

Lord John Plantagenet, he also knighted, conferring the same honour upon many northern gentlemen;* and willing to do the city and citizens some extraordinary bounty "for old services and new," he sent for the mayor, the alderman and commons on the 17th of September, and, "without any petition or asking," bestowed upon the city of York a charter of great value and importance. "Richard's munificence to our city at this time," observes Drake,† who has published a transcript of the original instrument, "whether it proceeded from gratitude or policy, was a truly royal gift I never found him, amongst all his other vices, taxed with covetousness, and he had many reasons, both on his own and his family's account, to induce him even to do more for a city which had always signalized itself in the interest of his house."

After a fortnight passed in a district so interesting to him, from long residence and early associations, and now endeared yet more by the proofs of attachment and loyalty so recently and enthusiastically displayed, Richard III. departed from York; carrying with him abundant proofs of the love of her citizens and of that personal attachment which was never diminished, never withdrawn,—no, not even when calumny had blighted Richard's fair fame, or death had rendered him powerless to reward the fidelity with which his grateful northern subjects cherished the memory and upheld the reputation of their friend and benefactor.‡

* Drake, p. 117.

† *Ibid.*

‡ What opinion our citizens of York had of King Richard will best appear by their own records; in which they took care to register every particular letter and message they received from him. And as his fate drew nigh, they endeavoured to show their loyalty or their gratitude to this prince in the best manner they were able.—*Ibid.*

CHAPTER XII.

King Richard resumes his regal progress.—Arrives at Pontefract.—Threatening aspect of public affairs.—The Earl of Lincoln nominated Lord Lieutenant of Ireland.—Nature of King Richard's edicts at this period.—His recognition of kindness shown to his race, and acts of justice to his political enemies.—He leaves Pontefract, and visits Doncaster, Gainsborough and Lincoln.—The people murmur at the imprisonment of the young princes.—The southern counties take up arms for their release.—The Duke of Buckingham proclaimed the leader of the rebels.—Rumoured death of the princes.—Inquiry into the origin of the report.—Contemporary writers examined.—Unsatisfactory tenour of their statements.—Sir Thomas More's narrative of the murder.—Its various discrepancies.—The tradition tested with coeval and existing records.—Brief notice of Sir Robert Brackenbury.—Sir James Tyrrel.—Plans for conveying the princesses out of the kingdom.—Strong points connected with Perkin Warbeck's career.—True cause of Sir James Tyrrel's execution.—Murder of the princes unauthenticated.—Reputed discovery of their remains.—Incompatible with the narrative of Sir Thomas More and Lord Bacon.—Observations resulting from the foregoing.—Causes that invalidate the tradition, and redeem King Richard from accusations founded on mere report.

KING Richard, accompanied by Queen Anne and the Prince of Wales, recommenced his royal progress about the middle of September, proceeding direct from York to Pontefract, which town he entered on the 20th of that month, with the view of returning to London through the eastern counties, and visiting the principal towns connected with that portion of the kingdom. But the festivities and apparent harmony which characterized this monarch's double coronation, and the peaceful state of things which marked his progress through so considerable a part of his dominions, were at an end: it had been but a temporary calm, the prelude of scenes of violence and disaffection, far more in keeping with that turbulent era than the uninterrupted tranquillity which formed so remarkable a feature in the dawn of this monarch's reign.

It has been shown that no effort was made to rescue Edward V.; no arm was raised in defence of the youthful princes, by the many and powerful lords who had been ennobled and enriched by their deceased parent: yet was there a feeling of commiseration in the humbler classes of the community; a still small voice of sympathy and affection for the royal orphans, which, like the mournful sound that betokens a coming storm, even under a cloudless sky, swept through the land and ended in a political convulsion that speedily brought home to Richard's heart the sense of the uncertain tenure of public applause, and the disquietude attendant upon a throne. From a proclamation sent to the mayor and bailiffs of Northampton,* forbidding the inhabitants to "take or receive any liveries or recognizances of any person of what estate, degree, or condition soever he be of," induced by a report that "great divisions and dissensions had arisen in consequence of oaths, the giving of signs and recognizances of time past," it is probable that some intimation of impending danger was communicated to the king, even before his arrival at York. But an order, sent from thence to Lord Dynham, lieu-

* Harl. MSS., 433, fol. 111.

tenant of the town and marches of Calais, to discharge a portion of the garrison on account of the expense, and because, as asserted, "the season of any great danger of adversaries is, of all likelihood, overpast for this year,"* would seem to imply that Richard's mind was thoroughly at ease before he left that city; and the nature of his edicts from Pontefract, at the fortress of which he remained for a brief period, conveys no symptoms of alarm either from foreign or domestic enemies. He addressed a letter on the 22d inst., dated from "Pomfret Castle," to the mayor of Southampton, assuring him, in reply to some official communication, that he would not allow "his dearest son, the prince, to deal or intermeddle with their franchises."† He also wrote to the Earl of Kildare from the same place, acquainting him that he had appointed the Lord of Lincoln, his nephew, to be lieutenant of Ireland, and the said earl to be his deputy,‡ requesting him to accept the office, which office, it will be remembered, was conferred upon the Earl of Kildare on the 9th of July, when King Richard had nominated his young son, now Prince of Wales, to the command of that country. Various communications to different individuals in Ireland,§ some high in rank, others in a humbler station|| of life, thanking them for their assistance against his enemies, or acknowledging past kindnesses, either to himself or his kindred, may, also, be found in this portion of Richard's diary, together with instances of his impartial administration of the laws, in cases where proof was given that persons had been oppressed or wrongfully treated.¶ No portion, indeed, of Richard's singularly eventful life more thoroughly disproves the accusation of his being destitute of natural affection, callous to the ties of kindred, the endearments of "household love," than the actions which perpetuate his brief sojourn at Pontefract, the only period of repose which occurred during his short and troubled reign. He sent instructions to the Bishop of Enachden empowering him to receive the allegiance of the Earl of Desmond, also to thank that nobleman for his offers of personal service, and to accept them "in consideration of the many services and kindness shown by the earl's father to the Duke of York, the king's father, the king then being of young age."** These instructions were accompanied with munificent gifts, together with a letter from the king himself to the Earl of Desmond, dated the 29th of September, wherein he says, "It is our intent and pleasure for to have you to use the manner of our English habit and clothing; for the which cause we send you a collar of gold of our livery and device, with our apparel for your person†† of the English fashion, which we will ye shall receive in our name, trusting, that at some convenient season hereafter we shall have you to come over to us hither, and be more expert both in the manners and conditions of us, and our honourable and goodly behaving of our subjects."‡‡ King Richard also confirmed the annuity granted by Edward IV. for ministering divine service in the chapel which was erected on the bridge at Wakefield,§§ in memory of his father and brother slain in the vicinity of that town. He commanded payment of 40*l.*,

* Harl. MSS., 433, fol. 113.

† Ibid., fol. 115.

‡ Ibid., p. 267.

§ Ibid.

|| Ibid.

¶ Harl. MSS., 433, p. 267.

** The debt of gratitude to his father here acknowledged has reference to the shelter afforded the Duke of York in Ireland, when, with his son, the Earl of Rutland, he escaped from Ludlow, and sought refuge in that country. King Richard was at that time about six years of age. In another part of this document allusion is made to the Earl of Desmond's father having suffered a violent death arising from his devotion to the House of York, for which the king says he has always felt great "inward compassion."

†† See Appendix DDD.

‡‡ Harl. MSS., 433, fol. 265.

§§ Ibid., fol. 116.

of the king's gift,* towards the building of the church at Baynard's Castle, and issued a "warrant to the auditors of Middleham to allow Geoffrey Frank, receiver of the same, the sum of 196*l.* 10*s.* in his accounts, for monies laid out upon several occasions," the particulars whereof are specified, and are mostly "the expences of my lord prince,"† which remarkable payment, so often quoted in these pages, has furnished to posterity almost the only known records of Richard's illustrious child. Offerings to religious houses,‡ charitable donations,§ and the disbursement of all just debts, not alone for himself, his offspring, and his household,|| but even those incurred by his political enemies,¶ might be adduced with advantage, to exemplify the consideration which Richard bestowed equally on the private duties of life as on the important functions of royalty. But these minute details, though important in themselves from displaying the true nature of Richard's disposition, could not be followed up without tedious prolixity. Nevertheless, it is due to this monarch to state that the closest examination of the register that has recorded his acts at this period, will show, that numerous as are the documents associated personally with him, and varied as are the edicts that bear the sign manual, and mark his progress from town to town, yet no one entry can be produced that convicts King Richard of being "disputious** and cruel."†† He was bountiful to the poor, indulgent to the rich, and generous in all his transactions, whether in recompensing the friends of his family,‡‡ or seeking to appease the animosity of his enemies. To the widow of Earl Rivers, who had "intended and compassed his destruction," he ordered the payment of all duties accruing from the estates which had been settled on her as her jointure.§§ He presented the Lady Hastings with the wardship and marriage of her son, and intrusted her with the sole charge of his vast estates after taking off the attainder;||| a boon that might have been greatly abused, and which would have been a munificent recompense to many of his faithful followers. But the most remarkable instance that could, perhaps, be adduced of Richard's kind and forgiving disposition, was the commiseration he felt for the destitute state of the unfortunate Countess of Oxford, the wife of the bitterest enemy of himself and his race, on whom he settled a pension of 100*l.* a year¶¶ during the exile of her noble lord, notwithstanding he was openly and avowedly arrayed in hostility against him.

The last instrument which received his signature prior to his departure from Pontefract is singularly illustrative of the religious scruples and sense of justice which formed so leading a feature in Richard's character. "The king, calling to remembrance the dreadful sentence of the church of God given against all those persons which wilfully attempt to usurp unto themselves, against good conscience, possessions or other things of right belonging to God and his said church, and the great peril of soul which may ensue by the same, commands that twenty acres and more of pasture within the park at Pontefract, which was taken from the prior and convent of Pontefract,

* Harl. MSS., 433, fol. 119.

† Ibid., fol. 118.

‡ "The king's offerings to religious houses," observes Whitaker, "appear to have been very liberal."—*Whit. Hist. Richmondshire*, vol. i. p. 346.

§ Harl. MSS., 433, fol. 118.

|| Ibid., fol. 58. 118. 120.

¶ "For money paid to Sir Thomas Gower, by him laid out for the expenses of the Lord Rivers."—*Harl. MSS.*, 433, fol. 118.

** Disputious—full of spite.

†† More, p. 9.

‡‡ In the register of Richard's acts at this particular period is "a grant of an annuity of 60*l.* to Thomas Wandesford, for his good service done to the right excellent prince of famous memory, the king's father, whom God pardon."—*Harl. MSS.*, 433, fol. 117.

§§ Harl. MSS., 433, fol. 166.

||| Ibid., fol. 27.

¶¶ Ibid., fol. 53.

about the tenth year of King Edward IV., be restored unto them."* Sentiments such as these, emanating from himself, attest, better than any inferences drawn by others, that Richard considered he had been legally and lawfully elected to the throne. The man who feared God's judgments, if he withheld twenty acres of land which had been unjustly taken "against good conscience," would surely have paused before usurping a crown!—calling to remembrance, as he did, the dreadful sentence of the church, and the great peril of soul which might ensue from such an act of injustice; or have risked his eternal salvation by wilfully perpetrating the most heinous crimes to secure possessions thus unlawfully obtained. Happy would it have been for this monarch had he been judged by his own acts rather than by the opinions of others: his reign would not then have been represented in the annals of his country as alike disgraceful to himself and to the land over which he ruled.

Richard departed from Pontefract early in October,† and from mention being made of alms having been bestowed at Doncaster,‡ he probably rested at that town on his progress to Gainsborough, where the regal party were abiding on the 10th of October, as appears by Richard's signature to two instruments bearing that date both of time and of place.§ Widely different, however, was the aspect of affairs during this portion of the monarch's tour, compared to the peaceful and unruffled state of things which his welcome reception at Oxford, Gloucester and York had seemed to portend at the commencement of his progress. The clouds, which for many weeks had begun to shadow the brightness of his sunny path, now more darkly obscured the political horizon, and gave presage of that coming storm which was about to burst so heavily over the head of Richard: nor was he altogether unprepared for the change, being too well acquainted with the workings of the human heart to overlook any indications, however trivial, that betokened ill, whether arising from jealousy in friends or hostility in enemies. Symptoms both of personal and political enmity had become apparent to the king at an early stage of his proceedings; but he was too wise to accelerate the impending evil by any premature or injudicious disclosure of his suspicions, until compelled to do so in self-defence. Many circumstances, however, prove that from the time he quitted York until he arrived at Lincoln on the 14th of October, he had been preparing himself to meet the exigency whenever it should occur. This exigency, and its momentous occasion, involve the most important consideration associated with Richard's career; not alone from the spirit of disaffection which it raised, and which was never afterwards subdued, but because it implicates this monarch in a transaction of the blackest dye, the truth of which, up to the present time, continues to be wrapt in the most impenetrable obscurity. So interwoven indeed with fable, with errors in date and discrepancies in detail, are the alleged facts of this mysterious occurrence, that perplexed as is the general tenour of King Richard's eventful life, yet this one point in particular has baffled effectually the labours of the antiquary, the historian and the philosopher, to unravel the tangled web of falsehood and deceit in which it is enveloped. It need scarcely be said that these observations have reference to the ultimate fate of Edward V. and his young brother,

* Harl. MSS., 433, fol. 121.

† Ibid.

‡ "iij. iiij. to a wyff (a poor woman) besides Doncaster, by the king's commandment."—*Ibid.*, fol. 118.

§ Warrant for the payment of 500 marks "for the expenses of our household at our castle of Carlisle," and of 5*l.* to the prior of the monastery of Carlisle, which the king had given towards the making of a glass window therein. Given at Gainsborough, 10th October, anno 1 Richard III., 1483.—*Ibid.*, fol. 120.

the Duke of York, which is so completely veiled in mystery, that notwithstanding tradition has long fixed on their uncle the odium of their deaths, yet no conclusive evidence has ever been adduced which can fasten upon him so revolting an act, or convict Richard the Third as a murderer or "a regicide."

The progress of public opinion, on which alone the imputation rests, will be best illustrated by examining the cotemporary accounts, which are limited to three writers, the Croyland historian, Rous, the Warwick antiquary, and Fabyan, the city chronicler. Fabyan, though the last in order as regards the time of the compilation of his work, is best fitted to describe the earliest indication of popular feeling, not only because he was resident in London at the time of Richard's election, but because he makes known the sentiments of the populace from the very earliest period of that monarch's regal career.

After narrating his accession to the throne, he says: "Then it followeth anon, as this man had taken upon him, he fell in great hatred of the more party of the nobles of this realm, insomuch that such as before loved and praised him, and would have jeoparded life and good with him, if he had so remained still as protector, now murmured and grudged against him in such wise, that few or none favoured his party, except it were for dread, or the great gifts that they received of him."*

In this account, three strong points present themselves to notice: 1st, That Richard, up to the period of his accession, was so beloved and estimated, that his cotemporaries would have risked life and fortune in his cause; which admission very materially weakens the imputation of after ages, that he was innately cruel, vicious and depraved. 2dly, That "he fell in hatred" because the turbulent nobles, who had elevated him to the throne, forthwith grudged him the exalted position which they had invited him to fill: it was not, let it be observed, the abuse of his newly-acquired power which made Richard unpopular, but the power itself with which the nobles had invested him. 3dly, That from his accession he was treacherously dealt with, and surrounded by time-servers, who enriched themselves by his liberality, and after courting his favour, rewarded him with deceit. Such is the statement of Fabyan, writing under the Tudor dynasty, and with a strong Lancastrian bias. No allusion is made by him of public indignation at the injustice committed against Edward V., or of detestation at the cruelty practised against him. Envy and jealousy at Richard's being *king*, instead of continuing "still as protector," are the reasons assigned by Fabyan why the lordly barons of England murmured and grudged against him."

The Croyland writer, after briefly relating his coronation at Westminster, his progress and his second enthronement at York, thus concludes his concise account:—"Whilst these things were passing in the north, King Edward's two sons remained under certain deputed custody, for whose release from captivity the people of the southern and western parts began very much to murmur."† Thus it appears that up to the period of Richard's departure from York no apprehensions were entertained for the safety of the young princes; and moreover, from the expression "certain deputed custody," it would seem as if they had been officially consigned to some person or persons well known or fitted for the charge, in accordance with the usual custom observed on similar occasions;‡ the murmurs of the people,

* Fabyan's Chron., p. 516.

† Chron. Croy., p. 567.

‡ By reference to a former chapter of this work it will be seen that Henry IV., after he had deposed Richard II. and usurped his crown, imprisoned the legitimate heirs to the throne, (the two young princes of the House of March,) for many years in Windsor Castle, placing them under "continued and safe custody" there: and also, that

be it remarked, arising solely from their captivity. These murmurs would, in all probability, have yielded gradually to the popularity which Richard gained during his state progress, by his wise and temperate exercise of the kingly prerogative, if the commiseration for his nephews, thus recorded by the Croyland writer, had not been fomented into open rebellion by the treachery of those disaffected nobles, who, Fabian states, "grudged" King Richard the regal authority that they had been the means of conferring upon him. "And when at last," continues the Croyland chronicler, "the people about London, in Kent, Essex, Sussex, Hampshire, Dorsetshire, Devonshire, Wilts, Berkshire and other southern counties, made a rising in their behalf, publicly proclaiming that Henry, Duke of Buckingham, who then resided at Brecknock, in Wales, repenting the course of conduct he had adopted, would be their leader, it was spread abroad that King Edward's sons were dead, but by what kind of violent death is unknown."* That plots and conspiracies would be formed in favour of the deposed prince was a result which Richard must have anticipated: it was also a natural supposition that the partisans of the widowed queen, and the friends of the deceased king, would rally by degrees, and seize any diminution of Richard's popularity to reinstate their deposed sovereign. But that Buckingham, the most zealous of the new monarch's supporters, the active agent by whom his elevation was effected,† should be the first to rebel against the kinsman to whom he had so recently vowed fealty and allegiance, affords, perhaps, one of the most remarkable instances on record of the perverseness of human nature. Yet such was the case; and, judging from the testimony of the Croyland historian, the report which has so blackened King Richard's fame may be traced also to this unstable and ambitious peer: but whether considered to be made on just grounds, or propagated purely from malevolence and political animosity, must depend on the view taken of his general conduct, and the degree of credit to be attached to his alleged assertions.

If the young princes, through the agency of their friends, were secretly conveyed out of the kingdom upon their uncle's elevation to the throne, as was currently reported in the succeeding reign,‡—a circumstance by no means improbable, considering the disturbed state of the country, and the peculiar position of the respective parties,—the rising of their friends, and the defection of Buckingham, may possibly have induced King Richard himself to assert that his nephews were dead, with the view of setting at rest any further inquiry concerning them. The greater probability, however, is this: that the Duke of Buckingham, aware of their disappearance from the Tower,

the infant Duke of York, who was next to them in lawful succession to the crown, was similarly incarcerated by King Henry V.; who sent the orphan prince to the Tower, after the execution of his parent, the Earl of Cambridge, placing him under "the custody and vigilant care" of Robert Waterton.—See ch. ii. p. 24.

* Chron. Croy., p. 568.

† "By my aid and favour, he of a protector was made king, and of a subject made a governor."—*Grafton*, p. 154.

‡ "Neither wanted there even at that time (anno 1 Henry VII.) secret rumours and whisperings, which afterwards gathered strength, and turned to great troubles, that the two young sons of King Edward IV., or one of them, which were said to be destroyed in the Tower, were not indeed murdered, but conveyed secretly away, and were yet living."—*Bacon's Henry VII.*, p. 4. "And all this time (anno 2 Henry VII.) it was still whispered everywhere that at least one of the children of Edward IV. was living."—*Ibid.*, p. 19. "A report prevailed among the common people that the sons of Edward the king had migrated to some part of the earth in secret, and there were still surviving."—*Pol. Virg.*, p. 569. "Whose death and final infortune hath natheless so far comen in question that some remain yet in doubt whether they were in his (King Richard's) days destroyed or no."—*More's Rycharde III.*, p. 126.

but not made acquainted with the place of their exile, spread the report with a view of irritating the populace against the new monarch, and thus advancing more effectually his own selfish and ambitious views; and that King Richard, unwilling, and, indeed, unable, to produce his nephews, was driven to sanction the report,* as his only defence against their friends, and the surest method of keeping secret from his enemies their actual place of concealment. Hence, in all probability, the origin of the tale; for it cannot be denied that the words of the ecclesiastical writer with reference to Buckingham are very remarkable, and tend more strongly to fix the report on that nobleman and his party than any allegation afterwards brought forward by tradition as evidence of the fact against Richard III.:—"Henry, Duke of Buckingham, repenting the course of conduct he had adopted, would be their leader," are the words of the chronicler; and he immediately follows this statement by the assertion, that "it was reported," as if in consequence of the change in Buckingham's views, "that King Edward's sons were dead, but by what kind of violent death was unknown."†

Richard, indeed, was ill prepared for opposition from such a source, for so implicitly had he relied on Buckingham's honour and fidelity, that he had intrusted to his custody his most violent enemy, Morton, Bishop of Ely; and it is more than probable that the active eloquence of this crafty prelate,‡ working on an envious, jealous and fickle temperament, roused into action in Buckingham those rebellious feelings which otherwise might have rankled secretly in his own discontented bosom. King Richard might well style him "the most untrue creature living,"§ for he remained firm to no party and to no cause beyond that which fed his rapacity and insatiable ambition. He espoused the sister of the royal Elizabeth when the Wydvile connection was the road to preferment,|| and he was the first to desert the widowed queen¶

* A precisely similar report was spread in the reign of Henry VII., with the view of making that monarch produce the young Earl of Warwick, or acknowledge what had become of him. He had not been seen or heard of since his close imprisonment in the Tower; and "a fame prevailed," states Polydore Virgil, p. 69, "and was everywhere spread abroad, that Edward, Count of Warwick, had met with his death in prison." Lord Bacon likewise states (p. 19) that it was generally circulated "that the king had a purpose to put to death Edward Plantagenet, closely in the Tower; whose case was so nearly paralleled with that of Edward the Fourth's children, in respect of the blood, like age, and the very place of the Tower, as it did refresh and reflect upon the king a most odious resemblance, as if he would be another King Richard." In order to disabuse the public mind, the king commanded the young prince "to be taken in procession on a Sunday through the principal streets of London to be seen by the people."—P. 27.

† Chron. Croy., p. 568.

‡ "This man," writes Sir Thomas More, p. 139, "had gotten a deep insight into political worldly drifts. Whereby perceiving now this duke glad to commune with him, fed him with fair words and many pleasant praises." Sir Thomas More's "History of Richard III." terminates abruptly in the midst of the conversation held between Morton and Buckingham. The narrative is, however, resumed by Grafton, who, it has been conjectured, had access to the same sources of original information which were open to Sir Thomas More.—*Singer*, p. 145.

§ In a letter addressed to his chancellor, which is preserved among the Tower records, and will be inserted at length in a future chapter, when considering the circumstances that led to its being written.

|| "When King Edward was deceased, to whom I thought myself little or nothing beholden, although we two had married two sisters, because he neither promoted nor preferred me, as I thought I was worthy and had deserved; neither favoured me according to my degree or birth: for surely I had by him little authority and less rule, and in effect nothing at all; which caused me the less to favour his children, because I found small humanity, or none, in their parent."—*Singer's Reprint of More*, p. 152.

¶ "I remembered an old proverb worthy of memory, that often rueth the realm,

and her now powerless kindred, when he fancied it would be to his interest to accelerate the advancement of Richard, Duke of Gloucester.* He proclaimed the illegitimacy and advocated the deposition of Edward V.,† when he wished to place Richard III. on the throne, and he circulated a report of the murder of the princes,‡ when he coveted their uncle's position and entertained the presumptuous hope of becoming king in his stead.§ He aimed at being a second Warwick—another “king maker,”|| but, possessing only the frailties of that lordly baron, unaccompanied by the vigorous intellect and those chivalrous qualities which fling such a romantic colouring over the career of the renowned and illustrious Richard Neville, he rushed headlong to his own destruction; equally with Warwick, the victim of ungovernable pride, and affording another but far less interesting example of the haughty and turbulent spirit which characterized the English nobles at this strange, eventful era.

But as the alleged cause of the rebellion which sealed Buckingham's fate, and put so sudden a stop to the king's peaceful progress, was ostensibly to avenge the young princes' death,¶ it becomes necessary to pursue the investigation into the reputed circumstance of that tragedy, before continuing the history of the Duke of Buckingham's revolt, in order that it may be shown how vague and unsatisfactory is the source whence sprang these accusations which have affixed to the memory of Richard III. a crime that has made him for many ages a subject of universal horror and disgust. Fabyan, in addition to the passage before quoted, says, after describing the accession of the lord protector, “King Edward V., with his brother, the Duke of York, were put under sure keeping within the Tower, in such wise that they never came abroad after.”** And again, that “the common fame went, that King Richard put into secret death the two sons of his brother.”†† Rous of Warwick is the next cotemporary authority; but, although coeval with King Richard, it must not be forgotten that he, like Fabyan, wrote the events which he records after that monarch's decease; and the fact of his having dedicated his work to King Henry VII. is alone sufficient to demonstrate his Lancastrian bias, even if proof did not exist that his character of King Richard, when exercising sovereign power, was altogether opposed to that which he afterwards gave, when writing under the auspices of his rival and successor.‡‡

where children rule and women govern. This old adage so sank and settled in my head, that I thought it a great error and extreme mischief to the whole realm, either to suffer the young king to rule, or the queen, his mother, to be a governor over him.”—*Ibid.*

* “I thought it necessary, both for the public and profitable wealth of this realm, and also for mine own commodity and better stay, to take part with the Duke of Gloucester.”—*Ibid.*

† More, p. 112.

‡ Chron. Croy., p. 567.

§ “I phantasied, that if I list to take upon me the crown and imperial sceptre of the realm, now was the time propitious and convenient.”—*More*, p. 155.

|| “I began to study and with good deliberation to ponder and consider how and in what manner this realm should be ruled and governed.”—*Ibid.*, p. 152.

¶ “But when I was credibly informed of the death of the two young innocents, his own natural nephews, contrary to his faith and promise, (to the which, God be my judge, I never agreed nor condescended,) O Lord! how my veins panted, how my body trembled, how my heart inwardly grudged! inasmuch, that I so abhorred the sight, and much more the company of him, that I could no longer abide in his court, except I should be openly avenged. The end whereof was doubtful, and so I feigned a cause to depart; and with a merry countenance and a despitiful heart, I took my leave humbly of him, (he thinking nothing else than that I was displeased,) and so returned to Brecknock to you.”—*Grafton, Cont. of More*, p. 155.

** Fabyan's Chron., p. 515.

†† *Ibid.*, p. 516.

‡‡ Whatever Rous chose to say of Richard, in compliment to Henry VII., he gave

“The Duke of Gloucester, for his own promotion, took upon him to the disinheriting of his lord, King Edward V., and shortly imprisoned King Edward with his brother, whom he had obtained from Westminster, under promise of protection; so that it was afterwards known to very few what particular martyrdom they suffered.”* This writer, however, places the death of the princes during the protectorate: “Then ascended the royal throne of the slain, whose protector during their minority he should have been, the tyrant Richard;” an assertion so utterly at variance with every cotemporary,† that it materially weakens the effect of his other assertions.

Bernard Andrews, the historiographer and poet laureate of Henry VII., states that “Richard ordered the princess to be put to the sword,”‡ a fact that must have been known to the cotemporary annalist, had a positive order to that effect been given;§ and Polydore Virgil, who compiled his work under the immediate patronage and at the express desire of the same monarch, after intimating the uncertainty of the manner of their death, states that it was generally reported and believed that the sons of Edward IV. were still alive, having been conveyed secretly away, and obscurely concealed in some distant region.|| Thus it appears that neither the cotemporary writers of the period, nor those who wrote by royal command in the ensuing reign, give any distinct account of the fate of the young princes: the former all agree that they were imprisoned, and that it was “commonly reported” that they were dead; but when or how the event occurred, or whether there was foundation for the report, has never been sought to be established, excepting by Sir Thomas More. This historian was not coeval with Richard, he was a mere infant at the time of that monarch's death;¶ but, being educated, as before observed,

a very different account of him in his roll, which he left to posterity as a monument of the earls and town of Warwick, to which he was so much attached. Here is the inscription as it was written by Rous's own hand: “The most mighty Prince Richard, by the grace of God, King of England and of France, and Lord of Ireland: by very matrimony, without discontinuance, or any defiling in the law, by heir male lineally descending from King Harry the Second, all avarice set aside, ruled his subjects in his realm full commendably, punishing offenders of his laws, especially extortioners and oppressors of his commons, and cherishing those that were virtuous, by the which discreet guiding he got great thank of God and love of all his subjects, rich and poor, and great laud of the people of other lands about him.”

(From the original MS. roll, now in the College of Arms, published in Lord Orford's Works, vol. ii. p. 215.)

* Rous, Hist. Reg. Ang., p. 213.

† See the recently quoted statement of Fabyan and the Chronicler of Croyland. Sir Thomas More's narrative is even more conclusive:—“The prince,” says that historian, in allusion to Edward V., “as soon as the protector left that name, and took himself as king, had it showed unto him that he should not reign, but his uncle should have the crown; at which words the prince, sore abashed, began to sigh, and said, ‘Alas! I would my uncle would let me have my life yet, though I lose my kingdom.’ Then he that told him the tale used him with good words, and put him with the best comfort he could. But forthwith was the prince and his brother both shut up, and all other removed from them, only one called Black Will, or William Slaughter, except, set to serve them, and see them serve. After which time the prince never tied his points, nor aught wrought of himself; but with that young babe, his brother, lingered in thought and heaviness, till this traitorous death delivered them of that wretchedness.”—*More*, p. 130.

‡ Cott. MSS., Dom. A. xviii.

§ Bernard Andrews could only narrate matters connected with this period from the reports of others, as he was a Breton by birth, and did not reside in England until after the accession of Henry VII., to whose suit he was attached, and whose fortunes he followed.

|| Pol. Virg., p. 569.

¶ Sir Thomas More was born in 1432, the year preceding King Richard's accession; he was therefore three years of age at that monarch's decease, and in his nineteenth year when Bishop Morton expired in 1500.—*Turner*, vol. iii. p. 373.

in Bishop Morton's house, he is supposed to have derived the materials of his history from that personage. But Morton, although coeval with the events related, gloried in avowing himself Richard's bitter enemy. He united with Hastings in conspiring against him as the lord protector,* and he goaded Buckingham to open rebellion after Richard was anointed king.† He deserted the latter nobleman as soon as he had weaned him from his allegiance; and escaping to the continent,‡ within a few weeks of Richard's coronation, there remained an exile and an outlaw during the rest of his reign. It must, therefore, be apparent, that any information derived from him relative to affairs in England during that period could only be by report; and the colouring which his own prejudice and enmity would give to all rumours spread to the disadvantage of King Richard, would render his testimony not only doubtful, but most unsatisfactory, unless confirmed by other writers or proved by existing documents. Sir Thomas More himself seems to have felt doubtful of the facts which he narrates, for he prefaces his account of the murder of the princes by these remarkable words: "whose death and final infortune hath natheless so far come in question, that some yet remain in doubt whether they were in Richard's days destroyed or no;"§ and in detailing the commonly received tradition of their tragical end, he admits that the reports were numerous, and certifies that even the most plausible rested on report alone.¶ "I shall rehearse you the dolorous end of those babes, not after every way that I have heard, but after that way that I have so heard by such men and by such means as me thinketh it were hard but it should be true." If by these words Sir Thomas More meant Morton,¶ that prelate, in consequence of his imprisonment at Brecknock, must have gained his information from the Duke of Buckingham, whose unprincipled conduct** and double dealing, even by his own admission,†† would rather be the means of acquitting Richard than of convicting him.

* "Thomas, Archbishop of York, and John, Bishop of Ely, although, on account of their order, their lives were spared, were imprisoned in different castles in Wales."—*Cont. Croy.*, p. 560.

† "But now, my lord, to conclude what I mean toward your noble person, I say and affirm, if you love God, your lineage, or your native country, you must yourself take upon you the crown and diadem of this noble empire; both for the maintenance of the honour of the same (which so long hath flourished in fame and renown) as also for the deliverance of your natural countrymen from the bondage and thralldom of so cruel a tyrant and arrogant oppressor."—*Grafton, Cont. More*, p. 149.

‡ The bishop, being as witty as the duke was wily, did not tarry till the duke's company was assembled, but, secretly disguised, in a night departed (to the duke's great displeasure) and came to the see of Ely, where he found money and friends, and he sailed into Flanders, where he did the Earl of Richmond good service, and never returned again till the Earl of Richmond, after being king, sent for him, and shortly promoted him to the see of Canterbury.—*Ibid.*, p. 163.

§ More, p. 126.

¶ "Could More," inquires Lord Orford, "have drawn from a more corrupted source? Of all men living, there could not be more suspicious testimony than the prelate's, except the king's (Henry VII.)."—*Hist. Doubts*, p. 18.

** "Outwardly dissimulating that I inwardly thought, and so with a painted countenance I passed the last summer in his company, not without many fair promises, but without any good deeds."—*Grafton, Cont. More*, p. 155.

†† The conversation between Buckingham and Morton, commenced by Sir Thomas More and continued by Grafton, is so explicit as to leave little doubt of its authenticity; many circumstances related could only have been known to the bishop,—his dexterous management of Buckingham, the particulars of his imprisonment at Brecknock, and his escape from the duke; these, and many other leading points in their reported conference, confirm the assertion of Sir George Buck, (whose work was printed in 1646,) that the reign of King Richard was written by Bishop Morton. "This book in Latin," he says, "was lately in the hands of Mr. Roper of Eltham, as Sir Edward Hoby, who saw it, told me."—*Buck*, lib. iii. p. 75.

The narrative of the murder, as given by Sir Thomas More, is as follows:—During the royal progress to Gloucester, King Richard's mind misgave him that "men would not reckon that he could have right to the realm" so long as his nephews lived. Whereupon he sent John Green, "whom he especially trusted," unto Sir Robert Brackenbury, the constable of the Tower, with a letter, "and credence also," commanding him to put the two children to death. Green rejoined the king at Warwick, acquainting him that Brackenbury had refused to fulfil his commands. Greatly displeased at this result, the king gave vent to his discomfiture, by complaining to the page in waiting that even those he had brought up and thought most devoted to his service had failed him, and would do nothing for him. The page replied, that there was a man upon a pallet in the outer chamber, who, to do him pleasure, would think nothing too hard, meaning Sir James Tyrrel, "a man of right goodlye personage, and, for nature's gifts, worthy to have served a better prince." He was, however, it is intimated, jealous of Sir Richard Radcliffe and Sir William Catesby; which thing being known to the page, he, of very special friendship, took this opportunity of "putting him forward" with his royal master, hoping to "do him good." Richard, pleased with the suggestion, and well aware that Tyrrel "had strength and wit," and an ambitious spirit, he called him up, and, taking him into his chamber, "broke to him, secretly, his mind in this mischievous matter." Sir James undertook the revolting office, whereupon, on the morrow, the king sent him "to Brackenbury with a letter, by which he was commanded to deliver to Sir James all the keys of the Tower for one night, to the end that he might there accomplish the king's pleasure in such thing as he had given him commandment." . . . "After which letter delivered and the keys received, Sir James appointed the night next ensuing" to destroy the princes. "To the execution thereof, he appointed Miles Forest, one of the four that kept them," a known assassin, and John Dighton, his own groom, a big, broad, square, strong knave." All other persons being removed, the ruffians entered the chamber, where the princes were sleeping, at midnight, when, wrapping them up in the bed-clothes, and keeping them down by force, they pressed the feather-bed and pillows hard upon their mouths, until they were stifled and expired. When thoroughly dead, they laid their bodies, naked, out upon the bed, and summoned Sir James Tyrrel to see them; who caused the murderers to bury them at the stair-foot, deep in the ground, under a great heap of stones. "Then rode Sir James in great haste to the king, and showed him all the manner of the murder, who gave him great thanks, and, as some say, there made him a knight." "But it was rumoured," continues Sir Thomas More, "that the king disapproved of their being buried in so vile a corner; whereupon they say that a priest of Sir Robert Brackenbury's took up the bodies again, and secretly interred them in such place as, by the occasion of his death, could never come to light."

The more closely this statement is examined, the more does its inconsistency appear, from the very commencement of the narrative. For example: as King Richard had been solicited to accept the crown, because his nephews' illegitimacy was admitted, and, as he had been successively elected, proclaimed and anointed king with an unanimity almost unparalleled, he could have had no reason, at this early period of his reign, to

Mr. Roper was an immediate descendant of Sir Thomas More's (see preface to Singer,) his eldest and favourite daughter, the estimable Margaret Roper, having left a numerous offspring.

* More, p. 127.

dread the effects of his nephews' re-assumption of their claims; still less cause had he for apprehension, when journeying from Oxford to Gloucester, at which university he had been so honourably received, that, even allowing that his mind misgave him when he first entered upon his kingly career, his popularity during his royal progress was alone sufficient to set all doubts at rest. Again: if so revolting a deed as murdering the princes to insure the stability of his throne had gained possession of Richard's heart, was it probable that he would not have taken measures to effect his purpose before quitting the Tower, or whilst sojourning at Greenwich or Windsor, instead of delaying his commands for the perpetration of the dark deed until he was necessitated to commit the order to paper, and thus intrust a design so destructive to his reputation to the care of a common messenger, on the chance of its falling into his enemies' hands? King Richard was proverbially "close and secret," being upbraided by his enemies as "a deep dissimular;"* traits, however, which, to the unprejudiced mind, will rather appear a proof of his wisdom when the subtlety of the age is taken into consideration. Would, then, a wise and cautious man, a prince evidently striving for popularity, and desirous, by the justice of his regal acts, to soften any feeling of discontent that might attach to his irregular accession—would such a person be likely to lay himself open to the charge of murder?—and this, after he had peaceably attained the summit of his ambition, and was basking in the very sunshine of prosperity, and when the oath had scarcely faded from his lips, by which he pledged himself to preserve the lives of the princes, and maintain them in such honourable estate that all the realm should be content?† Would any one, indeed, endued with common foresight have risked two letters, which innumerable casualties might convert into positive proof of an act that would bring upon him the hatred of his own kindred and the detestation of the kingdom at large,—the one sent by an ordinary attendant, "one John Green," to Brackenbury, with "credence also," commanding that "Sir Robert should, in any wise, put the two children to death," the other, by Sir James Tyrrel, to Brackenbury, commanding him to deliver to Sir James the keys of the Tower, that he might accomplish the very crime which that official had previously refused himself to perform? It is scarcely within the bounds of probability, unless the letter and "credence" were extant, together with the formal warrant which was sent to Brackenbury, justifying him as governor of the Tower in delivering up the keys of the fortress committed to his charge.‡ "And has any trace of such a document been discovered?" asks the historian of the Tower.§ "Never," he adds: "it has been anxiously sought for, but sought in vain; and we may conclude that Sir Thomas More's is nothing but one of the passing tales of the day."||

* More, p. 9.

† "He promised me, on his fidelity, laying his hand on mine, at Baynard's Castle, that the two young princes should live, and that he would so provide for them and so maintain them in honourable estate, that I and all the realm ought and should be content."—*Grafton, Cont. More*, p. 154.

‡ "King Richard, having directed his warrant for the putting of them to death to Brackenbury, the lieutenant of the Tower, was by him refused. Whereupon the king directed his warrant to Sir James Tyrrel to receive the keys of the Tower from the lieutenant for the space of a night, for the king's special service."—*Bacon's Henry VII.*, p. 123.

§ This valuable work, "The History and Antiquities of the Tower," was compiled, as stated by the author, Mr. Bayley, from state papers and original manuscripts there deposited, and which he had peculiar facilities for examining as "one of her majesty's sub-commissioners on the public records."—*Bayley's Hist. of the Tower*, part i.

|| Bayley's *Hist. of the Tower*, part i. p. 64.

If this assumption is warranted by the inconsistencies and contradictory statements which mark the tradition generally, still more will such a conclusion appear to be well grounded if the several statements connected with the chief individuals named are strictly examined. Sir Thomas More says, that King Richard took "great displeasure and thought" at Sir Robert Brackenbury's refusal. Is this borne out by the monarch's subsequent conduct as proved by existing records? Did he remove him from the honourable office of governor, or even tacitly and gradually evince his anger against him? On the contrary, he not only continued him in the command of the Tower, but renewed the appointment, with the annual fee of 100*l.*, some months after this reputed contumacy;† and throughout the whole of his reign, he bestowed upon him places and emoluments that are perfectly consistent with his desire of providing for a favourite follower, but are altogether opposed to indications either of dissatisfaction or annoyance. There would be nothing surprising in the grants here alluded to, had Brackenbury been guilty; because the king would naturally favour him under such peculiar circumstances: but both Sir Thomas More and Lord Bacon expressly state that he was innocent of all participation in the crime, that he spurned the royal command, and that the king was, in consequence, greatly displeased with him.

King Richard was not a man to shrink from making apparent his displeasure, if just grounds of offence had been given to him; at least so his enemies would make it appear. "Friend and foe was muchwath indifferent where his advantage grew: he spared no man's death whose life withstood his purpose."‡ Neither was he so weak and unreflective as to have sent an order to the constable of the Tower of so fearful an import as the destruction of two princes committed to his custody, unless well assured of the manner in which his design would have been received and carried into execution. Sir Thomas More implies that he early adopted Brackenbury himself, brought him up, and, also, that he thought he would surely serve him." And he did serve him, even unto death; for he fought and died for his patron: but it was gloriously, honourably, and as became a true knight on the battle-field,§ and not as a midnight assassin in the secret chamber. Sir Robert was a member of a very ancient and distinguished family|| in the north;¶ and if, from his trusty qualities, early evinced, he acquired the confidence of the Duke of Gloucester, it is most clear that other features in his character must also have been equally well known to his patron. Green is stated to have found Brackenbury at his devotions.** If, then, he was religious and humane,—firm in rejecting evil commands, though emanating from his sovereign,†† and faithful in the discharge of the trust reposed in him by the state,—braving death with cheerfulness and alacrity when called upon to defend the king to whom he had sworn allegiance, but shrinking from the cowardly act of murdering imprisoned and defenceless children,—such a man was not the agent to whom Richard, without previously sounding him, would have made known his detestable project, or have selected for

* Appendix FFF.

† Harl. MSS., No. 433, fol. 56.

‡ More, p. 9.

§ Surtees's *Durham*, p. 71.

|| *Ibid.*

¶ Two other brothers of the same family as Sir Robert are named by Drake as attached to Richard's service; viz., John and Thomas Brackenbury: the first sent to London upon a confidential mission by the mayor of York; the other dispatched to that city with the protector's reply.—*Drake's Ebor.*, p. 3.

** "This John Green did his errand unto Brackenbury, kneeling before our Lady in the Tower."—*More*, p. 128.

†† "Who plainly answered, that he would never put them to death to die therefore."—*Ibid.*, p. 128.