

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.

which he had invariably been accompanied and assisted by his queen. The document here alluded to is a commission addressed to Lord Maltravers, appointing him his deputy at the approaching festival "of the glorious martyr, and patron of England, St. George," which solemn feast the king could not, at this time, "in his own person, conveniently keep."\*

There can be little doubt, indeed, from the superstition which characterized those times, that the astronomical phenomenon which marked the day of Queen Anne's decease was pregnant with evil consequences to her husband. The ignorance of the age, which construed even the most natural events into good or evil omens,† considered the eclipse of the sun to be an unequivocal proof that some unhallowed means had been used to accelerate her dissolution, and regarded it as affording additional evidence of the truth of the rumour that her illness had originated in the king's desire of elevating his niece to the throne.

In vain was every pains taken by the monarch to prove the groundlessness of such a charge, in vain his efforts to show, by his actions, that whatever seeming foundation there might have been for the report, arising from the coincidence in the dresses of the aunt and the niece, yet that it was so judged of by others on the ground of political expediency alone. It was sufficient for his enemies that he carefully guarded the young Elizabeth from collision with the partisans of Henry of Richmond, and that his queen, shortly after she was left childless, followed her offspring to the tomb, and left an opening for King Richard to elevate to the throne the affianced of his much-hated rival.

Whatever may have been the nature of King Richard's views with reference to the Lady Elizabeth,—whether in accordance with the dissembling policy of the age, he tacitly permitted the report to gain ground from the wish to mortify and thwart the hopes and expectations of the Earl of Richmond,—yet this one fact is incontrovertible,—Richard neither sought a divorce during the life of the queen, notwithstanding his niece was betrothed to Henry of Richmond long before apprehensions were excited for the safety of his royal consort, neither did he profess himself the suitor of his young kinswoman, nor give any pretence for asserting that he entertained so unnatural a design after death had severed the only tie that interposed against its accomplishment: on the contrary, the king promptly adopted measures to exculpate himself from a charge equally at variance with policy and religion.

Immediately after the remains of the deceased queen were "honourably" laid at rest, Richard summoned a council of state for the express purpose of distinctly repelling the calumnious report relative to his proposed union with his niece.

He solemnly protested, "with many words, that such a thing had never entered into his mind;"‡ and it must be admitted that if he were guiltless of the charge he could not have adopted a more manly course than this speedy denouncement of an act of which he felt himself unjustly accused. Not

\* Harl. MSS., 433, fol. 213.

† See Warkworth's Chronicle for an account of the comet,—"the most marvellous blazing star,"—that appeared in the eleventh year of the reign of King Edward IV.; and also for many examples of the superstition which characterized that age—"tokens of death, of pestilence, of great battle, of war, and of many other divers tokens" which have been showed in England "for amending of men's living," the which "note of prognosticating prodigies" are the more valuable from being penned in the same year in which they happened.—*Warkworth's Chronicle, printed by the Camden Society,* pp. 22, 24, 70.

‡ Chron. Croy., p. 572.

satisfied, however, with this explicit denial before his great officers of state, the king further resolved on making his abjuration yet more public and decisive. Accordingly, "a little before Easter," in the great hall of St. John's Priory, Clerkenwell, Richard, "in the presence of the mayor and citizens of London, with a clear and loud voice repeated the aforesaid disavowal;"\* contradicting most unreservedly the invidious rumour before the assembled multitude, and protesting his innocence of having ever contemplated a marriage so repugnant to the habits and usages of the English nation. The promptitude with which the king executed the strong measures he had thus resolved upon, cannot but add considerable weight to his distinct and emphatic refutation of the charge. He allowed himself no time for considering the possible advantages that might result from a union with his niece, or even of ascertaining the probability of reconciling his subjects to such an alliance, in case, "as a disciple of the Church of Rome, he had sought to fortify his throne, and prevent a civil war, by availing himself of an indulgence† which then, as now, is tolerated in Roman Catholic countries as legal;"‡ but as soon as he was at liberty to select a fresh partner to his throne, he summoned a council of state to negative a report so offensive: and within the shortest possible period that decency admitted after this more private abjuration, he called before him, not only the civic authorities of London, but "the most sad and discreet persons of the same city in great number, being present many of the lords spiritual and temporal of our land, and the substance of all our household,"§ to reiterate his denial of having ever contemplated—for such are his own words—"acting otherwise than is according to honour, truth, and the peace and rightfulness of this our land."||

Such, in effect, is the testimony of the Croyland chronicler, who, after stating that the queen expired about "the middle of March," specifies the king's interview in the great hall of St. John, as occurring "a little before Easter," seasons so closely approximating that the ceremonial of the queen's funeral obsequies could scarcely have terminated ere the king presented himself before the citizens of London, publicly to refute an accusation eagerly seized upon by his opponents to render him yet more unpopular with the great mass of the people. But words and deeds were alike ineffectual towards reinstating the king in the affections of his subjects. The rumours that took their rise in those festivities, the alleged profuseness attending which was considered as the immediate cause of the hated tax he had been compelled to levy, fell in too well with the discontent of the multitude to afford due chance of belief in an asseveration which was imputed, not to choice, but to necessity. "The king was compelled to excuse himself," says the before-named chronicler,¶ "because his proposed marriage had become known to those who would not that it should occur."

And again, "Sir Richard Ratcliffe and Sir William Catesby, whose opinions he scarcely ever dare resist, brought forward twelve doctors in theology,

\* Chron. Croy., p. 572.

† The legality or illegality of a marriage of relations must depend upon the rules of the church to which the parties belong. It was undoubtedly forbidden by the canon law; but the same law forbade a marriage between persons within the fourth degree of kindred. The pope was, however, considered to possess a dispensing power; and though, as a matter of feeling, there is a material difference between the union of first or second cousins and the marriage of a niece to her uncle, each alliance was illegal without the exercise of that power. The pontiff not only might, but often did, authorize the marriage of uncles and nieces.—*Memoir of Elizabeth of York,* p. 42.

‡ Memoir of Elizabeth of York, p. 42.

§ Ibid.

|| Ibid.

¶ Chron. Croy., p. 572.

who asserted that the pope could not grant a dispensation on such a degree of consanguinity."\* That the supreme head of the Romish church could, and frequently has, exercised that power, and that he continues up to the present day to sanction corresponding alliances in kingdoms under his immediate ecclesiastical control, is an historical fact that cannot be denied or refuted;† but that Richard would attempt, by such an extreme measure, to accomplish a purpose which would bring him in collision with his subjects of all ranks, by setting at defiance the usages of his country, and striking at the root of its prejudices, both civil and religious, is too improbable to admit of its being placed in opposition with the recorded fact of his fervent and solemn denial of the charge, even if the ecclesiastical chronicler himself had not summed up his account by the admission, that "it was thought by many that the king's advisers, alarmed lest there should be foundation for the rumour, had started these objections, from fear that if the Princess Elizabeth attained the royal dignity she would avenge the death of her relatives, the Lord Rivers and Sir Richard Grey, upon such as had counselled the deed."‡

Most justly has it been observed, with reference to this occurrence, that "if a statement which stands on very dubious authority cannot be believed without assigning to him to whom it relates conduct directly at variance with that which the public records show he pursued, and if credence on that statement can only be given by imputing to the person an inconsistency so great, and a change of opinion so flagrant, that his political existence must have been endangered, there is just cause for rejecting every thing short of positive proof."§

It is very clear that King Richard left no legitimate means untried to stem the torrent of undeserved calumny, and to testify, by his actions, how grievously he had been defamed. He addressed a letter|| to the citizens of York on the 11th of April, bitterly complaining of the "false and abominable language and lies," the "bold and presumptuous open speeches,"¶ spread abroad to his disadvantage, requiring the magistrates of that city to repress "all such slanders and take up the spreaders of it:" but the strongest proof that he gave of his wish to discountenance so injurious a rumour was his removing the Princess Elizabeth to an asylum far distant from himself or his court. The regal palace, indeed, was no fitting abode for his young niece, now that her aunt was no longer an occupant of its silent halls. To place her again under the care of her mother was at once to give her into the hands of his rival. Richard, therefore, chose a middle path, and sent her to share the nominal captivity of the youthful Earl of Warwick at Sheriff Hutton, "a goodly and a pleasant house of his own in Yorkshire, where he had liberty, large diet, all pleasure, and safety."\*\* The monarch neither imprisoned the young Elizabeth, nor acted with cruelty towards her; he neither committed her to a solitary dungeon, nor concealed her place of abode from her friends or from the world: he kept her still in "honourable" captivity,†† although the evil reports which prevailed, no longer permitted him to do so under his own immediate eye. But if that were imprisonment which she shared with young Edward of Warwick, then, indeed, it was "a

\* Chron. Croy., p. 572.

† Marriages between uncles and nieces have been very frequent, and allowed in other countries by the church. In the House of Austria, marriages of this kind have been very usual, the pope dispensing them.—Buck, lib. iv. p. 129.

‡ Chron. Croy., p. 572.

§ See Appendix VVV.

\*\* Buck, lib. v. p. 135.

¶ Memoir of Elizabeth of York, p. 46.

‡ Drake's Ebor., p. 119.

†† Lingard, vol. v. p. 262.

prison courteous," as John Froisard saith,\* for every latitude and indulgence were permitted consistent with the vigilant watch that was of necessity kept over the two members of his family, whom faction would gladly have seized upon as the individuals best suited to further the ends of the disaffected, and to insure the downfall of their uncle.

There is nothing, however, so hard to disabuse as the public mind — nothing so difficult to overcome as popular prejudice. Perhaps no stronger instance of this can be adduced than the degree of credit which has been attached for ages to every idle and vague rumour propagated to the disadvantage of Richard III., and the slight attention which has been directed to those really excellent and imperishable acts which rest not on report alone, but are indelibly connected with his name. His just and equitable laws,† his wise and useful statutes, his provident edicts, and bold enactments, have, indeed, been eulogized by the soundest lawyers,‡ and called forth the admiration of the most profound politicians.§

Brief as was the period during which he was permitted to rectify the abuses, and meet the exigences of those troubled times, he not only revived the substance of many obsolete Saxon laws in all their original purity, but he instituted fresh ones, based on such solid ground, and framed with such legislative wisdom and ability, that to this day many of the statutes of Richard III. remain in full force, and justify the encomiums which his enemies have passed upon them. "In no king's reign," states Sir Richard Baker, the chronicler of the English monarchs, "were better laws made than in the reign of this man:" "he took the ways of being a good king if he had come to be king by ways that had been good."|| Even Lord Bacon, the biographer of his rival, bears testimony to "his politic and wholesome laws,"¶ an admission of no small importance, as emanating from the highest legal authority in the realm, and from one of the most learned men who are numbered amongst the lord chancellors of England; notwithstanding which, so firmly established was the belief in this sovereign's malpractices that Lord Bacon felt himself obliged to modify (in accordance with the prejudices of the age) the statement which his own sense of justice drew forth, by adding that "these laws were interpreted to be but the brocade of a usurper, thereby to woo and to win the hearts of the people."\*\* "He was a good law-maker for the ease and solace of the common people," further testifies this profound philosopher and statesman; yet in summing up the "virtues and merits" of King Richard, he could not forbear adding that "even those virtues themselves were conceived to be feigned:†† so hard is it to banish early impressions, so difficult to remove prejudices which have been long and steadily rooted in the minds even of the most discerning and erudite judges. Richard III. did, indeed, merit more generous treatment from his subjects, for amidst the turmoils and vexations, the mortifications and disappointments, which fell so thickly and so heavily upon him, his attention was unceasingly directed to one point — that of emancipating the great body of the people from the many oppressions under which they had so long and so painfully laboured, and diffusing a nobler and better spirit among all ranks, by the soundness of his edicts, and the high principles of justice, religion and morality on which they were based. "The king's highness is fully determined to see administration of justice to be had throughout

\* Buck, lib. v. p. 135.

† Bacon, pp. 2, 3.

§ Buck, lib. v. p. 136.

|| Chron. of Kings of England, p. 234.

\*\* Ibid.

‡ See Sharon Turner, vol. iii. p. 72.

¶ Bacon's Henry VII., p. 3.

†† Ibid., p. 2.

his realm, and to reform and punish all extortion and oppression," were the words of the proclamation in which, during a brief progress into Kent, Richard invited the humblest of his people, who had been unlawfully wronged, to make his petition "to his highness; and he shall be heard, and without delay have such convenient remedy as shall accord with the laws:" for, finally concludes this important document, "his grace is utterly purposed that all his true subjects shall live in rest and quiet, and peaceably enjoy their lands and goods according to the laws."\* As a means of checking the unjust verdicts which had of late years prevailed, bringing the courts of law into contempt, and frustrating the benefit designed by that noblest of our institutions — trial by jury, he struck at the root of the evil by decreeing that no individual but such as possessed freehold property to the amount of forty shillings a year should be deemed eligible to be chosen a juror:† he also granted to every justice of the peace power to bail such persons as were arrested for felony on suspicion alone:‡ but the most beneficial of his enactments, and that which afforded the greatest relief to the community at large, was a law prohibiting the seizure of property belonging to persons imprisoned on a charge of felony before conviction§—a measure which was loudly called for in consequence of the opening which a contrary usage had long afforded to the powerful to oppress the poor, their weaker opponents, and by false indictment to set at defiance all principles of justice and humanity. He framed most admirable laws for the better regulation of the temporary courts held during fairs||—courts which in themselves, indeed, were insignificant,¶ but which, as instituted to do justice to buyers and sellers, and summarily to redress disorders committed during these chartered meetings, were invested at this time with very considerable power, arising from the importance that attached, in the middle ages, to those periodical marts, which were founded as the only medium of bartering with the merchants of other lands, and diffusing generally throughout the kingdom the various manufactures and staple commodities of its most distant provinces. The protection, indeed, which was afforded by King Richard to commerce and trade has been already partially detailed; it may, however, be further observed, that although he had reigned but twenty months up to the period under consideration, yet the nation had already extended its commerce towards the North Pole as far as Iceland,\*\* and was peaceably trafficking with Denmark††, Germany, Flanders and the Netherlands,‡‡ as also those rich republics in the south of Europe, Genoa§§ and Venice,||| which were then in the zenith of their prosperity. His attention to the maritime interests of the country are abundantly shown by edicts tending to the safety and protection¶¶ of those whose enterprising spirit led them to brave the perils which, in these early days of navigation, were inseparable from long and distant voyages; while the permission which he at this time granted for English wool being transported beyond the straits of Morocco\*\*\* was scarcely less beneficial to the realm than the restriction which was judicially imposed on the importers of foreign products, to dispose of their commodities wholesale, or otherwise to take them back within a given and limited period.†††

\* Harl. MSS., 433, fol. 128.

† Ibid., p. 478.

‡ Ibid., p. 479.

§ These courts were entitled "Pie-poudre," a corruption of pied-poudre, dusty-foot.

\*\* Harl. MSS., 433, fol. 88. 159.

†† Harl. MSS., 433, fol. 86.

‡‡ Ibid., fol. 71.

§§ Ibid., fol. 104.

† Stat. of Realm, vol. ii. p. 479.

|| Ibid., p. 480.

¶¶ Buck, lib. i. p. 33.

§§ Ibid., fol. 30.

¶¶ Ibid., fol. 159. 180.

††† Stat. of Realm, vol. ii. p. 508.

The register, in short, which so minutely details the public acts of this monarch, affords innumerable examples of the salutary results of his legislative ability, if deduced only from the vast sums which, in an incredibly brief space of time, enriched the country, arising from money received on imports from Spain alone;\* while the abuses which he rectified in fines, feoffments and tenures, and the admirable regulations which he introduced on these and other modes of transferring landed property, together with his edicts against gambling,† and his encouragement of the truly English pastimes of archery and shooting, when legally exercised,‡ justify the observation,§ that "the proclamation of Perkin Warbeck in the ensuing reign, being addressed to popular feeling, may be considered as expressing the general estimate of Richard's reign: although desire of rule did blind him, yet in his other actions he was noble, and loved the honour of the realm, and the contentment and comfort of his nobles and people."|| In carrying out and perfecting measures thus worthy of a great monarch, one who coveted the affection of his people, and sought to obtain it by devoting the energies of a powerful mind towards redressing their grievances, and correcting abuses so detrimental to the welfare and peace of the realm, did Richard III. pass the period that elapsed after the decease of his queen, and while anticipating the threatened invasion of the Earl of Richmond—a period the beneficial occupation of which procured for him the ungracious admission, in after-years, of "beginning to counterfeit the image of a good and well-disposed person,"¶ but which bid fair, had he lived sufficiently long to reap the fruits of a soil so judiciously cultivated, to have secured lasting advantages to his country, and proportionate renown to himself.

These pacific occupations did not, however, lessen the king's watchfulness over the motives of the insurgents, or lead him to relax in his vigilance against the threatened invasion. Various reports had reached him from time to time relative to the intentions of the rebels, but the movements of their leader were enveloped in a degree of mystery and uncertainty that caused the king considerable anxiety. From the time that Henry of Richmond had been so courteously received by the French monarch after the earl's flight from the principality of Bretagne, or rather from the period when a truce had been sought for by Charles VIII., and a league of amity been agreed to by Richard III., no satisfactory information had been received respecting his rival. Under the plea of strengthening his cause, by seeking out the exiled supporters of the House of Lancaster, the representative of that fallen dynasty had abruptly quitted Paris and the asylum there afforded to himself and his partisans, and had subsequently eluded the vigilance of King Richard's spies to ascertain or gain intimation of his retreat. Respecting his subsequent movements, the continental historians, together with the English chroniclers are altogether silent; not so, however, the Welsh bards: their cotemporary metrical lays abound with such marked allusions to the Earl of Richmond and to King Richard, under the emblems of the eagle and the lion, in conformity with the allegorical style of the poetry of that age, that there is every reason to believe that Richmond passed privately from France into Wales;\*\*\* and that many wild and allegorical compositions which are yet extant refer to his perilous adventures when concealed for many months among the fastnesses of his native Cambria, wandering in various disguises

\* Harl. MSS., 433, p. 99, 100.

† Ibid., fol. 219.

‡ Turner's Middle Ages, vol. iv. p. 93.

§ Bacon, p. 155.

\*\* Pennant's Tour in Wales, vol. i. p. 9.

‡ Ibid.

¶ Grafton, p. 200.

among the haunts of his youth, partly to ascertain the sentiments of the populace as regards King Richard, and partly to judge how far he himself might venture to renew an invasion which, on the former occasion, had terminated so disastrously for himself and his supporters.

By what means the king's suspicions were excited, it is not possible to say; but the fact of some intimation having been made of the probability of his rival being concealed in Wales is evident from the circumstance of a tradition having been handed down in the Mostyn family, that the earl's retreat was actually discovered by Richard's emissaries, and that, while sojourning with the chief of that ancient race, the house was surrounded by soldiers, and Richmond, escaping with difficulty through an open window in the rear of the house, lay concealed in an obscure spot, which, under the epithet of the "King's Hole,"\* yet perpetuates the romantic tale, and favours the belief that the future fortunes of the Tudor dynasty were greatly influenced by personal communication with his correspondents and allies in the west. It is certain Richmond was in full possession of all that was passing at the English court; he had both heard, and gave credit to, the rumour of King Richard's design of espousing the Princess Elizabeth: and if the reputed report of the alliance was really propagated from political views, and with the design of counteracting the schemes of the disaffected party, the device had well nigh succeeded, for the earl, trusting to the indignation which he foresaw would be excited against so unpopular a measure, resolved on strengthening his own cause by seeking to ally himself in marriage with one of the most powerful and influential families in Wales, that of Sir Walter Herbert,† whose parents had been entrusted with his guardianship in childhood, and to whom they had hoped to have united their eldest daughter.‡

The Earl of Northumberland, firmly attached to King Richard's service, had married this lady; and it was a stroke of consummate policy that led Richmond to decide on making, at this crisis of his fate, proposals to her sister, and thus, possibly, to pave the way by a renewal of early ties for interesting in his cause two chiefs now openly opposed to his schemes, but whose overwhelming influence in the north and in the west would give such weight to his future movements.

The reappearance of the Earl of Richmond amongst his exiled friends was as abrupt as had been his disappearance. Full of hope, and confident of success, bringing with him vast sums of money, and captains of known experience to aid him with their councils, he did not present himself either to his partisans or at the French court until measures were sufficiently matured to admit of his being welcomed by the former with enthusiasm, and received by the latter with that courteousness which is generally extended to those on whom fortune smiles, and over whose prospects the sun of prosperity is shining.§ Keen and observant as was the English monarch on all points connected with his own interest, or the safety of the realm, it may be supposed that he was not slow to observe the increasing strength and well-organized schemes of the rebels, notwithstanding the mystery that veiled the individual movements of their leader. Had he, however, been lulled into fancied security by the seeming inactivity of his opponent, the uncertainty of his own position could not but be painfully forced upon him

\* Pennant's Tour in Wales, vol. i. p. 9.

† Grafton, p. 208.

‡ Life of Margaret Beaufort, p. 73.

§ "When the earl was thus furnished and appointed with his trusty company, and was escaped all the dangers, labyrinths and snares that were set for him, no marvel though he was jocund and glad of the prosperous success that happened in his affairs."—Grafton, p. 194.

by the continual defection of many wealthy commoners and influential men, in all ranks of society, who, despite his vigilance and conciliatory measures, were perpetually reported to him as having passed over to the enemy.\* Still no positive imminent danger appeared to menace the kingdom, and Richard continued to reside at Westminster for the remainder of the spring, 1485, exerting himself to ameliorate the condition of his people, and bestowing earnest attention upon all works of charity and beneficence, as is instanced by the last document which received his signature prior to quitting the metropolis—that of empowering the "Hermit of Reculver," by royal commission, to collect alms for the purpose of restoring an ancient church "consecrated to the sepulture of shipwrecked mariners, and those who have perished by casualty of storms."†

But the crisis which was to decide the destinies of England, as well as the fate of her monarch, was fast approaching. Sir James Blount, the governor of Hammes, a veteran soldier in whom Richard had reposed the greatest confidence, not only abandoned his trust and deserted to the Earl of Richmond, but released from captivity the Earl of Oxford,‡ a state prisoner of known experience in martial acquirements, and who had been placed under his charge as a determined enemy of the House of York.

This dereliction, it is considered, was owing to the machinations of Bishop Morton; but the act itself was rendered more mortifying to Richard by its being accompanied with the information that Richmond's reappearance had been concomitant with this most important addition to his forces.§ It is true that prompt measures were forthwith taken for recapturing the castle and town of Hammes, and that the success which attended them, in some degree, reassured the English monarch;|| nevertheless, the fact itself, and the desertion of Sir John Fortescue and some of the garrison at Calais, which immediately followed, could not fail to convince him that some powerful agent was tampering with the troops of his most important strongholds. It must, also, have impressed upon him the conviction that repose no longer befitted him, but that his personal presence had become imperatively necessary to check the tendency to revolt, which was thus fearfully apparent, and to nullify the seditious spirit which it was the object of his enemies to excite throughout his dominions. Accordingly, "a little before Pentecost," King Richard once more quitted the metropolis, and "proceeded to the north."¶

Each day added strength to the current rumour that the rebels were hastening their approach to England, yet Richard could obtain no decisive information as to where they intended to land;\*\*\* and as he slowly, but steadily, passed on from town to town, he perceived little indication of internal revolt, or of those symptoms of disaffection and anarchy which generally presage civil war. He reached Coventry towards the end of May,†† and there rested for many days, when he departed for Kenilworth, at which castle he appears to have been sojourning on the 6th of June.‡‡ He finally fixed his temporary abode at Nottingham,§§ the strength of its fortress rendering it a desirable post in the event of any sudden outbreak, while the central situation of the country made its capital a convenient spot whence Richard, without delay, could direct his steps to encounter his

\* Fabyan, p. 218.

† Harl. MSS., No. 433, fol. 213.

‡ Buck, lib. ii. p. 58.

¶ Chron. Croy., p. 572.

†† Harl. MSS., No. 433, fol. 200.

§§ Ibid., 220.

‡ Fabyan, p. 518.

|| Hall, p. 408; Grafton, p. 203.

\*\* Ibid.

†† Ibid., 219.

enemies as soon as decisive information was obtained of the point where they purposed landing. To his faithful chamberlain and devoted follower, Francis Lord Lovell, the companion and friend of his youth, he committed the charge of his naval forces, leaving him at Southampton in command of the fleet\* which was there stationed to resist any invasion of the southern coasts.

Before quitting London, Richard had adopted all available and politic measures for securing the peace and safety of the capital; and immediately upon his arrival at Nottingham, he followed up these salutary precautions, by apprising the authorities in his northern metropolis of the impending invasion, demanding assistance from the loyal citizens of York, and soliciting from them substantial aid in the forthcoming crisis.†

Corresponding intelligence was sent to the commissioners of array in every county throughout England, accompanied by "instructions"‡ so explicit as regards reviewing the soldiers and seeing "that they be able persons, well horsed and harnessed"—so decided in commands that their captains, "lords, and noblemen, do lay apart all ancient grudges, quarrels, rancours, and unkindness"—and so peremptory, with reference to the frequent muster of "all knights, esquires, and gentlemen," that they, "in their proper persons," may be prepared to do the king service "upon an hour's warning, whenever, by proclamation or otherwise, they shall be thereunto commanded," that Richard, although fully alive to the forthcoming storm, was equally prepared to encounter its evil consequences, and enabled calmly to await the result of the inquiries he had set on foot, and to pass the remainder of June and the greater part of the month of July in comparative tranquillity. The Castle of Nottingham had always ranked high in favour with the princes of the House of York.

Apart from its commanding situation, its natural advantages rendered it a station of vast importance during the sanguinary wars of the Roses; and many are the notices in its local history of times when the banner of England waved proudly from its castellated battlements. Under the direction of King Edward IV., this ancient fortress, which had sheltered him in some of the most remarkable vicissitudes of his reign, received many additions, important as regards strength, and admirable as specimens of architectural taste. Richard III., who yielded to none of his race in natural genius, or in the patronage of science and art, not only carried out the noble works commenced by his royal brother, but yet further enlarged and beautified this princely structure, "so that surely," writes Leland in his interesting description of it, "that north part is an exceeding piece of work;" indeed, to this very day, the site of its principal bulwark—the sole remnant of its former magnificence—bears the appellation of "Richard's Tower," in consequence of its having been erected by Richard III.

The Castle of Nottingham is in fact associated intimately and inseparably with almost all the leading events of that monarch's remarkable career. It was his frequent abode during his wardenship of the north; there he rested on his bridal progress to Middleham, and there he took upon himself the custody of young Edward V., assumed the office of lord protector and made that compact with the unstable Buckingham which led to Richard's subsequent elevation to the throne. It was within its walls that he issued commands for his second coronation, and there also were his brightest and fondest hopes laid prostrate by the announcement of the decease of his son; there he passed the last days of healthful companionship with his departed

\* Chron. Croy., p. 572.

† See Appendix WWW.

‡ Appendix XXX.

queen, and thither he now returned preparatory to renewed struggles for that crown which had yielded him so little of peace or enjoyment.

The nature of King Richard's feelings with reference to this favoured provincial palace of the monarchs of the House of York, may be estimated by the appellation which he bestowed upon it; he called it the "Castle of Care."\*

Nevertheless, at this crisis, having secured himself against immediate danger, and adopted the most strenuous measures for the defence of the realm, the king kept his court within its walls with his usual magnificence and liberality; and so sedulously cultivated the friendship of the surrounding gentry, that he won many over to his cause, amongst whom was Sir Gervoise Clifton, whom at his coronation he had created a knight of the Bath,† and whose devotion to Richard, even unto death, has been made the subject of historical record.‡ The edicts which the king had issued, and the ordinances that had been circulated requiring each shire to furnish its contribution of troops at an hour's notice,§ were followed up by strong letters addressed to the sheriffs|| of every county, furnishing them with copies of the instructions sent to the commissioners of array, and enjoining their "continual abode within the shire town of their office," to the intent that it might be openly known, "where they might be found," in the event of increased danger.

To prove the necessity of these precautions, and still further to secure the co-operation of his subjects in resisting the invaders, Richard summed up his various manifestos by a proclamation¶ of considerable length, denouncing "Henry Tudor" as a traitor, his supporters as exiles and outlaws, "enemies to their country, and subverters of the peace of the realm." The assumed pretensions of Richmond were fully detailed, to prove that his illegitimate descent gave him no lawful claim to the throne, or justified his invasion of the realm to contest it; and that his league with the ancient enemies of England was purchased by a pledge, "to give and release to the crown of France such continental possessions as appertained to the English nation, and all right, title and claims that her monarchs have, and ought to have, to the sovereignty of that kingdom." The miseries that must ensue from open rebellion, and from the admission of mercenary troops into the country, were depicted in strong language; and an earnest and energetic appeal made to the feelings of all classes, that, "like good and true Englishmen, for the defence of their wives, children, goods and inheritance, they furnish themselves with all their powers;" promising in requital that their sovereign lord, "as a well-willed, diligent, and courageous prince, will put his royal person in all labour and pain necessary in their behalf, for the resistance and subduing of his said enemies, rebels and traitors."\*\*

Thus nothing was left undone that policy, foresight and courage could

\* Hutton's Bosworth, p. 40.

† Buck, lib. i. p. 26.

‡ Sir Gervoise Clifton and Sir John Byron were friends and neighbours in Nottinghamshire; the former joined King Richard's standard, the latter fought with the Earl of Richmond. They had mutually agreed, that whichever party conquered, the supporter of the victor should intercede for his friend's life, and procure the estate for the benefit of their family. In the heat of the conflict at Bosworth, Sir John Byron saw Clifton fall, and rushing to the enemy's ranks, came to his friend, supported him on his shield, and life not being extinct, implored him to surrender. But the wound was mortal. Sir Gervoise faintly exclaimed, "All is over," and expired while reminding Byron of his pledge, that he would use his utmost efforts to procure the restitution of his land to his children, in the event of Richmond's party gaining the day. Sir John Byron gave the promise and fulfilled his pledge; the estate was preserved to the Clifton family.—Hutton's Bosworth, p. 117.

§ Harl. MSS., fol. 221.

|| Appendix YYY.

¶ See Appendix ZZZ.

\*\* Paston Letters, vol. ii. p. 319.

devise, to prevent a recurrence of domestic feud, or to save the already impoverished land from the evils attendant on the substitution of martial for civil law.

This determined resolution and statesmanlike vigilance on the part of King Richard, urged on the progress of the Earl of Richmond and those who had sworn to depose the reigning sovereign; it served to bring matters to a crisis, by showing the necessity of the most prompt measures. Richmond's purposed attempt upon the English crown was too widely promulgated, and had been too fully matured to be abandoned, and both the insurgents and their leader felt that prolonged delay might possibly frustrate their schemes, and lead, as upon the former occasion, to unlooked-for defeat and ruin.

The proclamation issued by the English monarch was met by a decisive and powerful reply from the earl.\* He avowed his intention of contesting the throne, and branded King Richard as a "homicide and unnatural tyrant," pledging himself to pass over the seas with such forces as his friends were preparing for him, "so soon as he was advertised of the names of the leaders who would co-operate with him on his arrival in England."

Courteously, however, as Henry of Richmond had been received by Charles VIII. on his re-appearance at Paris, he failed in obtaining from him the full and efficient aid on which he calculated.† Political dissensions at the court of France‡ had greatly curtailed the power of its monarch, who consequently was in no position to break his faith with Richard, although otherwise well disposed to lend a helping hand to his rival. He welcomed him with professions of regard, but shrank from openly committing himself to the encouragement of attempts upon the British sceptre.

This cautious policy was a source of considerable exultation to Richard,§ although but of short duration; for the security which it seemed to promise was quickly dispelled by information that the earl had obtained as a loan those succours which were refused on the score of friendship, or as the compact of a political alliance, the advantages to result from which rested on such uncertain grounds. Nevertheless, Charles VIII. yielded at last to the importunate Richmond, and advanced him a considerable sum of money, besides furnishing him with 3000 men,|| an accession of strength which speedily enabled him to quit Paris, and proceed towards Harfleur, the present rendezvous of his troops.¶ Bidding farewell to his friends at the French court, he left there as hostages for repayment of the assistance which had been afforded him, Sir John Bourchier and the renegade Marquis of Dorset,\*\* who, doubting the success of the earl's application to Charles, had suddenly abandoned the cause of the insurgents from considering their prospects as hopeless, and fleeing to Flanders, was overtaken at Campeigne, in his progress to ally himself with King Richard.

To give time for mustering his forces and provision his shipping, the Earl of Richmond rested for a brief period at Rouen: there he was joined by his chief commanders, whose indignation at the rumour, now universally spread, of Richard's determination to espouse the Princess Elizabeth, decided him on carrying into effect, although without their knowledge, his project of a Welch alliance, and of privately dispatching messengers to Sir

\* Appendix AAAA.

† "The Earl of Richmond was with his suite in the court of France sore wearied, and desiring great aid could obtain small relief."—*Grafton*, p. 204.

‡ *Grafton*, p. 206.

§ *Ibid.*

¶ *Ibid.*, p. 78.

|| *Buck*, lib. ii. p. 57.

\*\* *Grafton*, p. 207.

Walter Herbert, with proposals of marriage to his sister,\* and likewise to the Earl of Northumberland, hoping to prevail upon him to advocate his views.

Here, also, to his surprise and joy, he received a considerable reinforcement of troops from Francis, Duke of Brittany,† who, repenting his former refusal, now sent, unsolicited, the seasonable and efficient aid of 2000 Bretons; so that no obstacle remained to prevent the earl from carrying into immediate execution his long-threatened and projected invasion. It is true that, judging from Philip De Comines, few auxiliary forces could have been more contemptible than the band of soldiers furnished by France,‡ but their inefficiency in military skill was more than counterbalanced by their reckless hardihood, while the prospect of advancement and of requital for services which stimulated them to zealous exertions, rendered these children of desperate fortune more valuable, as a body, than the better disciplined troops of the English monarch, commanded by time-serving courtiers, who, after having been enriched and ennobled by the bounty of the prince, whom two years previously, with shouts and joyful acclamations, they had elevated to the throne, were now ripe to betray him. The great secret, indeed, of King Richard's downfall was the defection of his miscalled friends, and the duplicity of those who, for more selfish purposes, had insinuated themselves into his confidence, the more readily to carry on that system of complicated intrigue which was designed to throw him off his guard, that he might the more surely be entangled in the snares which were laid for his destruction. Most justly did Sir Thomas More depict this fact, when, after admitting the generosity which formed so striking a feature in his character,§ "he was above his power liberal,"|| he further added, "with large gifts he gat him unsteadfast friendship, for which he was fain to pil and spoil in other places, which gat him steadfast hatred."¶ This was, indeed, unhappily the case. Had Richard been more avaricious and mercenary, had he been less frank and generous, more tyrannical, more suspicious of those that surrounded him, less chivalrous and gallant in the treatment of his nobles, neither Henry of Richmond nor the combined tributaries of France and Brittany could have vanquished him. One of the ablest generals and wisest legislators of his age was the victim of the stealthy and systematic treachery which peculiarly marked this era in other European courts; and although forming, comparatively speaking, a new feature in English policy, the monarch had been too early initiated into the crafty proceedings of Louis XI. and the wily counsellors of Francis of Brittany, to be altogether blind to the true cause that was gradually accelerating his own ruin. Many members of his court pierced him to the heart by their open ingratitude; but foremost amongst those whose concealed perfidy contributed to his destruction was Morgan Kydwelly,\*\* the attorney-general,†† who, ranking high in the king's favour,‡‡ was not only in a position to watch the arrangements of his sovereign, but, in virtue of his high office, could contrive the means of conveying clandestinely to the enemy that intelligence which alike counteracted the designs of the English monarch and strengthened the projects of

\* *Grafton*, p. 208.

† Philip de Comines, p. 356.

‡ More, p. 9.

\*\* *Grafton*, p. 209.

†† King Richard's liberality to Morgan Kydwelly is shown by the various entries in the Harl. MSS., which contain the grants of several rich manors, the stewardship of the lordships in the duchy of Lancaster, and other acts of bounty of a similar nature.—*Harl. MSS.*, No. 433, fol. 49. 69. 73. 79.

† *Buck*, lib. ii. p. 58.

|| *Ibid.*

¶ *Ibid.*

‡‡ See the Harl. MSS., No. 433, p. 79.