

There is no compulsion enjoined in this epistle, no stretch of regal power, no threats, no stipulated resignation of office, but simply exhortation enjoined from the highest dignitary in the state, himself a prelate of unblemished reputation and virtue. The chancellor was empowered to release the frail but fascinating Jane from prison, to deliver her into the charge of the person most fitting to succour her—her own father, and even to sanction the marriage provided it held good “with the law of the church.” Is this conduct indicative of cruelty? Does this letter exemplify the arbitrary, imperious, selfish destroyer of his people’s comforts and happiness? Surely not! And when it is remembered that in Richard’s days letters were neither designed for, nor liable to, publication, as in later times, but were the secret deposits of the unbiased sentiments of the individual who penned them, it must be admitted that the letters above given are satisfactory indications of the king’s frame of mind, and tend materially to redeem his character from many of the harsh traits ordinarily affixed to him by historians.

It also completely exonerates him from the tradition of having caused Jane Shore’s decease by starvation, from his merciless prohibition of all assistance being afforded her in her misery. She survived the monarch many years,\* and the very circumstance of her dying in advanced age, and so decrepit that she was “but shrivelled skin and hard bone,” removes her death to a period long subsequent to King Richard’s reign, when her attractions,

— “A pretty foot,

A cherry lip,

A bonny eye, a passing pleasing tongue,”†

were sufficiently remarkable to attract the young Marquis of Dorset, and after his attainder to win the king’s solicitor-general.

Many more letters might be adduced illustrative of Richard’s lenity, forbearance and kindness of heart; for, notwithstanding the rarity of epistolary communication at this early period of English history,‡ yet the letters of this monarch are abundant; they are mostly, it is true, on matters of state, but whether official or private, or of courtesy to crowned heads, the “chief are the king’s own.”§ The mass of facts connected with his remarkable career equally precludes the possibility of introducing the whole of his correspondence, as of making copious extracts from the invaluable register which has been so frequently referred to in this work. “I made the attempt,” states Mr. Sharon Turner, when speaking on the latter point, “but I found the entries too numerous for insertion: it contains from 2000 to 2500 official documents, most of which are the king’s beneficial grants.”¶ Had the reign of Richard III. extended over as many years as it is now numbered by months, the above well-authenticated fact, and the probable results of so vigorous and active a mind—a mind devoted to the interests of his country and to the well-being of his subjects—would, in all probability, have conduced to the life and character of this monarch being perpetuated in a far different and truer light than that in which it has hitherto been depicted.

\* Jane Shore was living at the time that Sir Thomas More wrote, which was nearly thirty years after Richard’s decease; for, in his history of that monarch, he says, “Thus say they that knew her in her youth. Albeit some that now see her, *for she yet liveth*, deem her never to have been well visaged.”—*Sir Thomas More*, p. 84.

† Shakspeare’s *Richard III.*, Act I. Sc. I.

‡ Ellis’s *Orig. Lett.*, 2d series, p. 147.

§ Turner’s *Middle Ages*, vol. iv. p. 58.

¶ *More*, p. 84.

## CHAPTER XVII.

King Richard returns to London.—Gloomy aspect of affairs in the metropolis.—Overtures of peace from King James of Scotland.—The body of King Henry VI. removed from Chertsey for reinterment at Windsor.—Injustice to Richard III. on this occasion.—His liberality displayed in his public buildings and collegiate endowments.—Pacific embassy from the French monarch.—Richard departs for Nottingham Castle, and receives the Scottish ambassadors in great state there.—Contract of marriage between the Prince of Scotland and the niece of King Richard, daughter of the Duke of Suffolk.—Treaty of peace with Francis, Duke of Brittany.—Richard’s cordial reception on his entry into London.—His encouragement of the pastimes of the age.—He celebrates the festival of Christmas with great splendour.—Receives information of Richmond’s projected invasion.—Measures promptly taken for the defence of the realm.—Exhausted state of Richard’s finances.—His forced loans.—Discontent at that offensive mode of raising money.—Illness of the queen.—King Richard accused of wishing to marry his niece, and of poisoning his wife.—Both charges examined and ascertained to rest on no foundation but rumour.—Letter attributed to the Princess Elizabeth inconsistent with her exemplary character.—Death of the queen.—Her solemn burial at Westminster Abbey.

THE month of August had commenced before King Richard could put into execution his earnest desire of returning to the capital of his kingdom. Six stormy months had marked the period since he had abruptly quitted the scene of his former triumph,—that city which had witnessed his accession, his coronation, and the ratification of his election to the crown. Threatening as the aspect of affairs then appeared, he yet quitted his capital sustained by hope, undaunted by fear, for he had attained the summit of his ambition. Not alone was his own brow encircled with the much-coveted diadem, but the sceptre seemed irrevocably fixed in his house by the act of settlement which had made the succession of his son the law of the land. How fragile is the slight tenure of earthly prosperity. The toil and the labour of years are crushed in a moment, and the littleness of man, at the height of his greatness, is often brought fearfully home to him by one of those immutable decrees from which there is no appeal. Although successful in arms, in political negotiation, and in the happy result of his own personal exertions, the king returned to his metropolis subdued in spirit and desolate in heart, for he was now childless. His youthful heir had been taken from him suddenly, and without warning. Before one anniversary had celebrated his parent’s accession to the throne, or commemorated his own exalted position as Prince of Wales, young Edward of Gloucester slept in his tranquil grave. Disaffection, too, was overspreading the land; the regal treasury had become fearfully diminished, owing to the precautions requisite for frustrating the designs of Henry, Earl of Richmond; and internal discord foreboded as much cause for anxiety within the realm as had already been created by avowed hostility from foreign enemies. These accumulated difficulties had made the king yet more earnest to return to his capital. He was well acquainted with the sedulous spirit which there prevailed, and he was not ignorant that his popularity was

waning. The citizens of London had been too long accustomed to, and had too fully revelled in, the pleasurable and luxurious habits promoted by Edward IV.\* not to feel keenly their changed position under the severe rule of his successor. Edward, that gay and gallant monarch, had sacrificed health, fame, dignity, even his love of glory, to his still greater love of ease. "But," observes Sir Thomas More,† "this fault not greatly grieved the people," although it irritated his warlike nobles, and weaned from him their respect and affection; for the community at large had imperceptibly reaped the benefit of that commercial prosperity‡ which resulted from "the realm being in quiet and prosperous estate,"—no fear of outward enemies, and among themselves "the commons in good peace."§ Richard, on the contrary, notwithstanding his desire of pursuing a similar course of domestic policy,—one which was altogether in accordance with his own enlightened views, and to perfect a system which had produced such beneficial results, was, from the distracted state of the country, which led to his elevation to the throne, speedily called upon to withdraw his attention from pacific and tranquillizing measures, and from the time of his accession, to make warlike and martial preparations the leading object of his government. The caprice and instability of many of his nobles being the existing cause of the renewal of civil discord, Richard had not the advantage of their undivided support to counterbalance the spirit of insubordination which generally prevailed among the middling classes, or the satisfaction of acting in concert with this powerful body of his subjects; while the discomfort which had resulted from the revival of internal feuds, united to the total cessation of commercial intercourse with France and Scotland, and the heavy cost of keeping up armaments by sea and land, had gradually fostered in the citizens of London a spirit of tumult and disorder very unfavourable to the views of the monarch, and very distressing to himself individually. Various causes of less import tended to increase this feeling of discontent. The court had been stationary at York for six months; and the evident partiality which Richard publicly testified for his northern subjects, added to the extensive repairs and embellishments which he had commanded at the royal palace in that city,|| made the inhabitants of the southern portion of the island fear the possibility of the regal abode being eventually removed to the scene of the new king's second coronation, and of his early popular rule, or, to say the least, that he might be induced to divide, between his northern and southern capitals, those great privileges which had, hitherto, been exclusively enjoyed by the ancient seat of government. But King Richard was too able a statesman, too wise a ruler, to be ignorant of the fatal consequences which must ensue to the governor of a divided kingdom, and he was proportionably desirous to return to London, that by his presence among his former supporters he might allay their apprehension, and inspire them with renewed confidence towards himself. The monarch quitted Nottingham¶ on the 1st of August,

\* "In the summer, the last that ever he saw, his highness being at Windsor, hunting, sent for the mayor and aldermen of London to him, for none other errand than to hunt and make merry with him."—*More*, p. 5.

† *More's Rich. III.*, p. 5.

‡ The twelve years succeeding the restoration of Edward IV. are reckoned by political economists the most prosperous ever enjoyed by the English people.

§ *More*, p. 5.

|| *Harl. MSS.*, 433, fol. 183.

¶ The document which fixes King Richard at Nottingham on the 30th of July is sufficiently curious to merit insertion. "Commission to Thomas Fowler, squire for the body, John Whitelocke, William Lok and Richard Austin, to make search for certain treasure, which, as the king was credibly informed, is hid in a ground called

and appears to have reached the palace at Westminster about the 6th instant, as, on that day, "letters of safe conduct" were granted to the ambassadors from Scotland,\* appointing the 7th of September for a desired conference, and fixing Nottingham, from its central position, as the place in which the king would receive them. A letter, also, was delivered from James III. to Richard, expressing his intention of sending commissioners to England, to treat not only "of truce and abstinence from war, but likewise of marriage, between those of the blood of both kings."† To this letter an official answer was returned, which fixes King Richard at Westminster on the 7th of August, 1484.‡ He continued there during the remainder of the month, which was characterized by one of the most interesting ceremonies connected with his reign—that of the removal of the body of Henry VI. from his place of interment at Chertsey Abbey to the collegiate church of Windsor, in order that the ashes of the deposed monarch might be placed beside those of his royal predecessors. Richard's every action has been so suspiciously viewed, all his measures, whether prompted by policy or generosity, have been so perverted and misrepresented, that it can scarcely excite surprise that this act of respect to the memory of the amiable but unfortunate rival of the House of York should be reported to Richard's disadvantage, after he himself became the sport of adverse fortune and political contumely. "He envied," it is stated by the partisans of the House of Tudor, "the sanctity of King Henry," and translated him from Chertsey "to arrest the number of pilgrimages made to his tomb,"§—a tomb admitted by the same authority, to have been unfitting for the resting-place of a crowned head, and situated in so retired a spot|| that the few devotees who there resorted could never have procured for the deceased king that revival of compassionate feeling which was called forth by his public disinterment, and the removal of his body to the regal mausoleum of his ancestors. If any positive fact could weaken the mere report of King Richard having himself assassinated the Lancastrian monarch, this proceeding might well be cited in his favour. The mortal remains of the hapless prince had reposed in their last resting-place upwards of thirteen years. His exhumation was neither caused by the murmurs of the populace, nor required as an act of justice for any former absence of accustomed ceremonial.¶ The people flocked to King Henry's tomb because his saintlike habits during life, united to the severity of his sufferings, had gradually invested his memory with superstitious veneration; yet did Richard voluntarily, openly, without fear of any popular ebullition of feeling for the unfortunate Henry, or the dread of evil consequences to himself, which a consciousness of guilt invariably produces, transfer the relics of the deceased sovereign to a more fitting place of interment—one of such distinction and notoriety, that visits to his tomb, if offensive to the reigning house, would thereby have been rather increased than diminished.

The words of the historian Rous,\*\* through whom the event has been recorded, and whose political enmity to King Richard exonerates him from

Sudbury, or nigh thereabouts, within the county of Bedford."—*Harl. MSS.*, 433, fol. 186.

\* *Fœdera*, xii. p. 230.

† *Harl. MSS.*, 433, fol. 263.

‡ *Wilk. Concil.*, iii. p. 635.

§ *Ibid.*

|| *Ibid.*

¶ "Many writers have committed the error of affirming that Henry VI. was buried without honours," observes the editor of Warkworth's *Chronicles* (p. 67); but reference to *Devon's Issue Rolls of Exchequer*, (p. 491,) wherein are specified sums paid for the expenses of that monarch's interment, will, he further observes, "prove that every respect was paid to his funeral obsequies."

\*\* *Rous*, p. 217.

all supposition of undue praise, will better tend to place the act itself in its true light than any arguments that can result from a mere review of it: "And in the month of August following, the body of King Henry was dug up, and translated to the new collegiate church of Windsor, where it was honourably received, and again buried with the greatest solemnity on the south side of the high altar."

This simple detail, by a cotemporary writer of acknowledged Lancastrian prejudices, an ecclesiastic by profession, and a warm partisan of Henry VI., joined to the fact that King Richard's motives were not impugned on this head until that monarch had been dead for many years, and not until it was in contemplation "to canonize King Henry VI. for a saint,"\* arising from miracles reputed to be performed at his tomb, fully exposes the malignity with which Richard has been, on all points, defamed. The very document, indeed, which impugns his motives, and charges him with envying King Henry the fame that attached to him after death, assists in exculpating Richard from the unsupported tradition of having deprived the Lancastrian sovereign of his life. "He had yielded to a pitiable death by the order of Edward, who was then king of England," are the words used by the English clergy in an address to the see of Rome. This address was written long after Richard's death, and at a time when King Edward's daughter was the reigning queen.†

Had there been solid foundation for the rumour that afterwards prevailed of Henry of Lancaster having been murdered by Richard, who can doubt that these ecclesiastics would, unhesitatingly, have substituted the words "by the hands of the Duke of Gloucester," when no reason existed for sparing the memory of one so maligned, and which would have saved them the necessity of fixing the crime on the sire and grandsire of the queen consort and the heir-apparent of the throne?

Brief as was King Richard's stay in London, it was characterized by acts of bounty and munificence similar to those which had marked his former sojourn there. He then commenced many public works of great importance; those he now continued, and also carried out other designs, which had been interrupted by his sudden departure for the north. He founded a college of priests in Tower street, near the church called "Our Lady of Barking."‡ He commanded the erection of a high stone tower at Westminster,—"a work," states Sir George Buck, "of good use, even at this day."§ He caused substantial repairs to be commenced at the Tower of London, erecting new buildings, and renovating the older portions; "in memory whereof," narrates the above-quoted historian, "there be yet his arms, impaled with those of the queen, his wife, standing upon the arch adjoining the sluice gate:"|| and both Windsor Castle,¶ the palace at Westminster,\*\* Baynard's Castle,†† and the Erber, or King's Palace,‡‡ as it was then designated, evince, by the additions and improvements undertaken by his command, the desire which Richard entertained of giving employment to the industrious portion of the community, and of exciting the more wealthy citizens, by his own example, to undertake works of useful design. He desired thus to divert their minds from sedition and insurrection to the

\* Bacon's Henry VII., p. 227.

† A petition was presented to Pope Alexander VI., in the year 1499, praying that the remains of King Henry VI. might be removed to Westminster Abbey.—*Wilk. Concl.*, iii. p. 635.

‡ Rous, p. 215; Buck, lib. v. p. 138.

§ Buck, lib. v. p. 139.

\*\* Ibid., fol. 204.

†† Ibid., fol. 175.

¶ Ibid.

¶ Harl. MSS., 433, fol. 211.

‡‡ Ibid., fol. 187.

encouragement of peaceful occupations, and the promotion of acts that would reflect honour on themselves, and confer lasting benefit upon their country.\* Most opportunely for the king, as affording him additional means for checking the growing discontent, messengers arrived in London from the French monarch, craving letters of protection for ambassadors appointed to treat for peace.† The required letters were issued by Richard on the 1st of September; and this important step towards the procurement of that peace, so much desired by the citizens, was rendered more effective by its having so immediately succeeded a corresponding application from Scotland, with which country an amicable league was on the eve of being cemented. An opening was thus afforded for a renewal of commercial intercourse with both kingdoms.

The immediate causes of his unpopularity, or at least a portion of them, being in some degree modified, the monarch again departed for Nottingham, which he reached on the 12th of September,‡ and on the 16th he gave audience to the deputies from Scotland, who were there most honourably received in the great chamber of the castle,§ the king being seated under a royal canopy, and surrounded by his court and the chief officers of state. The noble commissioners|| sent by James III. were accompanied by his secretary and orator, "Master Archibald Quidlaw," who, stepping before the rest, addressed an eloquent oration to the English sovereign in Latin, panegyricizing his high renown, noble qualities, great wisdom, virtue and prudence. "In you, most serene prince, all the excellent qualities of a good king and great commander are happily united, insomuch that, to the perfection of your military and civil accomplishments, nothing could be added by the highest rhetorical flights of a most consummate orator."¶

This address, although couched in the extravagant language of the times, confirms three facts connected with King Richard of no small importance, viz., his mildness of disposition: "You show yourself gentle to all, and affable even to the meanest of your people." His beauty of feature—"In your face, a princely majesty and authority royal, sparkling with the illustrious beams of all moral and heroic virtues;" and, lastly, that his stature, though small, was unaccompanied by deformity, since the Scottish orator made it the vehicle of his chief eulogy: "To you may not be unfitly applied what was said by the poet of a most renowned prince of the Thebans,\*\* that Nature never united to a small frame a greater soul, or a more powerful mind."†† The conference ended, the ambassadors delivered to King Richard a letter from their sovereign; to which the English monarch returned a brief

\* "This King Richard is to be praised for his buildings at Westminster, Nottingham, Warwick, York, Middleham; and many other places will manifest."—*Rous*, p. 215.

† *Fœdera*, xii. p. 235.

‡ Harl. MSS., 433, fol. 187.

§ Buck, lib. i. p. 33.

|| "The embassy consisted of the Earl of Argyle, Chancellor of Scotland, the Bishop of Aberdeen, the Lord Lisle, the Lord Dramonde of Stobhall, Master Archibald Quidlaw, Archdeacon of Lothian and secretary to the king, Lion, king-at-arms, and Duncan of Dundas."—*Buck*, lib. i. p. 33.

¶ Buck, lib. v. p. 140.

\*\* "So great a soul, such strength of mind,  
Sage Nature ne'er to a less body joyn'd."

*Translation in Kennet*, p. 573.

†† "If Richard had not been short," observes Mr. Sharon Turner, "the prelate who came ambassador to him from Scotland would not, in his complimentary address delivered to him on his throne, have quoted these lines; nor would he have made such an allusion, if it had not been well known that Richard cared not about it."—*Middle Ages*, vol. iii. p. 476.

but dignified reply.\* They, likewise, inquired his pleasure relative to the reception of commissioners, then on their progress from Scotland to negotiate a marriage between the Duke of Rothesay, eldest son of King James, and the Lady Anne de la Pole, daughter of the Duke of Suffolk, and sister of the Earl of Lincoln, whom the English monarch had nominated his successor to the throne.

This important proposition, intended as a means of establishing peace between the two countries,† was finally decided upon on the 20th of September,‡ when the contract of marriage between the heir of the Scottish crown and King Richard's niece was signed by the Scotch commissioners and the great officers of state attached to the English government;§ and on the same day a truce with Scotland for three years was concluded,|| and duly ratified by commissioners nominated for that purpose by their respective sovereigns.¶ It will be fresh in the mind of the reader, that the faithless performance of a corresponding matrimonial engagement entered into some years previously between the above-named Duke of Rothesay and the Princess Cecily was the origin of the war in which King Richard, before his accession to the throne, acquired such high military reputation; and it is somewhat remarkable, as a proof of the vicissitudes consequent on those mutable times, that this second contract with the line of York, now entered into as the means of terminating warfare, and cementing peace and amity between the two kingdoms, was destined to terminate in a manner similar to the former betrothment, and to entail equal mortification on another of Richard's nieces.

The Lady Anne de la Pole, like her fair cousin Cecily, became the victim of the inconstancy of the age. The pledge solemnly plighted at Nottingham was but lightly regarded in after years. "Upon the breach thereof," states Sir George Buck, "the young affianced, resolving to accept no other motion, embraced a conventual life, and ended her days a nun in the monastery of Sion,\*\* while the Scottish prince was reserved for marriage with the daughter of the rival and enemy of their house and race, Henry of Richmond;‡ although, as the daughter of his consort, Elizabeth of York, the Princess Margaret of Tudor was the niece of his first betrothed, and the cousin of the Lady Anne, whose marriage has been just detailed.

The aspect of political affairs continued to brighten during Richard's prolonged stay at Nottingham; another treaty of peace and amity was sought for by Francis, Duke of Brittany, or, rather, a ratification of former negotiations; and as soon as the Scotch ambassadors had fairly departed, shipping was ordered to convey an English mission†† to that principality, which sailed§§ on the 13th of October, and succeeded in establishing so friendly an alliance between the two countries||| that all apprehension of Richmond's receiving aid from that quarter was entirely set at rest. Architectural improvements on an enlarged scale at Nottingham Castle,¶¶ and at the royal palace at York,\*\*\* a warrant for rebuilding, at the king's cost, a

\* See Appendix SSS.

† Ibid., p. 244.

‡ Fœdera, xii. p. 235.

\*\* Ibid.

†† James IV. of Scotland was united to the Princess Margaret, the eldest daughter of King Henry VII. and of his Queen Elizabeth of York, on the 8th of August, 1503.—*Lel. Coll.*, iv. fol. 205.

‡‡ Harl. MSS., 433, fol. 189.

§§ Fœdera, xii. p. 255.

¶¶ Harl. MSS., 433, fol. 193; see also Leland's *Itin.*

\*\*\* Harl. MSS., 433, fol. 187. 218.

† Fœdera, xii. p. 232.

§ Buck, lib. i. p. 33.

¶ Buck, lib. i. p. 33.

§§ Ibid., fol. 192.

chapel at Pontefract, and the house adjoining of Dame Margaret Multon, an anchorite,\* together with other of those acts of piety and munificence which so endeared King Richard to his northern subjects, attest the fact of this monarch's sojourn at Nottingham for the remainder of the autumn, with the exception of a brief visit from thence at the close of October to his lordship and castle at Tutbury.† Having at length restored peace within the realm, and cemented amicable leagues between Scotland, France and Brittany, Richard made preparations for returning to London for the winter, where he was welcomed by the citizens with demonstrations of popularity and joy, fully as great, if not greater than those which had characterized his triumphant entry into the metropolis at the same period a twelvemonth before. "In the beginning of this mayor's year, and the second year of King Richard," retails the city chronicler,§ "that is to mean the 11th day of the month of November, 1484, the mayor and his brethren being clad in scarlet, and the citizens, to the number of five hundred or more, in violet, met the king beyond Kingston, in Southwark, and so brought him through the city to the Wardrobe,|| beside the Black Friars, where for that time he was lodged."

Thus reinstated in public favour, and bemoaning the demoralizing effects which had resulted from the disturbed state of the kingdom since his accession, the king essayed to promote kindlier and gentler feelings amongst all classes of his subjects, by encouraging and patronising such sports and pastimes as were consonant with the spirit and habits of the age. Falconry and hawking especially engaged his attention. He had nominated John Grey of Wilton to the office of master of the king's hawks, and the keeping of a place called the Mews,¶ near Charing Cross,\*\* in the preceding year; and he now issued warrants for securing, at a reasonable price, such hawks and falcons as should be necessary for the "king's disport," following up this command by the appointment of a sergeant of falcons for England, and a purveyor of hawks for parts beyond the seas.†† Hunting, also, the sport to partake of which King Edward had so frequently invited the civic authorities of London, a condescension which had told so much in his favour, was not overlooked by his politic brother. It was an amusement to which Richard had been early inured, and to which he was much attached: and the minute particulars in his register of the payments awarded to the chief officers of the royal establishment, as well as the distinct enumeration of the several appointments connected with the inferior departments,‡‡ together with the provision allotted to the horses and dogs, evince his determination to uphold a recreation which the disturbed state of the kingdom had, for a time, interrupted. Nor were the amusements of the humbler classes forgotten by the monarch; the exploits of the bearward, the appellation given

\* Harl. MSS., 433, fol. 193.

† Ibid., fol. 191.

§ Fabyan, p. 518.

|| On Bennet Hill, in the neighbourhood of the Herald's College, a little to the west, anciently stood the royal wardrobe, kept in a house built by Sir John Beauchamp, who made it his residence. It was sold to King Edward III., and in the fifth year of Edward IV. it was given to William Lord Hastings; it was afterwards called Huntingdon House, and became the lodging of Richard III. in the second year of his reign.—*Pennant's London*, p. 356.

¶ The term "Mew" signified moulting; and the range of buildings which once stood near Charing Cross, called the King's Mews, and which were converted into stables by King Henry VIII., derived the appellation from the royal hawks being kept there during the time of their moulting.—*Old Sports of England*, p. 28.

\*\* Harl. MSS., 433, fol. 53.

†† Ibid., 433, fol. 49. 175. 195.

‡ Ibid., fol. 193.

‡‡ Ibid., 433, fol. 103. 214.

to the keeper of dancing bears, together with the grotesque antics of apes and monkies, by which the former animals were usually accompanied, was a rude pastime greatly estimated at this period by all ranks; and the king, shortly after his accession, had appointed a "master guider and ruler of all our bears and apes within England and Wales"\*—the greater part of the animals thus exhibited being the property of the crown; and letters were sent to the several mayors and sheriffs throughout the kingdom, requiring them to protect the "said game," as well as the master and subordinate keepers whom the king licensed, "reasonable money paying," to travel through the country with them. But the recreation to which Richard himself seemed most devoted was that of music. Innumerable grants to minstrelst were bestowed from the royal funds, and foreign musicians received from him the greatest encouragement.† He kept a band of trumpeters at a yearly payment,§ and promoted a royal choral assemblage upon a very enlarged scale, having empowered "John Melynek, one of the gentlemen of the chapel royal, to take and seize for the king all such singing men and children, being expert in the science of music, as he can find, and think able to do the king's service within all places in the realm, as well cathedral churches, colleges, chapels, houses of religion, and all other franchised and exempt places or elsewhere, the college royal of Windsor excepted;‡" an act which singularly illustrated the despotism of the period, and the little personal freedom enjoyed by the people of England, but which might have been highly beneficial in advancing the art of music in this country, had King Richard been permitted sufficient leisure and tranquillity to carry into effect the enlarged views which he entertained on all matters connected with the improvement or benefit of his country.

But Richard's peaceful days were few in number and of short duration. His earnest desire was to quell discord, and to ensure a period of repose by exertions the most praiseworthy and unceasing. Nevertheless, he was too wise to slumber or to be lulled into security while any symptom existed for alarm; and so long as Richmond was at large, and his supporters unsubdued, just cause for apprehension remained that peace was by no means settled.

The treaties with France, Brittany and Scotland had, indeed, tempered any present suspicion of danger; nevertheless, rumours and reports reached King Richard's ears from time to time which induced him to fix his attention warily upon the movements of his enemies, even when seemingly engaged in promoting such amusements and recreations as were fitted for a season of tranquillity. So early after his return to London as the 6th of December,¶ intelligence was communicated which led him to doubt the good faith of the French nation, and to compel him to issue a strong proclamation to that effect. "Forasmuch as we be credibly informed that our ancient enemies of France, by many and sundry ways, conspire and study the means to the subversion of this our realm, and of unity amongst our subjects, as in sending writings by seditious persons with counterfeit tokens, and contrive false inventions, tidings and rumours, to the intent to provoke and stir discord and disunion betwixt us and our lords, which be as faithfully disposed as any subjects can suffice. We, therefore, will and command you strictly, that in eschewing the inconveniences aforesaid, you put you in your uttermost devoir of any such rumours or writings come

\* Harl. MSS., 433, fol. 139.

† Ibid., fol. 46.

§ Ibid., fol. 78. 96. 104.

¶ Ibid., 787, fol. 2.

‡ Ibid., fol. 190. 210.

§ Ibid., 189.

amongst you, to search and inquire of the first showers or utterers thereof; and them that ye shall so find ye do commit unto sure ward, and after proceed to their sharp punishment, in example and fear of all other, not failing hereof in any wise, as ye intend to please us, and will answer to us at your perils."\* The result of this strong edict was the arrest of Sir Robert Clifford at Southampton, who, being sent to the Tower of London, was arraigned and tried at Westminster, and, being found guilty, was from thence drawn unto the Tower Hill upon "a hurdle," where he suffered the death of a traitor.†

Whether he was the bearer of private instructions to his accomplices in England, or whether King Richard obtained, by means of his own emissaries, more direct information respecting the views of the rebels in France, does not plainly appear; but the fact was speedily ascertained that Harwich was the point where the insurgents intended to land, and measures for resisting their attempts were instantly adopted. Instructions were issued on the 18th of the same month to the commissioner of array for the counties of Surrey, Middlesex and Hertford, "to call before them all the knights, squires and gentlemen within the said counties, and know from them what number of people, defensibly arrayed, every of them severally will bring at half a day's warning, if any sudden arrival fortune of the king's rebels and traitors."‡ Sir Gilbert Debenham and Sir Philip Bothe were dispatched with a strong force to the protection of Harwich, a commission being sent to the bailiffs, constables and inhabitants to assist them in keeping the said town, and to resist the king's rebels if they should arrive there. These precautions had the desired effect. The conspirators were either intimidated by the resistance which they understood would await them, or their projects were defeated by finding that the king was not thrown off his guard by the recent truce with France, and was well acquainted with their designs, and fully prepared to subvert them.

Whatever occasioned the delay, the threatened danger was again dispelled, and King Richard was left to celebrate his Christmas in undisturbed tranquillity. He solemnized this festival with pomp and splendour, corresponding to that which had characterized its anniversary in the preceding year, encouraging the recreations usual at the season, presiding himself at the customary feasts, and so attentively observing even the most trivial customs, that a warrant is entered for the payment of "200 marks for certain New-Year's gifts, bought against the feast of Christmas."§ The festivities continued without interruption until the day of the Epiphany, when they appear to have terminated with an entertainment of extraordinary magnificence, given by the monarch to his nobles in Westminster Hall,—“the king himself wearing his crown,” are the words of the Croyland historian,|| “and holding a splendid feast in the great hall similar to that at his coronation.”

\* Harl. MSS., 787, fol. 2.

† That Sir Robert Clifford was strongly and strenuously supported by the disaffected party in London is evident from the measures taken to prevent his execution, the detail of which is thus quaintly given by the city historian. “But when he came fore St. Martin-le-grand, by the help of a friar which was his confessor, and one of them that was next about him, his cords were so lowered or cut, that he put him in devoir to have entered the sanctuary; and likely it had been that he should have so done, had it not been for the quick help and rescue of the sheriffs and their officers, the which constrained him to lie down upon the hurdle, and new bound him, and so hurried to the said place of execution, where he was divided into two pieces, and after his body, with the head, was conveyed to the Augustine friars, and there buried before St. Katharine's Altar.”—*Fabyan*, 518.

‡ Harl. MSS., 433, fol. 198.

§ Chron. Croy., p. 571.

|| Ibid., fol. 148.

Widely different, however, were the results of the two entertainments—the one giving promise of a peaceful and popular reign, from the seeming unanimity which then prevailed, the other being destined to usher in that period of anarchy and feud which was alike to deprive Richard of his crown and of his life; for, “on the same day,” continues the chronicler,\* “tidings were brought to him by his seafaring intelligencers that, in spite of all the power and splendour of his royal estate, his enemies would, beyond all doubt, enter, or attempt to enter, the kingdom during the approaching summer.” Little did Richard imagine that this would be the last feast at which he would preside—the last time he would display his crown in peace before his assembled peers! Strongly imbued with the innate valour of his race, he hailed with satisfaction the prospect of terminating a system of petty warfare, which ill suited the daring and determined spirit of a prince of the line of York; he ardently longed for the period when he should encounter his rival hand to hand, and, by one decisive blow, crush his aspiring views, and relieve himself from those threatened invasions, the guarding against which was more harassing to a mind constituted like his than the most desperate conflicts on the field of battle. Measures were forthwith taken to provide for the defence of the town and marches of Calais, and a warrant was sent to the collectors of customs at the port of Sandwich,† commanding them to pay the mayors and bailiffs of the Cinque Ports, whereat they should take shipping, for the expenses which they might incur for the same.‡

Similar precautions were taken for the preservation of the castle and county of Guisnes, of which Sir James Tyrell was appointed governor, “to have the charge, rule and guidance of the same during the absence of the Lord Mountjoy, the king’s lieutenant there.”§ The knights, squires, gentlemen, &c. of the county of Chester were commanded by an edict “to obey the Lord Stanley, the Lord Strange, and Sir William Stanley, who had the rule and leading of all persons appointed to do the king service, when they shall be warned against the king’s rebels;”|| and a like commission to the knights of other counties was issued, “to do the king’s grace service, against his rebels, in whatsoever place within the realm they fortune to arrive.”¶ Richard, in fact, neglected no precaution that could secure his personal safety, or insure tranquillity to his kingdom; but such a continual system of warfare, or rather provision against its anticipated occurrence, could not be met by the ordinary resources of the country in those troubled times; and the enormous expenditure to which he had been subjected almost from the period when he ascended the throne had so exhausted

\* Chron. Croy., p. 571.

† This document contains, amongst other items, an article that is somewhat remarkable, and one which cannot fail of interesting those who consider that Perkin Warbeck was indeed the true Duke of York, and conveyed secretly into Flanders by the friends and supporters of his family, and not surreptitiously by command of King Richard III., viz., “Warrant to the privy seal in order towards the repaying the mayor, &c. of Dover, four marks, by them advanced for defraying the passage, &c., of Sir James Tyrell, the king’s councillor, and knight of his body, who was of late sent over the sea, into the parties of Flanders, for divers matters concerning greatly the king’s weal.” If one or both of the young princes were privately conveyed to Flanders, as both Sir Thomas More and Lord Bacon assert was current reported at the accession of Henry VII., there can scarcely be a doubt that their uncle would strive to discover their retreat; and Sir James Tyrell, though by no means likely to have been “their employed murderer,” would, as the king’s councillor and “squire of the body,” be a fitting agent for dispatching to the continent on so delicate and important a mission as seeking out the princes, if alive.

‡ Harl. MSS., 433, fol. 200.

§ Ibid., fol. 202.

¶ Ibid., fol. 201.

|| Ibid., fol. 203. 205.

the treasury, and dissipated the funds amassed by King Edward IV.\* that Richard, in spite of his repugnance to adopt, by compulsion, a measure he had resolutely refused when it was voluntarily offered to him,† was necessitated at length to fall back upon the despotic and unpopular system entitled “Benevolences,”‡—a mode of taxation which he had not only condemned at his accession, but had afterwards abolished by act of Parliament; one which excited so much anger against his brother, by whom it was first devised,§ and one to which Richard had proved he never would have had recourse but from a necessity which admitted of no alternative. To this obnoxious proceeding, indeed, there can exist little doubt, may be traced those accumulated evils, and the origin of most of those malignant accusations which have cast so deep a shade over the latter part of this monarch’s reign, that even time itself has failed to soften its ill effects, and justice has been powerless in withdrawing the veil which anger, discontent and popular excitement at so odious a measure cast over every subsequent act undertaken by this sovereign.

Tumult and insurrection speedily followed,|| when Edward IV., in all the fulness of prosperity, had descended from his high estate to distract his subjects, under this misapplied term of “Benevolence,” for bounty despotically extorted from them.¶ King Richard had not only despised such regal beggary, but had rendered a renewal of similar exactions illegal by act of Parliament.\*\* Tenfold, therefore, was the public indignation increased against him, when, unsupported by his brother’s more favoured position, and with the partisans of that brother’s offspring arrayed in hostility against him, he revived a measure which even King Edward’s popular manners, united to his stern and unrelenting rule, could with difficulty carry into effect.††

It was, indeed, the death-blow to Richard’s waning popularity; and reference to the strong language of the Croyland historian, and Fabyan, the city annalist, will sufficiently prove that, from the time this king sanctioned the imposts, religious and secular, to which he was driven, in this his great strait, (for the sum was specified which the clergy as well as laymen were required to give,)‡‡ he was subjected to the united enmity of the church, which had recently lauded him to the skies, of the citizens of London, who had conducted him twice in triumph to their city, and of the many wealthy and richly-endowed commoners, who had hitherto remained neutral amidst the political distractions which had terminated one dynasty and elevated another to the throne.

The ecclesiastical writer, after detailing the immediate cause that led to this mode of replenishing the royal coffers, viz., the impending invasion of the Earl of Richmond, says:§§ “Herewith he (King Richard) was not displeased, thinking it would put an end to all his doubts and troubles;” “cunningly, however, remembering that money, of which he had now so little, was the nerve of war, he resorted to the exactions of King Edward,|||

\* Chron. Croy., p. 571.

† Rous, p. 215.

‡ “This tax, called a Benevolence, was devised by Edward IV., for which he sustained much envy. It was abolished by Richard III., by act of Parliament, to ingratiate himself with the people, and it was now revised by King Henry VII., but with consent of Parliament, for so it was not in the time of King Edward IV.”—*Bacon’s Henry VII.*, p. 100.

§ See ch. 10, p. 183, note.

¶ Buck, lib. v. p. 134.

†† Hab. Edw. IV., p. 131.

‡‡ Chron. Croy., p. 571.

||| Fabyan (p. 694) states that King Edward demanded from the wealthiest of his commoners “the wages of half a man for the year,” or 4*l.* 1*l.* 3*d.*, and that he got

|| Lingard, vol. v. pp. 221. 225.

\*\* Stat. of Realm, vol. ii. p. 478.

†† Harl. MSS., 433, fol. 275.

which he condemned in full Parliament benevolences—a word hated by all: and he sent chosen men, sons of this age, more prudent in their generations than the sons of light, who, by prayers and threats, extorted from the chests of almost all ranks very large sums of money.”\*

Fabyan not only corroborates this account, but so forcibly depicts the distressed state of mind to which the king was reduced before having recourse to the measure, that his emphatic description of the treachery and ingratitude which evidently aggravated the king’s most trying position at this crisis, affords a melancholy picture of the degenerate state of the nobility at this most important period of English history. “And in the month of February following,” he writes, “King Richard, then leading his life in great agony and doubt, trusting few of such as were about him, spared not to spend the great treasure which before King Edward gathered in, giving of great and large gifts. By means whereof he alone wasted, not the great treasure, but also he was in such danger that he borrowed many notable sums of money of the rich men of this realm, and especially of the citizens of London, whereof the least sum was forty pounds, for surety whereof he delivered to them good and sufficient pledges.”†

With such guarantee for repayment, and it is well known that Richard pledged even his plate and jewels to raise money in this emergency, it can scarcely be said that he revived, in its extreme sense, the obnoxious system of “Benevolences;” the tax so designated being absolutely required as a gift by King Edward. “The name it bore,” observes that monarch’s biographer,§ “was a benevolence, though many disproved the signification of the word by their unwillingness to the gift.” Whereas King Richard is allowed by one of the citizens of London, who was cotemporary with him,|| to have given “good and sufficient pledges,” as surety for the sums which he sought as a temporary loan. The official record which perpetuates the tax, yet further certifies to this fact: “Commissioners were appointed to borrow money for the king’s use;”¶ and the same register demonstrates, also, most conclusively, the cause for which these loans were made, viz., “for such great and excessive costs and charges as we must hastily bear and sustain, as well for the keeping of the sea as otherwise for the defence of the realm.”\*\* Although no mention is made of the assembling of Parliament during this second year of his reign, yet the letters delivered by the above-named commissioners afford undeniable proof that Richard adopted this strong measure by the consent and sanction of his privy council; and these credentials†† being prefaced with the words—“to be delivered to those from whom the commons requested loans in the king’s name,” together with their embracing also this strong expression—“for that intent his grace and all his lords thinking that every true Englishman will help him in that behalf,” it justifies the inference that King Richard neither acted tyrannically nor unadvisedly in this important matter, but rather followed the advice of certain leading members of both Houses, whom he had probably summoned to aid him with their counsel in so momentous a crisis.

from the lord mayor 30*l.*, and from each alderman 20 marks, or at least 10*l.* Before exacting these contributions, as “a present for the relief of his wants,” the clergy, the lords, and the commons had separately granted this monarch a tenth of their income.—*Lingard*, vol. p. 220.

\* Chron. Croy., p. 571.

† Fabyan, p. 518.

‡ His want of money appears from the warrants in the Harl. MSS., “for pledging and sale of his plate.”—*Turner’s Middle Ages*, vol. iv. p. 29.

§ Hab. Edw. IV., p. 131.

|| Fabyan, 518.

¶ Harl. MSS., 433, fol. 276.

\*\* Ibid.

†† See Appendix TTT.

But vain were his efforts to stem the tide of adverse fortune! Domestic trials, mingled with the cares of state; and the hand of death was already pressing heavily on another of his house, threatening to sever the only remaining tie of home affection which had soothed and softened the anxious cares of Richard’s regal career. His gentle consort, the companion of his childhood, and the loved one of maturer years, had never recovered the shock which she sustained from the sudden death of her only child. The king was, indeed, compelled to struggle with his grief, being speedily called upon to take part in stirring scenes, which afforded little time or opportunity for indulging in that anguish which the chronicler of Croyland graphically paints as approaching almost to insanity: \* not so the afflicted and distressed queen; she had both time and leisure to dwell upon her irreparable loss.† To all the tenderness of the fondest parent she united that pride of ancestry which was inherent in her lofty race, and which was so strikingly exhibited at York as she led by the hand in triumph her princely child, his fair young forehead graced with the golden circlet of heir-apparent to the throne. The anguish of the bereaved mother, the blight which had prematurely withered her fondest hopes, and left her childless at the very period when maternal love and maternal pride most exultingly filled her heart, produced so disastrous an effect on a frame which was never robust, and of late had been subjected to excitement of no ordinary kind, that it gradually produced symptoms which presaged a dissolution as premature, arising from a disease similar in its nature to that which had consigned her sister, the Duchess of Clarence, to an early grave.‡ Consumption,§ there seems little doubt, was the true cause of the “gradual decay” which is stated, in both instances, to have wasted the strength of the daughters of the Earl of Warwick. If, however, the state of debility consequent on that incurable disease, and into which the Lady Isabel fell for two months preceding her death, was publicly imputed to poison,|| and if the impetuous Clarence not only procured the execution of one of her attendant gentlewomen on that charge, but even accused King Edward’s queen of accelerating the dissolution of his duchess by means of necromancy,¶ it can scarcely be wondered at that Richard, accused of the murder of his nephews, and to whom even the death of his royal brother by poison had been imputed by the malice of his enemies,\*\* although he was widely separated from him at the time the event occurred, it can scarcely, I repeat, excite astonishment that motives were industriously sought for to account for Queen Anne’s declining health, or that her death, following so immediately as it did upon that of the young Prince of Wales, was imputed to the king’s desire of ridding himself of a consort, now weak in health and subdued in spirit.†† Poison was the vague instrument to

\* Chron. Croy., p. 570.

† “The queen could not hold so proportioned a temper over her grief, the tenderness of her sex letting it break upon her in a more passionate manner, and with such an impression, that it became her sickness past recovery, languishing in weakness and extremity of sorrow, until she seemed rather to overtake death than death her.”—*Buck*, lib. ii. p. 43.

‡ Isabel, Duchess of Clarence, only sister of Anne, queen-consort of Richard III., died of a deep decline, the 12th of December, 1476, in the twenty-fourth year of her age, having been born September 5th, 1451.—*Sandford*, book v. p. 412.

§ “A consumption, and past hopes of recovery.”—*Buck*, lib. 4. p. 128.

|| Rot. Parl., vi. p. 173.

¶ Ibid., vi. p. 174.

\*\* “They who ascribe it to poison are the passionate enemies of Richard, Duke of Gloucester’s memory.”—*Hab. Edw. IV.*, p. 222.

†† “Either by inward thought and pensiveness of heart, or by infection of poison,—which is affirmed to be most likely,—the queen departed out of this transitory life.”—*Cont. More by Grafton*, p. 201.