moral Gower." He stands half-way between the minstrel of Normandy and the English poet, and he seems to have transferred the faults of a declining literature into the language of one newly arisen. "Gower prepared for his bones a resting in the monastery of St. Mary Overie, where, somewhat after the old fashion he lieth, right sumptuously buried, with a garland on his head, in token that he in his life-daies flourished freshly in literature and science."

Richard, during childhood and youth was committed in succession to the charge of several guardians; and, like children (says an historian) whose nurses have been often changed, he thrived none the better for it. He did good or evil according to the influence of those around him, and had no decided inclination, except for ostentation and licentiousness. In his reign, laymen, among whom Chaucer and Gower are illustrious examples, received occasionally a learned education; and indeed the great number of gentlemen who studied in the Inns of Court is a conclusive proof that they were not generally illiterate. The common law required some knowledge of two languages. Upon the whole, we are inclined to think, that in the year 1400, or at the accession of Henry IV, the average instruction of an English gentleman of the first class would comprehend common reading and writing, a tolerable familiarity with French, and a slight tincture of Latin; the latter attained, or not, according to his circumstances, as school learning is at present.

XX.

HENRY IV.—HIS ACCOMPLISHMENTS.

Of Henry IV of Bolinbroke, eldest son of John of Gaunt, and born in the ancient castle of Bolinbroke, in Lincolnshire, in 1366, few early traits are recorded; and as his father was a subject, nothing of material interest was at the time associated with his appearance in the world. Blanche, his mother, survived the birth of Bolinbroke not more than three years; he thus early lost the benefit of maternal care, which, with his father's subsequent life of profligacy, may account for the excesses of Prince Henry. Richard II presented him, on his father's second marriage, with a costly ring. Froissart reports that Henry Bolinbroke was a handsome young man; and we read that he excelled in music. It was his custom every year, on the Feast of the Lord's Supper—that is, on the Thursday before Easter—to clothe as many poor persons as equalled the number of years he had completed on the preceding birthday. Henry was a gallant young knight, often distinguishing himself at jousts and tournaments, and in the Pell Rolls of 1401 is recorded the payment of 10*l.* "to Bartolf Vanderlurey, who fenced with the present lord the King, with the long sword, and was hurt in the neck by the said lord the King." Henry was of an active, ardent, and enterprising spirit; but we have no ground for believing that he devoted much of his time and thought to the education of his children. In this reign was built a library in Durham College, (now Trinity College,) Oxford, for the large collection of books of Richard of Bury, said to consist of more volumes than all the bishops of England had then in their possession.

XXI.

HENRY V AT QUEEN'S COLLEGE, OXFORD.

Of Henry V. of Monmouth, the childhood and youth are chronicled more nearly contemporarily than those of his predecessor. Henry was born in 1367, in the castle of Monmouth, of which the crumb-

ling ruins are now a few vine-clad walls, washed by the Monnow. From this castle, tradition says, that being a sickly child, Henry was sent to Cornfield, six or seven miles distant, to be nursed there; and the cradle in which he was rocked was shown there some thirty years since. In the Wardrobe Accounts of Henry's father we find an entry of a charge for a "long gown" for the young Lord Henry; and we further learn that very shortly after he ascended the throne, he settled an annuity of 20*l.* upon his nurse, Johanna Waring, "in consideration of what was done to him in former days." In the records of the Duchy of Lancaster, in the year 1397, is the charge of 8*d.* paid "for harpstrings purchased for the harp of the young lord Henry;" 12*d.* "for a new scabbard of a sword;" and "1*s.* 6*d.* for three-fourths of an ounce of tissue of black silk for a sword of young Lord Henry." In 1396, we find a charge of "4*s.* for seven books of grammar contained in one volume, and bought at London for the young Lord Henry." There is reason to believe that so early as 1399, Henry was placed in Queen's College, Oxford, under the superintendence of his half-uncle, Henry Beaufort, then chancellor of the University; so that even the above volumes of grammar may have been first learned under the direction of the future Cardinal.

In the old building of Queen's College, a chamber used to be pointed out by successive generations as Henry the Fifth's. It stood over the gateway opposite to St. Edmund's Hall. A portrait of him in painted glass, commemorative of his residence there, was seen in the window, with an inscription (as it should seem of comparatively recent date) in Latin:—

To record the fact for ever,
The Emperor of Britain,
The Triumphant Lord of France,
The Conqueror of his enemies and of himself,
Henry V.
Of this little chamber,
Once the great Inhabitant.

The tender age of Henry at this period does not render the tradition improbable; for many then became members of the University at the time they would now be sent to school. Those who were designed for the military profession were compelled to bear arms, and go to the field at the age of fifteen; consequently, the little education they received was confined to their boyhood. Hence it may be inferred that Henry (though perhaps without his uncle, then chancellor, and studied under his superintendence. It is nearly certain that before the October term, 1398, Henry had been removed to King Richard's palace, carefully watched; whilst in 1399 he accompanied that monarch in his expedition to Ireland. Shortly after his return, on his father's accession, he was created Prince of Wales; and had he subsequently become a student of the University, its archives would have furnished evidence of the fact; but, as the boy of the Earl of Derby, or the Duke of Hereford, living with his uncle, the omission of his name is not remarkable. In all probability his uncle superintended his general education, entrusting the details to others more competent to instruct him in the various branches of literature. Among his college associates was John Carpenter, of Oriol; and Thomas Rockman, an eminent astronomer and learned divine, of Merton. Among other pious and learned persons much esteemed by Henry was Robert Mascall, a Carmelite friar, confessor to his father; and Stephen Partington, a popular preacher, whom some of the nobility invited to court. It is impossible to read Henry's letters, and reflect on what is authentically recorded of him, without being impressed by a conviction that he had imbibed a very considerable knowledge of Holy Scripture, even beyond the young men of his day; whilst chroniclers bear testimony that "he held in great veneration such as surpassed in learning and virtue." Here we take leave of Henry, since an event in the autumn of 1398 turned the whole stream of his life into an entirely new channel, and led him by a very brief course to the inheritance of the throne of England.

Prior to the reign of Henry V, specimens of English correspondence are rare; letters previously to that time, were usually written in French or Latin, and were the productions chiefly of the great or the learned. The letters of learned men were verbose treatises, mostly on express subjects; those of the great, who employed scribes, resembled, from their formality, legal instruments. We have nothing earlier than the 15th century which can be termed a *familiar letter*. The material, too, upon which letters were written, up to the same period, was usually vellum; very few instances, indeed, occurring, of more ancient date, of letters written on common paper. The earliest royal signature known in this country is the signature of Richard III.—*Ellis's Original Letters*, 1st series, p. 8.