

first year of Richard III. "And the two sons of king Edward were put to silence."*

Here we might leave the question in its original obscurity, if it were not necessary to mention a circumstance which has been held to be a decisive corroboration of the narrative published as Sir Thomas More's. In 1674, some alterations were going on in the White Tower, to prepare it for the reception of papers from the Six Clerks' Office. In making a new staircase into the chapel of that tower, some bones were found under the old staircase, whose proportions "were answerable to the ages of the royal youths." Charles II. caused them to be removed to Henry the Seventh's Chapel, where a Latin inscription, upon marble, records the discovery, after a lapse of a hundred and ninety-one years, of these remains of Edward V. and the duke of York, who were confined in the Tower, put to death, and secretly and ignominiously buried, by command of Richard. The decided nature of this inscription shows how absolute was the belief in the seventeenth century in the ordinary relations of these tragical events of the fifteenth. There was little scepticism then amongst historians; and one chronicler repeated and amplified what another chronicler had handed down. The value of this discovery of bones in the Tower will be differently estimated by different minds. The murder of the princes, regarded without reference to the historical narratives and conjectures, is so consistent a sequel to the other circumstances of violence which accompanied the accession of Richard to the throne, that it would require some absolute proof in the support of a contrary belief, to disturb what rests upon the popular opinion of generation after generation. Even the local traditions which connect the gateway called "The Bloody Tower" with this tragedy, will not readily be shaken by the evidence of the diligent antiquary, that in the reign of Henry VIII. it was called "The Garden Tower."*

* Published by the Camden Society, 1852, p. 23.

† Bayley's "History of the Tower," p. 257.

CHAPTER IX.

Spirit of an age reflected by Chroniclers.—Mixed character of Richard.—Revolt of Buckingham.—Suppression of the revolt.—Indifference of the people.—Salutary Laws of Richard's parliament.—Statutes now first printed, and in English.—Encouragement to printers and sellers of books.—Daughters of Edward IV.—Deaths of Richard's son and his queen.—Henry, earl of Richmond.—Inadequate preparations against invasion.—Battle of Bosworth-field.—Death in battle of Richard III.

IN the true spirit of historical observation, Dr. Arnold, noticing the memoirs of Comines as belonging "to the last stage of an old state of things," remarks how striking they are from their perfect unconsciousness that the notions which the middle ages had tended to foster were "on the point of passing away." As a result of this unconsciousness, Comines, who records the crimes of his master Lewis XI., speaks of him as an admirable prince; and Froissart never permits the atrocities which he described as knightly deeds to interfere with his eulogies of his chivalrous heroes.* These chroniclers, as well as others less celebrated, necessarily reflect the spirit of their age; and their insensibility to the real character of actions which now excite our unmeasured indignation was the result of the general standard of moral judgment in the great body of their contemporaries. Thus, as far as we can discover, the accession of the duke of Gloucester to the crown was not an un-sanctioned usurpation, resting only upon the resolute will of one man, surrounded by a few unscrupulous partisans, and having the command of a strong military force. Hastings, Rivers, Vaughan, Grey, Hawte, have been swept away by sudden tyranny. The heir of the last king, to whom the nobles of the land have twice sworn fealty, is, with his brother, in mysterious confinement; which, according to the natural destiny of deposed princes, will probably end in secret murder. And yet, in less than a fortnight after Richard had seated himself on the marble bench of Westminster Hall, thirty-five of the peers of England, and seventy of her knights—names amongst the highest in the land—do homage at his cor-

* "Lectures on Modern History," Lecture ii.

onation. There is nothing to indicate that the usurper has an insecure seat—that the violence which these great men have witnessed or thoroughly known was far out of the ordinary course of events. Theirs had been a long training in the outrage and dissimulation of a disputed succession; and if their moral sense was not so completely blunted as that of the chief perpetrator of the revolution of 1483, their prostration before the despot of the hour was so absolute as to throw a colour of legality over all his proceedings. Nor is it to be affirmed that no principle of public policy was mingled with their ready submission to his will. They had a natural dread of the insecurity of minorities and protectors, and of struggles for power amongst unprincipled favourites. They were familiar with depositions and “sad stories of the death of kings.” These were the invariable accompaniments of the inordinate power of a turbulent aristocracy; and when Buckingham, Norfolk, Suffolk, and Northumberland—the highest of the nobles—were ranged on the side of Richard, the herd of lesser lords of the soil did not trouble their consciences with thoughts of the probable fate of the children of their late master. One had leapt into the throne whom they knew for a man of courage and sagacity, as ready to defend his own interests, as to uphold those who served him and depress those who were open enemies or cold friends. During the next half century of our history, we shall see how much more completely, even than in the case of Richard, the directing minds of the country were subjected to the absolute will of the monarch; and, therefore, how imperfect is the evidence furnished by proclamations of council, and statutes of parliament, and verdicts of peers, of a regard for the public welfare overriding the baser influence of selfishness and cowardice, to sanctify, as some would believe, the caprice, injustice, and cruelty of regal pride and passion.

The character of Richard was an extraordinary mixture of hateful and amiable qualities, of either of which we must not attempt altogether to judge by the opinions of our own times. Those who had served him he loaded with benefits. Foremost amongst these was the duke of Buckingham, to whom by letters patent, dated a week after the coronation, he assigned the estates which Buckingham derived in right of his descent from Humphrey de Bohun, earl of Hereford, which had been withheld from him by Edward IV. Nor had Richard any petty feelings of revenge towards the representatives of those whom his policy had cast down. About the same time, he released the estates of Hastings from

forfeiture, in favour of his widow and her children. He secured her jointure to the widow of Rivers, and bestowed a pension on lady Oxford, whose husband was in prison. He moved about amongst the people as though he had no sense of having committed wrongs which would make him obnoxious; going a progress to Reading, Oxford, Gloucester, Tewkesbury, Worcester, Warwick, Coventry, Leicester, Nottingham, York. At the great city of the north, Richard and his queen were again crowned in the minster. During the progress, he administered justice against offenders, and “heard the complaints of poor folks.” All seemed to promise a reign of peace and security, however troubled were its beginnings. But insurrections suddenly sprung up in various parts of the country. On the 10th of October the duke of Norfolk writes to sir John Paston, from London, that, “the Kentishmen be up in the Weald, and say that they will come and rob the city;” and prays him to come to him, “and bring with you six tall fellows in harness.”* On the 12th of October Richard himself writes a remarkable letter to his chancellor, John Russell, who at that time was sick in London; in which he says, “Whereas we, by God’s grace, intend briefly to advance us towards our rebel and traitor, the duke of Buckingham, to resist and withstand his malicious purpose, as lately by our other letters we certified you our mind more at large; for which cause it behoveth us to have our great seal here.”† In a subsequent portion of this letter, in Richard’s own hand-writing, he urges the chancellor to send the seal, if he is unable to come himself; and adds, “here, loved be God, is all well and truly determined, and for to resist the malice of him that had best cause to be true, the duke of Buckingham, the most untrue creature living.”‡ Amongst the mysterious events of this reign, none are more incapable of a wholly satisfactory explanation than this sudden revolt of the man who had been the chief instrument of placing Richard on the throne; who had been his counsellor, agent, and abettor in every act, whether of violence or craft, up to the time of his taking the crown. We have only, for interpreting these secret passages, the very doubtful relation contained in Grafton’s “Chronicle,” which purports to be a continuation of More’s “History.” This narrative takes up the story where More breaks off, in a dialogue between the duke of Buckingham and Morton, bishop of Ely, who was committed to the duke’s charge

* “Paston Letters,” letter ccccxviii.

† Ellis, “Original Letters,” Series II., vol. i. p. 160.

after his release from the Tower. Out of the long-winded orations of these two personages, we collect that Morton incited the duke's ambition, by suggesting that he, "the very undoubted similitude and image of true honour," was meet to be a ruler of the realm, in preference to "a blood-supper and child-killer." Then, that Buckingham, having slept upon the suggestion, entered upon a defence of his conduct in taking part with the duke of Gloucester to be Protector, and further to consent "that he might take upon him the crown, till the prince [Edward V.] came to the age of four and twenty years, and were able to govern the realm." Next, that when he was "credibly informed of the death of the two young innocents, his own natural nephews," he abhorred the sight and company of Richard, so that he could not abide in his court; and thought that he would take arms and aspire to be king himself, as heir of the house of Lancaster, till he by accident recollected that Margaret, countess of Richmond (now wife to Lord Stanley), had a prior claim. And lastly, that Buckingham and Morton agreed that Henry, earl of Richmond, the son of Margaret, should wed Elizabeth, the eldest daughter of Edward IV., and thus uniting the houses of Lancaster and York should bring to confusion "the bragging boar, that with his tusks raseth every man's skin." This apocryphal account is so clearly a manufacture after the accession of Henry VII., that it is worthless, except for the fact that Buckingham concerted with Morton a general insurrection against the rule of Richard, and that they put themselves in communication with Richmond. "High-reaching Buckingham," and miscalled "shallow Richmond," were each descended from John of Gaunt, by Catherine Swynford, the issue of this irregular union having been legitimated. Margaret, countess of Richmond, was the great grand-daughter of the duke of Lancaster, and so was Margaret, countess of Stafford, the mother of Buckingham. But the father of Richmond's mother was the elder branch. Her husband was Henry, earl of Richmond, who was the son of Owen Tudor, a gentleman of Wales, whom Catherine, the widow of Henry V., had married. But Buckingham was also descended from Thomas of Woodstock the youngest son of Edward III., and thus his pride of descent might have been doubly operating upon his wayward mind. The narrative attributed to More,—very different in its pithy style from the Continuation,—says of Buckingham, "the duke was a high-minded man, and evil could bear the glory of another; so that I have heard of some that said they saw it, that the duke at such

time as the crown was first set upon the protector's head, his eye could not abide the sight thereof, but wryed his head another way."* It is easy to comprehend, in the absence of positive facts, that the subtle Morton might naturally work upon this weak scion of the house of Lancaster, to persuade him that, one game of ambition having been played out, and he no more than constable of England and justiciary of Wales, whilst Richard of York was king, there was another game to be played by the two representatives of the Red Rose, in which the caprices of fortune might leave the more experienced pretender a clear road to the throne. The assumed hostility of Buckingham to Gloucester on account of the murder of the two princes, is utterly inconsistent with the statement of a contemporary, that when Richard was being enthroned at York in September, the time when Buckingham and Morton were plotting at Brecknock,—there was no suspicion that the princes had ceased to live. "Whilst these things were passing in the north, king Edward's two sons remained under certain deputed custody, for whose release from captivity the people of the southern and western parts began very much to murmur."† For the release of the princes the same historian says that a rising was about to take place, when it was reported that they were dead; and that then the conspirators turned to Richmond as the object of their enterprise. Early chronicles and modern histories detail with much minuteness the negotiations which preceded the outbreak; involving communications between the countess of Richmond and the duke of Buckingham through sir Reginald Bray, for the distinct object of placing her son on the throne; plots between the countess and the widow of king Edward, carried on through one Lewis, a physician; messengers passing to and fro between the countess and her son in Brittany; the heads of the plot going about in England inciting the commonalty to revolt; and, finally, the earl of Richmond sailing with five thousand Breton soldiers, and attempting a landing in Dorsetshire, simultaneously with the proclamation of himself as the coming king in Devonshire, Wiltshire, Kent, Berkshire, and Wales.‡ This extensive organisation of the scattered materials for another revolution in a wonderfully short time, according to the received accounts, is perfectly incompatible with the

* "History," Singer's edit., p. 137.

† Croyland Chronicle.

‡ Whether by accident or design, Polydore Vergil has carried forward the date of these events a whole year, making the sailing of Richmond from Brittany occur in October 1484, "the second year of king Richard."

belief of any sudden impulses on the part of Buckingham and other Lancastrians in concert with the Woodville family, to set up Richmond because Edward V. was removed by assassination. We have seen from Richard's letter to his chancellor that, previous to the 10th of October, he was aware of Buckingham's revolt. More relates that Buckingham, "both with great gifts and high behests, in most loving and trusty manner," departed from Richard at Gloucester; and going to his castle at Brecknock, the bishop of Ely being there in custody, "waxed with him familiar." This friendly parting at Gloucester took place in the beginning of August. That the plot of Morton, Buckingham, and Richmond could have been matured after the knowledge of the deaths of the princes in the Tower, which More says was determined by Richard during his sojourn at Warwick, is almost an impossibility. The king was receiving the Spanish ambassador at Warwick in the second week of August. In two months he was intending to advance "against our rebel and traitor the duke of Buckingham." There can be little doubt that the scattered party of the Lancastrians turned their regards upon the earl of Richmond, the nearest lineal representative of that house, from the time when the direct succession of the house of York, in the person of Edward V., had been set aside. Had this king remained upon the throne in his "young age," the energy of the protector would, in all likelihood, have been incessantly demanded to prevent a renewal of the civil war through the pretensions of Buckingham or Richmond. When the crown was usurped, and the issue of Edward IV. declared illegitimate, the hopes of the adherents of the Red Rose would naturally become stronger; and the actual removal of the princes in the Tower by death, or the popular belief that they were dead, would as materially forward the policy of Richmond as the policy of Richard. The report of their death, which preceded the outbreak of the conspiracy of 1483 only about a month, does not furnish the slightest proof that their murder had been accomplished by Richard, or that they did not remain in some secret custody at the period when Buckingham was in insurrection, and Richmond about to land with a Breton force in Dorsetshire.

The revolt of 1483 was soon quelled by the energetic king. On the 23rd of October he issued a characteristic proclamation from Leicester, in which he offers high rewards for the apprehension of Buckingham and other conspirators. He marched with a considerable army to Salisbury, the junction of Buckingham's forces with

the foreign troops of Richmond being expected to be attempted in the south-western counties. Buckingham moved boldly out from Brecon "with a great power of wild Welshmen, whom he, being a man of great courage and sharp speech, had thereto rather enforced and compelled by lordly and strait commandment than by liberal wages and gentle retainer." * Not only with Buckingham's levies, but with other bands of the feudal lords, was the ancient zeal for the cause under whose banner the men served fast passing away. Buckingham experienced a series of disasters, which ended in his discomfiture. For ten days the Severn was overflowing the whole country through continual rains, which flood says Grafton, "they call to this day the great water, or the duke of Buckingham's great water." The Welshmen, without victual or wages, deserted him. The duke was compelled to fly. The terrible Richard had appointed a vice-constable of England, to supersede the power of Buckingham as constable; and he used the great seal to arm his new officer, sir Thomas Ashton, with authority to judge all traitors, "without the noise and formality of trial, and without regard to any appeal whatsoever to proceed to execution." When Richard put on the despot, he did the work of tyranny most thoroughly as far as he chose to go. Under this commission, Buckingham, who had been betrayed by one of his servants, was executed at Salisbury on the 2nd of November: the other confederates dispersed. The chiefs fled to the continent; some of inferior note were taken and put to death. Richmond, whose fleet had been scattered by a storm, thought it prudent to return without any attempt to land. In Brittany he and the marquis of Dorset, son of Elizabeth Woodville, met to devise new plans; and there, in the cathedral of Vannes on the following Christmas-day, they pledged themselves to another attempt, and Richmond swore to marry Elizabeth, the eldest daughter of Edward IV., if he should obtain the crown.

In this abortive revolt against the power of Richard, we see nothing like a popular movement on one side or the other. The faithful adherents of the king, such as the duke of Norfolk, gathered their "tall fellows in harness," and stood by the man whom they had placed on the throne. Buckingham impressed his Welshmen, and a few lords and knights prepared their tenants for the field. But there was no signal demonstration in London or the great cities. The peaceful and industrious people of town and

* Grafton.

country were utterly weary of these feudal struggles, and had sunk into the worst state of public feeling,—that of indifference. Richard and his advisers appear to have partially comprehended the spirit of their time, and to have endeavoured to discharge their duty to the people by wise legislation and impartial justice. Bacon says of this king that he was “jealous of the honour of the English nation, and likewise a good law-maker, for the ease and solace of the common people.” At the same time Bacon objects that “the politic and wholesome laws which were enacted in his time,” were only “to woo and win the hearts of the people, as being conscious to himself that the true obligations of sovereignty in him failed and were wanting.”* Bacon lived at a period when “the ease and solace of the common people,” to be promoted by wholesome laws, were scarcely thought to be amongst “the true obligations of sovereignty.” The maligned Richard, in the statutes of his one parliament, showed that he was in advance of his age.

The triumph of the king, in the failure of the plans of Buckingham and Richmond, would naturally tend to place his government upon a more secure basis. He found a parliament ready enough to confirm his title by passing an Act for the settlement of the crown upon him and his issue; in which the illegitimacy of the children of Edward IV. was affirmed, and his widow is styled “sometime wife to sir John Gray, knight, late naming herself and many years heretofore queen of England.” But this parliament, which was held at Westminster on the 23rd of January, 1484, did something beyond this confirmation of Richard’s claims, and the attainder of those who had been concerned in the recent revolt. In the address which the protector delivered to the meeting which invited him to assume the crown, he used these remarkable words: “For certainly we be determined rather to adventure and commit us to the peril of our life and jeopardy of death, than to live in such thralldom and bondage as we have lived long time heretofore, oppressed and injured by extortions and new impositions against the laws of God and man, and the liberty, old policy, and laws of this realm, wherein every Englishman is inherited.”† This was not a mere boast of the hour. Edward IV. had been accustomed to plunder his subjects under the name of “Benevolences;” which practice the duke of Buckingham defined to be, “that every man should pay, not what he of his own good will list, but what the king of his

* History of Henry VII., p. 2, ed. 1622.

† Rolls of Parliament. See Hallam’s “Middle Ages,” chap. viii., part iii.

own good will list to take.”* The statute of Richard “to free the subject from Benevolences” denounces these “new and unlawful inventions” as the cause of “great penury and wretchedness,” and ordains that no such exactions shall in future be made, but that they be “annulled for ever.” The “Act for Bailing of Persons suspected of Felony” provides that on arrests for mere suspicion of felony, every justice of the peace shall have power to bail: and that the goods of persons apprehended for felony shall not be seized before conviction. “An Act for returning of sufficient Jurors” aims at the proper administration of justice, by requiring that no juryman be summoned but such as are of good name and fame, and have twenty shillings a year in freehold land, or twenty-six shillings and eightpence in copyhold. “An Act against privy and unknown feofments” secures the transfer of property to the buyer against the claims of the heirs of the seller. “An Act for Proclamation upon Fines levied” † is repeated in almost the exact words by a statute of Henry VII. ‡ “It is surely strange,” says Mr. Hallam, “that those who have extolled this sagacious monarch [Henry VII.] for breaking the fetters of landed property (though many of them were lawyers) should never have observed that whatever credit might be due for the innovation should redound to the honour of the unfortunate usurper.”§ It is unnecessary here to enter upon a technical explanation of the provisions of this Act. By a decision of the courts of law in the time of Edward IV., the practice of barring estates tail—that is, of permitting their alienation in despite of entail—by what is called a common recovery, was established. The statute of Richard, by enacting that a fine levied in the courts, with due proclamation, should, after five years, be a bar to all claims, gave security to possession, and thus facilitated the transfer of lands, and in so doing broke down one of the chief foundations of the feudal system.

A great legal authority, looking at these acts of Richard III.—fifteen altogether—says of this, his only parliament, “We have no difficulty in pronouncing it the most meritorious national council for protecting the liberty of the subject, and putting down abuses in the administration of justice, which had sat since the time of Edward I.” || But in opening the volumes of our laws, as printed

* More, “History of Richard III.”

† Cap. vii., 1 Richard III., in the Statutes published by authority, vol. i. p. 482.

‡ 4 Henry VII., c. 24.

§ “Constitutional History,” vol. i. chap. i.

|| Lord Campbell, “Lives of the Chancellors,” vol. i. p. 404.

by authority "from original records and authentic manuscripts," we are struck with a change upon the face of these statutes of Richard III., which indicates as true a regard for the liberty of the subject as the laws themselves. For the first time the laws to be obeyed by the English people are enacted in the English tongue. But, beyond this, they are the first laws of the land which were ever printed. In the legislation of this short and troubled reign, and in the mode of promulgating a knowledge of the laws, there is the evidence of some master mind breaking down the trammels of routine and prescription. The commercial acts are not marked by any advance beyond the principle of protection, except in one striking instance, in which an exception is made to the old system of fettering the dealings, and restricting the liberty, of alien traders. There was one commodity which was to come into the land as freely as the light from heaven; there was one class of foreign merchants whose calling was to be encouraged, for in their hands were the great instruments of all national progress. Let us give this memorable enactment in its original English: "Provided alwey that this acte, or any part therof, or any other acte made or to be made in this present parliament, in no wise extende or be prejudiciall any lette hurte or impediment to any artificer or merchaunt straungier of what nacion or contrey he be or shalbe of, for bryngyng into this realme, or sellyng by retail or otherwise, of any maner bokes wrytten or imprinted, or for the inhabitynge within the said realme for the same intent, or to any writer, lymper, bynder, or imprynter, of suche bokes, as he hath or shall have to sell by wey of merchaundise, or for their abode in the same realme for the exercisyng of the said occupacions; this acte or any parte therof notwithstanding." There could be no greater homage to the memory of Gutenberg, the inventor of printing, than this law, enacted fifteen years after his death, which said to his fellow craftsmen of every nation that no English restrictions upon aliens should touch them. The power, now for the first time exercised, of securing a better obedience to the laws by a wider publicity, demanded such a tribute to the merchants and artificers of knowledge. Richard and his counsellors stood upon the threshold of a new state of society; and this encouragement of transcribers, printers, and sellers of books, showed that they understood what was one of the characteristics of their time. But the spirit of the feudal ages was still a living presence. As the commercial classes were pressing forward to the honours which wealth commanded,

and the gates of knowledge were opened wider, the claims of blood came to be regarded even more than when the only social distinction was that of lord and vassal. The knight-riders, poursuivants, heralds of kings, were more than ever required to be the arbiters of rank, and the tracers of genealogies. Richard III. raised the heralds into an incorporation, and bestowed upon them the royal house of Cold Harbour. They became the worthy depositaries of the nation's family antiquities.

One of the measures of Richard's parliament was to annul all letters-patent granting estates to "Elizabeth, late wife of sir John Gray." The relict of Edward IV. still remained with her daughters in sanctuary. But on the 1st of March, 1484, the king, in the presence of lords spiritual and temporal, and the mayor and aldermen of London, made oath *verbo regio* upon the holy Evangelists, that if Elizabeth, Cecile, Anne, Katherine, and Bridget, the daughters of dame Elizabeth Gray, would come out of the sanctuary, and be guided, ruled, and demeaned after him, he would see that they should be in surety of their lives and suffer no hurt or imprisonment, but that they should have everything necessary as his kinswomen; and that he would endow such as were marriageable with lands to the yearly value of two hundred marks, and provide them gentlemen born as husbands; and that their mother should receive of him seven hundred marks annually for her support.* This family, accordingly, came out of their place of refuge, and submitted themselves to the guidance of Richard. In the next month, he, who was suspected of having destroyed his brother's sons, sustained himself the heaviest of human afflictions. His own son, Edward, the only child of his marriage with the daughter of Warwick, died at Middleham Castle. The unhappy parents were almost driven mad by the intelligence.† But the king had too many enemies to watch, to sit down in hopeless grief. He declared his nephew, John de la Pole, earl of Lincoln, his heir; and applied himself to counteract the schemes of Richmond, by negotiating with the duke of Brittany to deliver him up. But Richmond was in many respects his intellectual equal; and he had secret friends in the English court as useful as the spies whom Richard employed to watch the motions of his rival. He suddenly fled from Vannes with a few servants, and succeeded in entering France, where he claimed the protection of Charles VIII. The earl of Ox

* The document is given at length in Ellis, "Original Letters," 2nd Series, vol. i. p. 149.

† "Pene insanire." Croyland Chron.

ford, one of the most constant of the Lancastrians, escaped from his prison at Ham, and joined Richmond, to whom other adherents gradually flocked. The king spent the year in active preparation for the possible invasion. He kept his Christmas at Westminster with great splendour; and it was remarked that his niece Elizabeth was dressed in robes of the same fashion and colour as those of his queen. Scandal upon this hint took up its courtly vocation; and the rumour went that as the queen was in ill health he contemplated marriage with his niece. On the 16th of March, 1485, the queen died. Here was a new occasion for fastening one more horrible suspicion upon the evil reputation of Richard; and therefore Polydore Vergil makes a doubt "whether she were despatched by sorrowfulness or poison." An eulogist of Richard, sir George Buck, affirms that he had seen a letter written to the duke of Norfolk by Elizabeth of York, in which she called the king "her joy and maker in this world; and said that she was his in heart and thought; withal insinuating that the better part of February was past, and that she feared the queen would never die." Although such a marriage was not beyond the bounds of papal dispensation, Richard felt that the rumour was injurious to him. Within a month after the death of the queen, on the 11th of April, before the mayor and citizens of London, he solemnly disavowed the intention which had been imputed to him. It has been justly observed that his title to the crown would not have been strengthened by marrying a woman whom the law had declared illegitimate; and as justly inferred that "the whole tale was invented with the view of blackening Richard's character, to gratify the monarch in whose reign all the contemporary writers who relate it flourished."* But they told the story, as against Richard, without the slightest hint that the lady who became the wife of Henry VII. was enamoured of the man who was held to be the destroyer of her brothers; but on the contrary they said that she abhorred his proposals. After the death of Richard's queen, Elizabeth was removed to Sheriff Hutton Castle, where her cousin, the earl of Warwick, the son of the duke of Clarence, was kept in a sort of honourable captivity. Historians, who can scarcely avoid dwelling too much upon the intrigues of courts, are indignant with the widow of Edward IV. that at this time she was in friendly relations with Richard, and induced her son, the marquis of Dorset, to attempt to return to England. He

* Sir N. H. Nicolas, "Memoir of Elizabeth of York," p. lii., prefixed to her "Private Purse Expenses."

was detained by the king of France, who gave assistance to the project of Richmond; and the preparations for invasion went forward. Richard appears to have somewhat too much despised his adversary. He was in London from the beginning of the year till the middle of May. There had been no parliament to grant him a subsidy; and he, by a solemn legislative act, had declared against "Benevolences." He was too straitened for money to make large warlike preparations. Fabyan, who personally knew whatever actions of the king bore upon the pockets of the citizens, says, of this period, that "king Richard spared not to spend the great treasure, which, before, king Edward IV. had gathered, in giving of great and large gifts;" and that "he borrowed many notable sums of money of rich men of this realm, and specially of the citizens of London, whereof the least sum was forty pounds. For surety whereof he delivered to them good and sufficient pledges."* This is explicit enough; and yet we constantly find it stated that Richard lost his small share of the affections of the citizens by adopting the system of Benevolences, though not in name. † He who gives "good and sufficient pledges" for a loan, can scarcely be said to pursue the same system of extortion as he who compels a gift without an intention of repayment.

The earl of Richmond had been acquainted with misfortune from his first years. Comines says, "he told me not long before his departure from this kingdom, that from the time he was five years old he had always been a fugitive or a prisoner." ‡ According to outward appearances and ordinary calculations, his enterprise for the English crown was not likely to improve his lot. The same observer regarded Richmond as without money, without power, without reputation, and without right; and he describes the three thousand Normans that were furnished to the earl by the king of France, as "the loosest and most profligate persons in all that country." § But Richmond had better support than his outward power of three thousand vagabond Normans. There was a systematic organisation of the Lancastrian party in England, which Richard, with all his penetration and caution, and with his reputation for striking hard when he did strike, very insufficiently guarded against. He had no great military force at his command. Fourteen years had passed since the battle of Tewkesbury, when the people of the south had rallied round the banner of the White Rose. The

* Chronicle, 4to., p. 671.
Book v. chap. xviii.

† See Lingard, vol. v., 8vo., p. 361.
§ *Ibid.*, chap. x.

Welsh had followed Buckingham, and were now ready to follow Richmond, who came with a genealogy from Cadwallader and king Arthur up to the Trojan Brute. Stanley, who could command many followers in Cheshire and Lancashire, and Northumberland, the great lord of the border country, were nominally for the king, and employed their authority as his accredited officers. The day of battle showed how dexterously they had been won over: to betray him. The confidence of Richard in the fidelity of these nobles seems a judicial blindness, very different from the supposed temper of the man who "while he was thinking of any matter, did continually bite his nether lip, as though that cruel nature of his did so rage against itself in that little carcase."* He indeed took some security in detaining the son of lord Stanley at his court, while the father went amongst his tenantry; but, beyond this he seems to have had no suspicion of the treachery which Norfolk had to learn on the day when he fell, with his master "bought and sold." Henry of Richmond set sail from Harfleur on the 1st of August, and landed at Milford Haven on the 7th. Beyond the precaution of having beacons on the hills of the coast—"lamps fastened upon frames of timber" †—the king had no sure means of being informed of the movements of his enemy. He took up a position at Nottingham, as the centre of the kingdom. But the landing of Richmond in Wales was a surprise. Norfolk, a day or two before the 15th of August, writes to sir John Paston, then sheriff, "letting you to understand that the king's enemies be a-land," and praying him to meet the duke at Bury, "that ye bring with you such company of tall men as ye may goodly make at my cost and charge, besides that which ye have promised the king; and I pray you ordain them jackets of my livery, and I shall content you at your meeting with me." ‡ The records of York show that it was not till the 16th that the king's firm friends in that city despatched their officer to him to know whether they should send him aid; and four hundred men were accordingly ordered to march on the 19th. Richard is said to have despised his adversary as "a man of small courage and of less experience in martial art," and this, combined with his fear of taxing the people, made him inadequately employ the resources of the crown. The very materials of the old English arm of war were deficient, if we may judge from an act of 1484, of which a petition from the bowyers forms the pre-

* Polydore Vergil, p. 227. Camden edit.

‡ "Paston Letters," letter ccccxliii.

† *Ibid.*, p. 213.

amble; they saying that from the want of "good and able stuff of bow-staves" the craft of bowyers is sorely diminished, and "thereby the land greatly enfeebled, to the great jeopardy of the same, and great comfort to the enemies and adversaries thereof." The want of preparation was, in some degree, the natural result of a period in which the industry of the nation had made remarkable progress, but in which the military arts had proportionably declined. The battle of the 22nd of August was fought with so few men on either side, that it would appear marvellous that it should have decided the fate of a kingdom, if we did not bear in mind that it was not fought by one section of an aroused population against another section similarly excited; but that the king himself, with a few faithful friends, was fighting with scarcely more power than that of a feudal partisan, and that when he, the first crowned sovereign since Harold that died in battle upon English ground, was struck down, the contest was at an end. In instructions to his chancellor to prepare a proclamation against Henry Tudor and other rebels, the king desires him to make known, "that our said sovereign lord willeth and commandeth all his said subjects to be ready in their most defensible array, to do his highness service of war, when they by open proclamation or otherwise shall be commanded so to do."* But this command was not of equal force as in the earlier days of the monarchy, or even in the recent time when Edward led forth the men of London to the hill of Barnet. The feudal chain which bound the lord to the king, and the vassal to the lord, had been impaired in many of its links. The sentiment of loyalty to the sovereign, founded upon the spirit of patriotism and not upon the obligations of feudal service, was scarcely yet created. That had to be born when the dominant power of the aristocracy was broken down, not so much by the force of arms or of law, as by the decay of the principle which was incompatible with the civilisation that more readily assimilated with the rule of one than the rule of many. With Richard, the last of the Plantagenets, expired the political system under which England had been governed by that house for more than three centuries.

Market-Bosworth, the nearest town of importance, gave the name to the decisive battle of the 22nd of August, 1485. "Not," says Burton, the old historian of Leicestershire, "that this battle was fought at this place (it being fought in a large, flat, plain, and spacious ground, three miles distant from this town, between the tower

* Ellis: "Original Letters," Series ii. vol. i. p. 162.

of Shenton, Sutton, Dadlington, and Stoke); but for this town was the most worthy town of note near adjacent, and was therefore called Bosworth-field.* Burton, at the beginning of the seventeenth century, was familiar with the traditions that belonged to the scene of so important an event. In 1787, William Hutton, who had a true love for his nation's antiquities, without the pedantry of mere antiquarianism, described this battle-field. Its real name, he says, is Redmoor plain, from the colour of the soil; rather of an oval form, about two miles long and one broad; part waste land, part in grass, part in tillage. Near a wood at the south end is a spring called king Richard's well. No human being resides on this desolate field or near it. Twenty years after his first visit, Hutton again went to the field and found the plain enclosed; fences grown up; Richard's well vanished; and the swamp where he is recorded to have fallen become firm land. It is thus that the material improvement of a country obliterates the physical traces of its history. Dr. Parr, in 1812, found the spring by digging; and by way of preserving the popular memory of a great English event, wrote a pompous Latin inscription to be inscribed on a local monument. The form of the ground, with an amphitheatre of hills bounding the plain to the south-east and south-west, and a rivulet called "the Tweed," will now furnish little assistance to him who goes to seek some illustration of the descriptions of the chroniclers. The facts of this battle may be soon told. On Sunday, the 20th of August, Richard marched from Nottingham to Leicester, at the head of his troops, riding on a white horse, in full armour, and a crown on his helmet. On the 21st he moved to the abbey of Mirivall, near Bosworth, and encamped on a rising ground called Anbeame or Amyon Hill. Richmond had crossed the Severn at Shrewsbury; had a conference at Stafford with Sir William Stanley, when it was agreed that the Stanleys should move towards Richard's camp, as if for his support; and on the 21st he reached Atherstone, by Tamworth. On the morning of the 22nd both armies advanced to Redmoor. Hutton, on his first visit, found traces of four camps. The largest, which he assigns to Richard, covers about eighteen acres; Richmond's, he says, covers six or seven acres; Lord Stanley's comprises about four acres, and Sir William Stanley's three acres. When the battle begun, Richard found the Stanleys opposed to him, and Northumberland stirring not a foot to his aid. No strategy could now be of avail. It was of little consequence that Richmond

* Hutton's "Bosworth Field," with additions, by J. G. Nicholls, p. 181.

"had never set a squadron in the field." The men whom Richard had loaded with benefits deserted him in the hour of his need, with a treachery that proclaimed that the knell of chivalry was rung. The courage of his race sustained him to the end. He made a desperate onset upon that part of the battle-field where Henry was, after having maintained an unequal conflict for two hours, with the aid of those who remained faithful to him. Polydore Vergil, the eulogist of Henry, does justice to the valiancy of Richard in this last struggle: "King Richard, at the first brunt, killed certain; overthrew Henry's standard, together with William Brandon, the standard-bearer; and matched also with John Cheney, a man of much fortitude, far exceeding the common sort, who encountered with him as he came; but the king with great force drove him to the ground, making way with weapon on every side. But yet Henry abode the brunt longer than ever his own soldiers would have weened, who were now almost out of hope of victory, whenas sir William Stanley with three thousand men came to the rescue. Then truly, in a very moment, the residue all fled, and king Richard alone was killed, fighting manfully in the thickest press of his enemies."