

partisans so obnoxious, a character as was the illustrious prince to whom, in her youth, the Lady Cecily Neville was allied.

Early imbued, however, as we have reason to believe their children were with honourable sentiments, severe as regards religion and morality,* and admirable in the culture and display of the domestic affections,† it is yet due to them to state, from the crimes which attach to their memories, and the calamities that marked their after-life, that the ambition, the pride, and unbending spirit which characterized alike the sons and the daughters of York,‡ were inherited from, and in all likelihood infused into their infant minds, from their birth, by their mother, in whose character these feelings formed a leading feature. She was a princess of "spotless character;"§ and as such was respected by her enemies and revered by all her contemporaries, whatever might be their political bias;|| but her natural temper was "so high and ambitious" that her name to this day is perpetuated as a proverb in the counties adjoining her abode, where pride and arrogance in a person are generally expressed by the significant term, "She is a proud Cis."¶ The duke, her consort, early subdued by misfortune, was mild, temperate and humane,** remarkable for his peaceable and submissive disposition, until goaded to anger and desperation by his enemies. Not so the Lady Cecily: the blood of the haughty Nevilles and the imperious Beauforts flowed in her veins; nine of her brothers were, by descent, marriage or creation, peers of the realm; and her sisters were matched with the most

* Of this, farther proof can scarcely be desired than the very perfect system drawn up for the service of the young Prince of Wales by King Edward IV. above referred to, which is still preserved in the Sloane MSS. No. 3479, and the admirable rules issued by Richard, Duke of Gloucester, for the use and regulation of his household before his elevation to the throne.—*Harleian MSS.* 433. fol. 269.

† The strong fraternal affection that existed between Margaret of York and George, Duke of Clarence, has formed the subject of cotemporary historical notice (see *Chronicle of Croyland*, p. 561), and the fidelity and devotion of Richard Plantagenet for his elder brother, King Edward IV., under the greatest possible reverses of fortune, as will be hereafter shown, formed a bright and beautiful feature in his character. A reference to Fleetwood's Narrative, p. 9, written by a personal attendant of the House of York, will still farther evince how strongly this feeling influenced every member of the family, and how religiously it was inculcated upon them all by their mother, the Lady Cecily.

‡ Sir Thomas More, in his *Life of Richard III.* (p. 8.) though speaking of the elder sons in terms of high encomium, says, "All three, as they were great states of birth, so were they great and stately of stomach, greedy and ambitious of authority and impatient of partners."

§ As regards the daughters, Ann the eldest, who married her first cousin, Henry Holland, Duke of Exeter, the faithful and firm friend of his ill-fated kinsman and godsire Henry VI., fully exemplified the same characteristics; unable to mould her husband to her own aspiring views and those of her family, she sacrificed him to her ambition; and instead of suing for pardon when the House of York condemned him as an exile and an outlaw, she heartlessly triumphed over the misery and wretchedness induced by his fidelity to his unhappy sovereign, and availing herself of his attainder and proscription, espoused in his lifetime Sir Thomas St. Leger.—See *Phil. de Comines*, lib. iii. p. 73; also *Stow's Annals*, temp. 12 Ed. IV. The Lady Margaret, her younger sister, though a much more amiable character in private life, was equally imbued with the same ambitious spirit, and indulged the same vindictive sentiments towards all who were opposed to the House of York. Her rich possessions in Burgundy she expended in projects tending to ruin the enemies of her race; and she was significantly termed "Juno," with reference to Henry VII., because, says Lord Bacon, "she was to him as Juno was to Æneas, stirring both heaven and hell to do him mischief."—*Bacon's Hen. VII.*, p. 113.

¶ *Historic Doubts*, p. 57.

|| Nichol's *Hist. and Antiq. of Fotheringay*.

** *Hume*, vol. iv. p. 168.

|| *Archæol.* xiii.

eminent and noble in the land.* When, therefore, she, the youngest of such highly-allied kindred, was placed in a yet more elevated position,† and that even the queenly diadem‡ was her probable destiny, by reason of her union with the legitimate heir of the crown, all her Lancastrian prepossessions were merged in the superior claims of the House of York, and her views henceforth were constantly fixed on those regal honours which she considered due to her husband and the lawful inheritance of her children. It has, indeed, been stated by some writers, that the Lady Cecily married the heir of York wholly with the hope of being a queen.§ Be it so, she was queen-like in all her actions, noble and dignified in her conduct and demeanour, and just even to severity in all her transactions. She was neither unduly elevated in days of prosperity, nor was she weakly subdued by calamity and peril: under all her afflictions she "carried a steady soul,"|| though she shared in common with her kindred that love of sovereign power, which led to their "making and unmaking kings,"¶ when they had no pretext for usurping the crown themselves. Nor does this lofty ambition, destructive as its seeds afterwards proved when it had ripened and yielded fruit in her offspring, seem at variance with the stern virtues ascribed to the Lady Cecily, if the times in which she lived are taken into consideration. Pride of birth to a degree almost incredible in later times, and disdain for all persons unconnected with ancient and noble descent, was the characteristic of the age in which she flourished.** The education of the high-born infant was based on these sentiments, and fostered by every external mark of sovereign and absolute power. Feudal despotism had then reached its climax; and although the abuse of that system, which at the period under consideration made the nobles of the land literally its rulers, led, in the next century, to the total destruction of the baronial ascendancy, and opened the path of freedom to the long enslaved land, yet the fact is nevertheless incontrovertible, that during the career of the Plantagenet race, personal courage and haughty independence were distinctive marks of the aristocratic noble; whilst arrogance and exacted homage, with few exceptions at least, characterized as a body the "lordly dame" of the fifteenth century. The De la Poles were the only instance on record of a family rising at this age of proud nobility from "trade to rank and splendour."†† The heir of its house, John de la Pole, Duke of Suffolk, was espoused to Elizabeth of York, second daughter of the Lady Cecily; and as if the evil destiny which marked the elder branch of the Plantagenets was ever to attach itself to those with whom they were allied, the De la Poles, as they exceeded the Nevilles, when in prosperity, in dignity and power, so did they also in the hour of adversity exceed them in misfortune and in the depth of calamity which extinguished their race.‡‡ Can it then be wondered at that Neville's proud daughter, sensible that her first-born would be the representative by right of primogeniture of Edward III. and Philippa of Hainault, that her consort was the rightful heir of a throne, wrested from his ancestors by usurpation, and then ruled ostensibly by an imbecile monarch, but virtually by an unworthy minister, allied to him by illegitimate descent, should, without considering

* Appendix P.

† — "the yengest,
And yet grace, hir fortun'd to be the byest."

Vincent, p. 622.

‡ *Ibid.*

§ *Anglo. Spec.*, p. 179.

** *Paston Letters*, vol. iv.

†† *Archæol.*, vol. xiii.

‡ Nichol's *Fotheringay*.

¶ *Archæol.*, vol. xiii.

†† *Heylin*, p. 368.

the disastrous results to which such tuition, if uncontrolled, might lead daring and turbulent spirits, infuse into the young minds of her offspring that feeling, which, enforced by a mother's example, and strengthened by a mother's precept, constituting their besetting sin through life—which blighted the character of her eldest and most unworthy daughter, Ann, the merciless Duchess of Exeter, and which has left so indelible a stain upon the name and the memory of Richard, her youngest son, the last monarch of the Plantagenet race?

Prevalent as the desire is, in the present day, of weeding from history those extravagant tales which, based on no authority, and corroborated by no substantial evidence, had their sole origin in the superstitious belief of miracles, industriously propagated by the monkish chroniclers in credulous times, it is presumed that it will be unnecessary here to detail or discuss the marvellous absurdities which have been perpetuated relative to the birth of this prince. Many of them are quite revolting, and the greater part suited only to the coarse taste of a semi-barbarous age, in which it was thought necessary to make matters of mere daily occurrence conformable to the after-career of those individuals who acted a more prominent part than their fellow-men; and even to invest with superhuman or demoniacal powers the innocent child at its birth, who, by the influence of good or evil passions, was fated to perform, at a subsequent period, a conspicuous part in the great drama of life. How forcibly is this exemplified, as relates to the subject of the present memoir, by the pen of the immortal Shakspeare:—

“The women cried,
‘O Jesus, bless us! he is born with teeth!’
And so I was, which plainly signified
That I should snarl and bite, and play the dog.”

Henry VI., 3d Part, Act. V. Scene VI.

Unhappy Richard, thus predestined to crime ere yet the smile of helpless infancy had given place to that of dawning reason!

Not the slightest foundation exists for reports so outrageous to common sense, so staggering even to the most ordinary understanding, as those propagated for three centuries and upwards in connection with the birth of Richard of Gloucester; nor can any trace of them be found in cotemporary records, with the single exception of John Rous, “the monk of Warwick;” whose narrative* has been pronounced by Lord Orford, after careful and critical examination,† “too despicable and lying even amongst monkish authors,” to merit quotation.‡ The chronicler of Croyland, William of Wyrcester, the Abbot of St. Alban's, and all other annalists of credit belonging to that period, make no mention or allusion to them; and even Sir Thomas More, whose history has been the chief source whence more modern writers have derived their prejudices against Richard of Gloucester, prefaces his marvellous report by the modifying sentence, “it is for truth reported,” or “as the fame runneth;”§ by adding forthwith, “whether men of hatred reporte above the truth,” proving, however, that his statement was founded on no authority, but on report alone; and thus implying his own

* Hist. Reg. Ang., p. 214.

† Hist. Doubts, p. 106.

‡ Laing, in his valuable “Dissertation on the Crimes imputed to Richard III.,” after quoting the statement made by Rous relative to the miraculous birth of this prince, adds, “The historian who deduces Richard's crimes from a calculation of his nativity, may attest the popular belief and rumour; but his private information must rest where he has placed it—on the authority of the stars.”—Appendix at the close of *Henry's Hist. of England*, vol. xii. p. 424.

§ More, p. 8.

suspicion of the rancorous feeling whence the tradition emanated. No authentic record, indeed, is extant respecting the birth of Richard Plantagenet, beyond the date of time and place where it occurred. Mr. Hutton, the indefatigable antiquary, who for the space of eighteen years devoted himself with such unwearied zeal to the traditions connected with this prince, that he is stated to have “surveyed the favoured object of his researches with an attention, an ardour, and a perseverance never before displayed by any English historian,”* asserts, that, after keen inquiry among the localities of his childhood, there is but little to record; that “the idle tales” of his birth are “beneath the notice of history;” and that his “infancy was spent in his father's house, where he cuckt his ball and shoot his taw with the same delight as other lads.”† His entrance into life, however, occurring but shortly before that of Edward, Prince of Wales, and about the time when the distressing malady of King Henry VI. led to the Duke of York's being nominated protector of the realm, there is little doubt that the young Richard was particularly exposed, from his very cradle, to the evil effects of that struggle for a crown, which excited, to an unexampled excess, the vindictive passions to which the above nomination was the prelude. His father, it appears, immediately assumed the regal style, when called upon as heir presumptive to exercise the sovereign authority; for, in the Paston Papers, there is preserved an original letter from the Duke of York, with his title appended at the top, in kingly form, and sealed with his own signet, bearing the arms of France and England quarterly.‡ His mother, too, gave audience in her throne-room at Fotheringay Castle, with all the pomp and majesty of a queen, which high station she had by this time considered her due, and of the title appertaining to which she was indeed only deprived by the untimely death of her princely consort. Thus it is apparent that her youngest son must have been prematurely placed in a far more elevated and dangerous position than that which marked the more tranquil childhood of his elder, but not less aspiring, brothers; and, accordingly, the cotemporary annals of that epoch make frequent mention of the younger children of the Lady Cecily as being associated with their parent in most perilous situations. At times, surprised and seized in their retirement by the opposing faction;§ at others, flying in all haste from the enemy,|| who plundered and ransacked without compunction all that had not escaped from the unbridled fury and fierce vengeance which civil contests excited in the soldiery to so lamentable a degree.¶

Very early, therefore, must the subject of this memoir have been inured to the sanguinary proceedings, and been an eye-witness of the harrowing scenes, which, so subversive of the best feelings of human nature, marked his youthful days; and very early, too, must the baneful influence of a desire to command and not to obey, of disdain for the constituted authorities, and a resolution to seize the throne and wrest the sceptre from “the Lord's anointed”** by open violence and sacrilegious†† fraud, have been grafted on

* Critical Review, vol. lxvii. p. 217.

† Hutton's Bosworth, p. xvii.

‡ Hearne's Fragment, p. 284.

¶ Paston Letters, vol. i. p. 184.

‡ Paston Letters, vol. i. p. 76.

|| Chron. Croyland, p. 551.

** Chron. Croyland, p. 556.

†† See the account of Queen Margaret's conspiracy to destroy the Duke of York and his friends the Lords of Warwick and Salisbury, by treacherously inviting them in courteous language, and under the royal signet, to attend the king, and thus fall into the trap prepared for their destruction. Also the deception practised by the Duke of York shortly afterwards, in retort for the queen's crafty proceeding, that of causing persons to swear in front of his army that King Henry had suddenly expired,

his youthful mind; and this, too, at a time of life when impressions are most durable, and the bias given to the good or evil of maturer years. Richard III. may, in truth, be said to have been cradled by ambition, nurtured on desperate deeds, and inured by example and tuition, from the first dawn of reason, to consider a crown as the ultimatum of human happiness, and its attainment the sole object and chief business of life.

The Lady Cecily's elder sons were, during his infancy, old enough to be associated with their father in most of the conflicts and turbulent scenes which marked the latter years of his chequered life; having been initiated by him, at a very tender age, into all the martial acquirements, in accordance with the warlike spirit of the times; and innumerable are the instances of filial affection which characterized, in early years, the offspring of the Duke of York. The infant Richard being, however, in conjunction with his brother George, peculiarly the object of the Lady Cecily's anxious and devoted care on those occasions of fearful peril and vicissitude which separated her from her husband and elder sons, the display of maternal love, so keenly and indelibly felt in early childhood, may well account for, and will fully explain, the respectful deference which Richard III., despite of Lancastrian tales to his prejudice, is proved by undeniable authority to have testified through life for his affectionate, though not altogether faultless, mother.*

This young prince was about seven years of age when he was called upon to experience the severe vicissitudes, and personally share in the disastrous consequences of that proximity to the throne which for three generations had periled the lives and nearly ruined the fortunes of his illustrious house; and from this tender age he may, indeed, be said to have commenced not only his public, but, as far as regards historical records, also his political career.†

It was in October, 1459, that the two factions of the Red and White Roses, having been roused to the highest degree of fury from the want of faith and bitterness of feeling‡ which had been recently displayed by the leaders of these two opposing interests, assembled in order of battle near the town and castle of Ludlow;§ the Lancastrians following the Yorkists' troops to the confines of Wales, where the latter had been summoned to join their chief in the neighbourhood of his patrimonial fortress. And fierce, indeed, would the contest probably have been had a battle ensued, for both parties were bent on each other's destruction: but the treachery|| which so often in these unhappy feuds decided prematurely the fate of the day, gave to the king's party on this occasion so unlooked-for an advantage, that the Yorkists were compelled to disperse in all haste, ere the morn of the intended conflict had dawned. The duke, taking with him his second son, Edmonde, Earl of

and commanding masses to be publicly sung by the soldiers for the repose of his soul.—*Kennet's Complete Hist. of England*, vol. i. p. 414; also *Turner's Middle Ages*, vol. iii. p. 219.

* Buck's *Richard III.*, lib. i. p. 82.

† Rot. Parl., p. 370.

‡ In reply to the proclamation issued by the peaceably disposed King Henry VI., offering pardon to all who would submit to his clemency, the Duke of York, though earnestly asserting his loyalty to him as his sovereign, added, "that the king's indemnity signified little, so long as the queen's predominant power in all things so overawed him."—*Sandford*, book iv. p. 295.

§ Stow's *Chronicle*, pp. 405, 406.

|| Sir Andrew Trollope suddenly departed secretly in the night, and joined, with the chief soldiers from Calais, the royal banner. This desertion, the dismay it created, and the uncertainty how many would imitate the treachery, unnerved the courage of the rest.—*Sharon Turner*, vol. iii. p. 219.

Rutland, an interesting and noble youth of about sixteen years of age, departed secretly at midnight* from his stronghold at Ludlow; and flying in all haste through Wales, sought refuge for himself and his child amongst the wilds and fastnesses of Ireland, where he was received with enthusiasm, and served with fidelity, in consequence of the popularity† he had acquired during his former just, but mild, government of that country.‡

Edward, Earl of March, his eldest son, who was just springing into manhood, and had been already distinguished for military prowess beyond his years, was also compelled, for the preservation of his life, to escape into France, with his noble kinsmen, the Lords of Salisbury and Warwick, leaving to the mercy of their foes the Duchess of York and her infant sons George and Richard Plantagenet.§

In accordance with the devastating system of civil warfare then pursued, the town of Ludlow became the immediate object of plunder and rapine.¶ Every valuable article in the castle was seized and destroyed within a few hours, after it was ascertained that the duke, with his elder sons, had escaped, and that his dwelling, in some measure, was left unguarded and defenceless; the despoilers finding within its secret apartments the Lady Cecily and her young offspring, they were immediately made prisoners of state, and, by command of King Henry, consigned to the custody of her elder sister, the Duchess of Buckingham,¶¶ who was espoused to one of the firmest supporters of the line of Lancaster.

A parliament being forthwith summoned to meet at Coventry,** where the king and his court were then fixed, the Duke of York, with the youthful Earls of March and Rutland, were immediately attainted of high treason, together with the chief partisans of their cause, who were proclaimed with themselves "traitors to the king, enemies to their country, and rebels to the crown."†† The whole of their lands were confiscated,‡‡ and the Lady Cecily, with her younger children, found herself not merely a prisoner with them, and bereft of home and "all her goods,"§§ but overwhelmed also by the conviction of its utter and ir retrievable ruin, in consequence of the severe measures adopted towards the House of York.¶¶ Its leaders were all exiles, or outlawed as traitors; every branch of her own family was attainted for the share

* Whethamstede, p. 459.

† Kennet, vol. i. p. 419.

‡ Richard III. when he ascended the throne adverted to the kindness shown to his father at this crisis by "certain nobles and gentles of his land of Ireland," in "the instructions given by him to his cousin the Bishop of Enachden, to be showed on his behalf to his cousin the Earl of Desmond," in the first year of his reign, viz., "Remembering the manifold and notable service and kindness by the earl's father unto the famous prince, the Duke of York, the king's father, at divers seasons of great necessity in those parts to his great jeopardies and charges doon." In another portion of this curious document, he feelingly alludes to his extreme youth at the time, "the king then being of young age;" thus evincing how early his interest was fixed on the troubles of the period, and also how deep an impression they left upon his mind.—*Harl. MS.* 433, fol. 265.

§ Whethamstede, p. 474.

¶ Hearne's *Fragment*, p. 284.

¶¶ Anne, the nineteenth child of Ralph, first Earl of Westmoreland, (and own sister to Cecily, Duchess of York,) was married first to Humphrey, Duke of Buckingham, and afterwards to Walter Blount, Lord Mountjoy.—*Blome's Monumental Remains*, part iii. p. 31.

** Rot. Parl., p. 370.

†† W. Wyrcester, p. 478.

‡‡ The Parliament "as yet abideth upon the great matters of attainder and forfeiture."—*Paston Letters*, vol. i. p. 179.

§§ Cecily, Duchess of York, "was deprived of all her goods; she come yester evening late to Coventry."—*Paston Letters*, vol. i. p. 179.

¶¶ *Paston Letters*, vol. i. p. 179.

which they had taken in the rebellion,* or, like herself, deprived of their rich possessions, and utterly in the power and at the mercy of their foes. But her husband's cause was not so desperate as it at first appeared:† it was in effect become too popular, and had been espoused too warmly, to be ruined by the event of a single dispersion of his supporters.

In less than three months from the fatal sacking of Ludlow, the consort of the attainted duke is recorded as having been well received in Kent,‡ where a serious insurrection had already been kindled in favour of her illustrious husband, who possibly held lands and retainers in that county by descent from the House of Clare. It is most probable, however, that at the time the insurrection commenced, the Lady Cecily was a state prisoner in Kent, in the custody of her sister, the Duchess of Buckingham, to whose charge she had been so recently committed, and that she was dwelling with her at Tunbridge Castle, the hereditary abode of the De Clares, Earls of Gloucester,§ whose patrimonial demesnes passed by marriage to the Staffords, Dukes of Buckingham, on the demise of the last earl in the 21st of Edward III., 1317. The pretensions of the Duke of York to the throne being upheld by the powerful influence of his wife's kindred, and aided by their vast wealth, fortune once more began to smile on the exiled chief and his family, so that the young Edward of March was encouraged in the ensuing year to return to England and face his opponents; and in conjunction with the leaders of the Yorkist faction again to unfurl the standard of rebellion,|| and give battle to the Lancastrians at Northampton.

So signal a victory was there achieved over the royal army, that danger now spread even to the warmest supporters of the unfortunate Henry VI., who was himself taken prisoner, and the chief of his adherents scattered or slain.¶ The queen and her young son, Edward, Prince of Wales, were compelled to seek safety in flight, which was accomplished under great perils, and with extreme difficulty,** and the Duke of York, who was then sojourning in much state at Dublin, was summoned from his exile by his triumphant party†† to assume a still higher position than that which had led to his attainder in the previous year. The Lady Cecily, emboldened by these brighter prospects, had returned to the metropolis;‡‡ but whether by formal release from captivity, or through the connivance of her sister at her escape, does not appear; most probably the latter, as she seems to have reached

* Alice, Countess of Salisbury, was attainted upon the charge of having counselled and abetted all the treason.—*Rot. Parl.*, p. 349.

† Rymer, vol. ii. p. 444.

‡ "My lady duchess is still again received in Kent. The Duke of York is at Dublin, strengthened with his earles and hommagers, as ye shall see by a bill. God send the king victory of his enemies, and rest and peace amongst his lords."—*Paston Letters*, vol. i. p. 184.

§ Camden says, "This great family of the Clares were resident for the most part at their castle of Tunbridge, in Kent, to which they had a liberty called the Loway, reaching three miles every way from the centre, answerable to that which belonged to their seigniory of Bryany in Normandy, which they exchanged for it." And again: "The Castle of Tunbridge, in Kent, was the ancient seigniory of the Clares, Earls of Gloucester."—*Camden's Remains*, p. 279. Richard de Clare, Earl of Gloucester and Lord of Tunbridge, erected a church and founded a priory there in the reign of Henry III.; and King Edward I. was nobly feasted at Tunbridge by Gilbert de Clare, Earl of Gloucester, through whose three sisters, his co-heiresses, the vast possessions of the House of Clare descended to Beauchamp, Earl of Warwick, Stafford, Duke of Buckingham, and Mortimer, Earl of March.—*Sandford*, book iii. pp. 140, 141.

¶ W. Wyrcester, p. 481.

** Stow's Chron., p. 409.

†† W. Wyrcester, p. 483.

‡‡ Ibid.

††† Paston Letters, vol. i. p. 184.

London secretly, and to have continued there in disguise; for, instead of openly taking up her abode in Baynard's Castle, her husband's mansion, she privately sought an asylum for herself and young children at the law-chambers of Sir John Paston, a faithful friend and ally of the family, in the Temple. Possibly she shrank from exposing herself and her offspring to the chance of recapture, as at Ludlow; or risking the destruction of property which there ensued, in case another reverse of fortune should render her again a prey to her political enemies; for Baynard's Castle, though garrisoned by a powerful force under the command of her son, the Earl of March, was hourly expected to be besieged. Be the cause what it may, the facts are clearly established by a cotemporaneous letter* of so interesting a nature, that, conveying, as it does, one of the few well-authenticated memorials of the childhood of Richard III., that portion of it demands insertion in these pages:—

"To the Right Worshipful Sir and Master John Paston at Norwich, be this letter delivered in haste.

"Right worshipful Sir and Master, I recommend me unto you; please you, to wit, the Monday after Lady-day,† there come hither to my master's place my Master Bowser, Sir Harry Ratford, John Clay, and the harbinger of my Lord of March, desiring that my Lady of York might be here until the coming of my Lord of York, and her two sons, my Lord George‡ and my Lord Richard,§ and my Lady Margaret|| her daughter, which I granted them, in your name, to lie here till Michaelmas. And she had not lain here two nights, but she had tidings of the landing of my Lord at Chester. The Tuesday after my lord sent for her, that she should come to him to Hereford; and thither she is gone, and she hath left here both the sons and the daughter, and the Lord of March cometh every day to see them.

"Written by a confidential servant of John Paston, one Christopher Haussion, October 12. 1460."

Here we see exemplified, in a very striking manner, the strong affection which, although strangely corrupted in after years, was evidently in their youth a spontaneous and inherent feeling in the children of the House of York.

Edward, its heir, the admired and the flattered, "the goodliest gentleman that ever eyes beheld,"¶ commanding his father's garrison with the firmness and vigour of an experienced leader,** though but a minor in years, and called upon to watch over that father's interest, entailing, as it did, so important a result as the reversal of his attainder and his own probable succession to the throne, is yet to be found affectionately attending to the comfort and safety of his young brothers and sister, thus unexpectedly thrown upon his watchful care. Notwithstanding his political difficulties and the importance of his military claims, the Earl of March found leisure each day to visit them, and despite of public engagements, that might well have been supposed all-engrossing to a youth of eighteen, yet privately performing, in his own person, those endearing offices of affection, and taking upon himself those

* Paston Letters, vol. i. p. 199.

† Monday after the Nativity of the Virgin Mary, 15th September, 1460.

‡ Afterwards Duke of Clarence, at this time in his 11th year, being born 21st October, 1449.

§ Afterwards Duke of Gloucester, aged about 8, being born the 2d October, 1452.

|| Afterwards Duchess of Burgundy, 14 years of age, being born in May, 1445.—*W. Wyrcester apud Hearne*, p. 461.

¶ Philip de Cominès, lib. iv. cap. 10.

** Sharon Turner, vol. iii. p. 226.

parental duties and anxieties, of which the young princes and the Lady Margaret had been temporarily deprived in the absence of their natural protectors.

Surely this must negative that sweeping charge of cruelty and utter heartlessness so often ascribed to King Edward the Fourth; and as completely must it controvert the impression so long conveyed, though without a shadow of foundation for the report, that Richard of Gloucester was an object of abhorrence from his birth—a precocious monster of wickedness, and, as such, alike detested and dreaded by his kindred and connections.

The Castle of Ludlow,* the scene of their calamitous separation in the preceding year, was the scene also of the reunion of the Duke of York and the Lady Cecily, who hastily quitted the metropolis, leaving her children securely placed at Sir John Paston's chambers in the Temple, to await her lord's arrival at Hereford, when intelligence was received of his departure from Ireland. The conclusion of the letter, a portion of which has just been inserted, while establishing this fact, narrates also the almost regal authority which the duke was empowered to exercise on his progress to London;† the unhappy Henry VI. being virtually a prisoner in the hands of the young Edward of March, and his kinsmen the Earls of Salisbury and Warwick, who, by ostensibly allowing their monarch his liberty and showing a marked deference to his views, his wishes and his pleasures,‡ furthered by means of the royal mandate, over which they had uncontrolled power, measures too important to be delegated generally to subjects.

On the 10th October, 1460, the duke and duchess reached London, and at Baynard's Castle, the long-separated branches of the illustrious family of York were once more happily re-united.§ The younger children, as above stated, were already domiciled in the metropolis, and the elder sons are also proved to have been there, from their being associated with their princely parent in solemnly swearing, before the assembled peers of the realm, “not to abridge the king's life or endanger his liberty.”||

The political events consequent on this sudden emancipation of the Duke of York from exile have been already narrated in the chapter which treated of his public career; in which it will be remembered, that up to this period he had not actually claimed the crown, but merely urged his right of succession. When, however, this latter point was conceded to him and his heirs, not only by act of Parliament, but ratified by the royal assent, from his having now openly asserted his pretensions to their fullest extent, there needed little else to render his triumph complete. This result speedily followed, for Parliament further enacted¶ that henceforth, “to encompass the Duke of York's death should be considered high treason,” and an acknowledgment of the justness of his conceded rights was established by his being created “Prince of Wales, Duke of Cornwall and Earl of Chester,”**

* W. Wyrcester, p. 483.

† “My Lord of York hath divers strange commissions from the king for to sit in divers towns coming homeward; that is to say, in Ludlow, Coventry, &c. &c., to punish them by the faults to the king's law. The king is away at Eltham and at Greenwich to hunt. The queen and the prince abideth in Wales always, and there is with her the Duke of Exeter and others.” This Duke of Exeter, the near kinsman and devoted partisan of the House of Lancaster, was espoused to the eldest daughter of the Duke of York. It would appear, however, that their colliding interests soon produced disunion in the husband and wife; the Lady Anne being as firmly devoted to her father's cause and that of the elder branch of the Plantagenet race, as was the duke to that of the hapless Henry and his heroic queen.

‡ Whethamstede, p. 482.

§ Rot. Parl., p. 379.

¶ Ibid., p. 380.

§ W. Wyrcester, p. 483.

** Kennet, vol. i. p. 424.

in addition to the lofty title of “protector of the realm;” and in support of these new dignities, a yearly income awarded to him of 5000 marks* for his own estate, 3000 for the Earl of March, and 2000 for the Earl of Rutland.†

Thus, after years of storm and tempest, the sun of prosperity seemed at last to shine with renewed lustre upon the House of York; peace and unanimity appeared secure to the duke and his household, as if to compensate for the many reverses of fortune that had, in the end, terminated so happily for them.

But it was a prosperity too brilliant to be lasting. A few weeks of reunion and domestic happiness were destined to usher in a futurity fraught with degradation and death to the father, with sorrow and calamity to his widow, and ultimate misery to his descendants and their offspring. The Duke of York was hastily summoned to oppose Queen Margaret in the north; and once more taking young Edmund of Rutland as his companion, dispatching the Earl of March into Wales to assemble their feudatory adherents in the marches,‡ and leaving the Lady Cecily again to watch over the lives and interest of the junior branches of their family, the illustrious prince proceeded with a small but trusty band to his fortress at Sendal near Wakefield, there to meet, in conjunction with the youthful Rutland, a speedy and a tragical death, and there, as already narrated, to receive, as if in mockery of human ambition, a paper crown in lieu of that much-coveted diadem for which he had so long fought and bled.

* A mark was anciently valued at 30s.; it is now generally taken for the sum of 13s. 4d. It is a silver coin, and varies materially in the several countries, Germany, Sweden and Denmark, where it is still current.

† Rot. Parl., p. 382.

‡ This term “marches” designated the boundaries between England and Wales. It was similarly used with reference to Scotland; and also in allusion to our provincial limits in France, the Netherlands and other continental possessions.