

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 cha-

\* 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.

acter 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

\* Cecily, Duchess of York, mother to King Richard III., as already detailed, became a nun of the Benedictine order in 1480. (See *Coll. 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 Berkhamstead, 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, membranisque 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.

favour—judging, at least, from the innumerable grants and gifts bestowed upon her and her husband. She was early married to William Herbert, Earl of Huntingdon, secretary to the young Prince of Wales;\* and in the deed of settlement† which conveys the king's consent to the alliance, she is styled “Dame Katherine Plantagenet, daughter to our said sovereign lord, King Richard III.” The king undertakes to make and bear the cost of the same marriage, and to endow her with an annuity of 400 marks. He shortly afterwards granted to William, Earl of Huntingdon, a confirmation of the name, state and title of the said earldom;‡ he bestowed upon him the stewardship of many rich demesnes,§ nominated him to various important offices;|| and in the last year of his reign, further granted to “William Herbert, Earl of Huntingdon, and Katherine his wife, jointly an annuity of 15*l.* 10*s.* 10*d.*, until the king should grant to them and their heirs lands of like annual value.”¶ Tradition numbers a third child\*\* with the two that are thus authenticated by history, another son bearing his father's name of “Richard,” but who, for some unexplained cause, appears to have been kept in ignorance of his parentage until the eve of the battle of Bosworth, when the monarch is stated to have sent for him, and to have made known his intention of acknowledging him as his offspring if he survived the approaching conflict and gained the victory over his enemies. Prior to the engagement, it is further stated that the king placed him on an eminence, where he could watch the progress of the battle, enjoining him to instant flight, for which he furnished him with the means, in the event of his death. When the fatal result took place, the youth, quite a stripling, precipitately fled, and after enduring great privations, and having no means of subsistence, it is said that he proffered his services to a stone mason at Eastwell in Kent, where he lived obscurely and worked in penury to the age of between seventy and eighty, carefully concealing his name, until circumstances, a few years before his death, led him to make known his history to an ancestor of the present Earl of Winchelsea, who suffered him to erect a cottage in his grounds, and in whose family this tradition has been perpetuated. Singular as this romantic tale may appear, there are not wanting facts which throw over it an air of credibility. The registry of the death and burial of “Rychard Plantagenet,” at Eastwell, in 1560, is yet extant;†† the foundation of the little dwelling where he is traditionally reported to have lived and died is also still visible in the park adjoining: these realities, and a well in the same parish, called to this day by his name, furnish strong presumptive proof, if not of the actual truth of the whole story, at least for there being some solid ground for a tradition‡‡ so curious and remarkable. Nevertheless, it is but tradition!

\* “To William Herbert, secretary to my lord prince, an annuity of 40 marks, for occupying of the said office.”—*Harl. MSS.*, 433, fol. 34.

† See Appendix DDDD.

‡ *Harl. MSS.*, fol. 66.

§ *Ibid.*, fol. 67.

¶ *Ibid.*, fol. 46.

\*\* *Ibid.*, fol. 29.

\*\* See “Peck's *Desiderata Curiosa*,” *Seymour's Top.*; and *Hist. Survey of Kent*; *Leland's Kent*; and *Gent's Mag.*, vol. xxxvii. p. 408, vol. lxii. p. 1106.

†† Through the zealous kindness of the Rev. Hans Mortimer, the author has been enabled to procure a certified copy from the ancient register of the parish of Eastwell, relative to the burial of Richard Plantagenet. It runs thus:—

“Anno Domini, 1560.

Rychard Plantagenet was buried the xxii daye of Decembre,  
Anno di supra.”

Likewise of the truth of the facts mentioned in the text relative to his humble abode, and the well which perpetuates his name.

‡‡ A very interesting letter will be found in the *Gentleman's Magazine*, dated August 10, 1767, entitled “The Story of Richard Plantagenet authenticated,” from the pen of

and although in itself a matter of no great importance, it furnishes another example of the mystery, uncertainty, and obscurity, which pervade even the most trivial matters connected with the memoirs of Richard III.

The most ordinary incidents in other men's lives with him seemed fated to be alternately the subjects of romance or of tragedy. Even the inn where he abode during his brief sojourn at Leicester, even the very bed on which he there reposed, are not exempt from the tales of horror which are associated with the memory of this prince. On his departure for Bosworth, it appears, from the result, that he must have left many articles of value, either too cumbersome to be removed, or in themselves ill suited for a temporary encampment, at the house of entertainment where he had been abiding, and which, as being the chief hostelry in Leicester, was distinguished by the appellation of Richard's badge,\* “the Silvery Boar:” but on his defeat and death, and the dispersion of his followers, the victorious army, with the infuriated rage which in all ages accompanies any popular excitement, compelled the owner of the inn to pull down the emblem of the deceased king, and to substitute the blue for the white boar.† The apartments which the king had occupied were pillaged and ransacked, and the hangings‡ of the richly-carved bed on which he had slept during his stay in the town were torn off, and either carried away as booty, with other portable articles, or were destroyed on the spot. The bedstead, however, being large and heavy and apparently of no great value, was suffered to remain undisturbed with the people of the house; thenceforth continuing a piece of standing furniture, and passing from tenant to tenant with the inn: for King Richard and his secretary being both slain, and all his confidential friends executed, imprisoned or exiled, it could not be known that the weight of the bulky wooden frame-work left in his sleeping apartment arose from its being in reality the military chest of the deceased monarch.§ It was at once his coffer and his couch. Many years, however, rolled on before this singular fact became known, and then it was only accidentally discovered, owing to the circumstance of a piece of gold dropping on the floor when the wife of the proprietor was making a bed which had been placed upon it. On closer examination, a double bottom was discovered, the intermediate space between which was found to be filled with gold coin to a considerable amount.||

The treasure thus marvellously obtained, although carefully concealed, helped in time to elevate the humble publican, “a man of low condition,”¶ to the proud station of chief magistrate of his native town.\*\* But at his death the vast riches that accrued to his widow excited the cupidity of menials connected with her establishment; and the wilful murder of their mistress, in 1613, led to the execution of her female servant, and of seven men concerned with her in the ruthless deed:†† thus adding another tragedy to the many of higher import which are inseparably connected with the recollection of this unhappy prince.

the erudite Rev. Samuel Pegge, under his assumed signature of “T. Row.” Likewise another letter of singular import, as regards the tradition, from the rector of the parish of Eastwell, in the same year, who states, with reference to the entry of Richard's burial, “It is also remarkable that in the same register, whenever any of noble family was buried, this √ mark is prefixed to the name; and the same mark is put to that of Richard Plantagenet.”—*T. Parsons, Rector of Eastwell, 1767. July.*

\* *Nichols*, vol. ii. p. 381.

† *Ibid.*

‡ *Hutton*, p. 48.

§ *Nichols*, vol. i. p. 380.

¶ *Ibid.*

|| *Ibid.*

\*\* *Ibid.*

†† The full particulars of this tragedy are given by Sir Roger Twysden, who had it from persons of undoubted credit, who were not only inhabitants of Leicester, but saw the murderers executed.—*Nichols' Leicestershire*, vol. i. p. 380.

The inn itself, rendered so remarkable as the last abiding-place of the last monarch of the middle ages, "a large, handsome, half-timber house, with one story projecting over the other,"\* remained for upwards of three centuries unchanged, an interesting relic alike of the architecture of its period as of the remarkable epoch which it perpetuated. But in the year 1836, although undecayed, uninjured, and defying the ravages of time, this venerable fabric was razed to the ground, to the regret of all who hold sacred such historical memorials, and hallow the relics which link bygone ages with the present time. Its site, with the appellation of an adjoining thoroughfare to which it formed an angle, and which still retains the name of "Blue Boar Lane," together with the description and delineation of its picturesque appearance, is now all that connects King Richard with this interesting memorial of his last days at Leicester.

Not so, however, the bedstead. That appendage to the inn, although three hundred and fifty years have elapsed since it was used by the sovereign, is still in existence, and in the most perfect state of preservation. Richly and curiously carved in oak, with fleur-de-lys† profusely scattered over it, its panels inlaid with black, brown and white woods, the styles consisting of Saracenic figures in high relief, it proves, from the singularity of its construction, the true purpose for which it was designed, every portion of it but the body being fabricated to take to pieces and put up at will; so that for travelling, it speedily became transformed into a huge chest, although ingeniously framed for the twofold purpose which led to its preservation.‡

This relic, insignificant in itself, is the only known memorial connected with the personal history of Richard III. His political career will be forever

\* Hutton, p. 47.

† During the Plantagenet era, this royal emblem of France formed a conspicuous feature in the heraldic embellishments of the English crown. The hangings, which were torn from the bed after the monarch's decease, were, in all likelihood, of great value, and richly ornamented with his badge; for there was scarcely any article of domestic use more highly prized during the middle ages than beds, and their costly furniture, the embroidering of which was a frequent occupation of ladies of the highest quality and their attendant gentlewomen. John of Gaunt, at his death in 1399, bequeaths in his will his "large bed of black velvet embroidered with a circle of fetterlocks," the badge of the House of Lancaster; and the Duke of York, killed at Agincourt, bequeaths to his dear wife Philippa "my bed of feathers and leopards, also my white and red tapestry of garters, fetterlocks and falcons." The "Testamenta Vetusta," whence the above examples were selected, abounds in legacies of a similar nature; and very curious behests may also be found in Nichols' "Royal Wills," proving how highly this article of furniture was estimated by its owners.

‡ Through the courtesy of the present owner of this valuable relic, the Reverend Matthew Babington, the author was permitted thoroughly to examine it, and was further favoured with many interesting particulars connected with its preservation, and the peculiarity of its construction. It seems, that after the murder of Mrs. Clarke, in 1613, the bedstead still remained at the Blue Boar Inn, and continued to do so for the space of 200 years, when it came into the possession of a person whose rooms being too low to admit of its transit, the feet were cut off: they were two feet six inches long, and each six inches square. It was purchased some years after by Mr. Drake, an alderman of Leicester, grandfather to the present proprietor, and by him held in great estimation, and very carefully preserved. Two of the richly-carved panels are said to represent the Holy Sepulchre; the tester is carved and inlaid with different coloured woods in various patterns; the posts are very massive in parts, and very taper in others, and their construction is said to be most ingenious. Modern feet have been added; but in all other respects this very remarkable piece of antique furniture remains in its pristine state, excepting that the rich gilding mentioned by Sir Roger Twysden was unfortunately removed by the carelessness of the person employed by Mr. Drake to cleanse it, after it was purchased by him.

perpetuated by Bosworth Field.\* Unchanged this memorable spot can scarcely be expected to have continued from so remote a period up to the present time. But although the country has been enclosed, hedges planted and fences have grown up, and the prospect generally is impeded,† still such is the peculiar character of Redmore Plain, that, with the aid of the local appellations by which the sites of the leading events of the day are traditionally commemorated, its ancient appearance may very well be understood, even from its modern aspect. The scene is indeed a still continuing monument of the action by which it is rendered celebrated. The churches of Bosworth and Atherstone in the distance, the heights of Stapelton, where Richard first encamped his army of observation, of Anbeam Hill, whither he removed preparatory to the conflict, and Amyon Hill, where the army were arranged in order of battle, the wood, the rivulet, the marshy ground, which protected Richmond in the disposition of his army, the well‡ from which Richard drank, the eminence on which King Henry was crowned, the alleged position of the

\* Deeply it is to be lamented that no memorial has ever been raised upon this celebrated plain; the

"Battle to describe, the last of that long war  
Entitled by the name of York and Lancaster."

*Drayton.*

Or any national monument erected that could perpetuate the era which was to

"Enrich the time to come with smooth-fac'd peace,  
With smiling plenty, and fair prosp'rous days!"

*Shakspeare.*

and yet more to

"Abate the edge of traitors,  
That would reduce these bloody days again!  
And make poor England weep in streams of blood!"

*Ibid.*

† Introduction to Nichols' reprint of Hutton, p. 4.

‡ Owing to the learned Dr. Samuel Parr, the site of this memorable spot will be handed down to the latest posterity. Having heard that the well was in danger of being destroyed by cattle from being in dirty, mossy ground, and from the draining of the land, he proceeded to Bosworth Field in the year 1813, accompanied by some gentlemen interested in the preservation of this traditional relic; and having discovered, by means of local information, the identical spot, he took measures to have it preserved by means of the following inscription:—

ARVA EX HOC PVTEO HAVSTA  
SITIM SEDAVIT  
RICARDVS TERTIVS REX ANGLIÆ  
CVM HENRICO COMITE DE RICHMONDIA  
ACERRIME ATQVE INFENSISIME PRAELIANS.  
ET VITA PARITER AC SCEPTRO  
ANTE NOCTEM CARITVRVS.  
XI. KAL. SEPT. A. D. M. CCCC LXXXV

In English thus:

With water drawn from this well,  
Richard the Third, King of England,  
When fighting most strenuously and intensely  
With Henry, Earl of Richmond,  
Quenched his thirst;  
Before night about to be deprived  
Alike of his life and sceptre.

11th of the Calends of September, A. D. 1485.

This inscription, deeply cut on white stone, is placed immediately over the spring, and within a small building of unhewn stone of a pyramidal form, and which, although rudely constructed, serves to mark the spot and preserve the very classical memorial by which Dr. Parr has perpetuated the tradition.

camp of the Stanleys, of Norfolk, and of Northumberland, and "Dickons' Nook," the place where King Richard is stated to have addressed his army!—these and many other less memorable sites spread an unfading interest around a spot which, notwithstanding the years that have elapsed, and the cultivation to which it has been subjected, seems by the air of solitude which yet reigns about it, the want of habitations, and the loneliness which pervades the whole district, to harmonize fitly with the tragical and touching exploits, the dark and stealthy deeds, which are inseparably interwoven with Bosworth field, and which have afforded such a fertile theme for poets.\*

These associations, however, together with many more which might be adduced, such as the chivalrous scene which ensued between the Lords of Surrey and Talbot, Sir Richard Clarendon, and Sir William Conyers,† the desperate encounter of the faithful Brackenbury with the traitor Hungerford,‡ and the romantic tale already related of the friendship which linked Sir John Byron and Sir Gervis Clifton,§ notwithstanding their political feelings—naturally as they arise when contemplating the present aspect of a site so memorable and deeply interesting—fade into insignificance by comparison when considered with reference to the mighty issue of that brief but decisive conflict.

The battle itself, fiercely as it raged, lasted but two hours;|| yet those two hours were fraught with the most important results to England. The downfall of King Richard proved the downfall, also, of that overwhelming baronial ascendancy which had led to his destruction. From the time that the race of York had presided over the destinies of the realm it had been the aim of their dynasty to curb the inordinate power of its arrogant nobles, and to check the undue influence of the priesthood: but it was reserved for the calculating, the phlegmatic Richmond to bring about that great revolution in the constitution,

\* "Here valiant Oxford and fierce Norfolk meet;  
And with their spears each other rudely greet;  
About the air the shined pieces play,  
Then on their swords their noble hand they lay;  
And Norfolk first a blow directly guides  
To Oxford's head, which from his helmet slides  
Upon his arm, and biting through the steel  
Inflicts a wound, which Vere disdains to feel,  
But lifts his faulchion with a threat'ning grace,  
And hews the beaver off from Howard's face;  
This being done, he, with compassion charm'd,  
Retires asham'd to strike a man disarm'd;  
But strait a deadly shaft, sent from a bow,  
(Whose master, though far off, the duke could know,  
Untimely brought this combat to an end,  
And pierc'd the brains of Richard's constant friend.  
When Oxford saw him sink, his noble soul  
Was full of grief, which made him thus condole:—  
*Farewell, true knight, to whom no costly grave  
Can give due honours, would my tears could save  
Those streams of blood, deserving to be spill'd  
In better service; had not Richard's guilt  
Such heavy weight upon his fortune laid,  
Thy glorious virtues had his sins outweigh'd.*"

*Beaumont's Bosworth Field.*

These brave commanders had lived in friendship, and were of one family, Oxford's mother being a Howard, and first cousin to the duke. Norfolk knew Oxford by the device on his ensign, a star with rays; and he knew Norfolk by his silver lion.—*Hutton*, p. 101.

† *Ibid.*, p. 104.

§ *Ibid.*, p. 117.

‡ *Ibid.*, p. 116.

|| *Grafton*, p. 231.

and to consummate that policy which the Yorkist monarchs, with their shining abilities, had failed in effecting. The temporizing Stanleys were to Richard III. what the imperious Nevilles had been to Edward IV.; and Northumberland, wily and selfish, represented to the fallen monarch the part pursued by the vain-glorious and ambitious Buckingham towards young Edward V. and his kindred. The entire epoch of the Yorkist rule was characterized by one vast and desperate struggle between the sovereign and the aristocracy; and none but a prince so cautious, so mistrustful, so secret in his habits and reserved in his manners\* as the founder of the Tudor race,† could have perfected the system which had been so admirably commenced but unavailingly pursued, by his predecessors; and realized their projects by means of that very revolution which, producing their ruin and leading to his own elevation, made him fully alive to the danger which must accrue to every monarch of England so long as the supreme control of affairs rested virtually, although not ostensibly, in her turbulent barons. Early initiated into their deep designing schemes, and from necessity made fully acquainted with the subtle means by which they compassed their ends, the new monarch was well prepared to observe and to resist the earliest indication of attempts similar‡ to those in which, as the exiled Richmond, he had acted so prominent a part; and his execution of Sir William Stanley within ten years of the period when, through his aid, Richard III. had been slain, and himself proclaimed king, affords evidence that he saw the necessity§ of watching his personal attendants, and acting towards his "lord chamberlain" with a stern resolution of purpose, which, had a similar relentless course been pursued by the betrayed monarch to "the high steward of his household," might have preserved to him both his life and his throne. It is certain that this severe measure of King Henry struck a panic into the disaffected that greatly induced to the safety of his throne, on the breaking out of that rebellion of which it was the precursor.

His jealousy of his nobles,|| and his undisguised dislike to all persons and matters connected with the Plantagenet rule, led him steadily but progressively to loosen the bonds which had long enslaved the humbler classes, and to encourage and protect the growing interests of that great commercial and trading body which had first been made to feel their importance by Edward IV., with the view of balancing the overgrown power of the feudal lords, and had been, from more enlarged views, the peculiar object of the legislative wisdom of their patron and benefactor, King Richard III.

This monarch, by striving to suppress the hosts of military retainers, and, above all, by his prohibitory enactments¶ against the ancient custom of giving badges, liveries, and family devices to multitudes of armed followers, struck at the root of the evil, which arose from each chieftain having a stand-

\* "A dark prince, and infinitely suspicious."—*Bacon*, p. 242.

† Full of thought and secret observations, and full of notes and memorials of his own hand, especially touching persons.—*Ibid.*, p. 243.

‡ "He was of an high mind, and loved his own will and his own way, as one that revered himself, and would reign indeed. Had he been a private man he would have been termed proud; but in a wise prince it was but keeping of distance, which indeed he did towards all, not admitting any near or full approach, either to his power or to his secrets; for he was governed by none."—*Bacon*, p. 238.

§ Through the agency of secret spies, which he did employ both at home and abroad, by them to discover what practices and conspiracies were against him.—*Ibid.*, p. 240.

|| See Howell's State Trials, vol. iii. p. 366.

¶ "He kept a strict hand on his nobility, and chose rather to advance clergymen and lawyers, which were more obsequious to him, but had less interest in the people, which made for his absoluteness, but not for his safety."—*Bacon*, p. 242.

¶ See Harl. MSS., 433, fol. 111. 138. 188. 230.

ing and well-disciplined army at command, to overawe the crown and perpetually disturb the peace of the realm. But the odium which attached to this daring measure of abridging a power so dangerous to the throne led to King Richard's ruin; while the merit of carrying out a policy which Richard began, doubtless too precipitately and boldly, has been exclusively apportioned to Henry VII., who, treading in the same steps with his predecessor, although circumspectly and with caution, attained the object, and the appellation of the Father of English liberty, from the identical cause, and from pursuing the same measures which laid King Richard in the dust, and procured for him the name and the character of a tyrant!

How far he merited this epithet must depend upon his acts, and the degree of credit which is due to those who have branded him with it. Many of the greatest, wisest and most powerful monarchs in all countries have been usurpers, or ascended the throne irregularly; and the reason is obvious; without rare talents and ability for government, they could not have acquired sufficient ascendancy over their fellow-men to break the direct line of succession, and to be invested with the sovereign power. But such political changes, when brought about by the voice of the country, and without having recourse to arms, by no means imply the elevation of a tyrant, although it may denote incapacity in the monarch deposed. If Richard erred in yielding to the evil counsels\* of those who knew that ambition was inherent in his race, and formed the predominant feature in his character, he at least proved himself, when called upon to exercise the regal power, a patriotic and enterprising monarch, distinguished for wisdom in the senate and for prowess in the field. His reign was signally advantageous to the realm; and he gave earnest of being disposed to make amends for any imputation of injustice that might be laid to his charge, arising from his irregular accession to the throne.

The nation were indebted to him for provident statutes of lasting good; and he was alike a firm protector of the church, and strict in the administration of justice to the laity.† He was a generous enemy, notwithstanding that he was an ill-requited friend; and that this his clemency and forbearance did not arise from personal fear, is evidenced by the intrepid bravery, undaunted courage, and contempt of danger, which even his enemies have perpetuated:—

“he did a stately farewell take,  
And, in his night of death, set like the sun;  
For Richard in his West seem'd greater, than  
When Richard shined in his meridian.

“Three years he acted ill, these two hours well  
And with unmated resolution strove:  
He fought as bravely as he justly fell.  
As did the Capitol to Manlius prove,  
So Bosworth did to him, the monument  
Both of his glory and his punishment.”‡

A close examination into the earliest records connected with his career will prove that, among all the heavy and fearful charges which are brought against him, few, if any, originate with his cotemporaries, but that the dark

\* “Let us speke of Rycharde in his dignitie, and the mysfortune that hym befell; a wicked counsell drew hym.”—*Harl. MSS.*, 542, fol. 20.

† “Could this king be brought off from the horrid imputation that lies upon his memory, of much bloodshed, oppression and gross hypocrisy, to gain and keep the crown, one might judge him a good king. For in several passages of his reign, and public declarations by him made, he expressed a care of the good estate of his people, and concern to have sin and wickedness checked, and carried himself with a regard to learning and religion.”—*Kennet*, p. 576.

‡ *Hist. of Hen. VII.*, by Charles Aley.

deeds which have rendered his name so odious were first promulgated as rumour, and admitted as such by Fabyan, Polydore Virgil, and Sir Thomas More, in the reign of his successor;\* that they were multiplied in number, and less unhesitatingly fixed upon him by Grafton, Hall and Holinshed, during the ensuing reign; and that towards the close of the Tudor dynasty, every modification being cast aside, they were recorded as historical truths by Lord Bacon, Sir Richard Baker and many others, and rendered yet more appalling by the moral and personal deformity with which King Richard was by that time invested by the aid of the drama. If, however, by a retrograde movement, these calumnies are found gradually to lessen one by one, and that the progress can be traced to no more copious source than the evil fortune which overwhelmed King Richard at Bosworth, and gave the palm of victory to his rival,—if his administration, though brief, affords evidence of the sound views which influenced his conduct,—and if, apart from fear and from jealousy of the baronial power, he resolutely pursued that system of domestic policy which he felt would ameliorate the condition of his people, and contribute to the prosperity of the country at large, then surely, as was observed at the opening of this Memoir, it is time that justice was done him as a monarch, and that the strictest inquiry should be made into the measure of his guilt as a man. Time, indeed, as was further remarked, may not have softened the asperity with which a hostile faction delighted to magnify his evil deeds; but time, and the publication of cotemporary documents, have made known many redeeming qualities, have furnished proof of eminent virtue, and certified to such noble exemplary deeds as already suffice to rescue King Richard's memory from at least a portion of the aggravated crimes which have so long rendered his name odious, and inspired great doubts as to the truth of other accusations which rest on no more stable authority.

If Lord Bacon‡ could panegyricize “his wholesome laws,” and pronounce him “jealous for the honour of the English nation,”‡—if Grafton could so far eulogize his proceedings as to admit “that if he had continued lord protector, the realm would have prospered, and he would have been praised and beloved,”§—if Polydore Virgil could speak in commendation of his “piety and benevolence,” and laud “the good works which his sudden death alone rendered incomplete,”||—if cotemporary writers testify to his noble conduct in the field, and the treachery that worked his destruction,¶ and certify that before his accession he was so “loved and praised” that many would have “jeopardied life and goods with him,”\*\*—if the universities of Oxford†† and Cambridge‡‡ perpetuate his love of letters, his patronage of the arts, and his munificence to these seminaries of learning,—and if the register of his public acts§§ abounds in examples of liberality to the church, of equity, charity, beneficence and piety, surely every impartial mind, with reference to his long

\* The Croyland historian, who terminated his valuable work with the death of King Richard, intimates very plainly the little probability there was of truth prevailing in subsequent narratives of that monarch. “Forasmuch as the custom of those who write histories is to be silent on the actions of the living, lest the description of their faults should produce odium, while the recital of their virtues might be attributed to the fault of adulation, the afore-named writer has determined to put an end to his labour at the death of Richard III.” (*Gale*, p. 577.) This he did on the 30th April, 1486, about eight months after King Henry's accession; a period, however, sufficiently long for him to perceive that silence was desirable with reference to his actions, and that odium would be incurred by the admission of his faults.

† Bacon, p. 2.

‡ *Ibid.*

§ Grafton, p. 235.

|| Pol. Virg., p. 565.

¶ Chron. Croy., p. 574; and Rous, p. 217.

\*\* Fabyan, p. 517.

†† Gutch's *Hist. Oxford*, p. 639.

‡‡ Cooper's *Annals of Cambridge*, p. 228.

§§ *Harl. MSS.*, fol. 433.

imputed but unsubstantiated crimes, must respond to the sentiments of the old poet,—

“Here leave his dust incorporate with mould:  
He was a king; that challengeth respect.”\*

True it is, that from the great distance of time in which he lived, some parts of his history must still rest upon reasoning and conjecture; any mystery will, probably, ever envelop many portions of his career, the destruction of original documents rendering impossible a close examination into several that rest on report alone: yet if so great an advance has already been made as the admission that the “personal monster whom More and Shakspeare exhibited has vanished,”† and that the restless habits resulting from a nervous temperament, and which have been made to indicate a Nero or Caligula,‡ are shown§ to have been, not the result of a demoniacal temper, but the usual accompaniment of those impetuous feelings, and of that vivid rapidity of thought, which, seeing all things clearly, could not brook opposition, or the unmanly subterfuge of double dealing, it is earnestly to be hoped, for the credit of our national history, for the honour of England and of her monarchs, that further discoveries, by throwing yet more light upon the dark and difficult times in which Richard III. flourished, will add to the proofs which already exist of his innocence as regards the great catalogue of crimes so long and so unjustly laid to his charge; and that thus his moral, equally with his personal, deformity may vanish under the bright influence of that searching examination into historical truth, that firm resolution of separating fact from fiction, which peculiarly characterize the present enlightened period.

These philosophical views having already rescued his memory from one portion of the fabulous tales which have made him a byword and reproach to posterity, fair ground is open for belief that the day is not far distant when truth and justice will prevail over prejudice and long-received opinion, and unite in discarding mere rumour and tradition for the recognition of facts that can be fully established; so that, the character and conduct of this prince being displayed in its true light, his actions dispassionately considered, and the verified details of his reign balanced against the unworthy motives attributed to him on no ground but surmise, atonement, however tardy, may at length be made to a monarch who, for three centuries and upwards, has been so unsparingly reviled, so bitterly calumniated, as

## RICHARD THE THIRD.

\* Aleyn's Henry VII.

† D'Israeli, *Amenities of Literature*, vol. ii. p. 105.

‡ Pol. Virg., p. 565.

§ Turner's *Middle Ages*, vol. iv. pp. 54. 84.

## APPENDIX.

## A.

THE WELL-KNOWN BALLAD OF “THE BABES IN THE WOOD” SUPPOSED TO BE A RHYTHMICAL TRADITION OF THE ALLEGED MURDER OF THE YOUNG PRINCES IN THE TOWER.

(See page 17.)

THAT the popular legend of “The Babes in the Wood” had its origin in, and was a disguised recital of, the reputed murder of his young nephews by Richard III., can scarcely be doubted when a comparison is instituted between that favourite metrical romance and the historical narratives of the Tudor chroniclers. The old editions of this interesting little ballad, which bears evident marks of antiquity, avowedly state that it was founded on fact; and its general resemblance to Sir Thomas More's account of the tragical event, and yet more with Shakspeare's description of the same dark deed, is very striking: many passages in the tragedy, and in the ballad, being couched in such parallel terms as to suggest the idea that both Sir Thomas More and Shakspeare were well acquainted with it, and aware of its true signification.

Throughout the whole of the tale there is a marked resemblance to several leading facts connected with Richard III. and his brother's children; and so singular a coincidence exists between many expressions in the poetical legend, and the historical details of the time, that it greatly favours the idea of the original ballad having been framed at a period when it would perhaps have been dangerous to speak of the event in plainer and more undisguised terms.

The children being placed under the guardianship of their uncle\* by their father,—

“Whom wealth and riches did surround,  
A man of high estate;”

the uncle's fair speeches to their mother when essaying to give her comfort,—

“Sweet sister, do not feare;”†

and the parting scene between the parent and her children when resigning them to their uncle,—

“With lippes as cold as any stone,  
She kist her children small:  
God bless you both, my children deare,—  
With that the teares did fall;”‡

cannot fail to recall, almost word for word, the corresponding descriptions of the dramatist and historian, allowance being made for the license permitted in legendary lore, and the disguise in which these traditional allusions to real events were generally conveyed.

Then, the removal of the children from the abode of their parents to one selected by their guardian,—

“The children home he takes;”§

the avarice and ambition that tempted the uncle to commit the crime, and its being

“his minority  
Is put into the trust of Richard Gloster.”

*Shakspeare, Rich. III., Act I. Sc. III.*

† “Sister, have comfort.”—*Ibid.*, Act II. Sc. II.

‡ “And therewithal she said unto the child, ‘Farewell, my own sweete son; God send you good keeping: let me kis you once yet ere you goe, for God knoweth when we shall kis together agayne.’ And therewith she kissed him, and blessed him, turned her back and wept.”—See Sir Thomas More's account of the parting of the young Duke of York and his mother, *Hist. Rycharde III.*, p. 62.

§ “And then the said duke caused the kyng to be removed up to the Tower, and his brother with him.”—*Fabyan's Chron.*, p. 513.