

CHAPTER XI.

The Duke of Gloucester in the north at the period of his brother's decease.—Edward V. proclaimed king.—State of affairs at the accession of the young monarch.—Gloucester takes the oath of allegiance, and exacts the same from all under his jurisdiction.—Divisions in the council.—Effect of these divisions on the conduct of Gloucester.—He hastens southward.—Seizes the person of the young king.—Imprisons the Lords Rivers and Grey.—Escorts Edward V. in state to London.—The queen and her family take sanctuary at Westminster.—The Duke of Gloucester chosen "protector and defender of the realm" by the unanimous voice of the council and the senate.

RICHARD of Gloucester was with the army in the marches of Scotland, adjusting finally the differences in that district, previous to removing the soldiery for the contemplated invasion of France, when intelligence of King Edward's death was forwarded to him. Although that event so unforeseen, and, in the ordinary course of things, so little to have been anticipated, considering the age of the deceased monarch, was likely to produce a vast change in Gloucester's political position and future personal career, yet there is no reason to suppose that the sorrow which he evinced at the announcement of the mournful occurrence, was otherwise than genuine; for it was altogether consistent with the affection and fidelity which he had, under adverse as well as prosperous circumstances, invariably testified for his royal brother.*

But, not only has the sincerity of his feelings on this occasion been called in question, and the respect which he immediately showed for the memory of the deceased monarch, in the strict observance of the religious offices enjoined by the church, been imputed to hypocrisy and the most hateful deception; but, as if no death could occur from natural causes during the reign of Edward IV., or be otherwise than hastened by the murderous hands of Richard, Duke of Gloucester,† even that of his royal brother, whom he had loved and served with a devotion altogether remarkable, has been attributed to poison administered by him. "They who ascribe it to poison," observes King Edward's biographer, "are the passionate enemies of Richard, Duke of Gloucester, who permit not nature at that time to have been obnoxious to decay, but make the death of every prince an act of violence or practice; and in regard this cruel lord was guilty of much blood, without any other argument, condemn him for those crimes for which he was actually most innocent." From this iniquitous deed, the which has not, however, been generally enumerated among the list of enormities laid to Gloucester's charge, he is fully exculpated; not alone from his absence in the north during the period of the late king's illness and death, and from the true cause of his dissolution being clearly established, but because unusual pains were taken to prove to the civic authorities and the lords spiritual and temporal, that neither violence nor unlawful means had accelerated their sovereign's unlooked-for decease. Immediately after his death he was placed on a board, naked from the waist upwards; and partially unrobed, was so exposed to the view both of friendly and of suspicious eyes for the space of twelve

* Buck, lib. iii. p. 83.

† Habington, p. 222.

hours*—a precaution rendered the more imperative from his demise occurring in the prime of life, and likewise from the charge of poisoning being so common in those evil and turbulent times.

The funeral of the deceased monarch was most sumptuous, and befitting, in all respects, the splendour and magnificence which had characterized his proceedings during life. He was interred at Windsor, in a chapel which he had there erected;‡ and his eldest son, aged twelve years and six months,‡ was forthwith proclaimed his successor by the name and title of King Edward V.

Almost the last act performed by the deceased king had been to assure to Gloucester, "to him and the heirs of his body," by the authority of Parliament,§ the wardenship of the west marches of England,|| together with the castle, city, town and lordship of Carlisle,¶ 10,000 marks in ready money, and such an extent of territory, and consequent increase of authority, in the north, where he was already so popular, that this fact evinces, far beyond any mere allegation or surmise, the absence of all jealousy on the king's part, and the deserts of a prince who could be thus fearlessly entrusted with almost unlimited power.

The amicable terms on which the two brothers had ever continued may, in great measure, be attributed to the pacific conduct which Gloucester observed towards the queen and her relatives.

A keen discernment of character, with the talent of adapting that faculty to his own particular circumstances, as well as those of the times, was a leading feature in Richard of Gloucester. It was, indeed, the union of those valuable qualities, foresight and prudence, that preserved this prince in all likelihood from the violent death of Clarence and the untimely fate of Warwick; for Gloucester possessed, in a remarkable degree, the power of suppressing a display of hostile feelings in matters where opposition would have been futile. Nevertheless, he had been no unobservant spectator of the undue influence exercised by the royal Elizabeth and the House of Wydville over the council and actions of the king. He participated in the indignation felt by the ancient nobility at the elevation of a race who, having no claims for preferment but that of consanguinity to the queen, had been raised to the highest offices in the state, and permitted to occupy the chief seat in the council chamber. He viewed, too, with mistrust and misgiving, the blind policy of his royal brother, who had removed the heir apparent from all intercourse with the proud and noble kindred of their illustrious line, and placed him under the direct tuition and immediate influence of his mother's family, in a remote part of the kingdom.** These feelings, which had been wisely concealed during the lifetime and reign of Edward IV., wore a far different aspect when the unlooked-for death of that sovereign, and the

* Sandford, book v. p. 391.

† The full particulars of this imposing ceremony, together with a description of the royal chapel at Windsor, are given by Sandford,—copied from the original document preserved in the College of Arms,—in his *Geneal. Hist.*, book v. p. 392.—See also *Archæologia*, vol. i. p. 348.

‡ Edward, Prince of Wales, was born in the Sanctuary at Westminster, 4th Nov., 1470; proclaimed king April, 1483.

§ *Rol. Parl.*, vi. p. 204.

¶ See Appendix A. Sir George Buck states, on the authority of an old MS. in the possession of Sir Robert Cotton, that Gloucester had the "earldom of Carlisle." "But whether he were Comes thereof, after the ancient Roman understanding, that is, governor; or Comes, or count, after the common taking it by us English, or others; that is, for a special titular lord, I will not take upon me to determine, but affirm I have read him *Come Carloliensis*."—*Buck*, lib. i. p. 8.

** More, p. 19.

minority of his successor tended, in all probability, to place Richard in the identical position which he had grieved to see so neglected and abused by the deceased monarch. As the sole surviving brother of Edward IV., and first prince of the House of York—with the exception of the youthful offspring of that king—his situation became one replete with difficulty; and judging from the fate of the princes who had been similarly placed, one beset with danger also. But Gloucester's mind was not constituted to shrink from difficulties however great; rather was he fitted to shine when energy and promptitude were requisite. Abandoning, therefore, the furtherance of his personal interests, and relinquishing his ardour for military fame in the plains of France, he hastily prepared to quit the north, and assume that lead in the direction of public affairs which the minority of his nephew had imposed upon him.

Meanwhile he wrote most soothing letters to the queen: he promised "advent, homage, fealty and all devoir to the king and his lord, eldest son of his deceased brother and of the said queen."* Proceeding to York with a retinue of 600 knights and esquires, "all attired in deep mourning,"† he commanded the obsequies of the deceased king to be performed at the cathedral with the splendour due to his regal station, and the solemnity befitting the mournful occasion, assisting himself at the ceremony "with tears,"‡ and every apparent demonstration of sorrow. He then constrained all the nobility of that district, as the late king's viceroy in the north, "to take the oath of fealty to the king's son, he himself setting them the example by swearing the first of all."§

The youthful monarch was residing at Ludlow when his father expired, under the immediate charge and tutelage of his maternal uncle, the Lord Rivers, and his half brother, the Lord Richard Grey;|| to whom intelligence was forthwith sent of the demise of Edward IV., accompanied by letters from the queen to her son, urging his immediate return to London.¶

To make somewhat more clear the very startling circumstances that occurred after the young king's departure from Ludlow and before his arrival in the metropolis, it becomes necessary to explain, that, during the late king's life, the court was divided into two distinct parties—the queen's relatives and supporters, together with those who coveted honour and official distinction without claim of high birth or lineage; and the ancient nobility and proud kindred of the House of York, attached either to the king's household or his administration. A perpetual rivalry and constant collision of interests existed between parties so jealously opposed to each other; and the king, on his death-bed, foreseeing the disastrous consequences which were likely to arise from his son's minority and the prospect of a regency—that fruitful source of intrigue and evil ambition—used his expiring efforts to effect a reconciliation between the factious opponents.** He is even alleged to have nominated the Duke of Gloucester as protector†† and guardian‡‡ during the young Ed-

* Chron. Croy., p. 565.

† Ibid., and Drake's Ebor., p. 111.

‡ The widowed queen of Edward IV., by her first husband, Sir John Grey of Groby, had two sons, viz., Sir Thomas Grey, created by her royal consort, in the eleventh year of his reign, Earl of Huntingdon, and four years after Marquis of Dorset; and the Lord Richard Grey, an appointed counsellor of the young Prince of Wales, and associated with the Lord Rivers in the important charge of his personal safety. Of the queen's brothers two only survived at the death of Edward IV., viz., Anthony, Earl Rivers, governor of Prince Edward's household, and Lionel Wydeville, Bishop of Salisbury.—See *Dugdale's Bar.*, 719, vol. ii.; *Cal. Rot.*, 313.

¶ More, p. 23.

†† Drake's Ebor., p. 111.

‡‡ "The nobles at London and in the south parts speedily call the duke home by

† Ibid.

‡ Ibid.

** Ibid., p. 13.

ward's nonage; and considering the high esteem with which he had ever distinguished his brother, and the neutral conduct observed by that prince, such a recommendation to his council in his dying hours, at least appears far from improbable. One thing, at all events, is most certain, viz., that the two dissentient parties who were present at their monarch's dissolution, united in testifying their affection and respect for his memory, by co-operating at the solemnization of the last sad rites*—his funeral being attended by the Lord Hastings, the Lord Stanley, the Lord Howard and other leaders of the ancient nobility; and by the Marquis of Dorset, the Lord Lyle, and other near relatives and warm supporters of the queen's authority.†

Very brief, however, was the unanimity thus formally displayed. Immediately after the funeral the council assembled to fix a day whereon Prince Edward should receive the ensigns of his coronation; and the queen's ambitious views are made known, not merely by her desire that the young king should be conducted to London with a powerful army, commanded by her brother and son, but yet more from information supplied by the annalist of that period,‡ who states that, though all parties united in wishing due regal state should be observed in the progress of the young monarch to the capital of his kingdom, yet that the more prudent of the council thought that the custody of the king's person, until he became of age, ought not to be entrusted "to the uncles and brothers on the mother's side; which they considered could not be prevented if they were permitted to attend the coronation otherwise than with a moderate number of followers."§—The very expression "moderate number" displays, in a remarkable manner, the spirit of the times and the character of the people. Little knowledge, indeed, of the condition of England at the accession of Edward V. is necessary to perceive that physical strength was the chief agent employed to acquire and maintain authority; that justice was measured out in proportion to the force which could command it; and that the most clear and legitimate claims were sacrificed to the bad passions of such as could oppose the decision of the sword to the legislative enactments of the realm. The 4th of May was the day fixed upon by the council for the coronation of the young king;|| and after much consideration, bestowed by the assembled lords, relating to the peculiar position of Edward V.,—"every one as he was nearest of kin unto the queen, so was he planted next about the prince"¶—and due attention having been given to the suggestion that he should enter the metropolis with an armed

their private letters and free approbation, to assume the protection of the kingdom and two princes committed unto him by the king. 'Rex Edwardus IV. filios suos Richardo Duci Gloucestræ, in tutelam moriens tradidit;' as Polydor testifieth.—*Buck.*, lib. i. p. 11.

* Harl. MSS., No. 6. fol. 111.

† William Lord Hastings was chamberlain of King Edward's household, and so great a favourite with his royal master, that he was styled by him his "beloved servant, William Hastings."—*Dug. Bar.*, vol. i. p. 580. Thomas Lord Stanley was high steward, and was another of the deceased king's chief and most esteemed counsellors.—*Ibid.*, vol. ii. p. 248. John Lord Howard was high in the confidence of Edward IV.: he bore the royal banneret at the king's funeral.—*Fœdera*, xii. p. 50. Thomas Lord Grey, Earl Huntingdon, Marquis Dorset, was the queen's eldest son by her first husband. He had been appointed governor of the Tower with extensive privileges by Edward IV., who had bestowed upon him the marriage and wardship of Edward, Earl of Warwick, son of the late Duke of Clarence.—*Dug. Bar.*, vol. i. p. 719; *More*, p. 169; *Cal. Rot.*, 325. The Lord Lyle, so created by Edward IV., was a brother of Sir John Grey of Groby, the queen's first husband.—*Dug. Bar.*, vol. i. p. 179.

‡ Chron. Croy., p. 564.

§ Ibid.

|| Ibid.

¶ Ibid.

§ Ibid.

¶ More, p. 19.

force, "in manner of open war,"* the result of this latter question, upon which the council had met more especially to determine,† confirms the opinion generally entertained, that his royal parent aspired to be regent, and to govern in concert with her own family during the minority.‡

It also portrays the evil which was anticipated by the counsellors of the late king, should the Wydville family continue to exercise over the actions of Edward V. the unpopular influence which they had exerted over the mind of his deceased parent. But the wisdom of their decision in limiting the retinue of the young prince to 2000 horsemen, can only be comprehended by taking into consideration the fact, that the Lord Rivers was possessed of almost unlimited power at the critical period of the death of Edward IV. The youthful monarch was in his hands, and under his entire control as governor of his household. Invested, too, as was this nobleman, with the supreme command of South Wales, and of the royal forces in the surrounding district,§ he had only to summon the army in the king's name, and forthwith march in triumph to the metropolis; the military command of which he knew to be already in the hands of his kinsman, from his nephew, the Marquis of Dorset, being governor of the Tower.

With access to the royal treasury there deposited, and with the entire command of the soldiery connected with this important stronghold, there was nothing wanting to complete the aspiring views of Elizabeth and the Wydville family than possession of the young king's person, and effecting a junction with Earl Rivers and the overwhelming force, which was available by him in the west country. This dangerous collision was defeated by the far-seeing sagacity of those prudent counsellors who aimed at limiting the authority of the queen without an open and positive rupture. By indirectly diminishing the power of the Wydviles and the Greys, it gave time, also, for communication with a third party in the state, on whom the attention of the great mass of the people, but above all the ancient nobility, were intently fixed|| as likely to secure their young sovereign and his administration from the factious spirit which had so long agitated the council and embittered the last days of King Edward IV.

This third party consisted of the surviving members of the Plantagenet race and the powerful kindred of Cecily, Duchess of York; the latter of which, although disgusted at the preference given by their late sovereign to his newly-created nobles, were firmly attached to the House of York, with which through her they were so closely allied.

The persons who may be designated as the heads of this illustrious and influential party were Richard, Duke of Gloucester, Henry, Duke of Buckingham, and Cecily, the widowed parent of Edward IV.

As first prince of the blood royal, the laws and usages of the time pointed out the Duke of Gloucester as most fit for the responsible situation of regent during the minority of his nephew; and the amicable terms on which he had invariably lived with the late monarch, his shining abilities, his talent for ruling, and his invaluable services in the council as well as in the state, rendered him eminently qualified to guide the youthful king, and preserve undisputed his lawful succession to the throne.

Henry, Duke of Buckingham, although possessing no claim to be associated

* More, p. 22.

† Hist. Doubts, p. 22.

‡ A retinue not exceeding two thousand, which number was satisfactory to Lord Hastings, because he calculated that the Dukes of Gloucester and Buckingham, on whom he chiefly confided, would not bring with them a less number."—*Chron. Croy.*, 565.

† *Chron. Croy.*, p. 564.

§ *Cott. MS.*, *Vitel. C.* fol. 1.

in the guardianship of Edward V. by reason of near consanguinity, was, nevertheless, a member of the royal House of Plantagenet, being the lineal descendant of Thomas of Woodstock, the youngest son of King Edward III., and consequently one in a direct line of succession to the crown, although at the present time far removed from it by nearer and legitimate heirs belonging to the elder branch. He, however, as thus allied to their royal ancestor, made common cause with Richard, Duke of Gloucester, whom he felt to be the representative of the Plantagenet interests during the minority of Edward V.

Cecily, Duchess of York, had retired altogether from public life after the decease of her illustrious consort; but although refraining from political interference, and resisting the temptation afforded by means of her powerful kindred to balance the intolerable power which was exercised by Elizabeth Wydville over her late son, was yet keenly alive to every species of danger that threatened the stability of a race of which she was the common parent, although, by an unlooked-for calamity, she had never been "queen by right" of the Yorkist dynasty. Her anxious wishes for the aggrandizement of her sons had been early crushed by King Edward's marriage, in direct opposition to her remonstrance,* and likewise by the preference which he immediately and invariably gave to his new relations over the interests and claims of his own family.† All her hopes had long centred in her youngest son, Richard of Gloucester, whose enlarged and statesmanlike views, together with his courage and zeal, had mainly contributed for some years to uphold his brother's authority, and to keep the country well ordered and in obedience. Both herself, therefore, and her connections are found, as might be expected, supporting this prince in his just pretensions to the protectorate, and in firmly opposing the rapacity and inordinate ambition of the young sovereign's maternal relatives.

Such was the state of affairs when Edward V., after waiting at Ludlow to celebrate St. George's Day,‡ quitted that ancient abode of his ancestors for the capital of his kingdom on the 24th of April, 1483—just a fortnight after the dissolution of his royal parent. Richard, Duke of Gloucester, it must be here observed, had been in no position to take any part either in the resistance made to the queen's assumed authority, or to the decisive measures adopted by the council as regards the mode and means of conducting the young monarch to the metropolis.

The interval thus occupied in dissensions at court, and by divisions in the cabinet,§ had been passed by this prince in travelling from the Scottish borders

* "The Duchess of York, his mother, was so sore moved therewith, that she dissuaded the marriage as much as she possibly might, alleging that it was his honour, profit and surety also to marry out of his realms, whereupon depended great strength to his estate by the affinity and great possibility of increase of his possessions."—*More*, p. 93.

† In addition to the chagrin felt by the Duchess of York, when King Edward bestowed her granddaughter on his son-in-law, Sir Thomas Grey, contracted as she had long been to a member of the House of Neville, he greatly offended his mother by uniting the heiress of the Lord Scales to Anthony Wydville, afterwards Earl Rivers, the Lady Cecily having wished to promote a union between her and Prince George of Clarence, then just entering into life. The young Duke of Buckingham, too, and the old Duchess of Norfolk, the one matched with the queen's sister, the other married to her young brother, were both nearly connected with the House of Neville, which increased the indignation felt by that haughty race at the Wydviles being so closely allied to them.

‡ *Rymer's Fœdera*, vol. xii. p. 179. The first instrument in this collection, which issued in the name of King Edward V., is dated on the 23d of April, 1483.

§ "Hastings, captain of Calais, declared that he would betake himself thither

to York, in commanding requiems to be solemnized there and in other large towns* for the repose of the soul of Edward IV., and in exacting allegiance from all under his dominion towards his brother's youthful successor.

Gloucester's conduct was open and honourable throughout, consistent in every respect with the deference which he had invariably paid to his sovereign, and the love he had shown him as his brother, and such, too, as was best calculated to insure the peaceful succession of his nephew to the throne.

There was no undue assumption of power; no assembling of the army, of which he had the entire control, to enforce his authority as nearest of kin to the royal minor; no tarrying in his viceregal territories to ascertain the feeling of the populace, or to induce the most remote suspicion that he contemplated usurpation of the sceptre. He had long possessed the sole command of one half of the kingdom, and had been the means of dissipating in the north many of the factions which had disturbed the peace of the realm. He was lord high admiral and chief constable of England, and lieutenant-general of the land forces; and his administration in these different capacities, maritime, civil and military, were allowed by all to have been just, equitable and prudent.

So long as Gloucester pursued the dictates of his own unbiased feelings, his conduct was irreproachable: his progress through his district being characterized only by affectionate respect for the memory of the deceased monarch, by setting an example of fealty and loyalty to the young king,† and by the most temperate use of his own unlimited authority and elevated station.

At York, however, the aspect of affairs assumed a very different hue;‡ and Richard found himself called upon to assume the lead, and forcibly to seize that authority§ which his behaviour, up to this time, would seem to imply he hoped to have entered upon in tranquillity, and maintained without opposition.

Throughout his remarkable career, this prince, it cannot be denied, was the victim of unhappy consequences induced by the bad passions of weaker minds and of ill-concerted designs; but in no one instance was the path he pursued more decidedly forced upon him than at this great crisis of his fate, when the exigences of the case and the deep-laid schemes of his opponents compelled him to act with the promptitude and determination which were inherent in his nature.

A private messenger from Henry, Duke of Buckingham, appears to have placed before Richard, during his stay at York,|| full particulars of the aspiring views of the queen and her family; and farther communication from the Lord Hastings¶—such, at least, may be surmised from his conduct in the metropolis—unveiled to the penetrating Gloucester the deep plot formed by the

rather than await the coming of the new king, if he came not with a moderate number; for he feared that if the supreme power fell into the hands of those of the queen's blood, they would avenge upon him the injuries which they had received."

—*Chron. Croy.*, p. 564.

* *Harl. MSS.*, 433, fol. 176.

† *Chron. Croy.*, 565.

‡ "It was here," observes Drake, "that the Duke of Buckingham sent a trusty servant, one Percivall, says Hall, to instil those notions of ambition into him which afterwards proved of such dire effect to his nephews as well as himself."—*Drake's Ebor.*, p. 111.

§ *Buck, lib. i.* p. 11.

|| *Drake's Ebor.*, p. 111, and *More*, p. 135.

¶ "The Lord Hastings, whose truth toward the king no man doubted nor needed to doubt, persuaded the lords to believe that the Duke of Gloucester was sure, and fastly faithful to his prince; and the Lord Rivers and Lord Richard, with the other knights, were, for matters attempted by them against the Duke of Gloucester and Buckingham, put under arrest for their surety, not for the king's jeopardy."—*More*, p. 32.

Wydvilles, and the total overthrow designed by them of his claims to the regency, provided strong measures were not immediately undertaken for securing the person of Edward V., and crushing the designs of his mother, his uncles, and his step-brothers, to obtain possession of him.

Impressed with these ideas, he quitted York for Northampton, so as to intercept the royal progress; and that he must have been possessed of some authority to act, either derived from the expressed wishes of the deceased monarch, as asserted by Polydore Virgil,* or arising from the guardianship being actually conferred upon him in King Edward's will,† and communicated possibly to Richard by the executors at York, seems certain from a passage contained in the *Croyland Chronicle*, to the effect, "that, when the Duke of Gloucester reached Northampton, there came there to do him reverence, Anthony Earl Rivers, the king's uncle and Sir Richard Grey, the king's uterine brother, and others sent by the king his nephew, that they might submit all things to be done to his decision."‡

The Lords Rivers and Grey were of no temperament to make this submission to Richard of Gloucester, unless necessitated so to do; neither was that prince likely to have received them "at their first coming," as the annalist proceeds to state, "with a pleasant and joyful countenance, and sitting at supper, at table, to have passed the time in agreeable conversation,"§ unless each party had been mutually satisfied with the performance of duties required from the one, and the deference due to the other: for, although Gloucester was endowed with an insinuating address and great flexibility of manners, that proud asperity of look so peculiarly his own when thwarted or displeased, could scarcely have softened into a "joyful countenance," had indignation characterized his first meeting with the obsequious lords. A vast change, however, appears to have occurred before the close of this eventful day.

In the evening, Richard and his associates were joined by Henry, Duke of Buckingham, accompanied by 300 horsemen;|| "and because it was late, they went to their several abodes," Rivers and Grey well pleased with their reception, and the success which had attended designs they believed to be unsuspected; for only four days intervened between the time appointed by the council for the coronation of Edward V., and he was already some miles advanced towards the metropolis, whither they intended, "on the morrow, to follow the kyng, and bee with hym early ere hee departed."¶ Gloucester and Buckingham to assemble a few of their most chosen friends in

* *Poly. Virg.*, lib. iv.

† From certain documents published in Nichol's valuable collection of Royal Wills, p. 345, and communicated by Dr. Ducarel from the registers at Lambeth, it appears that Edward IV. left a will that is not now known to be extant, and which, it has been conjectured, was intentionally destroyed. A will of Edward IV., transcribed by Rymer from the Rolls' Chapel, and dated at Sandwich, 20th June, 1475, was printed in the "*Excerpta Hist.*" p. 366; but as the executors therein named differ from those enumerated by Dr. Ducarel, it may justly be concluded that the published will was not the last will, although where this latter document is now deposited is unknown. In the will dated at Sandwich, "Elizabeth the Quene" is the first executor named; in the Lambeth registers her name is altogether omitted; and four only of the executors associated with her in the published will are contained in the list there recorded. From motives which remain unexplained, the executors of the last will refused to act; consequently, the nature and contents of King Edward's final testament have never been divulged. But that such an instrument was executed is indisputable, from the fact of the executors who are enumerated in the Lambeth registers having placed the royal property under ecclesiastical sequestration within a few weeks of the monarch's decease; and it is by extracts from these registers that the important information is furnished of there having been a second will.

‡ *Chron. Croy.*, p. 565.

§ *Ibid.*

|| *Ibid.*

¶ *More*, p. 28.

council, where they spent a great part of the night, revolving, as proved by the result, the extraordinary proceedings of the queen's family in the metropolis, and the sinister conduct of Earl Rivers and the Lord Grey, in greeting the Duke of Gloucester, unaccompanied by the young king, to whom, as his paternal uncle, HE was the natural, if not the appointed guardian,* and from whom THEY, as his delegated counsellors and governors of his household, were bound not to have separated. Momentous, indeed, was the intelligence received from the capital, and made known, as it would appear, by Buckingham, or by some of the secret messengers, who had communicated with Gloucester on his progress to Northampton;† for the Marquis Dorset had taken possession of the king's treasure,‡ and had already commenced equipping a naval force; thus usurping a power altogether unprecedented as regards the appropriation of the royal funds, and personally offensive to Richard of Gloucester as relates to the mode of its expenditure, that prince having the entire control, as admiral of England, over the maritime affairs of the country. The subtle part acted by Lord Rivers in sending the young king to Stoney Stratford, a day's journey in advance of his illustrious uncle, although the duke§ was hourly expected at Northampton, and thus withdrawing him on the very verge of his coronation from all intercourse or interview with his father's brother, was by this information explained; and the intolerable and premeditated usurpation of authority thus early exercised by the young king's maternal relatives, so fully confirmed the suspicions entertained by the late king's advisers as to the Wydvilles' aspiring to the regency, and their resolution of detaining, in their own hands, the person of the young monarch, until he was irrevocably invested with the symbols of royalty,|| that it roused every indignant feeling in Richard, and induced measures which, but for these crafty proceedings, might never have been resorted to, either in his own mind or that of the nobles attached to his party. Their little council sat in deliberation until near the dawn of day, and the nature of their conference may be judged from the exigency of the occasion, and the strong measures which resulted from it; before entering upon which it is fitting, however, to observe, that these measures, harsh as they may appear, and attributed as they have been, by most historians, solely to the ambition, tyranny and individual act of Gloucester alone, were, in effect, the result of a general council. Small, it is true, and not legally constituted as such, but fully justified in their deliberations and the degree of responsibility which they assumed, considering that they were assembled under the auspices of the late king's only brother, in a city especially under his jurisdiction as seneschal of the duchy of Lancaster, and driven to adopt hasty but firm resolutions, in consequence of the artifice exhibited in removing the young monarch, under a flimsy pretext, to an unimportant town, incapable of accommodating, in addition to the royal suite, the duke and his retinue,¶ and altogether unsuited for the kingly progress. The town of Northampton, whence Edward V. was hurried,

* If the duke aspired to nothing more than the protectorate, his ambition was not to be blamed. It was a dignity which the precedents of the two last minorities seemed to have attached to the king's uncle.—*Lingard*, vol. v. p. 241.

† *More*, p. 135.

‡ *Ibid.*, p. 27.

§ "Now was the king in his way gone from Northampton, when these Dukes of Gloucester and Buckingham came thither: where remayned behynd the Lord Rivers, the king's uncle, intending, on the morrow, to follow the king, and be with him at Stony Stratford."—*More*, p. 23.

|| One important fact appears always to have been overlooked, viz., that after the coronation, however young the sovereign, there could no longer be a protectorate, that office being expressly instituted to protect and defend the realm until such time as the minor was solemnly anointed king.—See *Turner, Middle Ages*, vol. iii. p. 2.

¶ "It was too streighte for both companies."—*More*, p. 26.

was but thirteen miles from Stoney Stratford, and the castle, in the former place, where parliaments had been heretofore held, appertained, by virtue of his office, to his uncle, who was hastening thither expressly to meet, and receive with all loyalty and affection, his youthful and illustrious kinsman, when he found him clandestinely removed to favour designs which it required but little penetration to fathom.

Richard of Gloucester was as firm in purpose as he was resolute in action. Discerning in the estimation of character, and master of the politics of the times—if mere political expediency and selfish ambition may deserve such a name—his experience and judgment were all sufficient for the difficult part which he was called upon to sustain; and before the day had dawned, or his rivals were stirring, every avenue of the city was guarded, and horsemen stationed on the high road to intercept all communication with the king and his escort.*

Astonished at their rising to find the gates closed, and "the wayes on every side besette," and satisfied that proceedings which offered so remarkable a contrast to the courtesy of the duke on the preceding day were not "begun for nought," and most probably foreboded evil to himself and his companion, the Lord Rivers resolved on neither offering opposition nor expressing surprise, lest, by betraying suspicion, "he should seem to hyde himselfe for some secret feare of his own faulte."† The uncle and nephew were, in fact, caught in their own net; but having brought themselves into this difficulty by proceedings equally disingenuous as that now practised upon themselves, the Lord Rivers farther determined, "sithe hee could not get awaye, to keep himself close;" and when opportunity offered, "to goe boldly" to his detainers, and "enquire what thys matter myghte mean."‡ Accordingly, all the lords departed together, and in seeming amity, to present themselves to the new king;§ but when they had nearly approached the entrance of the little town where he was sojourning, Earl Rivers and Richard his nephew, with certain others who came with them, were suddenly arrested, by command of the Duke of Gloucester. Continuing their route, Richard, Buckingham, and their companions proceeded with all speed to Stoney Stratford where the wily scheme concerted by the young king's attendants for hurrying him to the metropolis, and separating him from his uncle of Gloucester, became still more evident; for "they founde the kinge with his companie readye to leape on horsebacke;"|| and this, too, be it remembered, at a very early hour, the lords having quitted Northampton at dawn of day, so as to frustrate designs which Richard's sagacity had penetrated, and for whose promptitude his adversaries were unprepared, "many of Lorde Rivers' servantes being unreadye."¶

Entering Prince Edward's abode, to whom the apprehension of his maternal relations was as yet unknown, the Duke of Gloucester arrested Sir Thomas Vaughan, his chamberlain, Dr. Alcock, Bishop of Worcester, his chief preceptor, and other of his personal advisers.** For it was the duke's conviction that the young monarch was a party to the deception sought to be practised upon him; and his indignation at the insincere part which he had acted, in sending the Lord Rivers to Northampton ostensibly to submit "all things to his decision," but in reality to gain time, and to blind Richard to the scheme at which his royal nephew seems to have connived, is made apparent by the following remarkable passage, with which the Croyland historian

* *More*, p. 24.

† *More*, p. 25.

‡ *More*, p. 26.

** *Rous*, p. 212.

† *Ibid.*

§ *Chron. Croy.*, p. 565.

¶ *Ibid.*, p. 24.