

CHAPTER XXVIII.

RICHARD II.—1377 to 1399.

How Richard the Second sent men round the country to gather the taxes; how Wat Tyler killed one of them, and collected an army; how he met the King in Smithfield, and was killed by the Mayor; how King Richard behaved cruelly to his uncles; how he was forced to give up the crown to his cousin Henry of Hereford, and was killed at Pomfret.

RICHARD II. was only eleven years old when his grandfather, King Edward III., died. He was made king immediately. The people, who loved him for the sake of his good and brave father, the Black Prince, were very peaceable and quiet in the beginning of his reign. But his uncles, who were clever men, and wanted to be powerful, did not agree very well with one another.

When Richard was about sixteen, a civil war had very near taken place. I will tell you how it happened.

The king was not so well brought up as he ought to have been, and he loved eating and drinking and fine clothes, and he made a great many feasts, and gave fine presents to his favourites, so that he often wanted money before it was the right time to pay the taxes. It happened, as I said, when the king was about sixteen, that he wanted money, and so did his uncles, who were in France, where the French and English still continued to fight now and then. The great lords sent the men who gathered the king's taxes round the country, and one of them, whose business was to get the poll-tax, that is, a tax on everybody's head, was so cruel, and so rude to the daughter of a poor man named Wat