

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.

which it was the custom of the times to attribute all cases of sudden or unexpected death, and the accusers of Richard acted upon a custom at once so common and so convenient.

But nothing can be more cruel or more unreasonable than this base insinuation, for which there exists no sort of foundation, even on the ground of expediency as in the case of the murder of the young princes. From infancy the cousins had lived on terms of amity and affection. No record exists, either positive or implied, as in the preceding and succeeding reigns to intimate that the royal pair, after their union in marriage, were unhappy or led a life of cold indifference. In every public ceremony, in every state banquet, on every momentous occasion, Richard III. was accompanied by Queen Anne. She is to be found supporting her part with becoming splendour and dignity at both his coronations; she was the companion alike of his regal progress and of his sojourn in more troubled times in the north; and it was the queen, and not the king, who exhibited to the delighted multitude at York, young Edward of Gloucester as the future monarch of England. They were resting together at Nottingham Castle when intelligence arrived of his death; and the harmony and affection in which they were living at the time that this fearful stroke of domestic bereavement fell upon them can scarcely be better illustrated than by the fact that the cotemporary annalist, in his forcible description of the bitterness of heart which overwhelmed both parents, sinks the dignity of their regal state in the appellation which most pathetically painted the union of home affections thus severed and broken: "Then might you have seen the father and mother, having heard the news at Nottingham, where they then dwelt, almost mad with sudden grief."^{*}

There is not, in fact, the slightest basis for imputing to Richard a crime as far exceeding all charitable belief as it was unnatural and uncalled for; nor, indeed, have his calumniators advanced any stronger proof to convict him of the monstrous charge than that inferred from suspicions excited by the simple fact that the youthful Princess Elizabeth, who, after the reconciliation of her uncle and her mother, was placed about the person of her aunt, the queen consort, appeared in robes of a similar form and texture to those worn by Queen Anne. On this interpretation of a circumstance, in itself so unimportant that the "only rational conclusion to be drawn from the coincidence," justly observes one of the ablest writers of the present day,[†] is the proof it affords that Richard strictly fulfilled his engagement, that his nieces should be supported as became his kinswomen, has this last and most appalling of this monarch's reputed crimes been fastened upon him; and, to heighten the fearful picture, his object in destroying the wife whom he had struggled to obtain in youth amidst the severest difficulties is inferred to have arisen from the desire of elevating to the throne his own niece! the sister of the young princes whom he is reputed to have slain, the daughter of his own brother, and, as surmised, the destined spouse of his deceased child! It is too monstrous to be credited; and the insinuation is rendered more doubtful from the prejudiced source whence it springs.

This most heinous and revolting crime is not hinted at by the ecclesiastical historian, who has perpetuated the report, until Richard had incurred the anger of the church by his renewal of "Benevolences," which tax, — from their great wealth, — fell with peculiar severity on the religious fraternities of which this writer was a member; and because the amusements and

^{*} Chron. Croy., p. 570.

[†] See Sir Harris Nicolas' Memoir, prefixed to the "Privy Purse Expenses of Elizabeth of York," fol. 42.

festivities which immediately preceded the levying of that tax, and with which the king had thought fitting to modify the discomfort that had hitherto characterized his reign, afforded them an opening for ascribing the king's pecuniary wants to unnecessary profuseness. "It is not to be concealed, that during the feast of the Nativity he was over much intent upon singing and dancing and vain changes of dress," is the strong language of the ecclesiastical chronicler,^{*} "which were given of the same colour and form to Queen Anne and to the Lady Elizabeth, daughter of the deceased king, whereat the people were scandalized, and the peers and prelates marvellously wondered; for it was said by many, that the king, either in expectation of the queen's death, or by divorce, for the procuring of which it was conjectured that he had sufficient cause, applied his mind in all ways to contracting a marriage with the said Elizabeth; he did not otherwise see that the realm would be confirmed to him, or his competitor deprived of hope."

That King Richard should strive to the utmost of his power to cancel the betrothment between Henry of Richmond and the Princess Elizabeth, whose stipulated marriage was alike the condition, as it formed the sole ground of hope, for his rival being supported in his attempts upon the crown, is a conclusion not only reasonable in itself, but one which can admit of no doubt.

Far different, however, is the surmise that Richard's own union with his niece could confirm to him the realm, or in the remotest degree strengthen his regal position. To have elevated her to the throne, in virtue of her illustrious descent, as King Edward's eldest daughter, in which position alone she could have given weight to his disputed title, would at once have impeached his own right to the throne, would have impugned the validity of the decree of Parliament which confirmed that assumed right, and would have made him a self-convicted usurper, by disproving not alone the charge of Queen Elizabeth's marriage being invalid, but rendering informal also the Act of Settlement by which her offspring were declared illegitimate, and himself the true, just, and rightful heir to the throne, arising from the stigma attached to the birth of young Edward V., and the legal impediments which excluded the offspring of the Duke of Clarence from the throne, by reason of their parents' attainder, which had never been reversed. The learned biographer of Elizabeth of York, in his most interesting memoir of that princess,[†] has devoted so much attention, and evinced such ability in his keen and searching examination into this disputed, and, as it would appear, most groundless accusation, that little opening is left for any more conclusive arguments than those which that eminent writer advances, after testing the charge insinuated by Richard's political enemies, and weighing their evidence by other and more valid documents.[‡] Convincing, however, as are the reasons which Sir Harris Nicolas brings forward to invalidate a charge which rests, as he most distinctly proves, on no more solid basis than surmise, yet being there advanced with a view of exculpating the youthful daughter of Edward IV., and not King Richard III., they can only be referred to in this memoir. Nevertheless, the learned writer, in defence of the niece, has adduced causes that equally tend to exonerate the uncle from a project in which both parties are alike implicated: for it is beyond all credibility to suppose that this young and singularly exemplary princess, who had not attained her nineteenth year, and had been subdued by trials and

^{*} Chron. Croy., p. 572.

[†] Privy Purse Expenses of Elizabeth of York, fol. 42. 46.

[‡] See Appendix UUU.

[§] Elizabeth of York, eldest daughter of King Edward IV., was born at Westminster, 11th of February, 1466.—Sandford, book v. p. 395.

mortifications,* more than sufficient to blunt the most buoyant and elastic spirit, could calmly insult the feelings of the reigning queen by appearing publicly in the character of her successor,† could unblushingly present herself to the assembled multitude as the affianced of their sovereign during the lifetime of his wife,‡ or that she should eagerly watch, as asserted,§ for the decease of her aunt, which, whether resulting from natural causes,|| or from poison said to be administered by her husband,¶ was to be the means of raising her kinswoman to the throne as the consort of her own uncle, and that too the same person who was accused of having murdered her brothers! for by admitting the certainty of their deaths only could she have been the heiress of Edward IV., or have possessed any claim to that inheritance, the admitted title to which, as giving stability to Richard's alleged unlawful seizure of it, was the cause assigned by his cotemporary,** for his selecting Elizabeth of York as his future consort. The supposition is, indeed, too monstrous for belief, and justifies the conclusion of the above-quoted most able historian, that King Richard "never contemplated a marriage with his niece," but "that the whole tale was invented with the view of blackening his character, to gratify the monarch in whose reign†† all the cotemporary writers who relate it flourished."‡‡ This conclusion is also strengthened by the fact that all these writers agree in exculpating the princess (then the royal consort of Henry VII.) from all participation in the scheme, whereas those who were cotemporary with the rumour, and give it as such only,§§ make no reservation, but, on the contrary, assign as the foundation for the surmise a circumstance which, if true, implicates her fully as much as her uncle; if false, exculpates both, and invalidates the report altogether. In addition to the arguments thus drawn from the untenable and unsatisfactory character of the rumour itself there exist many positive facts, which tend still further to weaken this aspersion of King Richard.

These ought to have their due weight in rescuing that monarch from an imputation which, it has been shown, originated with unscrupulous political assailants, but which has since too long passed and been received as an historical fact. It appears that, after the widow and children of King Edward IV. were induced to leave the sanctuary at Westminster, they were received "with honourable courtesie"||| by Richard and his royal consort, especially the Lady Elizabeth, who "ranked most familiarly in the queen's favour, and with as little distinction as sisters."¶¶ This admission alone would satisfactorily account for any coincidence in the form or texture of their dresses.*** The young princess was placed by the queen on an equality

* This young princess had early been promised in marriage to the Dauphin of France, and in the court of France was called Madame la Dauphine; but Louis, the reigning sovereign of that kingdom, broke his solemn pledge to Edward IV.: indignation at which not only led to the death of that king, but was the exciting cause of the severe misfortunes which afterwards overwhelmed his offspring.

† Chron. Croy., p. 572.

‡ Buck, lib. iv. p. 123.

¶ Rous, p. 218.

†† Grafton, Hall and Holinshed, with other chroniclers who perpetuate the rumour, or rather record it as an acknowledged fact, not only penned their works during the Tudor dynasty, but commenced them very many years after King Richard's death.

‡‡ Memoir of Elizabeth of York, p. 46.

§§ Buck, lib. iv. p. 127.

*** It was not until a later period of history that sumptuary regulations were issued for the "reformation of apparel for great estates or princesses, with other ladies and gentlemen." These statutes, with the "orders for precedence," yet extant in the Heralds' College, were drawn out by the Countess of Richmond, by command of her son Henry VII., in the eighth year of his reign. It is therefore evident that at this

† Ibid.

‡ Ibid.

** Chron. Croy., p. 572.

†† Chron. Croy., p. 572.

‡‡ Chron. Croy., p. 571.

with herself; and since no statement is made of Elizabeth being arrayed in the vestments of royalty, but simply that at feasts, in which "dancing and singing and vain changes of dress" were made a reproach to her uncle, she was attired in robes similar to those of her aunt, nothing can be more reasonable than the supposition that the queen should soften the painful position in which her young relative now appeared at court, as the daughter of Dame Elizabeth Grey, instead of, as heretofore, the princess royal of the line of York, by attiring her as became the niece of the reigning monarch, and one whom the queen loved and distinguished "as a sister." Moreover, the peculiar degree of favour which was quickly lavished upon the Lady Elizabeth, gave occasion for the surmise that she was destined to be the bride of the young Prince of Wales.* If such were, indeed, the case, she would become yet more an object of interest to her afflicted aunt; and the similarity in their dresses would be still more satisfactorily accounted for from the pleasure, melancholy but natural, which the queen would feel in arraying the contemplated bride of her deceased child as befitted the exalted station which she would probably have filled had his life been spared. The words which follow the passage recently quoted from the cotemporary chronicler, for the purpose of demonstrating the terms of familiarity on which the queen and the princess lived, seem to imply that it bore some connection to the deceased prince; "but neither society that she loved, nor all the pomp and festivity of royalty, could cure the languor or heal the wound in the queen's breast for the loss of her son."† As the consort of the Prince of Wales, Elizabeth would, indeed, have destroyed all hope of Richmond's attaining the crown; equally expedient, also, in regard to policy, would have been the alliance between the two cousins, with reference to its strengthening the position of King Richard: since, without in any degree compromising the justice of the plea by which he was elected to the throne, or repealing the act that made his brother's offspring illegitimate, the union of a daughter of Edward IV. with the heir of Richard III. would have softened the resentment of the opposing party, by the prospect which it held out of restoring the sceptre to King Edward's race in the person of his eldest child. But the demise of the Prince of Wales occurring so immediately after the reception of Elizabeth and her sisters at court, and before any such measure, if it were contemplated, could be adopted by the king for carrying into effect a scheme so desirable for restoring peace to the realm, this circumstance left his niece still the betrothed of Henry of Richmond, and, as such, an object of anxious and unceasing solicitude to her uncle. Hence arose the real cause of her close companionship with the queen, by being placed in personal attendance upon whom the young Elizabeth was kept in real though honourable captivity.‡ As far as the investigation of this, the darkest of King Richard's reputed crimes, has yet been pursued, the imputation has rested on conjecture alone; but as the question of whether he did actually wish to marry his niece is as important to his character as the allegation that he hastened the death of his wife to further that intention is altogether destructive of it, it is requisite to state, that Sir George Buck gives the substance of a letter said to have been written by the Lady Elizabeth to the Duke of Norfolk, which, if the fact could be substantiated, would fully support the injurious accusation as regards the king, and implicate his niece in the

time there existed no impediment to preclude the queen and the princesses from wearing corresponding dresses on general occasions. Had such an edict prevailed, subsequent laws would not have been required.

* Lingard, p. 262.

† Chron. Croy., p. 571.

‡ Lingard, vol. v. p. 262.

heinous charge of seeking to further her uncle's unhallowed and most criminal design. The Croyland writer unhesitatingly asserts that Richard contemplated a union with the Princess Elizabeth: but this assumption, it has been shown, was gratuitous, and based only on common rumour. Fabyan, another cotemporary writer, is altogether silent on the subject; so likewise is Rous, the only remaining historian coeval with the monarch, although, in summing up the catalogue of his imputed crimes, he includes the poisoning of his wife.* This catalogue, it may be necessary to remark, is compiled with such an evident party feeling towards the House of Lancaster, and so unreservedly includes every accusation advanced against King Richard without adducing proof in support of any single allegation, that it cannot be regarded as possessing a shadow of historical authority. Nothing, indeed, approaching to evidence has ever been adduced, with the exception of the letter above named, as cited by Buck; and his notice of so important a document appears in so questionable a form, that it goes but very little way towards establishing the point.

"When the midst and last of February was past," writes Sir George Buck,† "the Lady Elizabeth, being more impatient and jealous of the success than every one knew or conceived, wrote a letter to the Duke of Norfolk, intimating, first, that he was the man in whom she most affied, in respect of that love her father had ever bore him. Then she congratulates his many courtesies, in continuance of which she desires him to be a mediator with her to the king in behalf of the marriage propounded between them, who, as she wrote, was her only joy and maker in this world; and that she was his in heart and thought: withal insinuating that the better part of February was passed, and that she feared the queen would never die." "All these be her own words, written with her own hand; and this is the sum of her letter," continues the historian;‡ "which remains in the autograph or original draft, under her own hand, in the magnificent cabinet of Thomas, Earl of Arundel and Surrey."§

If Sir George Buck had himself seen the letter, and spoken of its contents from his own knowledge,—if either himself or any other writer had inserted a copy of it, or even a transcript from the "original draft," then, indeed, it would have been difficult to set aside such testimony. But considering that every search has been made for the alleged autograph,—that no trace of such a document has ever been discovered, or even known to have existed,—that no person is named as having seen it, or is instanced in support of its validity,—and, moreover, that Sir George Buck, throughout his history of Richard III., inserts, at full length, copies|| of almost every other instrument to which he refers, or gives marginal references to the source whence his authority was derived, but, in this instance, contents himself with merely stating the fact, and giving the substance of a letter which he appears to have received from rumour or hearsay information, the conviction cannot but arise that the letter in question was either not the production of Elizabeth of York, or, if so, that the insinuations referred to in it were misconstrued, and that its contents had reference to some other individual, and not, as was supposed, to her uncle.¶

* Rous, p. 215.

† Lib. iv. p. 128.

‡ Buck, lib. i. p. 128.

§ The valuable collection of MSS. made by Thomas, Earl of Arundel, now termed "The Arundelian Library," has been most carefully examined, with reference to the present work, but no trace appears of this extraordinary letter.

|| See pp. 23. 31. 48. 119. 121. 137. 139.

¶ "If the letter cited by Buck really existed, its purport may perhaps be reconciled with other facts, by supposing that he mistook, or assigned to it a wrong date, and

Although Richard III. is described by his enemies as being destitute of all principle, moral and religious, it was not so with his gentle niece; and the piety and virtue for which she was pre-eminently distinguished throughout a life of peculiar trial and vicissitude* materially lessen the effect of the slight evidence just produced, though it sufficiently accounts for the "sisterly" affection with which she was beloved by the queen, her intimate companionship with whom was, in all likelihood, the cause of the injurious rumour which has alike darkened her own fame and that of the king. Her widowed parent likewise shared in the odium which attaches to all the parties concerned in promoting this unnatural union, it being stated that she was so overjoyed at the proposed alliance of King Richard with her daughter, that she sent over to France to withdraw her son, the Marquis of Dorset, from attendance on the Earl of Richmond,† soliciting his return to England to participate in the advancement and favour which Richard had promised to show him. Considering that Queen Anne was living at the time the alleged union was proposed, and that some length of period must have elapsed before the dispensation could be procured from Rome, which was necessary to legalize the marriage of an uncle with his niece, it is very improbable that so circumspect and politic a woman as the widowed queen of Edward IV. would risk the life of her only surviving son, by withdrawing him from the service of the prince, who was the betrothed of his sister, to place him in the power of a monarch who was reported to have slain his brothers. It is, indeed, altogether beyond belief that a mother should promote the marriage of her daughter with the reputed murderer of her other children,—the uncle who had deprived her sons of their birthright, and degraded herself and her daughters from their high estate to the rank of private gentlewomen, in order to possess himself of their inheritance. One of the charges must be false; and either the widowed Elizabeth was satisfied that King Richard had not destroyed her offspring, or, otherwise, she must, in common with her daughter and the king, have suffered unjustly from rumours based on shallow foundations, or inferences drawn from false premises to suit the degraded and deceitful policy of the times. It is, nevertheless, due to her to state, that the chroniclers who narrate the circumstances of her endeavouring to detach the Marquis of Dorset from Richmond's interest, place it as occurring at the time when she quitted sanctuary‡ with her daughters, and, consequently, before the queen's illness or the death of the young prince gave an opening for Richard to propose an alliance with the youthful Elizabeth.

that, in fact, the person for whom she expressed so eager a desire to marry was Henry instead of Richard. Many parts of the abstract would agree with this hypothesis, for the allusion to February and Queen Anne, Buck calls an 'insinuation;' and a passage of doubtful import becomes doubly so when construed by so suspicious a reporter. The only thing which renders this surmise unlikely is, that the letter is said to have been addressed by the Duke of Norfolk, who perished at Bosworth Field: but may not its address, too, have been only inferred, arising from its being in the possession of the duke's descendant?—*Memoirs of Elizabeth of York*, fol. xlix.

* "From her youth, her veneration for the Supreme Being and devotion to Him were admirable. Her love to her brothers and sisters was unbounded. Her affection and respect to the poor and to religious ministers were singularly great."—*Bern. Andreas, Cotton. MS.*, Dom. xviii.

† Buck, p. 127.

‡ "Wherefore the king sent to the queen, being in sanctuary, divers and often messengers, which first should excuse and purge him of all things before against her attempted or procured, and afterwards should so largely promise promotions innumerable and benefices, not only to her, but also to her son Lord Thomas Marquis Dorset, that they should bring her, if it were possible, into some wanhope, or, as men say, into a fool's paradise."—*Grafton, Cont. More*, p. 198.

If, then, amidst such contradictory accounts, any opinion can be hazarded on the probability of a fact so involved in mystery, the natural conclusion to be drawn from this last statement would be that the queen-dowager was induced to quit the sanctuary from the prospect of her daughter being allied to King Richard's heir, and that she wished, from this circumstance, to detach her son from the Earl of Richmond, and, in consequence, made the attempt at the period mentioned, it being a proposition, under her peculiar and very trying circumstances, that would justify her saying, without compromising her own or her daughter's honour, "that all offences were forgotten and forgiven," and that she was "highly incorporate in the king's heart."*

It appears that the severe illness which threatened the life of Queen Anne occurred a few days after the Christmas festivities. From the period of her child's decease a report certainly prevailed of her languid and precarious state of health;† and the fatigue resulting from the entertainments which ushered in the new year of 1485 may, very possibly, have increased the disease which originated in "pining grief" and desponding of heart at her severe domestic bereavement. But the charge of King Richard having poisoned his wife, which fills up the measure of this monarch's alleged crimes, is not only negatived by the fact of her slow but gradual decline, and the duration of her illness for a period infinitely too long to have seemed likely to result from sinister means or violent measures, but is still further disproved by the testimony of the Croyland historian, who expressly avers that, from the commencement of her attack, the queen was under the care and control of physicians; and that the king abided so implicitly by their advice, that he withdrew from the society of his consort‡ when this separation was rendered necessary in consequence of her increasing illness. Even this act, however, which was the result, and not the cause, of her sufferings, has been made a further cause of reproach to her husband, who, by the Tudor chroniclers,§ has been accused of hastening her death by neglect and unkindness, nay, of even spreading a report that she was actually dead, in the hope that indignation at such heartless indifference for her fate would more speedily terminate her existence. If, indeed, King Richard had recourse to such an expedient, and if the rumour designed for the queen's ears was rendered more painful to a wife's feelings by being accompanied by the most harsh and inhuman reflections on her enfeebled state,|| his behaviour, as detailed by the same writer to his declining queen, when with tearful eyes, and in sorrowful agony, she repaired to his presence to inquire "why he had judged her worthy to die,"¶ is very singularly opposed to the merciless conduct which led to so affecting an interview. "The king answered her with fair words," he soothed her grief, comforted her with smiling and tender caresses, "bidding her be of good cheer, for to his knowledge she should have no other cause."** Nor is there, indeed, the slightest proof on record to show that Queen Anne had other cause for death than the gradual but certain effects of the lingering consumption which was surely, but slowly, consuming her. From the fact of the court removing to Windsor†† on the 12th of January, shortly after the first symptoms of danger appeared, it would seem as if every means was adopted that human skill could devise for checking the progress of the disease, and such as were consistent with

* Grafton, p. 199.

† Chron. Croy., p. 570.

‡ Pol. Virg., p. 557; Grafton, p. 201; Hall, p. 407.

§ Ibid.

** Grafton, p. 201.

† Buck, lib. ii. p. 44.

¶ Ibid.

†† Harl. MSS., 433, pp. 200, 201.

the assertion that Richard was "affectionately inclined to his wife,"* and had the commendation of a "loving and indulgent husband."† But, in truth, from the very commencement of her seizure, the physicians had pronounced the queen's case to be hopeless, and even considered it unlikely that she would survive the month of February.‡ She lingered, however, until March, "about the middle of which month," says the Croyland writer, "on the day of the great eclipse of the sun, she died, and was buried at Westminster, with all honour befitting a queen."§

So terminated, in the spring of the year 1485, the life of Queen Anne, the only surviving daughter of the Earl of Warwick, and the partner, for twelve years, of the last monarch of the princely race of York; the accession of which dynasty to the throne, and its subsequent deposition, had mainly contributed to fix upon her father his title of "the king-maker." She sank to rest in the 31st year of her age, after wearing the crown as queen consort for the limited space of twenty months—a period, notwithstanding its short duration, that commemorates her as the only instance in our regal annals of a twice crowned and twice enthroned queen, a period which was characterized by the elevation of her husband to the throne, although, at the time, far removed from the direct line of succession, and which chronicles her child as bearing the title of Prince of Wales,—which had been so ominous to his race,||—for an interval as brief as that which commemorates her own betrothment to the heir-apparent of the House of Lancaster; by virtue of which political contract she forms one out of the six¶ illustrious individuals who alone have borne the high and ancient appellation of Princess of Wales. This early and transient prospect of succeeding to the exalted rank to which she eventually attained, and which Rous her cotemporary has perpetuated by surmounting her portrait with two mystic hands, the one tendering to her the crown of Lancaster, the other that of York, adds another to the many remarkable events which procured for her the epithet of "the pageant queen,"** that of receiving homage as Princess of Wales from one branch of the race of Plantagenet, although the one which was never destined to elevate her to the throne,—and attaining the dignity of queen through a union with the youngest member of the rival house, him in whom the race as well as the dynasty became altogether extinct, but who, as neither heir-apparent nor heir-presumptive, could hold out no prospect at the time of bestowing upon her that regal coronet which, wreathed with the red rose, she had indeed once been led to expect as her marriage portion. Its after-possession brought with it but little of peace, and still less of happiness, arising from the rival broils and domestic trials which marked the brief interval that elapsed before the white rose of York withered on the brows of the last of the Plantagenet queens, the gentle and amiable consort of Richard III.

Her decease, occurring on a day rendered remarkable by a total eclipse of the sun, an event viewed with superstitious feelings and gloomy forebodings

* Buck, lib. iv. p. 129.

† Ibid., p. 130.

‡ Ibid., p. 128.

§ Chron. Croy., p. 571.

|| Richard, Duke of York, the father of Richard III., (created prince by the Parliament, which admitted his claim to the throne,) was killed at Wakefield; Edward, Prince of Wales, the heir of King Henry VI., was slain at Tewkesbury; Edward, Prince of Wales, eldest son of Edward IV., (and who, for a few months, bore the title of King Edward V.,) is reputed to have been murdered in the Tower; and Edward, Prince of Wales, the only child of Richard III., died suddenly a few months after he was advanced to the title.

¶ Strickland's Lives of the Queens of England, vol. iii. p. 362.

** Lawrence's Mem. of the Queens of England, p. 440.

at this early period of history, doubtless added force to the rumours which had long prevailed to the disadvantage of the king, and contributed to raise fresh reports, which, being based on compassion for the deceased queen, were eagerly adopted as facts by Richard's political enemies, and thence found their way into the pages of history by succeeding prejudiced annalists. The gorgeous manner, however, in which the obsequies of the deceased queen were solemnized, the magnificence* of the funeral, the solemnity† by which it was characterized, the tears‡ which her husband is allowed to have shed when personally attending her remains to St. Peter's, Westminster,§ near the high altar of which she was interred, with all honour befitting a queen|| —not only give proof that her decease “added not a little to the king's sufferings and sorrows,”¶ but fully justify the biographer of her reputed rival in stating (after defending Richard from the calumnious accusation of poisoning his wife to espouse his niece), that it is a charge which is deserving of attention for no other reason than as it affords a remarkable example of the manner in which ignorance and prejudice sometimes render what is called history little better than a romance.**

* Buck, lib. iv. p. 129.

† Baker's Chron., p. 232.

‡ Chron. Croy., p. 571.

** Memoirs of Elizabeth of York, p. 46.

† Grafton, p. 201.

§ Grafton, p. 201.

¶ Buck, lib. ii. p. 44.

CHAPTER XVIII.

Richard III. disclaims all intention of marrying the Princess Elizabeth.—The forced loans the true cause of his unpopularity at this period.—Elizabeth of York sent to Sheriff Hutton.—Injustice to King Richard.—Prejudices of his accusers.—His wise and beneficial laws.—His efforts to redress grievances and reform abuses.—Advantage to the country from his foreign and domestic policy.—Report of the Earl of Richmond being concealed in Wales.—His narrow escape from being captured by Richard's soldiery.—His re-appearance at the French court.—Sir James Blount releases the Earl of Oxford.—They join the Earl of Richmond at Paris.—Richard III. quits London and fixes his abode at Nottingham.—Strong measures taken to repel the impending invasion.—Predilection of the House of York for Nottingham Castle.—Richard's proclamation and Richmond's reply.—The earl obtains assistance from the French king.—Perfidy of Richard's counsellors.—Suspicious conduct of Lord Stanley.—Secrecy of Richmond's measures.—He lands at Milford Haven.—Passes rapidly through Wales.—Arrives at Shrewsbury, and enters Litchfield.—King Richard quits Nottingham and marches to Leicester to intercept his progress.—The two armies meet near Redmore Plain.—Disposition of the hostile forces.—Battle of Bosworth Field.—Treachery of the Lord Stanley, the Earl of Northumberland, and Sir William Stanley.—The king performs prodigies of valour.—Challenges Richmond to single combat.—Is perfidiously dealt with, overpowered by numbers, and mortally wounded.—Death of King Richard III.

If the exigences of the state at the period of his son's decease allowed King Richard but little leisure to indulge in the anguish consequent upon a stroke as poignant as it was irreparable, still less time or opportunity was permitted him to brood over the loss of that gentle consort who, from childhood, was associated in the vicissitudes that characterized the fortunes of his race. The kingdom, indeed, was on the eve of a rebellion;* perfidy within his household† had destroyed Richard's confidence in those that surrounded him;‡ and rumour from without, with her hundred tongues, by rendering him odious to his subjects at large, had completed the measure of his misfortune. Little is it then to be marvelled at that the monarch was altogether subdued by a state of things so disheartening, or that he felt keenly the loss of that faithful partner with the remembrance of whom must have been associated the recollection of days of unmingled happiness and prosperity. Many trifling anecdotes, indeed, although in themselves unimportant, demonstrate the affection which Richard III. entertained for the companion of his youth. One of his last acts prior to the queen's decease, and at the time when her dissolution was hourly expected, was a grant of 300*l.* to that university which in the preceding year had decreed an annual mass for “the happy state” of the king and “his dearest consort, Anne;”§ and one of the first instruments which bears his signature after her demise affords proof also of the disinclination which he felt to take part in those pageants which heretofore he had considered it a duty to promote, and in the celebration of

* Fabyan, p. 518.

† See Sharon Turner's Middle Ages, vol. iv. p. 57.

‡ Fabyan, p. 518.

§ Cott. MS. Faustina, c. iii. 405.; see also Cooper's Ann. of Cambridge, p. 229.