of this city,"* would alone suffice to show that neither the nation at large nor her nobles as a body, had rejected him from being their king.

Face to face he met his foes, proudly disdaining to shrink from the danger to which he was compelled to expose his faithful adherents. To check the carnage which was exterminating the bravest of his subjects, he challenged his rival to mortal combat, that the life of one man might suffice to stay the slaughter of thousands. Led to believe that Richmond could oppose but seven thousand men to his own gallant force of sixteen thousand, but quickly shown that five thousand more were in reserve, and only awaited, under the Lord Stanley, the fitting time for rendering the combatants of nearly equal strength, he was basely deserted by one-third of his own army, which was withdrawn by the Earl of Northumberland† at the most critical point of the battle, and hemmed in, for the purpose of destruction by the other member of that specious triumvirate, by whose machinations alone he was vanquished,‡ and numbered the chief among the mighty dead who perished on Bosworth Field.

Later ages, misled by partial statements, have given a far different colouring to the events which really led to King Richard's death; but the statement of the other cotemporary historian not only corroborates the eulogium bestowed by the ecclesiastical chronicler above quoted, but most graphically paints the base manner in which, with his dying breath, the monarch proclaimed that his ruin had been accomplished. "If," says Rous,§ "I may speak the truth to his honour, although small of body and weak of strength, he most valiantly defended himself as a noble knight to his last breath, often exclaiming that he was betrayed, and saying — Treason! treason! treason!"

With these words on his lips, King Richard expired on the 22d August, 1485, in the thirty-third year of his age, and after a brief reign of two years and two months — the victim of conspirators who had vowed his destruction, and craftily watched the most favourable moment for carrying it into execution. His death establishes the truth of the degrading fact which was communicated to the faithful and noble Howard the night preceding the battle;— the sovereign of England was indeed "both bought and sold!"

upon; and to such I leave it." "It is plain that Richard, represented as a monster of mankind by most, was not so esteemed in his lifetime in these northern parts. And had the Earl of Northumberland staid and raised forces here, he might have struck Henry's new acquired diadem into the hazard. Wanting that nobleman's personal appearance, our city had nothing to do but with the rest of the kingdom to submit to the conqueror. His policy taught him to show great acts of clemency at his entrance into government, though he must know that neither his title nor his family were recognized or respected in these northern parts of the kingdom."—*Drake's Ebor.*, p. 124.

* Ibid., p. 120.
† Pol. Virg. p. 563; Grafton, p. 234; Hall, p. 419.
‡ Ibid.
§ Rous, p. 217.

CHAPTER XIX.

The royal troops are dispersed after King Richard is slain.—The Earl of Richmond is proclaimed king, and crowned on the field.—Farther comparison between the battles of Bosworth and of Hastings; also between the fate of their leaders, Richard III. and Harold II.—The conduct of the Norman and Tudor invaders contrasted.—Insults offered to King Richard's mutilated remains.—His body conveyed back degradingly, but in triumph, to Leicester.—King Henry departs for London.—The corpse of Richard III. exposed to public view.—It is begged by the nuns of Leicester, and by them obscurely buried.—A monument is erected in after years to his memory.—His epitaph.—Defacement of the tomb at the dissolution of the monasteries.—Local traditions relative to his disinterment.—His appearance after death the probable origin of his alleged repulsive aspect.—His exploits at Bosworth disprove many incredible traditions.—The evil reports of his political enemies afford a fertile theme for poets and the drama.—King Richard leaves two illegitimate children.—Tradition numbers a third child.—Singular history of this latter.—Tragical circumstance that resulted from the discovery of money concealed in King Richard's military chest.—Present appearance of Bosworth Field.—Local appellations perpetuate its leading features.—Reflections arising from the issue of the combat.—King Richard the victim of adverse fortune.—He was no tyrant.—Facts recorded to his praise preponderate over rumours to his disadvantage.—His character briefly reviewed with reference to early and later testimonials.—The presumption that, his personal deformity being disproved, just grounds are afforded for believing that his alleged moral turpitude was equally unfounded—Arguments induced from the foregoing deduction.—Concluding remarks.

The fearful struggles on Bosworth Field terminated with King Richard's life; for the shouts of triumph which rent the air as he sank beneath the swords of countless multitudes,* quickly announced to his own army the direful fate of their illustrious and intrepid leader. Terror-stricken, the royal troops fled in all directions, and were speedily followed by the victorious party, who, unimpeded by the dead and the dying,† which, piled in fearful numbers,‡ formed a dreadful barrier between the hostile armies, they pursued their adversaries with that ferocity, that unrelenting vengeance, which forms one of the most melancholy features of civil warfare. For nearly two miles their route is said to be still marked by "pits or hollows,"§ which are supposed to be the graves of the heaps of slain that fell in the pursuit; and although this appalling result to the tragic scenes enacted on the battle-field occupied less than fifty minutes,‖ it was sufficiently long to secure a complete victory to Richmond, and utter discomfiture to the supporters of the fallen monarch. A steep hill served to check alike the pur-

* "Charged and environed with multitudes, that like a storm came on him, valiant Richard falls the sacrifice of that day under their cruel swords."—*Buck*, lib. ii. p. 61.
† "And many a noble knight then lost theyr life with Richard theyr kynge."—*Harl. MSS.*, No. 542. fol. 34.
‡ There fell in this battle about four thousand of the vanquished.—*Hume*, chap. xxiii. p. 273.
§ Hutton, p. 128. ‖ Ibid., p. 129.

suit of the victors and farther carnage of the vanquished.* Henry, accompanied by the Lord Stanley, the Earl of Pembroke, the Earl of Oxford and others of his most renowned commanders, paused on its summit,† and there received, from the hands of his father-in-law, that diadem which had cost King Richard his life, and was to secure to himself the throne. During the heat of the conflict, and shortly before the monarch's death, the crown which surmounted his helmet was cleft from it.‡ Falling to the ground, it was picked up by a soldier,§ and concealed in a hawthorn bush‖ in the adjoining wood. There it was accidentally discovered by Sir Reginald Bray, who, seizing the precious relic, the possession of which had caused the slaughter of so many gallant warriors, he gained the victors, and presenting it to Lord Stanley,¶ that nobleman placed it on Richmond's head,** and hailed him as monarch of England.

The eminence whereon this occurred still retains the name of "Crown Hill," in perpetuation of the event, and the cheers and acclamations of the conquering hosts as they greeted their leader with cries of "King Harry, King Karry,"†† were wafted across the intervening space, and echoing over Redmore Plain, announced that the pursuit was over, and conquest complete, there remaining "none against whom the victor Henry VII. might renew the fight.‡‡

Bosworth Field not only chronicles the only sovereign of England, save the hero of Agincourt, who went into battle wearing the royal diadem, but it commemorates also the only British monarch who was slain in battle since the Norman conquest, and since Harold II., by a similar death, conferred corresponding celebrity on the field of Hastings. The analogy between these two conquests and the fate of their royal leaders,§§ together with the remarkable epochs in British history which they perpetuate, have been already noticed at the opening of this memoir; but the conduct of the invaders in the fifteenth century affords a painful contrast to the generous and ennobling feeling which marked that of the Norman conqueror four centuries before, although acted in times by comparison rude and uncivilized, and characterized by a far greater degree of popular excitement. They warred with the living, and not with the dead; they fought as became men and Christians, not as ruthless savages.‖‖ Harold fell, vanquished by the victorious bands of the

* "Then they removed to a mountayne hyghe, and with a voyce they cried King Harry."—*Harl. MSS.*, No. 542. fol. 34.

† Ibid., No. 542. fol. 34.

‡ "They hewed the crown of gold from his head with dowtful dents."—*Harl. MSS.*, No. 542. fol. 34.

§ Hutton, p. 132.

‖ To commemorate his being crowned with King Richard's diadem at Bosworth Field, found in a hawthorn bush, Henry VII. bore the hawthorn bush with the crown in it, and these letters K. H., with which the windows of his royal chapel at Westminster Abbey are replenished.—*Sandford's Geneal. Hist.*, book vi. p. 434.

¶ "The crown of gold was delivered to the Lord Stanley, and unto Kynge Henry then went he, and delyvered it."—*Harl. MSS.*, No. 542. fol. 34.

** Grafton, p. 233. †† Ibid. ‡‡ Chron. Croy., p. 574.

§§ Harold, like Richard, died the victim of stratagem, for, states the old chronicler, "as an expert general, he had ordered his men in so firm a body, that no force of the Normans could disorder their ranks, till Duke William used a stratagem, commanding his men to retire and to counterfeit flight, by which he drew the English on, upon a hollow ground covered with earth, whereunto many of them fell and perished; and besides, into an ambush of his horsemen, which unexpectedly fell upon them and cut them in pieces."—*Baker's Chron.*, p. 23.

‖‖ "Richard died by the hands of a multitude, who cut his body in the most shocking and barbarous manner, while he was breathing his last."—*Nicholl's Leicester*, vol. ii. p. 298.

Norman William; but with his death all personal rancour ceased, and the conqueror, honouring the valour of his rival, however much he rejoiced at his overthrow, delivered his body to his mother,* that he might receive the interment befiting a gallant prince, although a vanquished and defeated monarch.

Far different was the conduct pursued towards Richard III. Although his intrepidity and his heroic deeds called forth eulogiums even from the Lancastrian historians, yet neither his bravery nor his misfortunes elicited sympathy from his opponents after death had sealed his fate, and when he was no longer conscious of the insults to which his mortal remains were subjected. Not contented with winning his crown, the great incentive to the combat—not satisfied with his defeat, and his having paid the forfeit of his life by his temerity, the victors searched for his body, and having found it covered with wounds† among a heap of slain, with a barbarity alike discreditable to the age and to the persons directly concerned in the unrelenting deed, they stripped him of his gorgeous apparel, and, in outrage of decency and common humanity, placed the deceased monarch naked across his war steed, "like a hog or a calf, the head and arms hanging on the one side of the horse, and the legs on the other side."‡ Thus all besprinkled "with mire and blood,"§ the inanimate victim of this unexampled barbarity was disposed of behind his pursuivant at arms, "Blanc Sanglier" (he wearing the silver boar upon his coat,‖) and carried back to Leicester as a trophy of the morning's victory,¶ to be presented in the most degrading manner,** which the inhumanity of political malice, hatred and revenge could suggest to the view of such of his subjects as had thronged to greet him on the day previous, gallantly wending his way to battle and to death. "The dead body of King Richard was found among the slain, and conveyed with great ignominy to Leicester," certifies the Croyland writer.†† Yet stronger is the language of the Tudor chronicler—"The dead corpse of King Richard was as shamefully carried to the town of Leicester as he gorgeously the day before, with pomp and pride, departed out of the same town."‡‡

Innumerable, indeed, are the extracts that might be made of corresponding import;§§ and this circumstance alone bespeaks more, perhaps, than all other arguments, the vindictive and personal feelings of malignity which influenced the conduct of Richard's adversaries, and formed the ground-work of those fearful accusations which henceforth were circulated freely and abundantly to brand the memory of the defeated king, and to exalt the merits of his successful opponent. Superstition lent her aid‖‖ to magnify the terrors of the eventful day. The head of the vanquished monarch being crushed against a projecting stone, as the pursuivant threaded his way over a narrow bridge, entering Leicester, there were not wanting soothsayers to protest that his left foot had touched the same spot the preceding day, and thus led to a prognos-

* For the body of King Harold, his mother Thyra offered a great sum to have it delivered to her; but the duke, out of the nobleness of his mind, would take no money, but delivered it freely, and then it was buried at Waltham Abbey, which himself had begun to build, at least repair.—*Baker's Chron.*, p. 23.

† Buck, lib. ii. p. 62.

‡ Grafton, p. 234. § Ibid. ‖ Hutton, p. 141.

¶ While in the possession of a complete victory, Richmond was totally destitute of that mercy and compassion which ennobles man.—*Nicholl's Leicestershire*, vol. ii. p. 381.

** Fabyan, p. 518. †† Chron. Croy., p. 574. ‡‡ Grafton, p. 234.

§§ See Fabyan, p. 518; Pol. Virg., p. 594; Hall, p. 419.

‖‖ See a pamphlet entitled, "Seven several Strange Prophecies," [London, 1643,] for some curious old legends concerning the death of King Richard III.

tication relative to his doom—"even so shall his head, at his return back, hit on the same place"*—of which nothing would have been known, had victory, not defeat, been the result of the conflict on Redmore Plain; for, as the local historian who perpetuates the tale ingenuously admits, "these are but reports."†

King Richard had left his tents standing‡, so that the spoil was immense, and amply were the foreign mercenaries, as well as the less needy English soldiers, repaid by pillage for their great exertions,§ and for the discomforts of their journey through Wales. "The same night, however, in the evening, King Henry with great pomp came to the town of Leicester, and his whole camp removed with bag and baggage."‖ The body of King Richard, brought there at the same time, was lodged at a fortified tower,¶ entitled Newark, one of the chief entrances to the town; and as it would appear by a proclamation, addressed to the citizens of York by King Henry VII. on the 25th inst., certifying to them the death of their late sovereign,** was there "laid openly that every man might see and look upon him," and be satisfied that he was indeed deceased.

The most zealous of the late king's personal friends were slain in battle with himself,†† at the head of which stands the Duke of Norfolk, who, regarding "more his oath, his honour, and promise made to King Richard, like a gentleman and a faithful subject to his prince, absented not himself from his master; but, as he faithfully lived under him, so he manfully died with him, to his great fame and laud."‡‡ "Of captains and prisoners there was a great number."§§ The Earl of Surrey, who, in yielding up his sword to Sir Gilbert Talbot, nobly exclaimed, "Our motto is to support the crown of England,"‖‖ was committed to the Tower of London, where he long remained immured, "because his father was chief counsellor, and he greatly familiar with King Richard;¶¶ but Sir William Catesby, "learned in the laws of the realm," and "the deceased monarch's confidential minister," with divers other were, two days after the battle, beheaded at Leicester.*** At this town King Henry remained for that brief interval, as well for the refreshing of his people as for preparing all things for his journey to London. This afforded time for the escape of many gallant knights who had fled from the engagement,††† when their royal leader, whom they would have supported unto death, no longer existed to require their efforts towards retrieving his evil

* Nicholl's Leicester, vol. i. p. 298. † Ibid.

‡ Hutton, p. 79.

§ Lord Bacon asserts that the "great spoils of Bosworth Field came almost wholly into the hands of Sir William Stanley, "to his infinite enriching," there being found in his castle of Holt, at the confiscation of his property, "forty thousand marks in ready money and plate, besides jewels, household stuff, stacks upon the grounds, and other personal estate exceeding great."—*Bacon's Henry VII.*, p. 133. 135.

‖ Grafton, p. 234.

¶ "They brought King Richard thither that night as naked as ever he was born, and in Newark was he laid, that many a man might see."—*Harl. MSS.*, No. 542, fol. 34.

** "And, moreover, the king ascertaineth you that Richard, Duke of Gloucester, late called King Richard, was slain at a place called Sandeford, within the shire of Leicester, and brought dead off the field into the town of Leicester, and there was laid openly that every man might see and look upon him."—*Drake's Ebor.*, p. 121.

†† The Duke of Norfolk, Sir Richard Ratcliffe, Sir Robert Brackenbury, constable of the Tower of London; John Kendall, secretary; Sir Robert Percy, comptroller of the household; Walter Devereux, Lord Ferrers and others, chiefly north countrymen, in whom King Richard most trusted.—*Chron. Croy.*, p. 574.

‡‡ Grafton, p. 230. §§ Ibid. ‖‖ Hutton, p. 166.

¶¶ Grafton, p. 231. *** Ibid.

††† "Many other nobles and gentlemen got into foreign countries and sanctuaries, obscuring themselves till the storm and smart of that day's memory was past."—*Buck*, lib. ii. p. 64.

fortune. The Lord of Lincoln and the Viscount Lovell were amongst this number, together with the Staffords, who took refuge in sanctuaries at Gloucester,* and whose zealous conduct at Bosworth, when considered with reference to their affinity to the Duke of Buckingham, cannot fail to weaken the imputation of undue severity having been exercised towards their kinsman.

At the expiration of the two days just named, Henry VII. with his army departed for Coventry, on his progress, by easy journeys, to the metropolis, carrying with him the standards won at Bosworth and other trophies of his victory there.† The mortal remains of the deceased king were exposed to the rude gaze of the multitude during the whole of his rival's sojourn at Leicester;‡ and even his triumphant departure from the town did not witness the termination of a spectacle sufficiently protracted to gratify revenge, however deadly, and satisfy the most sceptical, as regards the monarch's decease. Such at least may be gathered from the relation of Lord Bacon,§ who states that, although King Henry gave orders for the honourable interment of his vanquished foe, his commands were neglected to be obeyed; and as if the closing scene of Richard's earthly career was destined to be as singular as had been the leading events of his extraordinary life, he, the last of the Plantagenet dynasty, the sovereign by whose decease that ancient, chivalrous, and munificent race of kings became extinct, was indebted to the compassion of the nuns of Leicester—to the pitying, charitable, humane feelings of a religious sisterhood, for the performance of the last solemn rites of burial, and for receiving at their sympathising hands that decent though humble sepulchre‖ which had been awarded to the meanest of his soldiers, although denied to the mutilated remains of their intrepid commander. "King Richard III., being slain at Bosworth," remarks the county historian, "his body was begged by the nuns at Leicester, and buried in their chapel there."¶ A sense of shame, however, or some compunction for the unchristian spirit which had been manifested towards the deceased king, appears at length to have influenced the conduct of his enemies, and led them, at the expiration of ten years, to bestow on him a more honourable sepulture; for the same writer who has commemorated the fact of his interment by the nuns in their chapel, also states** that, "after revenge and rage had satiated their barbarous cruelties upon his dead body, they gave his royal earth a bed of earth, honourably appointed by the order of King Henry the VII., in the chief church of Leicester, called St. Mary, belonging to the order and society of the Gray Friars, the king in short time after causing a fair tomb†† of mingle coloured marble, adorned with his statue, to

* Grafton, p. 231.

† Bacon, p. 8. ‡ Hutton, p. 142.

§ "Though the king, of his nobleness, gave charge unto the friars of Leicester to see an honourable interment to be given to him, yet the religious people themselves, being not free from the humours of the vulgar, neglected it, wherein, nevertheless, they did not then incur any man's blame or censure."—*Bacon*, p. 2.

‖ "Commanding all the hurt and wounded persons to be cured, and the dead carcases to be delivered to the sepulture."—*Grafton*, p. 232.

¶ Nicholl's Leicester, vol. i. p. 298. ** Ibid.

†† Extract from the privy purse expenses of King Henry VII., September 11th, an. 1495:—

"To James Keyley, for King Richard's tomb, 10*l.* 1*s.*"

This entry is deserving of attention, as it proves the statement of some writers that Henry VII. caused a tomb to be erected to Richard the Third's memory. That prince was meanly buried in the Gray Friar's church of Leicester, where afterwards King Henry caused a monument to be erected for him, with his picture in alabaster, where it remained until the dissolution under Henry VIII., when it was pulled down and utterly defaced."—Vide *Excerpta Hist.*, p. 105.

be erected thereupon;* to which Sir George Buck affirms† "some grateful pen had also destined the following epitaph," which, although never fixed to his stone, he had seen "in a recorded manuscript-book," chained to a table in a chamber in the Guildhall of London:" —

EPITAPHIUM
REGIS RICHARDI TERTII,
SEPULTI AD LEICESTRIAM, JUSSU,
ET SUMPTIBUS ST^{I} REGIS
HENRICI SEPTIMI.

"Hic ego, quem vario tellus sub marmore claudit,
Tertius a justâ voce Richardus eram;
Tutor eram patriæ, patriur pro jure nepotis;
Dirupta, tenui regna Britanna, fide.
Sexaginta dies binis duntaxat ademptis
Ætatesque, tuti tunc mea sceptra, duas.
Fortiter in bello certans desertus ab Anglis,
Rex Henrice, tibi, septime, succubui.
At sumptu, pius ipse, sic assa dicaras,
Regem olimque facis regis honore coli.
Quatuor exceptis jam tantum, quinq. bis annis
Acta trecenta quidem, lustra salutis erant,
Antique Septembris undena luce kalendas,
Redideram Rubræ jura petita Rosæ.
At mea, quisquis eris, propter commissa precarem
Sit minor ut precibus pœna levata tuis."

DEO O. M. TRINO ET UNO,
SIT LAUS ET GLORIA ÆTERNA.
AMEN.‡

* The bed of earth honourably appointed by the order of Henry VII., with the tomb of many coloured marble, and the statue of King Richard by which it was surmounted, is somewhat inconsistent with the proclamation issued before his interment, in which he is simply designated as "Richard, Duke of Gloucester." Still more out of character is it with the bill of attainder, which Henry procured to be passed in his first Parliament, (*Rot. Parl.*, vol. vi. p. 276,) in which, not only are the late king's followers proclaimed traitors, and their lands forfeited to the crown, but Richard himself is attainted on a charge of high treason, for bearing arms against Henry of Richmond; although this latter prince was at the time a claimant only for those regal honours to which Richard had been declared duly and lawfully elected, and which he rightly and justifiably defended.

† Buck, lib. v. p. 147.

‡ This epitaph is also registered in a book in the College of Arms, a literal copy from which source is given by Sandford in his "Genealogical History of the Kings of England, book v. p. 410. It has been thus rendered into English in Bishop Kennet's reprint of "Buck's Life and Reign of Richard III."—See *Complete History of England*, vol. i. 597.

EPITAPH OF RICHARD III., BURIED AT LEICESTER BY THE ORDER AND EXPENSE OF KING HENRY VII.

I who am laid beneath this marble stone,
Richard the Third, possessed the British throne.
My country's guardian in my nephew's claim,
By trust betray'd, I to the kingdom came.
Two years and sixty days, save two, I reign'd,
And bravely strove in fight; but unsustain'd
My English left me in the luckless field,
Where I to Henry's arms was forced to yield.
Yet at his cost, my corse this tomb obtains,
Who piously interred me, and ordains
That regal honours wait a king's remains.
Th' year fourteen hundred 'twas and eighty-four,
The twenty-first of August, when its power
And all its rights I did to the Red Rose restore.
Reader, whoe'er thou art, thy prayers bestow
T' atone my crimes and ease my pains below.

At the suppression of the monasteries by King Henry VIII., Richard's tomb and the "picture of alabaster representing his person" were utterly defaced;* "since when, his grave, overgrown with nettles and weeds, is not to be found."† His body is traditionally reported to have been carried out of the city, and to have been contemptuously thrown over Bow Bridge,‡ the spot already noticed as the scene of the soothsayers' alleged prediction; while the stone coffin which contained his body, "the only memory of the monarch's greatness," is ordinarily reputed to have been given or sold to an innkeeper, in whose possession it remained as a drinking trough for horses,§ till the beginning of the 18th century.‖ For the defacement of his tomb and the sacrilegious use to which his coffin was applied,¶ there may have been and probably was some foundation, considering the desecration to which all royal mausoleums throughout the kingdom were subjected during that direful revolution, which swept away many of the most ancient monuments in the land; but that the ashes of the ill-fated monarch were so degradingly bestowed, as is locally reported, admits of great doubt; indeed, positive proof may be said to exist, and on the high authority of Dr. Christopher Wren,** that his relics, however profanely disturbed, were suffered to rest finally in consecrated ground. "At the dissolution of the monastery where he was interred," states that learned antiquary, "the place of his burial happened to fall into the bounds of a citizen's garden; which, being after purchased by Mr. Robert Heyrick, some time mayor of Leicester, was by him covered with a handsome stone pillar three feet high, with this inscription, 'Here lies the body of Richard III., some time King of England.' This he shewed me walking in the garden, 1612."††

No remains, however, of this or of any other monument now mark the place where the monarch was interred.

His name is inseparably connected with Leicester, but the precise spot where his mouldering remains were at length permitted to rest in peace is no longer known. To the circumstance, however, of his having been exposed to public view in this town so long before his burial, and under such unfavourable auspices, may, in all probability, be traced the source of those extravagant descriptions of his person, which unhappily have so long prevailed. It has been already shown that these descriptions were not derived from cotemporary writers, neither are they borne out by coeval statements, but that

* Nichols, vol. ii. p. 298. † Ibid.

‡ Ibid.

§ The Reverend Samuel Carte, who published an account of Leicester in the Bibl. Top. Britannica, and who, as vicar of St. Martin's, resided for many years in that town, says, in 1720, "I know of no other evidence that the stone coffin formerly used for a trough was King Richard's, but the constancy of the tradition. There is a little part of it still preserved at the White Horse Inn, in which one may observe some appearance of the hollow, fitted for retaining the head and the shoulders." The son of this learned divine, Thomas Carte, the eminent historian, was one of King Richard's most zealous defenders, and some very striking arguments, in refutation of his alleged crimes, will be found in his account of this monarch's reign, in his valuable History of England, published in 1754, in 4 vols.

‖ Nichols, vol. ii. p. 298.

¶ Considerable doubt, however, cannot but be entertained, whether the remains of the coffin described by Mr. Carte was that which had belonged to King Richard, inasmuch as stone coffins of that shape and kind were not used so late as the time of that monarch, neither had they been for centuries before.

** Christopher Wren, B.D., at that time tutor at St. John's College, Oxford, to the eldest son of Sir William Heyrick, of Beaumanor, Leicestershire, a near relative of the Mr. Robert Heyrick, who is named in the foregoing quotation.

†† Wren's Parentalia, p. 114.

they had their rise in Tudor times, and were perpetuated by Tudor chroniclers. There can, indeed, be little doubt, that the hideous accounts which were first promulgated by them, and which have invested Richard with such injurious notoriety, originated from the statements of such of his enemies as beheld him in the agonies of death, when, with his limbs distorted and his features convulsed by the desperate struggles which preceded his violent end, he was for "a season exposed to view that all men might see him."* Such an exhibition, it is very certain, would produce a far different effect on the beholder who so looked on their deceased sovereign for the first time, his face livid, his body mangled, and the expression of his countenance altogether disfigured by the contending passions which marked his dying hour, to those which were impressed on the memory of writers who framed their reports in the full tide of his prosperity, when he was an honoured and esteemed prince, not a calumniated and a vanquished monarch.

The physical power which Richard displayed when seeking out Henry of Richmond on Redmore plain, must prove to every impartial mind how great a mixture of fable has been intermingled with the historical facts. A withered arm could not have slain Sir William Brandon, or unhorsed Sir John Cheyney, the most powerful man of his time; neither, if it had been withered from his birth, could Richard have performed corresponding acts of heroism at Barnet to those which have been so eulogized on Bosworth Field!

The reports, however, of his mental and bodily deformity were fully considered in an earlier portion of this work, when weighing the relative merits of cotemporary writers with the historians from whom Shakspeare derived the marvellous tales which he has so graphically depicted. The subject might be pursued with advantage to the memory of the monarch, from the period of his birth up to the very moment of his decease, for there is scarcely an action connected with his memorable career that has not been reported with a political bias, and been represented as springing from motives, designs and prejudices for which there is no authority or foundation.

The momentous events which preceded and succeeded his elevation to the throne were in themselves so important, and necessarily exacted such minute details, and such searching examination into the origin of the erroneous impressions under which many of them have long been viewed, that to renew the subject now, in connection with Shakspeare's tragedy of Richard III., would be to repeat the arguments which were adduced when separately considering the same striking scenes, with reference to history and tradition. One of the most remarkable features in the historical plays of our immortal bard is his close adherence to the statements of those chroniclers whose relations furnished him with the materials he dramatized; and it is by that very fidelity that Shakspeare's rich and incomparable poetry has unhappily fixed upon the traduced monarch "a gloomy celebrity as durable as his own genius."*

The assumption by King Richard of the office of lord protector, his deposition of Edward V., and his subsequent acceptance of the crown, the reported murder of the young princes in the Tower, and the charge of having poisoned his queen in order to espouse his niece,—all presented subjects of too great importance to his character to be otherwise than closely examined and tested by such cotemporary documents as helped to place the transactions themselves in the fairest and truest light. But to these documents, coeval with the monarch, the Bard of Avon had no access: he contented himself with

* Fabyan, p. 518. † Sharon Turner, vol. iv. p. 60.

adopting the plots presented to him through the medium of the most popular chroniclers* of the day; and the romantic colouring which they gave to many events, in themselves unimportant, and the tragical tales which they incorporated in their narrative, made their relation a far more winning and fitting theme for the poet and the dramatist† than he would have found the concise and meagre details which comprise the only truthful histories of Richard III. Foremost among the embellishments thus literally transferred from Sir Thomas More's pages to Shakspeare's tragedy is the statement of Richard demanding strawberries from the Bishop of Ely, when waiting the fitting time for Lord Hastings' execution,‡ and of the displaying his withered arm to convict the conspirators of witchcraft and necromancy.§

No allusion can be found to this latter astounding accusation in the earlier and cotemporary writers; it rests, indeed, on no firmer basis than rumour: whereas Richard's dauntless courage and military prowess, which he displayed before thousands at his death, are conclusive evidence that the scene, however imposing in the drama,‖ has no foundation in historical truth. The oration delivered before the battle partakes of the same character;¶ and

* Gents. Mag., vol. xvii. p. 498.

† The reign of King Richard III. has not only exercised the talents of our great national bard, but the conflict which commemorates his decease has afforded subject for the muse of many poets greatly distinguished in their day: amongst whom may be enumerated "Michael Drayton," a native of Atherstone, born in 1563, whose "Bosworth Field" ranks among the best of his heroical epistles; Sir John Beaumont, Bart., of Grace Dieu, Leicestershire, born 1582, and Judge of the Court of Common Pleas, whose most popular poem relates to the same subject, and was considered one of the best productions of the age in which he flourished; and Charles Aleyn, (1620,) famed for his "Life of Henry VII.," with the "Battle of Cressy and Poictiers" in heroic verse.—*Winstanley's Lives of English Poets*, pp. 105. 145. 165.

‡ "My lord, you have verye good strawberries in your gardayne in Holborne. I require you to let us have a messe of them."—*More*, p. 70.

"My lord of Ely, when I was last in Holborn,
I saw good strawberries in your garden there;
I do beseech you send for some of them."
Richard III., Act III. Sc. IV.

§ "And therewith he plucked up hys doublet sleeve to his elbow upon his left arm, where he showed a werish withered arme, and small as it was never other."—*More*, p. 74.

"Then be your eyes the witness of their evil,
Look how I am bewitch'd; behold mine arm
Is, like a blasted sapling, withered up."
Richard III., Act III. Sc. IV.

‖ See also the following passage:—

Hastings.—"Certainly, my lord, if they have so heinously done," (alluding to the conspirators, who, acting under evil influence, had withered his arm,) "they be worthy heinous punishment." "What," quod the protector, "thou servest me, I ween, with iffes and andes. I tell thee they have so done, and that I will make good on thy body, traitor!"—*More*, p. 72.

Hast. "If they have done this deed, my noble lord—
Glos. If! ....
Talk'st thou to me of ifs? Thou art a traitor."
Richard III., Act. III. Sc. IV.

In allusion to which scene the late lamented author of the "Commentary on the Historical Plays of Shakspeare" judiciously observes, that these "smaller incidents confirm the probability that More's history was derived from Bishop Morton, if not written by that prelate himself."—*Courtenay's Commen.*, vol. ii. p. 87.

¶ "And to begin with the Earl of Richmond, captain of this rebellion, he is a Welsh milksop."—*Grafton*, p. 222.

"And who doth lead them but a paltry fellow,
Long kept in Bretagne at our mother's cost?
A milksop." *Richard III.*, Act V. Sc. III.

very many other examples of a similar nature might be advantageously adduced: but the most destructive scene as regards King Richard's condemnation is that wherein the ghosts of Edward of Lancaster, Henry VI., George, Duke of Clarence, Rivers, Grey, and Vaughan, the Lord of Hastings, the two young princes, Queen Anne and the Duke of Buckingham, are made to visit the doomed monarch, and to flit before him with reproaches for every crime which posthumous calumny and legendary lore have fastened upon him.* Here not Shakspeare's authorities, but Shakspeare's own genius, is brought to bear against the memory of the monarch: what wonder is it, then, that by this terrific scene the mind of the spectator becomes so imbued with a conviction of this monarch's horrible guilt, that it would be difficult to banish the impression, even upon after reference to genuine records, or to be satisfied that the simple and by no means uncommon effect of a fearful dream, was the sole foundation for a scene "made to embody and realize conceptions† which had hitherto assumed no distinct shape."‡ Justly, indeed, has it been observed of King Richard, in an admirable essay exposing the false impressions received of this monarch as he is ordinarily represented on the stage, that "nothing but his crimes, his actions are visible; they are prominent and staring; the murderer stands out; but where is the lofty genius, the man of vast capacity,—the profound, the witty, the accomplished Richard?"§

Where, indeed! for, until within a comparatively brief period, little else was known of this monarch's proceedings than the appalling portraiture of his alleged crimes, thus powerfully delineated by the master hand of the immortal Shakspeare. The danger of confounding moral with personal deformity has likewise been ably depicted by the above-named forcible writer,‖ who most effectively portrays "this humour of mankind to deny personal comeliness to those with whose moral attributes they are dissatisfied."

Perhaps no instance on record better demonstrates the truth of this hypothesis than the unmitigated prejudice which is universally felt with reference to the fallen monarch. Of his merits as Duke of Gloucester — of his brilliant career as a firm, faithful and uncompromising prince, striving to retrieve his brother's evil fortune and to sustain the royal prerogative — of his undeviating fidelity to Edward IV. amidst every reverse and amidst all temptation — of his stern resistance of the French king's bribes, and wise neutrality in the factious proceedings which distracted the English court,— of all this, and yet more, of his shining abilities, his cultivated mind, his legislative wisdom, his generosity, his clemency, and the misfortunes that led to his downfall, but little notice is taken: every bright point in his character has been carefully concealed, every manly virtue scrupulously withheld, as if by common consent; and a monster of depravity, whose very name seemed to typify deformity of the most revolting description, corporeal as well as mental, is the impression that prevailed for ages, and, to a certain degree, still prevails, respecting a monarch whose actions, during his brief reign alone, deserved a more just, a more faithful representation.

If a veil of mystery was thus studiously thrown over his public career, it is not to be marvelled at that still fewer records remain of his private life. That he was the last survivor of "his hearth" has been already shown, and that his short reign was characterized by the remarkable occurrence of the decease of the heir-apparent to the throne, and the reigning queen, has been also related. Little else is known of his domestic history beyond the fact of his having preceded his venerable mother* to the grave, and of his having left two illegitimate, but not unacknowledged children — a son and a daughter both apparently older than the young Prince of Wales, with whom they were probably brought up at Middleham;† as from occasional notices in the oft-quoted registry they would seem to have been educated with great care, and were recognized by the king as his offspring. The eldest, John, sometimes surnamed "of Gloucester,"‡ sometimes "of Pomfret,"§ was knighted, it will be remembered, by Richard after his second coronation at York; and, shortly before the monarch's decease, he appointed him Captain of Calais for life, and governor of the fortresses of Rysbank, Guisnes, Hammes, and all the marches of Picardy belonging to the English crown. It would appear, from the wording of the patent,‖ which conveyed to his son this permanent provision, that the young Plantagenet gave promise of no ordinary degree of excellence: nothing is known, however, of his subsequent proceedings, neither does there appear to be preserved any other document relating to him beyond an entry in the Harl. MSS. of a donation from the king, of "silk clothes,"¶ and other articles of dress suitable to the position in life which his son was about to fill, and bearing date two days before the patent above named.

His other child, a daughter, seems to have ranked high in her father's

* Richard III., Act V. Sc. III.

† Drayton, as well as Shakspeare, with the license of a poet, has transformed the undefined images of the old chroniclers into the ghosts of all those individuals whose violent deaths were ascribed to the monarch:

"Both armies, well prepared, tow'rds Bosworth strongly prest,
And on a spacious moor, lying southward from the town,
Indifferent to them both, they set their armies down,
Their soldiers to refresh, preparing for the fight;
Where to the guilty king, that black fore-running night,
Appear the dreadful ghosts of Henry and his son,
Of his own brother George, and his two nephews done
Most cruelly to death; and of his wife, and friend
Lord Hastings, with pale hands, prepared as they would rend
Him piece-meal." *Drayton's Bosworth Field.*

‡ Lamb's Essays "On the Tragedies of Shakspeare with reference to their fitness for Stage Representation," vol. ii. p. 5.

§ Ibid., p. 22. ‖ Ibid., p. 156.

* Cecily, Duchess of York, mother to King Richard III., as already detailed, became a nun of the Benedictine order in 1480. (See *Cott. MSS. Vitel.*, 1. fol. 17.) She survived this her youngest son for the space of ten years, as appears by the following notice in Lord Bacon's Life of King Henry VII., (p. 144): "Thus died also this year (1495) Cecile, Duchess of York, mother to King Edward IV., at her castle of Berkhampstead, being of extreme years, and who had lived to see three princes of her body crowned, and four murdered. She was buried at Foderingham, by the side of her husband." The life of this illustrious lady is, perhaps, unexampled for its vicissitudes! a brief summary of which may be found in the Archæologia, vol xiii. fol. 7. Sandford states, that on her coffin being opened, in the reign of Queen Elizabeth, "the Duchess Cecily had about her neck, hanging on a silk riband, a pardon from Rome, which, penned in a fine Roman hand, was as fair and fresh to be read as if it had been written but the day before."—*Sandford*, book v. p. 374.

† See Harl. MSS., 433, fol. 269.

‡ Drake's Eborac., p. 117. § Harl. MSS., 433, fol. 99.

‖ 1485. 11th March, 2d Rich. III.—Patent reciting that whereas "the vivacity of wit, agility of limbs and proneness to all good habits (ingenii vivacitas, membranumque agilitas, et ad omnes bonos mores pronitas,) of our beloved bastard son, John of Gloucester," gave the king "great and undoubted hope of his future good service, he had appointed him Captain of Calais, and of the Tower Rysbank, and Lieutenant of the Marches of Calais, for life, with all profits thereunto pertaining, excepting the right of appointing officers during his minority." He was, at the same time, appointed captain of the castles of Guisnes and Hammes in Picardy.—*Fœdera*, vol. xii. p. 265.

¶ Harl. MSS., 435, fol. 211.