

CHAPTER XV.

Insurrection of the Duke of Buckingham.—Origin of his disaffection: the reputed cause shown to be unfounded.—Compact between the Duke of Buckingham, Bishop Morton, the Queen Dowager and the Countess of Richmond to place Henry, Earl of Richmond, on the throne, and to unite him in marriage with the Princess Elizabeth.—Nature of the connection of the Earl of Richmond with the House of Lancaster.—Jealousy entertained towards the earl by the House of York.—Projected invasion of Richmond.—Open rebellion of Buckingham.—Strong measures taken by the king to subdue the conspiracy.—Untoward events lead to the capture of Buckingham.—He is delivered unto King Richard's hands and beheaded at Salisbury.—The king proceeds to Exeter.—The leading insurgents flee the country.—Many are captured and executed, the remainder outlawed.—King Richard returns to London in triumph.—Is met and conducted thither by the citizens.—He summons a parliament.—Various important grants.—Richard's generosity to the families of the outlawed.—His moderation, clemency and justice.—Celebrates the Christmas festivities.—Observations on the close of the year 1483.

THE entire reign of King Richard III. is composed of such startling events, each succeeding the other so rapidly, and all more or less wrapt in impenetrable mystery, that it more resembles a highly-coloured romance than a narrative of events of real life. Perhaps no scene in the remarkable career of this monarch is more strange, more irreconcilable with ordinary calculations, than the insurrection of the Duke of Buckingham; characterized as it was by perfidy and ingratitude of the blackest dye, and involving purposes as deep and results as momentous as the basis on which it was built was shallow and untenable. No one appears to have been more thoroughly ignorant of the deep game playing by his unstable kinsman than the king himself; for, however strongly his suspicions of some outbreak might have been excited as regards local or general disaffection, yet that his confidence in Buckingham remained unchanged, and his friendly feelings towards him undiminished, is evinced by one of the last official instruments issued by the monarch from York, his assent being affixed to "Letters from Edward, Prince of Wales, to the officers and tenants of his principality in North Wales and South Wales, commanding them to make their recognizances, and pay their talliages,* to Humfrey Stafford, the Duke of Buckingham, and his other commissioners." That Richard had not merited the enmity which led to Buckingham's revolt is apparent from many documents which attest his generosity, and prove the honourable fulfilment of his promises to that nobleman. Setting aside several of these that were instanced as among the first acts of his reign, the historian Rous, the cotemporary both of Richard and of Buckingham, states that the king conferred on the duke such vast treasure, that the latter boasted, when giving livery of the "Knots of the Staffords,† that he had as many of them as Richard Neville, Earl of War-

* Harl. MSS., No. 433. fol. 3.

† This observation refers to the Duke of Buckingham's badge. The cognizance of the Earl of Warwick, "the bear and ragged staff," was one of the most celebrated heraldic devices of the middle ages. The Stafford knot, however, was of great anti-

wick, formerly had of ragged staves."* Simple as is this anecdote, yet few could better have portrayed the feeling which occupied Buckingham's mind of assimilating himself in all respects to that mighty chief.

That vanity, indeed, and the most inordinate ambition were the true causes of the Duke of Buckingham's perfidious conduct to his royal kinsman admits of little doubt, for although Sir Thomas More asserts that "the occasion of their variance is of divers men, diversely reported;† yet he sums up the detail of these several rumours by this important admission—"very truth it is, the duke was an high-minded man, and evil could bear the glory of an other, so that I have heard of some that said they saw it, that the duke at such time as the crown was first set upon the protector's head, his eye could not abide the sight thereof, but wried [turned aside] his head another way.‡"

The ordinarily reputed cause of his rebellion is evidently devoid of truth, as shown by instruments that effectually disprove the allegation. The Duke of Buckingham is stated to have taken offence at King Richard's refusing him the Hereford lands,§ whereas complete restitution, and in the fullest manner that was in the power of the crown, was almost the opening act of this monarch's reign: nothing can be more forcibly worded than were the letters patent|| "for restoring to Henry Stafford, Duke of Buckingham, the purpartie of the estate of Humfrey Bohun, late Earl of Hereford, at present till the same shall be vested in him by the next Parliament, as fully as if no act of Parliament had been made against King Henry VI."¶

This was followed by "a cedula, or particular of this purpartie, amounting to a great sum yearly."** Sir Thomas More narrates, that up to the last moment of the duke's departure, although his discontent was apparent to Richard, yet that "it was not ill taken, nor any demand of the duke's un-courteously rejected, but he with great gifts and high behests, in most loving and trusty manner, departed at Gloucester.††"

Neither could indignation have been kindled in his heart, arising, as is generally believed, from the murder of the princes; for at the time that he is asserted to have united with Bishop Morton in deploring their death, the cotemporary chronicler testifies that they remained "under certain deputed custody;‡‡ and it is also recorded by Fabyan, that conspiracies were beginning to form in the metropolis for effecting their release. §§ Sir Thomas More, the sole narrator of the reputed manner of their destruction, distinctly relates that the assassins were not dispatched to destroy them until the king arrived at Warwick: ||| nevertheless, Buckingham, who left Richard at Gloucester some days before the king's departure from that city, informs the bishop that the fearful event was communicated to him during his attendance on the king. "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, and how my heart inwardly grudged! inso-

quity; and the Dacre's knott, the Bouchier's knott, the Wake's knott, and the Harrington's knott were all distinguished as badges of high repute, and as denoting the retainers of ancient and honourable houses.

* Rous, p. 216.

† Ibid., p. 137.

‡ Harl. MSS., 433. fol. 107.

¶ On the death of King Henry VI., who died without issue, all the estates of Lancaster (especially those of the royal family of Lancaster) escheated to King Edward IV., and from him they came to King Richard, as heir to his brother upon the deposition of Edward V. and the elevation of himself to the throne.—*Buck*, lib. i. p. 35.

** Harl. MSS., 433. fol. 107.

†† Chron. Croy., p. 567.

§§ Fabyan, p. 515.

‡ More, p. 135.

§ Ibid., p. 136.

†† More, p. 136.

|| More, p. 128.

much 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 revenged."*

If this was, indeed, the case, then Sir James Tyrrel's reputed confession is still more completely negatived; and Sir Thomas More's statement becomes nullified altogether. Without, however, renewing discussions on this point, or dwelling on the suspicions that might fairly be pursued of Buckingham's connivance in the princes' destruction, if they were indeed so early murdered as he implies, or indulging in conjectures arising from his seeming knowledge of a crime that formed the alleged basis of his weak and wayward conduct, still ambition as regards himself, and envy as relates to King Richard, are apparent throughout that remarkable dialogue held by the duke and his prisoner, Cardinal Morton, the substance of which there can be no doubt was reported by that prelate to Sir Thomas More, and hence narrated by him and by Grafton, the continuator of his history.†

That the Duke of Buckingham coveted the regal diadem is evident from his entire conduct, but whether Bishop Morton indirectly fed his vanity with the ultimate view of restoring the sceptre to King Edward's offspring, or that Buckingham was in reality so blind as to believe himself capable of founding a new dynasty, is difficult of decision, from the contradictory and altogether incredible circumstances with which the details are involved.‡

The leading points of the occurrence, as popularly received, are as follows:—Disgusted at the death of the young princes, and abhorring the presence of their uncle, Buckingham feigned a cause to leave King Richard at Gloucester, and departed, as it is said, with "a merry countenance but a despicable heart."§ As he journeyed towards Brecknock his angry passions had so far gained the ascendancy over him, that he began to contemplate whether it were practicable to deprive the king of his crown and sceptre, and even fancied that if he chose himself to take upon him the regal diadem, now was "the gate opened, and occasion given, which, if neglected, should peradventure never again present itself to him."¶ "I saw my chance as perfectly as I saw my own image in a glass," he states, "and in this point I rested in imagination secretly with myself two days at Tewkesbury."** Doubting, however, how far his title to the throne would be favourably received if acquired by conquest†† alone, he resolved upon founding his pretensions on his descent from the House of Lancaster, the legitimate branch of which having become extinct in Henry VI., the descendants of the "De Beauforts," John of Gaunt's illegitimate offspring, considered themselves the representatives of their princely ancestor. Pleased with this scheme, and sanguine as to its result he made it known to a few chosen friends; but while pondering within himself which was the wiser course to pursue, whether publicly and at once to avow his intentions, or "to keep it secret for a while,"‡‡ as he rode between Worcester and Bridgenorth he encountered his near kinswoman, the Lady Margaret, Countess of Richmond, wife to the Lord Stanley, and the descendant of the eldest branch of the above-named "De Beauforts." This illustrious lady, to whom, in conjunction with the Duke of Buckingham, had

* Grafton's Cont. of More, p. 135.

† Singer's More, p. 145.

‡ Buck, lib. iii. p. 76; Laing, in Henry VI., p. 415; Walpole, p. 18.

§ Grafton, p. 155.

¶ Ibid., p. 156.

** Ibid.

†† "I mused, and thought that it was not convenient to take upon me as a conqueror, for then I knew that all men, and especially the nobility, would with all their power withstand me for rescuing of possessions and tenures, as also for subverting of the whole estate, laws and customs of the realm."—Grafton, 155.

‡‡ Ibid., p. 157.

† Turner, iii. p. 505.

been allotted so favoured a position at the recent coronation of Richard and Queen Anne, being well acquainted with the influence which her kinsman possessed at court, and the favour with which he was regarded by the king, availed herself of this opportune meeting to intreat his good offices in behalf of Henry, Earl of Richmond, who, escaping into Brittany on the total defeat of the House of Lancaster, was attainted by Edward IV., and had been, for the space of fourteen years, an exile and a prisoner in that country. She prayed the duke for "kindred sake" to move the king to "license his return to England," promising that if it pleased Richard to unite him to one of King Edward's daughters,* (in conformity with a former proposition of the deceased monarch,) that no other dower should be taken or demanded, but "only the king's favour."† This was a death-blow to Buckingham's aspiring views, arising from his Lancastrian lineage. An elder branch lived to dispute with him any claims which he might urge on that ground, the Countess of Richmond being the only child "and sole heir to his grandfather's eldest brothers, which," he states, "was as clean out of my mind as though I had never seen her."‡ All hopes of the crown being thus at an end as regards his descent from John of Gaunt, the duke revolved his other possible chances of success. "Eftsoons I imagined whether I were best to take upon me, by the election of the nobility and commonalty, which me thought easy to be done, the usurper king thus being in hatred and abhorred of this whole realm, or to take it by power which standeth in fortune's chance and hard to be achieved and brought to pass."§

But neither of these plans gave promise of a happy result; the sympathy of the country was too much excited for the offspring of King Edward IV. for any fresh claimants to anticipate aid either from the nobles or commons of the realm, while the resources and alliances of his cousin, the Earl of Richmond, "which be not of little power," would, as Buckingham felt, even if he were elected to the throne, keep him ever "in doubt of death or deposition."|| With a reluctance which only served to increase his hatred to King Richard, he found himself compelled to abandon all hope of obtaining that sovereign power to which he had been the chief means of elevating his kinsman.

Bent, however, on depriving Richard of a crown which he could not himself obtain, Buckingham again changed his purpose; and improving on the modest request preferred by the Countess of Richmond, determined to devote his "power and purse"¶ to effect the release of her son: not, however, through the favour of Richard III., nor through measures of peace and amity, but in avowed hostility, as a rival to the reigning monarch, whose throne he decided should be promised to the Earl of Richmond, on condition that he espoused the Princess Elizabeth, and thus united the long-divided Houses of York and Lancaster. That the Duke of Buckingham should have aspired to the regal dignity, or imagined it possible, from mere personal malice, to effect a counter-revolution within a few weeks of an election and coronation so seemingly unanimous as that of Richard III., seems utterly incomprehensible: but that he could, by any possibility, have forgotten that he was descended from the youngest branch of a family so remarkable as the House of Somerset, arising from the feuds which their struggle for power had occasioned for half a century, in turbulent but unavailing efforts to be recognized as legitimate**

* Cott. MSS., Dom. A. xviii.

† Ibid., p. 157.

‡ Ibid., p. 158.

§ Ibid., p. 158.

** The De Beauforts had been legitimated by act of Parliament, February, 1397, and enabled to enjoy all lands and hereditary seignories; but the charter, it was gene-

† Grafton, p. 159.

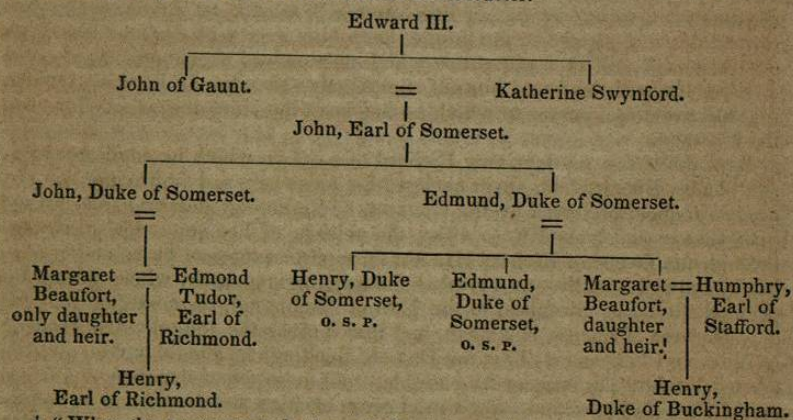
§ Ibid.

|| Ibid., p. 160.

branches of the royal line of Lancaster,* is altogether incredible, and casts an air of fable over the entire narrative that professes to relate his motives. Pride of birth, of lineage, and of kindred ties, was one of the leading characteristics of the age; and family intermarriages, arising from this pride of ancestry, constitute one of the most difficult features in the biography of those early times. The continued captivity of the Earl of Richmond had been too favourite a scheme both with Edward IV. and King Richard himself for the rivalry which existed between the House of York and the collateral branch of the House of Lancaster to have remained unknown to their cousin of Buckingham: and, had such been the case, the simple fact of himself and the Countess of Richmond having been selected to fill so prominent a position as that of upholding the trains of the king and queen at the coronation, in virtue of their Lancastrian descent, was of itself sufficient to have refreshed his memory. This unfortunate position, indeed, was, in all probability, the true cause of converting the envious Buckingham from Richard's devoted friend to his bitterest foe.† He had been the active instrument in raising him to the throne; and, as the joint descendant with himself from King Edward III.,‡ he could ill brook to bear the train of a prince for whom he had secured a crown. It might be deemed a favoured place, and it certainly was one that implied confidence and friendship: but Buckingham was by descent a Plantagenet, and he above all things loved display and coveted distinction. Moreover, he considered himself entitled to the office of high constable of

rally considered, conferred on them no pretensions to the crown, there being a special exception when the act was confirmed in the reign of Henry IV. with respect to the royal dignity.—*Life of Margaret Beaufort*, p. 80.

* Table showing the descent of Margaret, Countess of Richmond, and Henry, Duke of Buckingham, from John of Gaunt, Duke of Lancaster.

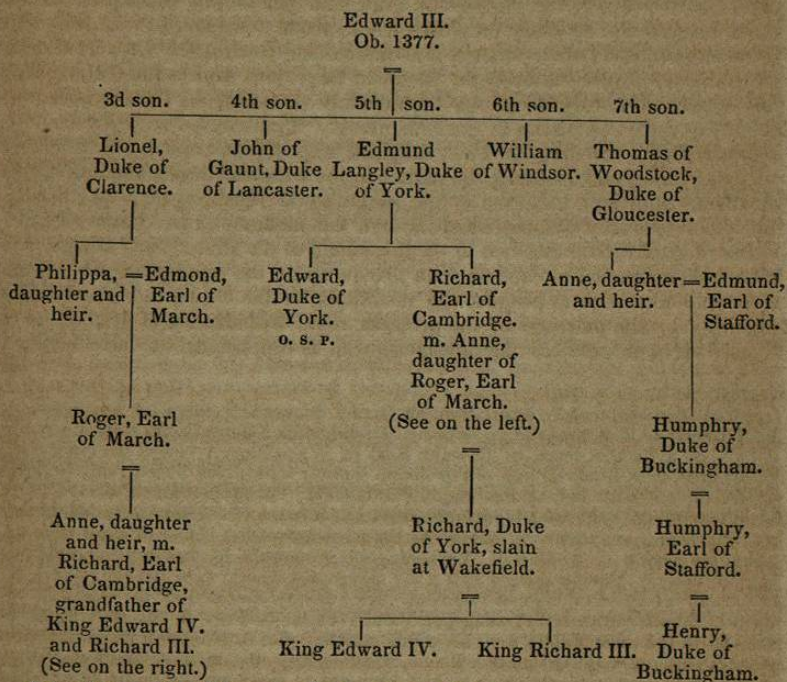


† "When the protector rode through London towards his coronation, he [Buckingham] feigned himself sick, because he would not ride with him. And the other, taking it in evil part, sent him word to rise, and come ride, or he would make him be carried! Whereupon he rode on with evil will; and that notwithstanding, on the morrow rose from the feast, feigning himself sick: and King Richard said it was done in hatred and despite to him. And they say, that ever after continually each of them lived in such hatred and distrust of other, that the duke verily looked to have been murdered at Gloucester; from which, nathless, he in fair manner departed."—*More*, p. 136.

‡ Table showing the descent of Richard III. and Henry, Duke of Buckingham, from King Edward III. (See next page.)

England in virtue of his descent from the De Bohuns, Earls of Hereford,* whose lands he had so urgently claimed of Edward IV.; and he was mortified at the ensigns of that honourable office being borne by the Lord Stanley, though but temporarily, on the day of the coronation;† and yet more at the newly-created Earl of Surrey occupying its allotted position when carrying before the king the sword of state.

It is true that, as a descendant of the House of Lancaster, the Duke of Buckingham bore his wand of office as hereditary seneschal, or lord high steward of England, anciently the first great officer of the crown. But although his consanguinity to that royal line was thus made apparent, yet Buckingham felt humbled at displaying it as the appendage of a train-bearer to the rival dynasty, when the Duke of Norfolk carried the crown, the Earl of Surrey the sword of state, and the Lord Stanley the much-coveted mace of constableness. True, this high office was secured to him immediately after the coronation, together with the lands of the De Bohuns;‡ but the canker-worm of envy and mortified vanity had previously turned the selfish love of Buckingham to hatred,—as selfishly and unworthily indulged.



* Grafton, p. 154; Edmondson's *Heraldry*, p. 154.

† Buck, lib. i. p. 26.

‡ On the 13th of July, in the first year of Richard III., Henry Stafford, Duke of Buckingham, had livery of all those lands whereunto he pretended a right by descent as cousin and heir of blood to Humphrey de Bohun, Earl of Hereford and constable of England; and within two days after was advanced to the high and great office of constable of England, as also constituted by the king constable of all the castles and steward of all the lordships lying within the counties of Salop and Hereford, and likewise chief justice and chamberlain of all South Wales and North Wales.—*Edmondson's Constables of England*, p. 30.

Obscure as may be the ostensible cause, nevertheless, the compact between the duke and his prisoner, Bishop Morton, admits not of doubt; neither, indeed, does the fact that, at its final ratification, the southern countries were on the eve of open rebellion to release the young princes from the Tower.* The two conspirators at Brecknock felt assured, therefore, that no sooner could a report be circulated that the princes were dead than the insurgents would readily fall into the plot which was about to be formed in favour of the Earl of Richmond, and of which Buckingham determined to propose himself as the captain and leader;† while King Richard could scarcely fail to be caught in the net thus doubly prepared to ensnare him by being compelled either to produce his nephews, and thus accelerate the operations of the insurgents, or be overwhelmed by the yet more formidable league which would unite both parties in supporting the pretensions of the Earl of Richmond, if the belief gained ground of the murder of the princes.‡ Violently opposed to King Richard, and personally attached to his former royal masters, Henry VI. and Edward IV., Morton hailed with delight any proposition that would shake the stability of the newly-created monarch, and give ultimate hope of uniting the lineages of York and Lancaster;§ consequently, the most resolute but cautious measures were speedily adopted by the duke and the bishop to carry their scheme into immediate execution. As a necessary preliminary, a trusty messenger, Reginald Bray, was sent to the Countess of Richmond, informing her of the high destiny contemplated for her son, and requiring her co-operation in the conspiracy. Transported with joy at intelligence so far exceeding her most sanguine expectations, the Lady Margaret willingly undertook to break the matter to the widowed queen and the young princess,|| both still immured in the sanctuary at Westminster; which difficult office was ably accomplished through the medium of Dr. Lewis, a physician of great repute attached to the household of the Countess of Richmond, who was instructed to condole with the queen on the reported death of her sons, and forthwith to propose the restoration of the crown to her surviving offspring by the marriage of the princess royal with Henry of Richmond.¶ Oppressed with grief, as the dowager-queen is represented to have been,**

* Chron. Croy., p. 567.

† Ibid.

‡ The imposture of Lambert Simnell, in the succeeding reign, is attributed by Lord Bacon to a corresponding scheme for compelling King Henry to produce the person, or avow the death, of Edward, Earl of Warwick. A report generally prevailed that that monarch had put to death, secretly within the Tower, this hapless prince, the last male heir of the line of Plantagenet. With the view of ascertaining this fact, and the better to advance his interest if alive, a youth of corresponding age and appearance was brought forward by the partisans of the House of York to counterfeit the person of the Earl of Warwick, with a report of his having escaped from his murderers; it being agreed that if all things succeeded well, he should be put down and the true Plantagenet received. King Henry, alarmed for the safety of his throne, caused "Edward Plantagenet, then a close prisoner in the Tower, to be showed in the most public and notorious manner that could be devised unto the people; in part," continues Lord Bacon, "to discharge the king of the envy of that opinion, and bruit [report] how he had been put to death privily in the Tower, but chiefly to make the people see the levity and imposture of the proceedings." The part pursued by the ecclesiastic at Oxford and the Earl of Lincoln, the chief supporters of Simnell and the bitter opponents of Henry VII., bears a singular analogy to the conduct of Bishop Morton and the Duke of Buckingham as regards King Richard III. and the young princes.—See *Bacon's Henry VII.*, pp. 19, 36.

§ "The bishop, which favoured ever the House of Lancaster, was wonderfully joyful and much rejoiced to hear this device; for now came the wind about even as he would have it; for all his indignation tended to this effect, to have King Richard subdued, and to have the lines of King Edward and Henry VI. again raised and advanced."—*Grafton*, p. 160.

|| *Grafton*, p. 162.

¶ Ibid.

** Ibid., p. 164.

when informed of the untimely end of her two sons, she yet hailed with great thankfulness a suggestion that gave promise of brightened prospects for her daughters; and, entering with alacrity into the scheme, she promised the entire aid of her late husband's friends and her own kindred, provided always that the Earl of Richmond would solemnly swear "to espouse and take to wife the Lady Elizabeth, or else the Lady Cecily, if her eldest sister should not be living."*

For the more speedy accomplishment of the project, the Countess of Richmond had returned to the metropolis, and taken up her abode at her husband's dwelling-place within the city of London,† so that daily communication passed between the countess and the queen in sanctuary, through the intervention of Dr. Lewis, the physician; and a powerful ally of the Duke of Buckingham, Hugh Conway, Esquire, with Christopher Urswick, the Lady Margaret's confessor, were speedily sent to Brittany "with a great sum of money,"‡ to communicate to the Earl of Richmond the fair prospect that had dawned for terminating his captivity, and ensuring his honourable reception in England. In the west country, Buckingham and Bishop Morton exerted themselves with equal zeal and determination: but the wily prelate, whether through apprehension of the duke's stability, or from a desire of effectually securing his own safety by flight, took advantage of the trust reposed in him by his noble host, and stealthily departing from Brecknock Castle, proceeded secretly to his see of Ely. There securing both money and partisans, he effected his escape into France, and, joining the Earl of Richmond, devoted himself to his interest during the remainder of King Richard's troubled reign.¶

The Duke of Buckingham, although greatly discomfited and mortified by the treachery of Morton, who acted towards him the same disingenuous part which, in a greater degree, he was pursuing towards his sovereign, was nevertheless too deeply involved in the conspiracy to shrink from prosecuting his scheme, even after he had been abandoned by his coadjutor, and that at a time "when he had most need of his aid."||

He steadfastly persevered in his object, communicating with the Yorkist leaders, enlisting on his side the disaffected of all parties, and gaining over to his cause the chief supporters of the late king, together with many ancient partisans of the fallen House of Lancaster, who had slumbered but not slept over the calamitous events which marked the extinction of their party. Thus gradually, but guardedly pursuing his design, the Duke of Buckingham soon collected sufficient force to enable him to co-operate with Henry of Richmond, when the plot should be sufficiently ripened to admit of his projected invasion of the realm.¶ All these proceedings and secret schemes were planned and carried out during King Richard's progress from Warwick to York: but whether the confederacy had wholly escaped detection before his second coronation, or whether the monarch dissembled his knowledge of the league until such time as he could trace the object of the conspiracy and ascertain who were its leaders, is not altogether clear. Thus much is certain: that on the 24th of September, a few days after Richard's return to Pontefract, the Duke of Buckingham sent to the Earl of Richmond, directing him to land in England on the 18th of October,** on which day the conspirators had arranged to

* *Grafton*, p. 166.

† Derby House, on the site of which the College of Arms now stands; a princely abode, erected on St. Benett's Hill, by the Lord Stanley, shortly before his marriage with the Countess of Richmond.—*Edmondson*, p. 143.

‡ *Grafton*, p. 166.

§ Ibid., p. 163.

|| Ibid.

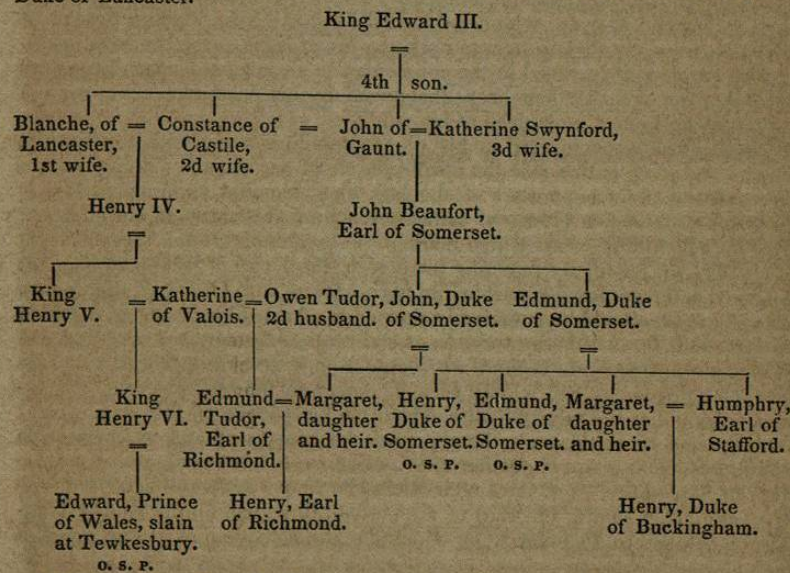
¶ Ibid., p. 169.

** Rot. Parl., vi. p. 245.

rise simultaneously in anticipation of his arrival. That Richard betrayed no suspicion of the impending danger is evident from the whole tenour of his conduct at York; neither were any measures adopted at Pomfret that could admit of just inference that he apprehended the landing of a rival. It may be that he despised the pretensions of Richmond, arising as they did from an illegitimate source, or that he was too much engrossed with preparations for his second coronation to examine into the vague reports that reached him. This latter surmise, however, is scarcely consistent with Richard's active and wary character. If he felt the danger, it is more probable that his tranquillity was assumed, that it was a mere veil to conceal knowledge which it was not politic to disclose to the world: but the former view is on the whole the most likely, considering the slender claim which a spurious branch of the usurping House of Lancaster could have upon the throne.

The history of the Earl of Richmond is briefly told.* His connection with the extinct dynasty has been already detailed in a note at the commencement of this memoir, when treating of the rivalry between the Lords of York and Somerset: but a brief recapitulation at this crisis will serve to render more apparent the shallow grounds on which he asserted a claim to the crown. John of Gaunt, fourth son of Edward III., had three wives. By his first, the heiress of the House of Lancaster (from marriage with whom he acquired that title,) he had two daughters† and one son, afterwards King Henry IV., the founder of the Lancastrian dynasty. By his second wife, a Castilian princess, he had an only child, a daughter:‡ and by his third wife, who was

* Table showing the descent of Henry, Earl of Richmond, from John of Gaunt, Duke of Lancaster.



† Philippa, the eldest daughter, was united to John, King of Portugal, and her descendants, for seven generations, governed that kingdom. Elizabeth, the second daughter, married John Holland, Duke of Exeter.

‡ This princess, Katherine, espoused Henry, Prince of Asturias, the eldest son of the King of Spain. Their posterity continued sovereigns of that realm until the year 1700.

previously his mistress, he had four children,* born before marriage, and sur-named De Beaufort, from the place of their birth. These children were eventually legitimated by act of Parliament,† although a special reservation was made (in the letters patent‡), excluding them from succession to the crown.§ From this corrupt source sprang the Duke of Somerset, father of the Countess of Richmond. She was united at the early age of fourteen to Edmond Tudor, Earl of Richmond, half-brother of King Henry VI.,|| and one child, a son, was the fruit of this union. Immense riches had centred in the Lady Margaret, herself an only child;¶ and her husband's near relationship to the Lancastrian monarch conferred upon their offspring at his birth a very distinguished position. This was increased by the premature death of the Earl of Richmond, and likewise from King Henry VI. being reputed to have prognosticated great things of his infant heir, the young earl,** who thenceforth became an object of jealousy to the House of York, and of corresponding interest to the line of Lancaster. At the brief restoration of King Henry VI., Henry of Richmond was in his fourteenth year. His prospects at that time were most promising, and he was completing his education at Eton,†† when the fatal battle of Tewkesbury having re-established the race of York on the throne, and effectually ruined the Lancastrian cause, he was secretly conveyed from England through the affectionate solicitude of his uncle, the Earl of Pembroke, himself also a half-brother of Henry VI.‡‡ A furious storm cast the fugitives upon the shores of Brittany,§§ where, being treacherously dealt with

* These children were—

1. John, afterwards created Earl of Somerset.
2. Henry, the renowned Cardinal Beaufort, Bishop of Winchester.
3. Thomas, created Duke of Exeter, and eventually chancellor of England.
4. Joan, married to Ralph Neville, Earl of Westmoreland. She was the parent of Cecily, Duchess of York, the mother of Edward IV. and Richard III.

† Rot. Parl., vol. iii. p. 343.

‡ Rot. Parl., vol. v. p. 343.

§ Excerpt. Hist., p. 152.

|| Katherine of Valois, only daughter of Charles VI. of France, and the widowed queen of King Henry V., as also mother of his successor, King Henry VI., selected for her second husband a private gentleman, of ancient lineage but slender fortune; to whom she was clandestinely married when her son, Henry VI., was about seven years of age. The issue of this ill-advised union was three sons and one daughter: Edmond Tudor, the eldest, was the father of Henry of Richmond, afterwards King Henry VII., by marriage with the Lady Margaret Beaufort, heiress of John, Duke of Somerset. Jasper Tudor, the second son, was a remarkable character during the rule of the House of York, and the chief agent in the preservation of the life of his nephew, Henry of Richmond, and of his subsequent elevation to the throne. Owen Tudor, the third son, and Katherine Tudor, their sister, died in the prime of life.

¶ John, first Duke of Somerset, (grandson of John of Gaunt,) died in the fourth year after his marriage, at the age of 39. His title, from default of male heirs, passed to his next brother, Edmond de Beaufort; but in all else, his daughter and only child, then not quite three years old, became sole heiress to his vast possessions.—See *Life of Margaret Beaufort*, p. 17.

** "One day, when King Henry VI., whose innocency gave him holiness, was washing his hands at a great feast, and cast his eye upon Richmond, then a young youth, he exclaimed, 'This is the lad who shall possess quietly that we now strive for.'"—*Bacon's Henry VII.*, p. 247.

†† Sandford's *Geneal. Hist.*, vol. vi. ch. 10.

‡‡ Buck's *Richard III.*, p. 16.

§§ The wind being contrary, and its violence extreme, they were driven far out of their course, and after having been placed in imminent peril, and preserved by little less than a miracle, they were at length cast upon the shores of Brittany. They gained St. Maloes with some difficulty, and were resting there to recruit their exhausted energies, when information having been forwarded to Francis, the reigning duke of that state, he forthwith ordered them to be arrested and conveyed as prisoners to the Castle of Vannes.—*Life of Margaret Beaufort*, p. 85.

by the reigning duke of that principality, the young earl was made captive, and detained a state prisoner, in which hapless position he had continued a victim to hopeless captivity up to the period when his mother so earnestly besought the intercession of the Duke of Buckingham towards effecting his release, and obtaining his pardon from Richard III.

Considering that a special reservation of the royal dignity had been inserted in the patent of legitimation exemplified and confirmed by Henry IV,* at the earnest request of his kinsmen, the De Beauforts,† the Yorkist sovereign would appear to have needlessly apprehended danger from the captive earl: but the deadly feud which had ever existed between Richard, Duke of York, father of Edward IV., and John, Duke of Somerset, grandfather to Henry, Earl of Richmond, the two great leaders of the rival factions, had rendered the illustrious exile a subject of suspicion and hatred to the House of York.‡ The affection with which Henry VI. regarded his half-brothers, and the distinguished position which the young Richmond held as the nephew§ of the reigning monarch, linked him so closely with the Lancastrian dynasty, that it strengthened the apprehension inspired by his being the heir male of the House of Somerset, after the battle of Tewkesbury had rendered the royal line extinct. Innumerable were the efforts made by Edward IV. to obtain possession of the attainted earl. Costly presents were sent to Francis, Duke of Brittany, and great sums offered to ransom his victim:¶ these overtures failing, King Edward, at the expiration of a few years, adopted a different course; and under the plea of sympathy for the young earl, and a desire to bury past differences in oblivion, he sent ambassadors to sue for his release, and to proffer him the hand of his eldest daughter, the Princess Elizabeth.¶ This subtle device had well nigh cost Richmond his life; for the Duke of Brittany, deceived by the well-dissembled protestations of King Edward, consented to release his captive. Happily, however, for the earl, the plot was made known to him, and escaping into sanctuary,** he eluded and defied the malice of his enemies. Francis of Brittany was a wary prince. The custody of Henry of Richmond was a constant source of emolument to himself and his principality, from the bribes sent by Edward IV. in the hope of obtaining the earl's release; and, moreover, from the evident importance attached to his prisoner, his continued safety rendered him always a hostage for unbroken and friendly alliance with the English. Under these considerations, Francis again tendered his protection to Richmond, who quitted the sanctuary on receiving a pledge that, although he must still be considered as a state prisoner, he should no longer be subjected to rigorous confinement. At the death of Edward IV., the attainted earl had been thirteen years an exile and a captive: nevertheless, the decease of his persecutor made no change in the

* The patent of legitimation which was exemplified and confirmed by Henry IV. on the 10th of February, 1407, at the request of the Earl of Somerset, is to this effect:—"We do, in the fulness of our royal power, and by the assent of Parliament, by the tenour of these presents, empower you to be raised, promoted, elected, assume and be admitted to all honours, dignities, (except to the royal dignity,) pre-eminences, estates, and offices, public and private, whatsoever, as well spiritual as temporal."—*Rot. Parl.*, vol. iii. p. 343.

† Excerpt. Hist., p. 152.

‡ One of the earliest proceedings of Edward IV. was to attain the young Earl of Richmond, (*Rot. Parl.*, 1 Edw. IV. p. 2.) by letters and patent he stripped him of his territorial possessions, and bestowed them upon his brother George, Duke of Clarence.—*Report on the Dignity of the Peerage*, p. 130.

§ "In the act of attainder passed after his accession, Henry VII. calls himself nephew of Henry VI."—*Historic Doubts*, p. 100.

¶ Philip de Comines, p. 516.

¶ Cott. MSS., Dom. A. xviii.

** Lobineau, l'Histoire de Bretagne, vol. i. p. 751.

conduct pursued by his captor. True, his misfortunes, his gentleness, his noble bearing, and entire submission to his cruel lot, had gradually gained him many powerful friends at the court of Brittany; still the reigning duke kept a vigilant watch over his proceedings, and any faint hope of liberation in which he may have indulged during the brief reign of Edward V. was effectually crushed by the decisive measures pursued by Richard III. immediately after his accession to the throne. One of this monarch's first acts was to dispatch Sir Thomas Hutton to renew the existing treaty with Francis,* and to stipulate for the continued imprisonment of Richmond;† and with the view of securing this latter desirable object, the most costly presents were sent, not alone to the duke himself, but also to his councillors and the leading persons of his court. Such was the position of Henry, Earl of Richmond, when the prospect of the English crown, together with the proffered hand of the princess royal,‡ gave promise of future honours that contrasted very remarkably with the forlorn situation which had characterized his early youth and manhood.§ The presence and counsels of the Bishop of Ely inspired him with confidence, and the vast sums of money sent him by his mother enabled him privately to enlist in his cause many persons of high military reputation, exiled followers of Henry VI., who had for years lingered in the extreme of poverty. Richmond's next measure was frankly to make known his bright prospects to the Duke of Brittany,|| of whom he earnestly besought assistance; but the recent compact between Francis and Richard precluded the possibility of his sanctioning his enterprise. Nevertheless, touched with compassion for one who had so meekly submitted to the restraints imposed upon him for so many years, he so far yielded as to pledge himself not to oppose his undertaking; and under that assurance, Richmond exerted himself so strenuously, and was supported by so powerful a band, both of Yorkist and Lancastrian exiles, that he was enabled to respond to the call of Buckingham, and to pledge himself to arrive in England by the day fixed upon for the general rising, viz., the 18th of October.

However scrupulously the commencement of this formidable league was concealed, it had evidently reached King Richard's ears before its final ratification. "The conspiracy," says the Croyland historian,¶ "by means of spies was well known to Richard, who, in manner as he executed all his designs, not drowsily, but with alacrity and with the greatest vigilance, procured, as well in Wales as in all the marches there, in the circuit of the said Duke of Buckingham, that as soon as he set foot out of his house, esquires should be in prompt readiness, who, animated by the duke's great wealth, which the king for that purpose conferred upon them, should seize upon the same, and by all means impede his progress; which was done. For on that side of the castle towards Wales, Thomas, son of Sir Roger Vaughan deceased, with his brethren and relatives, most strictly watched all the circumjacent country; and the bridges and passages leading to England were partly broken down, and partly closed under strict guards by Humphrey Stafford."

It cannot but tell greatly in Richard's favour, that these last-mentioned

* Harl. MSS., 433, fol. 241.

† Grafton, p. 169.

‡ "The Duke of Buckingham, by the advice of the Bishop of Ely, his prisoner at Brecknock, sent to him to hasten to England as soon as he could, to have to wife Elizabeth, elder daughter of the deceased king, and together with her, possession of all the realm."—*Cont. Croy.*, p. 568.

§ Philip de Comines, who was well known to the Earl of Richmond, states, that he told him, even from his birth, he had scarcely known the blessings of liberty, having been either a fugitive or a captive from the age of five years.—*Philip de Comines*, vol. v. p. 514.

¶ Grafton, p. 168.

¶ Chron. Croy., p. 508

individuals, the grandchildren of old Sir Thomas Vaughan, whom he has been reproached with unjustly executing, and Sir Humphrey Stafford, the near relative of Buckingham himself, should have so decidedly espoused the king's cause as to be willing agents for entrapping the rebellious duke; neither can it escape observation, that the reputed avenger of the princes' alleged murder, instead of bringing forward the Earl of Warwick, or advocating exclusively the rights of the Princess Elizabeth, lawfully the inheritor of the crown,—if, indeed, proof existed that her brothers were really dead,—should have selected as the successor to their throne an illegitimate scion of the extinct House of Lancaster, and by making the Princess Elizabeth a secondary consideration, have thus perpetuated to the House of York the very act of injustice for which they condemned King Richard.

It is more than probable from the wording of Dr. Hutton's instructions,* on his mission to the court of Brittany, that the plot for restoring the Lancastrian dynasty in the person of Henry of Richmond had been contemplated before the deposition of Edward V., and that the report of the alleged death of the royal brothers was spread by the Lancastrian agents† to further views which had been contemplated at the accession of the young king, arising out of the disturbed state of the realm at that period, but which had been promptly dissipated by the firm and vigilant government of Richard, both as protector and king. That the Duke of Buckingham should have risked the uncertain favour of a kinsman to whom he was personally unknown,—one that had been long estranged from his country, and was an alien to its laws and customs,—when the monarch whom but a few weeks previously he had aided to elevate to the throne was manifesting on all occasions his gratitude, and showering down his gifts most liberally upon him, is a mystery that defies solution! How keenly Richard felt his treachery, and how bitterly he resented it, is not, however, subject of surmise, being recorded in his own hand-writing, in a confidential postscript to a letter,‡ addressed to the lord chancellor, a document so replete with interest as portraying the true nature of the king's sentiments and feelings on this momentous occasion, that it demands unabbreviated insertion in this memoir of his life.

“By the King.

“Right reverend Father in God, and right trusty and well-beloved, we greet you well, and in our heartiest wise thank you for manifold presents§

* In instructions given to Dr. Thomas Hutton, who was sent to the Duke of Brittany for the ostensible purpose of renewing a commercial treaty, which “*by diverse folks of simple disposition*” was supposed to have expired in the death of Edw. IV., is the following passage:—“Item, He shall seek and understand the mind and disposition of the duke, anent Sir Edward Wydville and his retinue, practising by all means to him possible, to unsearch and know if there be intended any enterprise out of land, upon any part of this realm, certifying with all diligence all the views and depositions there from time to time.”—*Harl. MSS.*, 433, fol. 241.

† The Croyland historian, after stating that “it was reported that King Edward's children were dead,” adds, “all those who began this commotion, seeing that they could not find a new captain, they called to mind Henry, Earl of Richmond, who had now for many years dwelt an exile in Brittany.”—*Cont. Croy.*, p. 568.

‡ This letter from Richard III. to Russel, Bishop of Lincoln, was extracted from the original in the Record Office in the Tower by Strype. It was printed in a note to Buck's History of Richard III., in Kennet's Complete History of England; and was also published by Singer in an Appendix to his revised and corrected edition of Sir Thomas More's History of Richard III. The postscript is in the king's own hand, and is most interesting for the earnestness with which it dwells on Buckingham's treachery.

§ The Bishop of Lincoln, at this time, filled the office of lord chancellor, and these words allude to Richard's abode in his see, and probably also to his residence at the ecclesiastical palace at Lincoln.

that your servants in their behalf have presented unto us at this our being here, which we assure you we took and accepted with good heart, and so have cause. And whereas, we, by God's grace, intend to advance us towards our rebel and traitor, the Duke of Buckingham, to resist and withstand his malicious purpose, as lately by our other letters* we certified you our mind more at large; for which cause it behoveth us to have our great seal here, we being informed that for such infirmities and diseases as ye sustain, ye may not in your person to your ease conveniently come unto us with the same: Wherefore we will, and natheless charge you, that forthwith, upon the sight of this, ye safely do cause the same our great seal to be sent unto us; and such of the office of our chancery as by your wisdom shall be thought necessary, receiving these, our letters, for your sufficient discharge in that behalf.

“Given under our signet, at our city of Lincoln, the 12th day of October.”

Then follows the postscript in the king's own hand-writing.

“We would most gladly ye came yourself, if that ye may; and if ye may not, we pray you not to fail, but to accomplish in all diligence our said commandment to send our seal incontinent upon the sight hereof, as we trust you, with such as ye trust, and the officers pertaining [appertaining] to attend with it: praying you to ascertain us of your news there. Here, loved be God, is all well, and truly determined, and for to resist the malice of him that had best cause to be true, the Duke of Buckingham—the most untrue creature living: whom with God's grace we shall not be long 'till that we will be in that parts, and subdue his malice. We assure you there was never falsen traitor purveyed for; as this bearer Gloucester† shall show you.”

This remarkable letter, as appears by its date, was written at Lincoln on the 12th October, a few days after the king is stated to have received from Buckingham an avowal of his perfidy, arising out of a refusal to attend the royal summons,‡ the monarch having invited his personal attendance with the view of ascertaining the truth or falsehood of a report which he could not bring himself to believe without such substantial proof.

Richard's character was one of determined resolution; and although it can scarcely be said that he was devoid of suspicion, yet every record favours the belief that he unwillingly credited reports to the disadvantage of his friends, and placed in all who were personally attached to his service a confidence that in many cases was shown to be miserably abused.§

Once roused, however, Richard was as firm in resisting his opponents as he was generous in recompensing his followers; and Buckingham, having openly avowed himself “his mortal enemy,” and hoisted the standard of rebellion, the monarch adopted the most rigorous measures for defeating the insurgents, and crushing the conspiracy. He dispatched a letter|| to the authorities of York, requiring their aid in this emergency, and desiring that such troops as they could furnish should meet him at Leicester on the 21st inst. This was followed by a proclamation, dated likewise at Lincoln, declaring

* This expression justifies the inference that King Richard knew of the conspiracy before his arrival at Lincoln.

† Richard Champney, the favoured king-at-arms of Richard III. This office was founded because it had been the name of Richard's ducal honour, a practice then usual; Edward IV. before, and Henry VII. after, making their heralds kings-at-arms giving them the names of the titles they bore.—See *Noble's College of Arms*, p. 65; likewise *Edmondson's Heraldry*, p. 99.

‡ Grafton, p. 171.

§ More, p. 9.

|| See Appendix GGG.