IX. *An Inquiry into the existing Narratives of the Battle of Cressy, with some Account of its Localities, Traditions, and Remains. By* GEORGE FREDERICK BELTZ, *Esq. K.H., F.S.A., Lancaster Herald, in a Letter to Sir HENRY ELLIS, K.H., F.R.S., Secretary.*

Read 17th, 24th, and 31st January, 1839.

MY DEAR SIR,

Heralds' College, January 16, 1839.

THE recent researches of several very able French antiquaries among the municipal archives of Picardy and Artois—conducted, apparently, in a spirit of candour, and with an unbiassed zeal for the developement of historical truth—having produced some variations in, and additions to, the existing narratives of the Battle of Cressy, and contributed, by a more minute attention than had hitherto been given to the relative localities, traditions and remains, materially to illustrate the positions and preliminary operations of both armies, I have thought that a condensed view of the result of these inquiries may possibly not be unacceptable to the Society of Antiquaries.

We learn, from our own historians, that Edward III. having landed at La Hogue on the 12th July, 1346, with an army of 40,000 men, devastated Normandy, and approached, without much opposition, so near to Paris as Poissy, had found it expedient, in order to avoid an imprudent premature conflict with the greatly superior army of his adversary, to direct his movements towards the coast, with the ultimate object of opening a way to Calais, but in the immediate hope of strengthening himself in Flanders, and particularly in Ponthieu, his mother's inheritance, which had then lately been seized by the French King and bestowed upon his kinsman, James of Bourbon, Count de la Marche.

After a long and fatiguing expedition, upon which he had been incessantly harassed by the cavalry under Count James, the English monarch reached Airaines, closely followed by King Philip, who shortly afterwards arrived at Amiens with 100,000 men, according to Mezerai, whilst others state that his army amounted to 120,000.

The position of the English, hemmed in as they were by the French army, the ocean, and the Somme, was perilous in the extreme. Precautions had been taken by Philip to destroy the principal bridges, and to guard the fords of that river, over which, however, a passage had become indispensable to Edward's safety; and he accordingly detached the Earl of Warwick and Geoffrey de Harcourt, his marshals, with 3,000 men, of whom two-thirds were archers, to force it wherever practicable. These troops marched to Longpré, and from thence in good order to the attack of Pont Remi, but they were there repulsed by a considerable body of knights, supported by the inhabitants of the borough. They burnt, on their retreat, Fontaine-sur-Somme, and threw themselves upon Long, which place they in vain endeavoured to carry; and, having made a similar ineffectual attempt at Picquigny, where the town, the bridge, and the castle had been strongly fortified, they were compelled to abandon all immediate hope of executing their commission, and to return to the head quarters.

In the meantime, Edward, anticipating the failure of his marshals, and most critically situated at a distance of a few leagues only from the camp of his powerful foe, surrounded also by a population exasperated by the unrestrainable excesses of his troops, had decided upon an effort to possess himself of Abbeville; and, accordingly, on the return of the detachment, and, after hearing mass a little before sunrise, he broke up with his whole army from Airaines in such haste that the French, who entered the town a few hours afterwards, found, as Froissart narrates, "great store of provisions, meat ready-spitted, bread and pasties in the ovens, tuns and vessels full of wine, and tables ready spread," as the English had, perhaps not undesignedly, left them.

Arrived before Abbeville, the King of England ascended, with an escort of 200 horse, the heights of Caubert, in order to ascertain the nature of the defences of the town, which he perceived was well prepared, by the strength

of its walls and the breadth of its fosses, for a vigorous resistance. The mayor, Colart de Ver, who had imbued the inhabitants with his own ardent patriotism, immediately sent out a strong detachment to attack the reconnoitring party, which, being greatly inferior in numbers, retreated precipitately upon the main body. The two marshals thereupon advanced up to the gates of the town; but the burgesses, supported by 2,000 men from the neighbouring communes, and led on by a corps of knights, drove them back, after putting, according to M. de Formentin, upwards of 500 men hors de combat, and making a number of prisoners.

Edward, finding it thus impracticable to take Abbeville by a coup de main, retrograded upon Oisemont, into which town the people of the vicinity had retired in multitudes for security; but, being carried by assault, after considerable slaughter both of the assailants and defenders, the King established his head-quarters in the Great Hospital, and despatched from thence numerous parties to reconnoitre the country. One of these, having advanced as far as the gates of Saint Valery, had a brisk skirmish with the garrison, and returned to Oisemont with many prisoners from the district of Vimeu. Edward, whose embarrassment was hourly increasing, demanded of the latter whether any one of them could point out a passage over the Somme, and undertake to serve him as a guide. A hind from Mons in Vimeu, named Gobin Agace or Agache, attracted by the promise of one hundred pieces of gold, his personal liberty, and that of twenty of his companions, engaged in this service. The English army departed at midnight from Oisemont, and, under the guidance of Agache, arrived towards five in the morning at the ford of Blanquetaque. Froissart says that Edward left Oisemont just before day-break, and reached the ford at sunrise; but the distance between Blanquetaque and Oisemont being at the least five leagues, the army must have been on its march during the greater part of the night.

Cassini is mistaken in placing the ford called Blanquetaque, *i. e.* Tache-blanche, at the entrance of the mouth of the Somme, above Crotoy. It is rather at the most prominent point of the steep chalky shore, which forms a long white strip above the village of Port. The site of the passage was, therefore, at from six to seven and a half furlongs (1,200 to 1,500 metres) downward from that village. At all the points of the Somme between Port

and Crotoy, the bed of the river is moveable, and the banks, which increase or lessen its depth, are shifted at every tide; but the ford of Blanquetaque has never varied. It was there where, in 981, the body of St. Valery was conveyed across the Somme, when the waters are said to have been divided by a miracle, in order to create a passage for the precious relic. In the long wars of the middle age it afforded always a convenient transit for the numerous armies which ravaged the country. At this day, as in the time of Gobin Agache, "the bottom is of white marle, hard and strong, and yielding a firm footing;" but the river is now entirely fordable from Port to Noyelles.

The tide was at flood when Edward reached the ford. He was therefore constrained to wait several hours, during which his army had time to form en masse upon the sandy strand, of considerable breadth at that spot, and submerged only at high tides. A new obstacle unexpectedly presented itself. A thousand men-at-arms, backed by 6,000 Genoese, the militia of Abbeville and the adjacent countries, and 2,000 of the townsmen of Tournay, were ranged on the opposite bank. This corps, commanded by Godemard de Fay, a Norman baron, formed an effective force of 12,000 men. Edward encouraged his troops, and ordered his marshals to plunge into the river with the best-mounted horsemen, whilst the archers on the left bank overwhelmed the soldiers of Godemard with a shower of arrows. Without awaiting their enemy, the French knights precipitated themselves into the stream, and attacked with vigour the head of the hostile column. In the fierce onset, many of either party were dismounted and perished; but the English, sensible that their destruction would infallibly ensue should they fail in making good the passage, redoubled their efforts, and reached at length the opposite shore. "There was great slaughter," says Froissart, "for the infantry could not fly; and, the pursuit continuing for a full league, a great number of those from Abbeville, Montreuil, Rue, and Saint-Riquier were slain or taken." The continuator of Nangis, and the anonymous author of the Chronicle of Flanders, accuse Godemard of having abandoned his soldiery and saved himself by flight towards Noyelles: but the modern French writers, and, in particular, Chateaubriand, in his "*Etudes Historiques*," refute this stain upon the memory of a brave commander, who had given numerous proofs of courage and fidelity, upon the highly probable ground that Philip of Valois,

who had, upon slight evidence and perhaps mere suspicion of intelligence with Edward, punished Clisson and the brothers Malestroit with death, would scarcely have pardoned in Godemard so flagrant a dereliction of duty. The manner, besides, in which our Northburgh, who was present, relates the fact, shows that the French defended themselves valiantly, since he avers that 2,000 of their soldiers fell in the engagement.

The passage of the Somme was effected on St. Bartholomew's day (24th August); and the English troops, on landing, proceeded towards the left, on the strand, in order to reach Noyelles; for the steep perpendicular shore between Port and that village precluded a straight ascent upon quitting the river. The garrison of Noyelles defended gallantly the castle of that small place, which was then the residence of Catharine of Artois, daughter of the celebrated Count Robert, and widow of John de Ponthieu, Count of Aumale, and Lord of Noyelles. This lady, says M. Louandre (in his excellent History of Abbeville and its environs), who shared the aversion to Philip of the major part of the nobility, had not been able to refuse entrance to her castle to the French troops; but these were soon compelled to yield to the battalions of the English monarch. The village became a prey to the flames, and a similar fate was reserved for the castle, when the countess, on her knees, implored the protection of Geoffrey de Harcourt, whose nephew, John (afterwards, in 1353, beheaded at Rouen by command of King John for his adherence to the King of Navarre), had married her daughter Blanche. Through the intercession of the "traitor" Geoffrey, the castle was accordingly spared. It may be interesting to remark, that it exhibits at this day only a vast heap of rubbish, surrounded by the remains of walls and deep ditches, where, at different times, arms, barbs of arrows, and human skeletons, have been dug up.

Numerous English detachments spread themselves over the country, and pushed their reconnoissances as far as the gates of Abbeville and Saint Riquier. Crotoy was taken by assault by Hugh Spencer, the town burnt, and the garrison, consisting of 400 men, put to the sword. The division of Godemard, having been replenished, rallied on the plain in front of Noyelles, which its inhabitants still, in memory of the passage, call Blanquetaque, and maintained itself gallantly near the village of Sailly-Brai, where a bank yet

bears the appellation of "le royon soudart" (the soldiers' territory), and where the frequent discovery of large masses of human bones comes in aid of the opinion that the ground had been fiercely contested, probably by the troops under Godemard de Fay.

Edward, after having dismantled Noyelles-sur-Somme, held a council of war, gathered together his troops, and, on the day following, put himself on the march. But, in order to avoid the impassable marshes which he saw on his left, he bent his course towards Titre, whence, having burnt the fort, he passed on to La Motte-Bulleux. His route from Noyelles lay on the ancient road, supposed to be Roman, which is still extant as a greensward-way, and, notwithstanding encroachments upon it, exhibits almost every where, for that distance, the ordinary breadth of the French high roads. This chaussée, which appears to have been the medium of communication between Havre and Flanders through Noyelles, is still uninterrupted as far as Notre-dame-de-Foi, and again to be met with, at several points, after crossing the chaussée of Brunehaut, on the passage from thence into Flanders. Had the King not been disinclined to traverse the forest, he might have proceeded from Titre by Forêt-L'Abbaye (the castle of which, formerly belonging to the Templars, was in ruins at that period), and so have reached Cressy by passing through a very small extent of the wood, which would indeed have been his direct road from Noyelles to that town. At La Motte-Bulleux, however, he joined the high road from Abbeville to Hesdin, and proceeded upon it until he reached Marcheville, where he found a direct road on the left, which, near an old farm called Le Donjon, terminates at Cressy.

All the movements of the English monarch tend to show that it was his intention to march upon Flanders : and, in truth no other asylum presented itself to his harassed army, inferior as it was by three-fourths to that by which it was pursued. The opinion, therefore, entertained by Froissart and several historians, that, with this fine road open to him, and which would conduct him, straight and without impediment, to his point of destination, he adopted that by Montreuil, ravaging in his course the villages of Rue and Crotoy, appears to be wholly inadmissible. For those places lay out of his route from Noyelles to Cressy ; and it is not credible that, as an experienced general, he would have committed the imprudence of traversing,

at its widest part, the immense forest of Cressy, where no road had been traced, and where he was liable to be intercepted by hostile ambuscades. The arguments, on the other hand, for the route by Marcheville, founded as they are upon a more correct survey of the country than had hitherto been thought of with a view to these points, appear to be conclusive : since it was open and much shorter, and placed Edward's enemy at a distance of two and a half leagues on his right, and the forest on his left. One of his two marshals might without doubt, agreeably to the narrative of Froissart, have passed by Rue, and possibly to Forest-montier (on the road from Abbeville to Montreuil), in order to cover his left wing ; whilst the other approached Abbeville for the purpose of covering his right. The former had, in such case, to cross the forest in order to join the main body at Cressy : a course which he could not avoid, as no other route would have been open to him except the too circuitous one by Bernai. It is also to be recollected that the high road from Abbeville to Montreuil-sur-Mer was not made until centuries after the period in question ; and that the then existing line of communication between those towns was both sinuous and difficult.

Edward passed the small river Maye on the bridge of the castle of Cressy, near the scene of the subsequent action : and the event alone justified his conduct in intrenching his army and deciding to await his enemy on that spot ; since, by proceeding one league further, it was in his power to place the river Authie between the French army and his own ; and so, if expedient, to avoid a battle, the successful issue of which, considering his comparatively small force, he must have contemplated as highly doubtful.

The uncertainty of historians concerning the position taken by King Edward, appears to have arisen from a defective geographical knowledge of the country. One author asserts that the English had the forest on their left. If so, they would have turned their backs to the French army, which has always been considered to have advanced from Abbeville. Others have thought that Edward posted his troops on the elevated ground near Cressy, with the forest on his right and the Maye on his left. But Baron Seymour de Constant, in his able military view of the subject, remarks that this would, for several reasons, not have been a good military position. In the first place, it is always usual to avoid giving battle with a river in the rear to

impede a retreat in case of misfortune: secondly, he might have been starved in his camp, having a forest in his rear from whence he might have been annoyed with impunity: and, thirdly, the heights of Cressy on the right bank of the Maye being in the occupation of Philip, he could have cut off all means of Edward's retreat upon Artois. Some historians, in discussing this point, have endeavoured to uphold the latter of the two abovementioned positions, by arguing that the hail having, during the battle, beaten against the faces of the Genoese archers (placed by Philip in the van) proves that the English were to the westward of the French; because the westerly winds are those which, at that season of the year, usher in storms. The observation has, undoubtedly, some weight: but the English army would be placed in the same direction relatively to its adversary, if we suppose that, having passed the Maye, its right was posted on the heights above Cressy, and its left extended towards Wadicourt.

It has been remarked that, although hail storms sometimes occur in Picardy in the month of August, heavy rains, driven by hurricane, are more frequent at that season, and so violent as materially to injure the harvest. Such a storm, coming from the west, and raised by the sea, which was in that direction with relation to the situation of the French army, must necessarily have greatly incommoded those archers in the position which common sense and a knowledge of the ground must deem it to have taken.

It would seem, therefore, unavoidable to fix the position of the English army on the right bank of the Maye and on the high ground near Cressy; its right wing covered by the town and the river—its left towards Wadicourt—and its front commanding a ravine on a gentle slope, called La Vallée-des-Clercs. This excellent position attests so much the more the military talent of Edward, as it deprived Philip of Valois of the power of employing his cavalry with success, except on his right; and as it afforded to the English the additional advantage of being enabled to follow the chaussée called Brunehaut, for the purpose of crossing the river Authie at Ponche, in case of defeat or in avoidance of a battle, by deploying to the left if the French army should have attempted to take them in flank with its right wing, and so to obstruct their retreat.

As, however, this position, although defended on the side of Cressy by several curtains, placed ladder-wise, one above the other, might have been

accessible whenever any considerable space should intervene between the army and the town, and be turned on the side of Wadicourt; the prudent monarch, in order to obviate such a disaster, barricaded his left with pallisades and waggons, leaving nevertheless a passage open for an emergency; placed the baggage behind him in the thicket towards the left, on the road between Cressy and Ligescourt; fortified that thicket with abatis, and thus formed his post into a vast intrenched camp, protected also by the small river Maye, which descends the valley of Cressy.

It was on this advantageous spot that the English monarch exclaimed,—“Let us take ground here: we will advance no further.” His soldier-eye embraced at once the strength of this position; and imagination furnished a happy augury, from the circumstance, that the battle would be fought upon his own territory of Ponthieu; for he added, “I am here upon my lands, and I will defend them.”

In the meantime Philip of Valois arrived at Airaines with his imposing forces. He had passed through Amiens, and advanced by rapid marches in order to block up Edward between the Somme and the ocean. He followed the same direction as the Count de la Marche; but the latter, inflamed with ardour and at the head of light troops, moved with greater expedition. Philip precipitated his march on the side of Saint Valery, where he had expected to find Edward; and had the mortification to learn, on reaching Mons in Vimeu (a village three leagues distant from Abbeville, and one league from the Somme, on that side, and nearly opposite to Noyelles-sur-Mer), that the King of England had just passed the Somme with his whole army. He ordered his army to halt; passed the night at Mons; and then took the road to Abbeville. This counter-march was made with difficulty, because it appeared that the bridges at Rouvroi had been broken down, in order to prevent the enemy from entering that suburb. Night approached when the bulk of the army had finished its passage of the Somme at Abbeville upon the bridge of Talance. Philip made necessarily this retrogressive march to Abbeville, instead of proceeding to Blanquetaque by the road which leads thither from Saigneville across the lower fields of that village; for the increase of the waters had commenced; and, supposing the ford had been practicable, he would scarcely have ventured upon it under

the eye of Edward, and whilst the battalions of the latter, encouraged by their recent success, covered the right bank of the river.

The Genoese archers, banditti accustomed to pillage and murder, remained at Mautort, Rouvroi, and in the environs of those places; being destined to form the advance-guard: and it was besides apprehended, that, should they be allowed to pass the night in Abbeville, the town would have become a prey to their marauding habits. The greater part of the French army proceeded, without halting, into quarters at Mepchecourt, Thuisson, and in the fields of that vicinity.

The King of France established his head-quarters in the abbey of St. Peter, where he assembled his principal officers in grand "parliament of arms," says Froissart, and, after supper, conjured them to be friendly and courteous towards each other, dismissing from them all envy, hatred, and pride. The fear that the English monarch might escape his pursuit, tormented and urged him to make dispositions for departure at an early hour of the following morning.

On Saturday, the 26th of August, at sun-rise, after having heard mass and communicated at St. Stephen's (a church now demolished), King Philip quitted Abbeville, in order to marshal his forces for the approaching conflict. In this army were 15,000 Genoese, whom, upon the disembarkation of Edward, he had caused to join him under the command of Grimaldi and Doria. The Ligurian mountaineers had, at that time, the reputation of being the most dexterous archers and the best seamen in Europe. His remaining infantry was inferior to that of the English. It was formed of inhabitants of towns, levied in haste, and of a large number of peasants whom fear had mustered under his banners. There was also a multitude of nobles, amongst whom several foreign princes, particularly John of Luxemburgh, King of Bohemia, esteemed one of the most able politicians and most ambitious of monarchs of his age, whose daughter had espoused John Duke of Normandy, eldest son of Philip, and who had desired, notwithstanding his almost total blindness, to come into France for the purpose of succouring that prince. John of Luxemburgh had brought with him his son Charles, elect King of the Romans. Amongst the other stranger princes was Don James, King of Majorca, who, after having been dethroned by Peter, King of Arragon, had taken refuge with Philip; Louis, Count of Flanders, expelled

from his states by his own subjects ; Raoul of Lorraine, who had distinguished himself in the war against the Moors ; the Duke of Savoy, recently arrived with a contribution of 1,000 horse ; and others. Of French princes, there were Charles, called the Magnanimous, Count of Alençon, the king's brother ; Louis de Châtillon, Count of Blois, the king's nephew ; Louis de Champagne, Count of Sancerre ; and John de Chalon, Count of Auxerre ; Peter of Bourbon ; John de Croix ; John de Conflans ; and others. The main army might then amount to 70,000 men ; but it contained too many commanders, and a great proportion of soldiers without experience. Philip was also less fortunate than his rival in respect to obedience to his authority ; and, although he had in the evening so strongly recommended unanimity to his jealous and restless barons, it was not practicable to bring them, on the morrow, under such subjection to his orders as was demanded by the crisis.

The French army, like the English, was divided into three bodies, or battalions. The first was commanded by Doria and Grimaldi ; the second, by the Count of Alençon ; and the King in person placed himself at the head of the third ; having with him the King of Bohemia, the other foreign princes, and the Count of Ponthieu.

The records of the district are said not to indicate the route which King Philip took on leaving Abbeville ; but, if it had been a direct one towards Cressy, it is improbable, considering the short distance, that, if his first columns had quitted that town at day-break, they would have arrived on the field of battle, as they did, fatigued and harassed, so late as three o'clock in the afternoon.

M. Louandre is of opinion that, seeing the villages about Crotoy in flames, Philip, on marching out of Abbeville, moved toward Noyelles by Menche-court, in the hope of driving Edward into the marshes of the Authie. The inhabitants of Noyelles, at this day, are said to call the road to Abbeville, by the strand of the river, "*Chemin de Valois*." Chateaubriand, in his "*Etudes Historiques*," informs us that Philip was deceived by a false report on quitting Abbeville ; and that he had already made two leagues on a contrary route before he ascertained that Edward had halted at Cressy : and the History of the Mayors of Abbeville mentions that the French made their first dispositions in the plains of Titre, which plains they would indeed have had to traverse in their progress from Noyelles to Cressy. Baron Seymour

de Constant, on the other hand, states that the French army, on leaving Abbeville, proceeded on the road which leads from that town to Hesdin, and which, he also asserts, is still called "*Chemin de l'Armée.*" Both accounts may be reconcilable upon the hypothesis that Philip was at first mistaken respecting the position of Edward, and that, after having advanced to Noyelles, and from thence to Titre, he joined the Hesdin route (as Edward had done) at Nôtre-Dame-de-Foi.

On arrival at Marcheville the French King gave orders to halt; for, there being a considerable elevation of ground beyond that village, all distant view was thereby intercepted. He sent forward D'Aubigny, Beaujeu, des Noyers, and Le Moine de Bazèle, to survey the country, says Froissart, and to ascertain if the English, reported to have been at Cressy on the preceding evening, were still encamped there. These knights, the chronicler adds, returned sad and dispirited; and, on being pressed with questions, Bazèle (whom he describes as one of the most chivalrous and valiant knights in the world) answered that this English army, which had been supposed to be on its retreat, was boldly awaiting in good order of battle the arrival of its adversary. At the suggestion of that brave knight to defer the engagement until the morrow, in order to afford time for the repose and refreshment of the troops, King Philip issued orders to stop the march of the advance-guard. Those troops which composed the first marching column accordingly halted; but the second battalia, commanded by Alençon, burning to come into action, disobeyed the order, the officers declaring that they would advance as far as their precursors. The van-guard, on observing the approach of the following corps, presumed that the order to halt had been countermanded, and continued its march. Alençon redoubled his steps, and the great lords had the vanity to strive to surpass each other; and, it thus becoming impracticable to maintain discipline, the mass arrived in face of its enemy in the greatest disorder.

Finding it impossible under these circumstances to delay the action, Philip passed above the sources of the Maye; and, extending his troops on the right, placed his army in battle array, with his left wing in front of Fontaine, Estrées behind his centre, and his right on the farm of Branlicourt. If the troops formed as they came up, it is in the order of things that the Genoese cross-bows in the advance were stationed towards the left, opposite the Vallée-

des-Clercs, which became the scene of the brunt of the action. The assumption that this was the position, is said to find a corroboration in the frequent exhumation of warlike weapons and human bones in that valley.

It was three o'clock in the afternoon; a violent storm burst upon the armies. The rain (which, in those districts near the coast, is at that season often mingled with hail) fell in torrents, and incommoded especially the cross-bow-men. The sun re-appeared, but his rays dazzled and blinded the Genoese. The English, on the other hand, had the sun at their backs, an advantageous position, which, in conflicts between archers, the usual prelude to general battles at that period, not seldom ensured victory to the party so favoured. When the two armies had approached sufficiently near, a signal was given to the Genoese in front to commence the attack; but they demanded a few moments repose, pleaded fatigue and hunger, and that the rain had slackened the cords of their bows. Natives, in fact, of a clime in which sudden showers of rain are less frequent, they had not learnt, like the archers of Edward, to sheathe their weapons. Urged on, however, by their commanders, they advanced with loud shouts, but were repulsed by the English archers. The impetuous Alençon, supposing the defeat of the Genoese the effect of treachery, exclaimed—"Kill that rabble, for they only impede us!" and so saying he darted upon and rode over them with his cavalry. Whilst the Genoese, thus bruised and mangled by their own party, sought, amidst piercing cries, to avoid death by flight or by houghing with their daggers the horses which were crushing them, the English overwhelmed the disordered mass with a shower of arrows, or cut the fugitives in pieces with their swords.

The Count de Ponthieu was sent by Philip to open a passage for the Genoese; and, by clearing the battle front, to enable the French to resume the offensive, which that valiant commander at length effected, but was, after a fierce combat, driven back into the valley, where the last columns of the second corps had just appeared. The nobles, attached to the staff of the Count of Alençon, the King's brother, were there ranged under his banner, borne by Jacques d'Estracelles. The retreat of the vanguard had suspended their march onward, and they deemed it prudent to await the advance of the King. But Alençon, with the impetuosity natural to him, commanded the attack, and ordered d'Estracelles to carry his banner before

him. This warrior, celebrated for numerous proofs of courage, had availed himself of an instant's repose to remove his iron head-piece, in order to breathe more freely during the extreme heat of the day. He represented to the Prince the danger of an attempt to dislodge the English from their entrenchments with the cavalry. The Count replied imperiously—"Replace your casque, and go forward!" "It is your order," said the brave soldier, "and I obey: I shall replace my casque, never to take it off again." He then sprang forward, and the troops following him, charged the Prince of Wales, who had just quitted his formidable position in order to fall upon the second French line, and to give it the death-blow. The young Prince endeavoured in vain to resist the powerful attack. Our national accounts of the battle, at this moment, show that he was in great peril, and that a report to that effect was made to his royal father; but the town records of Abbeville are said to furnish some details on the point which are not historically known to us, and which, if they may be relied on, are certainly of great interest. M. Louandre states, upon their authority, that the Black Prince, surrounded and thrown to the ground, would infallibly have fallen into the power of the enemy, but for a knight of Norman origin, Richard de Beaumont, who carried the great banner of Wales, threw it over the prince; and, having placed his feet upon it, with his sword in both hands, repulsed the assailants. Harcourt, to whose experience Edward had confided his young son, having apprised the Earl of Arundel of the critical situation of the heir apparent, the latter came up at the head of the second division, and forced the French, who had advanced as far as the hill, suddenly to retire.

The Counts of Alençon and de Ponthieu, finding themselves unable to maintain this position, resolved to turn it. Those who have surveyed the ground, are led to believe that this attempt was made in the ravine, which conducts to that point of the field of battle, on the side of Wadicourt, which the inhabitants call "*Le Marché à Carognes*." But as fast as the French penetrated into this ravine, the outlet of which was barricaded, the English, entrenched behind the pallisades, and under cover of their baggage-waggons, destroyed all who presented themselves. The assailants endeavoured in vain to throw down the barricades, and were pierced by the English

lances. The Count of Alençon was slain; and the Count de Blois, the Duke of Lorraine, and the Counts of Auxerre and Sancerre shared the same fate. The gallant d'Estracelles fell, covered with wounds, whilst defending his banner, his casque unremoved, as he had predicted! The French authors assert that quarter was sternly refused by the English, and particularly to the great barons; and add, that several English commanders, moved to pity by the indiscriminate slaughter, supplicated Edward to stay its progress, but found him inflexible. It would seem, however, to be difficult to support this latter assertion by any thing in the shape of evidence; and the distance of the King, who commanded the reserve, from the immediate scene of the pell-mell conflict, appears to increase that difficulty.

The two first divisions of the French army had been already broken and repulsed, when King Philip appeared in the valley of Cressy. He thought the battle gained, and came only to witness the rout of his principal troops. The unfortunate monarch plunged furiously into the thick of the remaining battle; and, seconded by those around him, drove his enemy to the foot of the acclivity. At that moment, King Edward advanced at the head of his division: his good fortune was again predominant; and the French fled in all directions. Philip, wounded in the neck and thigh, had had two horses killed under him; and notwithstanding all his efforts to rally the fugitives, he saw himself at once abandoned and almost within the power of his victorious foe. The intrepid King of Bohemia had, just before the catastrophe, come up with the extreme rear-guard. Being nearly blind, he enquired the state of the battle, and learnt that it was lost, and that Charles of Luxembourg, King of the Romans, his son, was dangerously wounded. He immediately ordered Le Moine de Bazèle to take the rein of his horse, and lead him against the English. An ineffectual endeavour was made to divert his resolution. "Shall I, the King of Bohemia," he exclaimed, "fly before an enemy? Let me succour Philip and my son, quit the spot as a conqueror, or perish!" And, so saying, he was led into the battle; and dealt at random "baleful blows" on all with whom he came into contact. The English soldiers, transported with rage, threw him from his horse, and slew Bazèle, Henry of Rosemberg, and John of Leuchtenberg, who strove in vain to save him. The old King fell, not at seven hundred paces forward from Cressy,

according to Mazas, but, as M. Louandre states, at the distance of 1,900 metres from that place ; and a great stone-cross was erected on the spot to commemorate the event. This cross, about three feet in height, wasted and blackened by time, was thrown down ; but being planted a second time near the pedestal which supported it, it may still be seen on the road, called "Chemin de l'Armée." There were still parties engaged in the fields near Watéglise, whilst the remnant of the French army was scattered in various directions. A tradition is said to exist that a numerous detachment, pursued as far as Brailly-Cornehotte, halted near that village and swore to die arms in hand ; and that the renewed conflict lasted until no one of the French remained. It was, in order to perpetuate the memory of this last effort, that a chapel, still extant on the fatal site, and called "Moriadini," was erected. A similar origin is assigned to the chapel of Tréchencourt (three hundred bodies) situated near Noyelles-en-Chaussée. For these topographical particulars M. Louandre acknowledges himself to be indebted to M. Delhommel de Sorus, who, residing in the vicinity of the battle-field, has been enabled to gather many traditions towards the elucidation of events so interesting to both nations.

King Philip, wounded, vanquished, and almost deserted, refused to quit the spot on which all his hopes had foundered. John of Hainault, the Counts de la Marche and Ponthieu, and the Lord of Aubigny, were obliged to use violence to remove him. They seized the bridle of his horse, and led away the unhappy monarch. John de Beaujeu, the Lord of Montfort, Charles de Montmorency, and sixty other warriors, who determined to defend him at the peril of their lives, served as his escort. Their course was towards the right ; and Philip reached, towards midnight, the castle of La Broie, whose owner, John Lessopier, was entirely devoted to his cause. The King himself knocked at the gate. The aged castellan, shaking with fear after the events of the day, called out from the battlements, "Soldiers, whose are ye ? If you serve not my Lord of Valois, you enter not my castle." "Open, open, castellan," answered Philip with emotion, "it is the unfortunate King of the French." Lessopier, recognising his voice, hastened to conduct the monarch and his suite within his walls, "not without dreadful weeping and lamentations," say the Abbeville records, "of his poor subjects." After partaking of a hasty repast, Philip continued his route to Amiens.

The English spread themselves over the whole plain, in order to complete the dispersion of their enemy. Edward was, besides, aware that the land militias of a part of Normandy, and from Beauvais and the neighbouring countries, were advancing on his track. Holand and Warwick, two of his best generals, consequently, put themselves on their march on the day following, and encountered, several leagues from the field of the late battle, corps of some thousands of men, who were running at hazard, and without knowing whither to direct their steps ; for they had been apprised, by the fugitives from Cressy, of the defeat of the French. These unfortunate rustic troops, with whom were the Archbishops of Nismes and Sens, and the Grand-Prior of France, fell, in the obscurity of the night, amongst the English soldiers, and were put to death. Hume observes that this inhumanity was endeavoured to be palliated by the alleged fact, that the King of France had given like orders to his troops, but that the true reason probably was, that the English, in their actual situation, feared to be embarrassed with prisoners. The history of the Mayors of Abbeville informs us that, whilst Edward's generals were employed in dispersing the fragments of the enemy's army, the King walked, accompanied by his son, over the lines where the battle had been fought. The ground, inundated with blood and covered with the dead, presented a horrible spectacle. "What think you of a battle," said he to the young Prince : "do you believe it to be an agreeable game?" He called his clerks, in order to count and recognise the slain, and to indicate, especially, the rank of the nobles. ~~The clerks remained~~ an entire day in the valley and neighbouring fields ; and, after their funereal scrutiny, reported to their sovereign, that they had found a King, eleven princes, eighty great barons, and twelve hundred knights, amongst whom Geoffrey Harcourt recognised his brother by the crest of a peacock upon his helm. If the war-cry of his house, exclaim the French writers, "Harcourt ! Harcourt !" which he doubtless heard during the battle, struck him, as it must, with grief and remorse, the aspect of the bloody corpse would have made him tremble with horror. He is said to have cast himself, at a subsequent period, at the feet of Philip, with his scarf around his neck in the manner of a cord, thereby avowing himself amenable to the most infamous of punishments. His penitence availing, he obtained a pardon for his perfidy.

Some historians aver that 30,000 men perished on the day of the battle, and 60,000 on the day following : but this is an evident exaggeration. Northburgh, an eye-witness, reduces the number of men-at-arms, killed on the first day, to 1,542, without reckoning peasants and trampers, and that on the morrow, to somewhat more than 2,000.

An ancient tradition, preserved in the Abbey of Valloires, states that Edward, having ordered the wounded to be removed, and relief administered to them, the monks of that monastery proceeded to the spot, and carried away a great number of barons and common soldiers into the vast buildings around their magnificent domain at Cressy-Grange, where they gave them every solace in their power. The ground is still shown, within an inclosure in the former cemetery of Valloires, where the Bernardine friars consigned to the grave the remains of the brave men whose lives their tender care could not save.

Edward proclaimed a truce of three days, for the purpose of burying the dead, and enjoined the surrounding peasantry to discharge that duty. There are still to be seen in the Vallée-des-Clercs large ditches which were evidently excavated with that object. One of these fosses exists at the angle connecting this valley with that of the Maye ; another is noticed against a small ravine which descends from the elevated point where the English were encamped. The bodies of the principal nobility were interred at Valloires, Maintenoy, Montreuil, but mostly in the church of Cressy. There lay the Count of Flanders, with this inscription on his tomb :—

“ Cy gist noble et puissant Prince de bonne
mémoire, monseigneur Louys de Crécy, comte
de Flandre, de Nevers et Rethel, qui
trépassa en l’an de grace MCCCXLVI le
xxvi^e jour du mois d’aoust.”

The body of the Count of Alençon was carried to Amiens. It is said that the King of England and his son assisted, in mourning, at the solemn service celebrated for the nobles slain in the battle ; but that before consigning the mangled bodies to their place of rest, he permitted his soldiers to possess themselves of their armour, helmets, and swords. There yet remained,

after this spoil, many of these relics which they could not bear away; and these and the waggons, collected in a vast heap, were devoted to the flames.

It has been already stated that the King of Bohemia, having rode into the midst of his enemies, was thrown from his horse and pierced with wounds. Edward, informed that he still breathed beneath the dust of the bloody field, ordered him to be carried to his tent, and that every aid should be afforded to him; but he expired in the night. The English monarch retained, of the rich spoils of the illustrious stranger, only two ostrich feathers which had surmounted his helm, and which were encircled by a golden wreath, whereon the motto "*Ich dien*" (I serve) was engraven. Edward presented the plume to his gallant son, as a guerdon for his exploits on the preceding day. The remains of John of Luxemburgh were deposited in the chapel of the abbey of Valloires, where, within the last century, was still to be seen this inscription:—

“ *L’an mil quarante six trois cents,
Comme la chronique tesmoigne,
Fut apporté et mis céans
Jean Luxembourg, Roi de Béhagne.*”

The Benedictines, editors of *L’Art de Verifier les Dates*, and other historians, affirm that these remains were reclaimed by two aunts of the deceased king, nuns in the Dominican convent at Montargis, and that his tomb was recovered in 1748, during the progress of some repairs of the church of that convent; but the Bohemian historians positively assert that the mortal relics of this great prince were transported into Germany. Baron Seymour de Constant has demonstrated that the body had sepulture in the cathedral of Luxemburgh; and that a portion of the bones, profanely disinterred during the French revolution, are now preserved in the cabinet of curiosities of M. Buch-Buschmann, the proprietor of a porcelain manufactory at Treves, and shown to visitors.

I have extracted a large portion of the preceding narrative from an instructive memoir contributed by M. Louandre to the "*Revue Anglo-*

Française," publishing at Poitiers ; and, although authorities are not cited for many of the statements, it cannot but be an interesting occupation to an English antiquary to bring under the view of his countrymen every incident connected with, and serving to illustrate, so memorable an event in history. I fear that my communication will already be thought too copious ; but I am tempted to add a few observations, from the above learned author, referring to some of the causes to which he attributes the victory.

Amongst these, M. Louandre says, must be reckoned the fine military position which the English had chosen, and in which they awaited, according to their custom down to the present time, the attack of their adversary. The superiority, also, of our archers, who, habituated to the incessant use of the cross-bow in those days, made that weapon a terrible instrument in their hands. The cross-bow was so formidable from its force, and so dangerous from the facility of its use, that the practice of it was anathematised in a council of the Lateran, held in 1139. The French despised it as a cowardly weapon, and refused to use it. For the same reason they were even disinclined to use the common bow ; and held the sword, the lance, and similar weapons only as honourable, as they required proximity, and afforded no superiority save to strength and valour. Other causes, contributory to the French defeat at Cressy, he considers to have been their inconceivable precipitation in attacking, by successive movements, the formidable lines of their enemy ; and the well-executed charge against the Genoese cross-bowmen, and the frightful disorder which resulted from it in the first moments of the action. Moreover, the celebrated historian Villani, who has been remarked for his scrupulous search after truth, and is superior in judgment to the French historians of that age, informs us that Edward had intermixed, with his archers, "bombs which, by means of fire, darted small iron balls, for the purpose of affrighting and destroying the horses ; and that this kind of missile caused so much noise and tremour, that it seemed like thunder from heaven, whilst it produced great slaughter amongst the soldiery, and the overthrow of their horses." This first mention of artillery in a battle is the more worthy of attention, says Sismondi, because Villani, who died two years only after the event, could not have committed an anachronism. M. Mazas, nevertheless, disbelieves the exact fact upon the ground

that Froissart has omitted all allusion to it. Mr. Hallam, however, in his great work on the Middle Ages, has not felt himself restrained by the silence of the chronicler from re-producing the testimony of Villani on the subject. It is indeed indisputable that cannon were used at the siege of Quesnoy so early as 1340. They were unlike those in present use, being much shorter and thicker, and had somewhat the form of a mortar. The use of artillery had been imported from the east by our commerce with Arabia, where powder had been employed since 1200 for the throwing of stones and balls. The Moors, continues M. Louandre, had artillery of this description, in 1305, at the siege of Ronda, and again, at that of Algesiras, in 1343, where several English battalions, serving as auxiliaries in the Castilian ranks, may have witnessed the power of this arm of war, and recommended its adoption to their nation.

Some French historians, amongst others Robert Gaguin (who died in 1501), mention the entangling costume of the French at that period as one of the causes of their disaster. Their dress, in the 14th century, consisted of a long robe trailing on the ground, with a cincture, and a hood like those used by monks. An old poet, Jean Douchet, thus expresses himself in his epitaph on Philip of Valois :

“ Puis a Crécy perdis de mes gindarmes
Trente cinq mille, nonobstant leurs grands armes,
Par le moyen de leurs acoustremens
Et chaperons et autres vestemens,
Lesquels flottoient de toutes parts en terre,
Qui n'estoient bons pour gens de bien de guerre.”

I shall conclude with an anecdote bordering on the marvellous. M. Mazas acquaints us that an old Latin Chronicle, amongst the MSS. of the abbey of St. Riquier, composed in the year 1200 and in a figurative and prophetic strain, predicts that, in the year of grace 1346, there would appear, over Bulecamp (the ancient name of the Vallée-des-Clercs), five Suns ; which appearance would be followed by an eclipse. The inhabitants of Picardy and the countries of Ponthieu and Artois thus interpreted the prediction. The

five Suns are the five Kings assembled on the field of Cressy, viz. Edward III., Philip of Valois, John King of Bohemia, Charles King of the Romans, and James King of Majorca. The eclipse was the disaster which befel the French nation in consequence of that congress. The Chronicle of Tramecourt adverts to the same prophecy; and adds that Cressy was anciently denominated "Bulecamp."

Believe me, my dear Sir,

Yours, very faithfully,

G. F. BELTZ, LANCASTER.

SIR HENRY ELLIS, K.H. F.R.S.

Sec. S. A.

Cross to the memory of the King of Bohemia near the Battle Field of Cressy.

From a sketch taken by W^m Bromet M.D.F.S.A. on the 10th of June 1816.