

just two months and twenty-seven days after the demise of Edward IV., and from the period when that monarch's hapless child succeeded to a crown which he was destined never to wear, although his name survives on the regnal annals of England as the second monarch of the Yorkist dynasty and the last Edward of the Plantagenet race.

CHAPTER XIII.

Richard takes possession of the throne, not as an usurper, but as a legitimate sovereign.—His conduct greatly misrepresented.—Commencement of his reign.—Preparations for his coronation.—State progress through the city.—Richard's election analogous to the change of dynasty in 1688.—Coronation of King Richard and Queen Anne at Westminster.—Peculiar magnificence of the ceremony.—The banquet which followed.—Early measures of Richard III.—His wisdom, justice and attention to his domestic duties.—Commences a progress through his dominions.—Flattering reception at Oxford.—Liberality to the city of Gloucester.—Holds a court at the castle at Warwick.—Is there joined by the queen.—Receives letters of credence from foreign princes.—Embassy from Ferdinand and Isabella.—Resumes his regal progress.—Decides on a second coronation.—Is joined by his son, the Earl of Salisbury, at Pontefract.—Enthusiastic reception at York.—King Richard and his queen crowned a second time in that city.—His son created Prince of Wales.—Dismissal of the foreign envoys to their respective courts.

RICHARD of Gloucester was now king of England—king, by the common consent of the nation, by the unanimous choice of the nobles, the clergy and the people.* For upwards of four centuries he has been designated as an usurper; but has consideration ever been duly bestowed on the literal acceptance of the term, or of its application to this monarch? It would appear not! as, if attention is directed to the one leading point, that Richard neither deposed Edward V., nor forcibly seized the crown, but that the regal dignity was tendered to him voluntarily and peaceably† by that branch of the constitution whose peculiar province it is to mediate between the monarch and the people, and to examine into the just pretensions of the new sovereign before he is irrevocably anointed ruler of the kingdom, it must be admitted that in this point, at least, Gloucester has been most unjustly accused. To quote the words of a modern eminent writer, who minutely examined every available document connected with this momentous inquiry, "Instead of a perjured traitor, we recognize the legitimate sovereign of England; instead of a violent usurpation, we discover an accession, irregular according to modern usage, but established without violence on a legal title."‡ Whatever difference of opinion may prevail respecting the disability alleged against Edward V., there can exist none as to his having been dethroned by the "Lords and Commons of the realm,"§ whose assent had alone rendered valid his former accession to the crown.¶ If, then, Parliament may settle so important a question as the right of succession to the throne of these kingdoms, Parliament assuredly may unsettle and reform the same: but the laws of inheritance, like the moral laws, are framed on mental obligations which cannot be infringed, even by

* Chron. Croy., p. 567.

† Laing, App. to Henry, vol. xii. p. 414.

‡ Chron. Croy., p. 567.

§ "The power and jurisdiction of Parliament," says Sir Edward Coke, "is so transcendent and absolute, that it cannot be confined either for causes or persons within any bounds. It can regulate or new model the succession to the crown. It can change and create afresh even the constitution of the kingdom, and of parliaments themselves."—Coke, quoted by Guthrie, p. 26.

† Buck, lib. i. p. 20.

Parliament, without raising a sense of injustice. Consequently, the fruitful source of that odium which has ever been attached to Richard's memory as king, may be traced to the early suppression, by Henry VII.,* of that statute which admitted the disqualifications of Edward V., and also to want of sufficient attention having been given to the fact that the young prince was rejected by his subjects on the ground of disqualification alone, and his uncle elected to the throne in his place because that throne was about to be vacated.

The peers and prelates of England felt themselves aggrieved at fealty having been exacted for a prince against whose legitimacy doubts might be entertained, and who had, therefore, no legal claims to their oath of allegiance, either as heir apparent or as king, owing to the irregularity of his father's marriage. It was this conviction that proved the great support of the lord protector's cause when the matter was formally submitted for discussion to the assembled peers, and was confirmed to them by the production of competent witnesses and authentic legal documents.†

The presumed rights of Edward V. being thus impugned, the constituted authorities elected his uncle their king, less from any notion that Gloucester had been wronged by his nephew's accession than because they were impressed with the conviction that what Parliament had sanctioned under false premises Parliament had a right to nullify when legitimate cause was shown for thus exercising their prerogative. This momentous question rests, not upon any present consideration of justice or injustice, but upon the view then taken of the matter by the Lords and Commons of the kingdom; and even admitting that they acted under mistaken impressions, one deduction can alone be made as regards King Richard himself, viz., that instead of usurping the crown, it was bestowed upon him by others,—a gift which, it is true, little doubt can exist as to its having been obtained chiefly by his keen sagacity, and that seducing eloquence and insinuating address which were peculiar to Richard when his abilities were called forth on any favourite project.

The youth of the hapless Edward, his innocence, his gentleness, have led to many accusations being heaped on Richard that must vanish whenever they are tested by the standard of justice; for however much sympathy may be elicited, or indignation be roused, for the calamities of a prince so roughly handled, the victim of error not his own, yet the mere act of his deposition and the elevation of his uncle to the throne, which is the sole point under consideration, was the decree of the nobles, the decision of the people, and therefore, it must be admitted, not the act of the lord protector himself.

Richard III. ascended the throne of England on the 26th of June,‡ 1483,

* "Henry's policy in suppressing that statute affords additional proof of Edward's marriage with Elenor Butler," observes Mr. Laing; who adds:—"The statute would have been destroyed without the ceremony of being reversed, but an act was necessary to indemnify those to whose custody the rolls were intrusted."—See *Year Book, Hilary Term*, 1 Hen. VII. "The statute was abrogated without recital in order to conceal its purport, and obliterate, if possible, the facts it attested; and a proposal for reading it—that Stillington, Bishop of Bath, might be responsible for its falsehood—was overruled and stifled by the king's immediate declaration of pardon."—*Ibid.* "Its falsehood," continues Mr. Laing, "would have merited and demanded detection, not concealment; and Stillington, whose evidence had formerly established the marriage, was, if perjured, an object of punishment, not of pardon."—*Laing's Dissertation, Appendix to Henry's England*, vol. xii. p. 409.

† "He then brought in instruments, authentick doctors, proctors, and notaries of the law, with depositions of divers witnesses, testifying King Edward's children to be bastards."—*Grafton, Cont. More*, p. 153.

‡ Sir Harris Nicolas, in his *Chronology of History*, (p. 326,) says: "As scarcely any two authorities agree respecting the date of the accession of this monarch, it is fortunate that he himself should have removed all doubt on the subject by an official

aged thirty years and eight months. The last known signature of Edward V. bears date the 17th of that same month;* and the first instrument attested by Gloucester after his accession is dated the 27th of June,† on which day the great seal was delivered to him by the Bishop of Lincoln, who was re-appointed chancellor, and "received the seals from the new king in a chamber near the chapel in the dwelling of the Lady Cecily, Duchess of York, near the Thames, called Baynard's Castle, in Thames Street, London;"‡ a fact which seems, even more decisively than all which have hitherto been alleged, to disprove the charge of impugning the character of his venerable parent, or of her having openly expressed indignation at her son's unfilial conduct. Before entering on the proceedings which occupied the brief interval between Richard's accession and his coronation, two points of some importance towards the justification of his character require particular notice at this crisis, resting as they do upon cotemporary authority: the one, that Lord Lyle, closely allied to Edward V. and his mother's family, and who had openly opposed the Duke of Gloucester upon his elevation to the protectorate, now joined his party and espoused his cause;§ the other, that the followers of the late Lord Hastings entered the service of the Duke of Buckingham: thus affording a decisive proof that a portion, at least, of the deposed monarch's kindred|| were satisfied with the justice of Richard's conduct; and likewise, that the partisans of the late king's most favoured adviser, so far from resenting the execution of their master, actually joined themselves to one of the two dukes who are charged with having so unjustly compassed the Lord Hastings' death. Neither must another fact, derived from the same source, be overlooked, from its connection with the alleged usurpation, as it affords evidence that the armed men sent for from York were indeed required as a protection to Richard and a safeguard to the metropolis, and were not summoned, as has been asserted, under a false plea to aid him in forcibly seizing the crown. "It is thought," writes Stallworth to Sir William Stoner, after describing the disturbed state of the city, "there shall be 20,000 of my lord protector's and my Lord Buckingham's men in London this week, to what intent I know not, but to keep the peace;"¶ yet Stallworth's letter, whence the above is extracted, was dated the 21st of June—the day previous to Dr. Shaw's sermon, and before any attempt had been made

communication. On the memoranda rolls of the exchequer in Ireland the following letter from Richard III. occurs, which fixes the date of the commencement of his reign to the 26th June, 1483:—

"Richard, by the grace of God, King of England and of France and Lord of Ireland. To all our subjects and liegemen within our land of Ireland, hearing or seeing these our letters, greeting. Forasmuch as we be informed that there is great doubt and ambiguity among you for the certain day of the commencing of our reign, we signify unto you for truth, that by the grace and sufferance of our blessed Creator, we entered into our just title, taking upon us our dignity royal and supreme governance of this our royaume of England, the 26th day of June, the year of our Lord 1483; and after that we will that ye do make all writings and records among you.

"Given under our signet, at our Castle of Nottingham, the 18th day of October, the 2d year of our reign."

(Printed in the report of the commissioners of the records of Ireland, where a facsimile of this letter may be seen.)

* *Fœdera*, vol. xii. p. 187.

† *Ibid.*, p. 189.

‡ *Ibid.*

§ "The Lord Lyle is come to my lord protector, and awaits upon him."—*Stallworth Letters, Excerpt. Hist.*, fol. 15.

|| "The Lord Lyle was brother-in-law to the widowed queen of King Edward IV., and consequently uncle to the Marquis of Dorset and to the Lord Richard Grey, recently executed at Pontefract."—*Dugd. Bar.*, vol. i. p. 719.

¶ *Excerpt. Hist.*, p. 560.

to promote Richard's accession, or to oppose the coronation of his nephew; consequently, the disturbed state of the metropolis arose not, it is very evident, from revolt instigated by the protector, the very letter in question making express mention of preparations for Edward's coronation,—a fact altogether at variance with the supposition that measures had been ripening for weeks to dispossess him of the crown. Stallworth's attestation is confirmed by Fabyan, who, after narrating the particulars of Richard's elevation to the throne, adds: "Soon after, for fear of the queen's blood, and other, which he had in jealousy, he sent for a strength of men out of the north, the which came shortly to London a little before his coronation, and mustered in the Moorfields, well upon 4000 men."* These two accounts, the one written by an officer in the lord chancellor's household, the other narrated by a citizen of London cotemporary with him, confirm the truth of Richard's assertions to the citizens of York, that a conspiracy had been formed to compass his destruction.†

This desperate state of things, and the severe measures consequent upon its discovery, decided Richard, there can be little doubt, to aspire to the crown, and also led to the counter-revolution which raised him to the throne instead of removing him from the protectorate,—a change in affairs which was effected actually before sufficient time had elapsed for his northern partisans to have reached the metropolis.

Not an effort, indeed, seems to have been made in favour of Edward V.—not a voice raised, even by the rabble, in behalf of the youthful king. The nobles, the clergy, the citizens, the people at large, hailed the accession of Richard III. with as much earnestness and unanimity as if Edward V. had died a natural death, and the crown had, of necessity, reverted to his uncle. Popular feeling, however, was too fleeting to be trusted by one so wary as Richard beyond the shortest possible period. The barons and knights who had elected him king were still remaining in the metropolis, whither they had been summoned to assist at the coronation of his royal nephew; and the preparations and festivities, so nearly completed for the deposed monarch, were in readiness for the immediate solemnization of his uncle's enthronement.‡ Richard resolved on availing himself of so happy a coincidence, the more so, as the trusty followers whom he had summoned from the north for other purposes, and who were hourly expected, would, he knew, be at hand, either to swell the procession, or to repress tumult and prevent disorder. Assembling, then, the lords of the council, and the great officers of state, the day for the coronation of himself and his queen was definitively fixed, and the usual preliminaries forthwith commenced.§ The following day, June 28th, instructions were dispatched to Lord Mountjoy and others, the governors of Calais and Guisnes, commanding them to make known to the garrison of these important fortresses "the verrey sure and true title which our sovereign lord that now is, King Richard III., hath and had to their fealty;"|| and to exact from them anew the oath of allegiance, which had become void by the dethronement of his nephew.¶ He presided in person at the judicial courts, declaring it to be "the chiefest duty of a king to minister to the

* Fabyan, p. 516.

† Polydore Virgil (p. 540) distinctly asserts that Lord Hastings speedily repented of the share he had taken in advocating the part pursued by Gloucester relative to the young king; and that he privately convoked a meeting of the deceased monarch's most attached friends to discuss the proceedings most expedient for the future.

‡ "And that solemnity was furnished for the most part with the self-same provision that was appointed for the coronation of his nephew."—*More*, p. 126.

§ *Fædera*, vol. xii. p. 190.

|| *Harl. MSS.*, 433, fol. 238.

¶ See Appendix WW.

laws."* He withdrew his personal enemies from sanctuary,† that he might openly pardon their offences before the people; and, calculating on the effect which courtesy produces, more especially when emanating from princes to their subjects, he followed the example set by Edward IV. on his accession, of mingling familiarly with the populace, addressing to the noble and opulent fair words and speeches, and acknowledging, with urbanity and condescension, the homage even of the most lowly.‡ On the 30th of June, the Duke of Norfolk, who, upon Richard's accession, had been created earl marshal, was appointed steward of England for the approaching coronation;§ and the honourable offices and high distinctions consequent upon that solemnity were dispensed with a liberal and impartial spirit, being alike distributed on the avowed enemies as upon the warm friends of the protector.

On the 4th of July, Richard proceeded in state to the Tower|| by water, accompanied by his royal consort; and, after creating several peers, he invested many gentlemen and esquires with the order of knighthood. He released the Lord Stanley from confinement, pardoned his reputed connection with the conspiracy of Lord Hastings, and, with a generosity and disregard to personal danger that seem little in accordance with the evil deeds imputed to him, sought to bury the past in oblivion, and to make him his friend, by appointing him lord steward of his household.¶ He likewise set at liberty the Archbishop of York,** and, confirming him in his primacy, permitted him to depart to his diocese. Morton, Bishop of Ely, whose after career fully confirmed the reports of his having conspired for Richard's destruction, although also liberated from the Tower,†† was committed to the charge of the Duke of Buckingham, that a nominal restraint in that nobleman's hereditary abode at Brecknock might be placed upon the turbulent prelate until such time as he evinced less violent opposition to the newly-elected king.

It is probable that the greater indulgence shown to the archbishop arose from an urgent appeal addressed to Richard on his behalf by the University of Cambridge. This monarch was much attached to that seminary of learning, to which he had shown himself a great benefactor; and he was, in consequence, generally beloved and estimated by its members; their earnest entreaties, therefore, in favour of their chancellor, whose munificent acts attested alike his piety and his goodness, were not likely to pass unnoticed by the king when the fitting time arrived for his enlargement, the more so as the language of the petition‡‡ did full justice to his own beneficence, and

* *More*, p. 244.

† *Ibid.*, p. 245.

‡ *Harl. MSS.*, No. 293, fol. 208.

** *Buck. lib. i.* p. 26.

†† "Right high and mighty prince, in whom singularly resteth the politic governance, peace and tranquillity of the realm of England. Your humble orators commend them to your good grace. And forasmuch as we have felt in times past your bountiful and gracious charity to us your daily bedemen, not only in sending by your true servant and chancellor, Master Thomas Barrow, to his mother the University a great and faithful lover, your large and abundant alms; but as well founding certain priests and fellows, to the great worship of God and to the increase of Christ's faith in the Queen's College of Cambridge; we, upon that comfort, make our writing to your good grace, for such things concerning the weal of the University, beseeching your noble grace to show your gracious and merciful goodness, at this our humble supplication, to the Right Reverend Father in God the Archbishop of York, our head and chancellor, and many years hath been a great benefactor to the University and all the colleges therein, and, through the help of God and your gracious favour, shall long continue. Most Christian and victorious prince, we beseech you to hear our humble prayers, for we must needs mourn and sorrow, desolate of comfort, until we hear and understand your benign spirit of pity to him-ward, which is a great prela

† *Ibid.*

§ *Fædera*, vol. xii. p. 191.

¶ *Grafton*, p. 799.

‡‡ *Grafton*, p. 797.

testified, most pleasingly, the estimation in which he was held at that university.

On the 5th of July, Richard, accompanied by the queen, rode from the Tower through the city in great state,* attended by all the chief officers of the crown, the lord mayor, the civic authorities, and the leading nobility and commons, sumptuously arrayed,†—the king, as it is related, “being robed in a doublet and stomacher of blue cloth of gold, wrought with nets and pine-apples, a long gown of purple velvet furred with ermine, and a pair of short gilt spurs;‡ and the queen in a kirtle and mantle of white cloth of gold, trimmed with Venice gold and furred with ermine, the mantle being additionally garnished with seventy annulets of silver and gyll.”§ During the procession not the slightest disturbance occurred, nor was any indication given by the populace, either of compassion for Edward V. or disapprobation at the accession of his uncle; and although Richard took the precaution of issuing a proclamation|| tending to preserve peace, yet the undisturbed state of the metropolis seemed to render the edict unnecessary, unless in accordance with ancient usage or political expediency. Surely this very extraordinary unanimity in all classes of the community must cast a doubt upon the imputation of hatred towards Richard which has been so long entertained, more especially when the national character of the English people is taken into consideration, and due weight attached, not only to the difficulty with which they are persuaded to adopt a new order of things, but also to the innate generosity of spirit which induces them as a body invariably to side with the oppressed, and fearlessly to oppose both king and nobles, if tyranny is exercised or despotism evinced. But the utmost indifference to the position of Edward V. seems universally to have prevailed; and that masterly scene of the immortal Shakspeare, which so forcibly depicts the hapless position of Richard II., from whose disastrous reign may be dated the calamities which fell so heavily on the innocent young princes of the House of York, is as applicable to the dethroned and forsaken Edward, and to his uncle, the monarch of the nobles, as it was to Henry of Bolingbroke, when he, like Richard of Gloucester, rode in triumph through the city, and received the homage of the multitude.¶

“The duke, great Bolingbroke,
Mounted upon a hot and fiery steed,
Which his aspiring rider seemed to know,
With slow but stately pace kept on his course,
While all tongues cried, ‘God save thee, Bolingbroke!’

in the realm of England. And we to be ever your true and humble orators and bedemen; praying to him that is called the Prince of Mercy for your noble and royal estate, that it may long prosper to the worship of God, who ever have you in His blessed keeping.

“Your true and daily orators,
“THE UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE.

“To the right high and mighty prince, Duke of Gloucester,
“Protector of the realm of England.”

(Printed in Cooper's Annals of Cambridge, p. 226.)

* Buck, lib. i. p. 26.

† “But the Duke of Buckingham carried the splendour of that day's bravery, his habit and caparisons of blue velvet, embroidered with golden naves of carts burning, the trappings supported by footmen habited costly and suitable.”—Buck, lib. i. p. 26.

‡ Brit. Costume, Part 2, p. 212.

§ Ibid., p. 218.

¶ See Appendix XX.

¶ “He rode from the Tower through the city,” says Buck, “with three dukes and nine earls, twenty-two viscounts and simple barons, eighty knights, esquires and gentlemen not to be numbered.”—Lib. i. p. 26.

You would have thought the very windows spake,
So many greedy looks of young and old
Through casements darted their desiring eyes
Upon his visage; and that all the walls
With painted imag'ry had said at once,
‘Jesu preserve thee! Welcome Bolingbroke!’
Whilst he, from one side to the other turning,
Bare-headed, lower than his proud steed's neck,
Bespake them thus: ‘I thank you, countrymen;
And thus still doing, thus he pass'd along.’

Richard II., Act V. Scene II.

A more peaceful or tranquil accession can scarcely be adduced from the regnal annals of England than that of King Richard III. But if wonder is excited at the undisturbed manner in which this prince obtained possession of the throne, still greater astonishment must be felt at the unanimity which prevailed at his coronation; the celebration of which solemnity is not only perpetuated as one of the most gorgeous pageants on record, but as, perhaps, the most magnificent ceremonial which can be adduced from our national archives. It was alike remarkable for the vast attendance of the aristocracy, and for the extraordinary magnificence* displayed by the influential leaders of the Lancastrian and Yorkist factions.

“The great regularity with which the coronation was prepared and conducted,” observes Lord Orford, “and the extraordinary concourse of the nobility at it, have not at all the air of an unwelcome reception, accomplished merely by violence; on the contrary, it bore great resemblance to a much later event, which, being the last of the kind, we term ‘the Revolution.’”† And a revolution truly it was, in its extreme sense, although not an usurpation; and, considering that it was accomplished without bloodshed, without the aid of an armed force,—for the description of Richard's “gentlemen of the north,” as given by Fabyan,‡ is little in keeping with desperate or determined rebels,—and that a fortnight was occupied in calm and deliberate preparations for solemnizing the ceremony, with the most minute attention to regal splendour, court etiquette and the observance of ecclesiastical and judicial forms, the question with which Lord Orford concludes his examination into this remarkable event cannot fail to recur to the mind of every reflective person: “Has this the air of a forced and precipitate election? or does it not indicate a voluntary concurrence in the nobility?”§ The circumstances of Richard's election were, indeed, singularly analogous to those which took place on the change of dynasty in 1688. Upon that great occasion, states Blackstone, “the Lords and Commons, by their own authority, and upon the summons of the Prince of Orange, afterwards King William, met in a convention, and therein disposed of the crown and kingdom.”|| Blackstone goes on to remark that this assembling proceeded upon a conviction that the throne was vacant, and “in such a case,” he says, “as the palpable vacancy of the throne, it follows *ex necessi-*

* Appendix YY.

† “The three estates of nobility, clergy and people, which called Richard to the crown, and whose act was confirmed by the subsequent Parliament, trod the same steps as the convention did which elected the Prince of Orange; both setting aside an illegal pretender, the legitimacy of whose birth was called in question: in both instances it was a free election.”—*Historic Doubts*, p. 45.

‡ . . . “In their best jacks and rusty salettes, with a few in white harness not burnished to the sale.”—*Fabyan*, p. 516. Hall and Grafton speak even more opprobriously: “Evil apparelled, and worse harness'd,” they say, “which, when mustered, were the contempt of beholders.”—*Drake's Ebor.*, p. 115.

§ *Hist. Doubts*, p. 17.

|| Blackstone's Comm., vol. i. p. 152.

tate rei that the form of the royal writs must be laid aside, otherwise no parliament can ever meet again."* And he puts the possible case of the failure of the whole royal line, which would, indisputably, vacate the throne: "In this situation," he says, "it seems reasonable to presume that the body of the nation, consisting of Lords and Commons, would have a right to meet and settle the government, otherwise there must be no government at all." It was upon this principle that the conventions of 1483 and 1688 both proceeded. Both presumed the throne to be vacant; the former by reason of the illegitimacy of the children of Edward IV., the latter on account of the abdication of James II. Both met without writ, as they must do if they assembled at all, on account of the vacancy of the throne; both declared the throne to be vacant; both tendered the crown to sovereigns selected by themselves; and both procured a subsequent parliamentary ratification of their proceedings. So far, therefore, as relates to strict legal form, the proceedings on the election of Richard III. were exactly similar to those adopted on the transfer of the throne from James II. to William and Mary.

Copies of the oath of allegiance to Richard III., taken by the lords spiritual and temporal,† are still in existence; as also are the names of the individuals who were created knights by this monarch on the Sunday before his coronation.‡

Many other very minute particulars are preserved in the Heralds' College, and also in the Harleian manuscripts,§ relative to the gorgeous ceremony which finally invested Richard of Gloucester and "Warwick's gentle daughter" with the regal honours;|| but as they embrace many obsolete customs and observances that are more curious than interesting in the present day, it will, perhaps, be deemed sufficient to give merely a general outline of the proceedings from the above-named cotemporary documents.¶

On the 6th of July, King Richard and Queen Anne, with the royal household and great officers of the crown, preceded by trumpets, clarions and "heralds with the king's coat-armour," passed from the Tower, through the city, to Westminster Hall, where they were met by the priests, abbots and bishops, with mitres and crosiers, who conducted them to the Abbey. The Bishop of Rochester bare the cross before Cardinal Bouchier, Archbishop of Canterbury; two earls following, the one bearing the golden spurs and the other "with Saint Edward's staff for a relic."*** The Earl of Northumberland carried the pointless sword of mercy; the Lord Stanley the mace of constableness (an arrangement that ought not to pass without comment on account of its impartiality, considering that the one nobleman had been chiefly instrumental in promoting Richard's present elevation, and that the

† Blackstone's Comm., vol. i. p. 152.

‡ Rymer's Add. MSS., No. 4616, art. 17, 18.

§ Harl. MSS., No. 293, art. 208.

¶ Ibid., No. 433, art. 211.

|| The termination of the MS. in the Harleian library is defective, but the corresponding instrument deposited in the College of Arms enables it to be completed. A literal transcript of the whole has been published in the *Excerpta Historica*, p. 380; and Sir George Buck has likewise given a correct programme of the ceremony.

¶ They are thus entitled: "Here beginneth the coronation of King Richard III. and Queen Anne, in the year of our Lord God 1483, and in the 6th day of July, the first year of his noble reign; and of the royal service that was done at the said coronation at Westminster. In the year and date aforesaid the king and queen coming out of the Whitehall to Westminster Hall, unto the King's Bench, the king and the queen going upon red cloth barefoot; and so they went, until time they came to St. Edward's shrine, with his noble lords before him, both spiritual and temporal, every lord in his estate, according as ye shall have hereafter written."

*** St. Edward's staff is of pure gold; on the top is an orb and a cross, and it is shod with a steel spike: a fragment of the real cross is said to be deposited in the orb.

other had been but a few days released from imprisonment in the Tower for conspiring to effect his destruction); the Earl of Kent and the Viscount Lovel carried the naked swords of justice, ecclesiastical and temporal, on the right and left hand of the king; the Duke of Suffolk* bare the sceptre, and his son, the Earl of Lincoln,† the ball and cross; the Earl of Surrey carried the sword of state in a rich scabbard, followed by his illustrious parent, the Duke of Norfolk, earl marshal of England, bearing the crown. Immediately after this nobleman came the king himself, under a canopy borne by the barons of the Cinque Ports, sumptuously habited in robes of purple velvet furred with ermine; his hose, coat and surcoat of crimson satin, and his sabatons (shoes) covered with crimson tissue cloth of gold. On one side Richard was supported by the Bishop of Bath,‡ on the other by the Bishop of Durham; his train being borne by the Duke of Buckingham, holding his white staff of office as seneschal or hereditary Lord High Steward of England.

The queen's procession succeeded to that of her royal consort, the Earl of Huntingdon bearing the sceptre, the Viscount Lyle the rod with the dove. Here, also, another instance of strict impartiality is remarkable, the Lord Huntingdon§ being, by betrothment, the destined son-in-law of King Richard, and the Lord Lyle,|| the brother to the dowager queen, and, until within a brief period, one of the most violent and bitter enemies of the new monarch. The Earl of Wiltshire carried the crown; and next to him followed the queen herself under a gorgeous canopy corresponding with that of her royal consort, but with the addition of a bell of gold at every corner. Like him, too, she was habited in robes of purple velvet, furred with ermine, her shoes of crimson tissue cloth of gold. Her head was adorned with "a circlet of gold, with many precious stones set therein," and her train was upheld by Margaret of Lancaster, Countess of Richmond, followed by the Duchess of Suffolk, the Duchess of Norfolk, and a retinue of twenty of the noblest ladies of the land. According to the accounts that have been transmitted to posterity, nothing could exceed the grandeur and magnificence of the procession.¶ Entering the west door of the Abbey, the royal pair proceeded direct to their chairs of state, and

* The Duke of Suffolk was Richard's brother-in-law, having married the eldest surviving sister of that monarch and of the deceased king.

† The Earl of Lincoln was King Richard's nephew, his sister's eldest son.

‡ This prelate was Dr. Stillington, formerly chaplain to King Edward IV., whose testimony of that king's former marriage led to the deposition of Edward V. and to the elevation of Richard III.

§ The Lord of Huntingdon was betrothed to the Lady Katharine Plantagenet, King Richard's illegitimate daughter.

|| The Lord Lisle, or Lyle, so created by the deceased monarch, was a Grey; he was brother by marriage to the widowed queen, and uncle to her sons by the Lord Grey.

¶ A full description of the coronation robes worn by the king and queen, by the chief officers of state, the principal nobility, and the henchmen or pages, together with the silks of various colours given as liveries and perquisites, has been preserved in the wardrobe accounts for the reign of Richard III.; to which is prefixed an indenture, witnessing "that Piers Curteys, the king's wardrober, hath taken upon him to purvey by the 3d of July next coming the parcels ensuing, against the coronation of our sovereign lord." The materials furnished for the ceremony were of the most costly description: velvets, satins and damasks of every hue; purple, crimson and scarlet cloths of gold, richly embroidered; ermine, minever pure, and other costly furs; mantles trimmed with Venice gold; stuffs of the most dazzling appearance for canopies, banners and pennons; horse furniture wrought in gold and silver, together with every appurtenance of dress; shoes, vests, kirtles, hose, bonnets, feathers with jeweled stems, cauls (or caps) of gold net, and transparent veils, paved or checkered with gold, all of corresponding magnificence, whether as regards richness of texture, variety of colour, or costliness of material.

there rested until "divers holy hymns were sung;" then ascending the high altar, and being divested of their surcoats and mantles of velvet, they were solemnly anointed from a vessel of pure gold* by the bishop. New robes of cloth of gold were in readiness for the concluding scene; being arrayed in which, they were both crowned with great solemnity by the Archbishop of Canterbury, the king being supported by two bishops, as also by the Dukes of Buckingham and Norfolk, the Earl of Surrey upholding the sword of state upright before him. The queen was, likewise, supported by two prelates, the Bishops of Exeter and Norwich, and having a Princess of York† on her right hand, a Princess of Lancaster‡ at her left, and the Duchess of Norfolk kneeling behind. High mass was performed by the cardinal archbishop, and the holy communion administered by him. "The king and queen," states the cotemporary MS., "came down to the high altar and there kneeled down, and anon the cardinal turned him about with the holy sacrament in his hand and parted it between them, and there they received the good Lord and were absolved both." Yet this venerable ecclesiastic, this high dignitary of the Church of Rome, the primate of all England, who thus absolved Richard from his sins and sealed his pardon with the most holy symbol of Christ's passion, was the same lord cardinal who had pledged "his own body and soul" to the widowed queen, when receiving the infant Duke of York from sanctuary scarcely three weeks before, not only for "his surety, but also for his estate."§ Can there, then, remain any longer a doubt that some just cause existed for young Edward's deposition, or that Richard's election to the throne was free and unbiassed?

The character of the archbishop who set the crown on Richard's head has never been impeached.¶ He was not raised to that high office for the occasion, or in reward of former services to the lord protector, but had been a bishop nearly forty years, and primate of Canterbury even before the accession of the House of York.¶ Venerable by age and eminent for his talents and virtues, lineally descended from Edward III.,** nearly allied to Edward IV.,†† whom he had also anointed king and invested with the regal diadem, and pledged to his youthful heir, Edward V.,‡‡ to whom he had twice sworn allegiance,—any remonstrance from such a quarter could scarcely have passed unheeded; not to mention the power of a cardinal, which was in those days so great that their persons were sacred, and their high office considered inviolate.§§ Yet Cardinal Bouchier, with the appeal to his God yet fresh

* The "ampullæ, or golden eagle," containing the oil with which the sovereigns of England were anointed, is of great antiquity, as likewise the "anointing spoon," used for the same purpose.

† The Duchess of Suffolk, second daughter of Richard, Duke of York, and the Lady Cecily.

‡ Margaret Beaufort, Countess of Richmond, was the great granddaughter of John of Gaunt, Duke of Lancaster, fourth son of Edward IV.

§ More, p. 59.

¶ Hist. Doubts, p. 55.

¶ Thomas Bouchier, son of William Bouchier, Earl of Essex, was, in 1434, elected chancellor of Oxford. From the see of Worcester he was translated to Ely, and enthroned Archbishop of Canterbury in 1453.

** Thomas Bouchier, Archbishop of Canterbury and cardinal of St. Cyrc, was the third son of the Lady Anne Plantagenet, by her second husband, William Bouchier, Earl of Essex; she was the eldest daughter of Thomas, Duke of Gloucester, fifth son to King Edward III.

†† Richard, Earl of Cambridge, the grandsire of Edward IV. and Richard III., left two children, viz., Richard, Duke of York, father of the above-named monarchs, and Isabel, married to Henry Bouchier, Earl of Essex, brother to the cardinal.—*Sandford*, book iii. and v., chap. xv. p. 365.

‡‡ Rot. Parl., vi. p. 234; and Chron. Croy., p. 566.

§§ "Our reverend father here present, my lord cardinal, who may in this matter

upon his lips, that "the estate as well as safety" of the young princes should be required at his hands, consecrates Richard of Gloucester ruler of the kingdom, and absolves him from all sin. But one conclusion, surely, can result from this extraordinary proceeding, sanctioned, as it was, by the whole body of the clergy,* by the judges and by the knightly representatives of the people; viz., that the nobility met Richard's claim to the throne at least half way,† from their hatred and jealousy of the queen-mother's family, and their conviction of the fact of King Edward's former marriage. Perceiving the calamities that would probably ensue from this defective title during a long minority,‡ and appreciating the high talent for government evinced by the lord protector, they hailed a legitimate plea for quietly deposing the youthful son of Elizabeth Wydville, and elevating for their ruler one of the popular race of York, whose abilities they had tried, whose firmness they had witnessed, and whose military reputation would alike conduce to peace at home, and, should the honour of the kingdom require it, command respect for the English arms abroad.

To return, however, from this necessary digression, to the gorgeous pageant of Richard's coronation. The religious ceremonies terminated by the king's going to St. Edward's shrine, and offering up St. Edward's crown, with many relics; after which devotional acts, being invested with the regal tabard,§ and the sacred coil of fine lawn, and assuming the regal coronet, the illustrious pair, bearing their insignia of sovereignty in their hands, returned to Westminster Hall in the same state and in the same order of procession as they had entered the Abbey. Mounting the raised dais,|| the splendid cortège dispersed, the king and queen leaving thereon their regal mantelets, and retiring for a brief period to their private apartments. The banquet which followed was conducted with the same magnificence and grandeur that had characterized the performance of the morning's solemnity. During the short interval in which the king and queen "retired themselves for a season," the Duke of Norfolk, riding into the hall with his horse trapped with cloth of gold down to the ground, cleared it of the vast concourse of people who had thronged to witness the spectacle. Yet, with all this multitude,—this indiscriminate assemblage of all ranks,—no tumult, no murmuring is recorded; all was peaceable and joyous. The turbulent spirit mentioned by Stallworth, as agitating the metropolis not a fortnight before, was now altogether hushed; and the trouble and anxiety which then filled men's hearts with fear, were turned into unanimity and concord, and a universal display of cordiality, confidence and loyalty.

About "four of the clock," Richard and his royal consort are described as having entered the hall, "arrayed in fresh robes of crimson velvet, embroidered with gold, and furred with minever pure," and advancing to the

(alluding to the removal of the Duke of York from sanctuary) do most good of any man, if it please him to take the pains."—*More*, p. 36.

* "And anon came up to the king two bishops kneeling before him, and so rose and went up to the king, and kissed him, one after another, and so stood before the king, one on the right, and one on the left hand."—*Harl. MSS.*, 433, fol. 2115.

† Hist. Doubts, p. 45.

‡ "And that the great wise man well perceived, when he sayde, 'Veli regno cujus rex puer est,'—Woe is that realme that hath a child to their king."—*More*, p. 113.

§ "Like unto a dalmatica, or upper garment of white sarsnet."—*Brit. Cost.*, Part 2, p. 212.

|| The dais was the place of honour in banqueting rooms, and signified a raised platform on which the king, or the noble in his baronial halls, dined apart from their retinue or vassals, who were seated at tables somewhat removed from their illustrious chief.

high dais, there sat down to dinner, under canopies supported by peers and peeresses; the king in the centre of the table and the queen on his left hand: there being present the Archbishop of Canterbury, the lord chancellor, the lord mayor, the lord marshal, the lord steward, the bishops, the chief judges of England, and an immense assemblage of the nobility and the most illustrious ladies of the English court. All was in keeping with the passion for splendour and the spirit of magnificence which so especially characterized the age. Nothing was omitted that could grace or dignify the entertainment. The royal couple were waited upon by the noblest persons in the realm, and the king was served "with one dish of gold and another of silver, the queen in gilt vessels, and the cardinal-bishop in silver." At the second course, Sir Robert Dymoke, the king's champion, came riding into the hall, "his horse trapped with white silk and red, and himself in white harness," and inquired "before all the people, if there be any man will say against King Richard III. why he should not pretend to the crown; and anon all the people were at peace awhile." Then making proclamation that "whosoever should say that King Richard III. was not lawfully king, he would fight with him with all utterance," the champion threw down his gauntlet for gage thereof, "when all the people cried, King Richard! God save King Richard!" Eighteen heralds, four of them wearing crowns, forthwith advanced before the king, and, after garter king-at-arms had proclaimed his styles and title, the remainder cried, "a largesse"* three times in the hall,† when, "the day beginning to give way to the night," wafers and ippocras were served, and anon the king and queen rose up and went to their chambers. "Great light of wax torches and torchets" speedily illumined the hall, and "every man and woman," the cotemporary chronicle, in conclusion, states, "departed and went their ways where it liked them best."‡

Such was the inauguration of the last monarch of the Plantagenets, a fitting close to the most powerful, magnificent, and chivalrous dynasty that ever filled the English throne. No personal fear was evinced by Richard, no deception practised on the multitude: bold and decisive, gorgeous, magnificent and wholly unopposed, the enthronement of Richard III. is the best reply to all the calumnies that proclaimed him a dark and a stealthy usurper. Friends and foes were marshalled, side by side, and the kindred of the deposed sovereign§ shared with the relatives of the new monarch the most dignified and honourable places, both in the procession and the banquet.

A daughter of the House of York,|| the sister of the late and aunt of the rejected king, occupied with her husband and son the most prominent places about the persons of Richard and his queen; while the heads of the royal House of Lancaster, the Duke of Buckingham and Margaret, Countess

* "Largesse, a free gift or dole, signifying, in this particular instance, coins scattered among the people."

† The following entry is preserved in the Harl. MSS.: "To garter king-at-arms, and to other heralds and poursuivants, 100*l*. for the king's largesse the day of his coronation."—No. 433, fol. 22.

‡ Excerpt. Hist., 383.

§ The Earl of Kent, as also the Duke of Buckingham, were, by marriage, brothers to the widowed queen, and uncles to the deposed sovereign; these two noblemen having espoused Jaquetta and Katherine Wydville, the royal Elizabeth's sisters: and it cannot but be considered as a striking circumstance that not one of the noble peers thus closely allied to the ex-queen as the husbands of her five sisters—and the greater proportion of whom had been enriched or received honourable appointments through her influence with Edward IV.—were absent from King Richard's coronation.

|| Elizabeth, Duchess of Suffolk, sister of Edward IV. and Richard III.

of Richmond,* were selected to fill the most favourite positions, and upheld the trains of the illustrious pair. No single observance was disregarded that could give effect or add weight to the ceremony, neither was there any display of despotism or partiality that could convert the solemn rite into a compulsory act, or one of abject servility to a tyrant; peers and prelates, judges, knights and citizens, all united, with one accord, in honouring the choice of the legislature, and in confirming the elevation of King Richard III.

There is one circumstance connected with this monarch's coronation which must not pass unnoticed; viz., the absence of Richard's heir, the youthful Earl of Salisbury, who had no place apportioned to him either at the solemnity in the Abbey or the festive banquet which succeeded. Whether the omission arose from a feeling of delicacy to the young princes in the Tower, or from the apprehension that the sight of Edward of Gloucester might call to remembrance his deposed cousin, and thus excite sympathy in the populace for the reverse of fortune which had so blighted his seemingly high destiny, cannot, of course, be determined; but certain it is, that none of the ill-omened offspring of Edward IV., of George of Clarence, or Richard of Gloucester, graced the pageant which fixed the crown of England on the head of the youngest of three brothers whose joint history and career are, perhaps, unparalleled.

King Richard being irrevocably seated on the throne, and fully invested with that sovereign power for which, by nature and by education, he was so peculiarly fitted, speedily showed his capacity for government, and his peculiar talents for the high office to which he had been raised, by the wisdom of his measures, and the vigour and resolution which characterized the opening of his reign. Mystery hangs, indeed, over his early days, and few and widely scattered are the memorials of his youth. Not so his career as monarch of this realm. No testimony that could be given by historian or biographer, no panegyric that could be passed by follower or friend, on his talents, vigilance and energy, could so truly depict his actual character, or develop the wonderful powers of Richard's masterly mind, as the evidence of his own acts both as lord protector and king, which have, fortunately, been transmitted to posterity. Amongst innumerable documents connected with the history of the Plantagenet monarchs, there is preserved, in the Harleian library a most curious folio volume in manuscript, formerly belonging to the Lord Treasurer Burleigh,† containing a copious register of the grants and public documents which passed the privy-seal or sign-manual during the reigns of Edward V. and Richard III., consisting of no less than *two thousand three hundred and seventy-eight articles*!‡ When it is remembered, that these entries commemorate the proceedings of little more than two short years, and that, apart from mere official edicts, they abound in instances of generosity and benevolence, together with proofs of his just, equable and

* Margaret, Countess of Richmond, was the relict of Edmund Tudor, half-brother of King Henry VI., and the mother of King Henry VII. This illustrious lady, as also Margaret, Countess of Stafford, the parent of Henry, Duke of Buckingham, were great granddaughters of John of Gaunt, Duke of Lancaster.

† Sir Harris Nicolas, whose authority on these points is indisputable, and who obligingly favoured the authoress with his opinion, considers that this work of Lord Burleigh's was probably what is called a "docket," and that it may have passed into Lord Burleigh's hands out of some public office, or by purchase, by plunder, or by gift. There cannot be any doubt that the book is cotemporary with Richard III.; its authenticity, too, is equally removed from all suspicion; and, whether compiled officially, or collected to serve some official purpose, its contents are invaluable, as throwing new light on Richard's true character and that of his remarkable reign.

‡ See Catalogue Harl. MSS., preface.