

THE LAST PLANTAGENET

By Henry Cabot Lodge

SOMEONE has said that "the youth of England take their theology from Milton, and their history from Shakespeare." Whether the first proposition is true or false, there can be no doubt that the second holds good, not only as to the youth of England, but as to all who speak or read the English tongue. The history of England which Shakespeare wrote is the history we really know, and the kings he put upon the stage are those who are real and vivid to English-speaking people to-day. Whatever these sovereigns may have been in reality, we think of them now as Shakespeare drew them. His conception has become that of the English-speaking world, and will so remain.

Life-like as all these royal portraits are, however, there is one that stands out with peculiar vividness. This is the last Plantagenet, Richard III. Some of the historical plays are never acted, and others seldom and irregularly. But "Richard III." is always upon the stage. The tragedy which bears his name goes far beyond the circle of those who read, and passes easily out of the range of occasional "runs" and scattered performances, which are the lot of its companions. It is intensely popular as a play. It packs theatres, it thrills audiences, it stirs the ambition of every aspiring tragedian, and it is ever before the public. Shakespeare's Richard is the best-known ruler England has ever had, for he is as familiar to the shoeblack and the newsboy, innocent of all learning and shouting applause from the gallery, as he is to the patient scholar in his closet, giving laborious days and nights to the mending of a corrupt line, or the settlement of a doubtful reading for some vast *Variorum* edition of the great dramatist.

It is not a hold upon posterity, however, which anyone need envy. Lord Lyndhurst said that the knowledge that Lord Campbell would write his biography added a new terror to death. If Richard could have known that his story would have been

told solely by his enemies, and would then have passed into the hands of the mightiest genius among men, to be depicted with all the resources of consummate art and all the prejudices of a servant of the Tudors, he might well have felt that there was a new pang added even to the terrors of a mediæval death-bed. Yet such has been his fate. Shakespeare took the statements of one of the king's bitterest enemies, and from them developed the Richard that we know. In the light of recent discoveries, it is possible now, in some measure, to see how near the great poet came to the historic truth. Richard is so distinct to us in the work of the dramatist that his career is always interesting, and has found many writers who have devoted to it much time and study. With the new materials, however, which modern research has discovered, the subject has risen from the level of a merely curious inquiry about an interesting character and the events of a dark period, to a plane where the great forces of English history are disclosed, and something more than a mere bloody struggle for personal power is revealed.

The first step is to define the Richard we know; the second is to compare this Richard and the supposed events of his life with the facts which the centuries have spared, and which now, after long hiding, have been brought to light. But few words are needed to set forth Shakespeare's Richard, so well is he known to us all. He appears in three plays—the second and third parts of "Henry VI.," as well as in the one that bears his own name and is depicted with that force of drawing and warmth of color of which only one man in all literature is capable. He is drawn with the utmost care and precision of definition, and his career is worked out with unsparing logic. From his first utterance to his last, there is not a break or a slip to mar the artistic completeness of the whole. The man stands before us with all his tendencies, motives,

and passions laid bare, and their consequences are worked out with the relentless force of a syllogism.

Richard makes his first appearance in the second part of "Henry VI.," when York summons his sons to back him in his claim to the crown.

Queen Margaret.—His sons he says will give their words for him.

York.—Will you not, sons?

Edward.—Ay, noble father, if our words will serve.

Richard.—And if words will not, then our weapons shall.

This first sentence defines him at once as the fighter and the man of action. Then he bandies words with Clifford, who cries :

Hence, heap of wrath, foul indigested lump,
As crooked in thy manners as thy shape.

Thus he is immediately stigmatized as physically hideous, and the first prejudice, that of the eye, is roused against him. The battle of St. Albans follows. Richard kills the Duke of Somerset, and apostrophizing the body, exclaims :

Sword, hold thy temper ; heart be wrathful
still :
Priests pray for enemies, but princes kill.

The last line marks sharply the man whose theory of life is to kill all who cross his purposes, while, as the play closes, his prowess in the battle is also especially emphasized.

In the third part of "Henry VI.," Richard figures largely. He is always the great soldier of the Yorkists, the foremost in fight, the most bloodthirsty, and the one who is ever eager for action and for blows. It is he who rallies the army at Towton when both Warwick and Edward give way. It is he who rescues Edward when Warwick imprisons him, and it is Richard who leads the van at Barnet and Tewkesbury. In this play his character is developed, and in the great speech which begins :

Ay, Edward will use women honorably,

his qualities and purposes are minutely set forth.

VOL. XXI.—24

The play ends with the great scene in the Tower, which Cibber tacked on to his version of "Richard III.," and which is therefore familiar to everyone. Richard kills Henry, and with a cynical jest upon his lips goes his way.

In the tragedy which bears his name there is no need to trace him, for everyone knows it well. It is easy to sum up his character, although an infinity of touches have gone to make the finished picture. In his full and final development, Shakespeare's Richard is a complete monster, physically and mentally, without a redeeming moral trait, except a courage that knows no fear. He is a great soldier, a man of the highest ability—cold, determined, relentless. He is subtle, hypocritical, ingenious, with an iron will and an address which bends all things to his purpose. He is devoured by an ambition for the crown. In this he is the man of one idea, and never for a moment loses sight of his object. He has a savage wit, a biting sarcasm, a brutal frankness, and, at the same time, a smooth, persuasive tongue in time of need. His most marked trait, perhaps, is the cynicism with which he meets every event, and which does not spare even himself or his ambition. There is no softer side, there are no periods of remorse. Moments of superstitious fear occur, but these have no flavor of repentance, and, as soon as he can catch his breath, these shadowy terrors are trampled under foot. The qualities which are especially emphasized in Shakespeare's Richard are savage cruelty, indifference to bloodshed, ability, and a reckless fighting spirit, which finally brings him to his death.

Let us turn now to the facts of history, cold and lifeless, with none of the glow of genius upon them, and see how far the real Richard was like the Richard of the poet. At the outset, be it said that Shakespeare, with his marvellous insight into human nature, could not be the mere reproducer of what Horace Walpole calls "mob stories and Lancastrian forgeries," however much he may have followed them. With the sure intuition of genius he saw much that he could not find in the books he read, and all this came out in the picture. For example, the ambi-

tion of Richard as Shakespeare shows it was in the main true. He came of a race who, for generations, had been occupied in getting and holding thrones; and his whole life had been absorbed, and all his immediate family had been concerned, in a struggle to seize and keep the crown. It is no wonder that to him, so born and so bred, the one thing worth having in life was the royal crown of England. In like manner Shakespeare portrayed truly enough the man's ability, his military capacity, his reckless personal courage, and his strong personal influence over everyone with whom he came in contact. These qualities, admitted alike by friend and foe, we may take as undoubted. All that remains is to see how far the other features of Richard's character, as drawn by Shakespeare, can be sustained by solid and trustworthy historical evidence.

Shakespeare relied for his story upon the account of Richard written by Sir Thomas More, and the slightly varying versions of the same narrative given by Hall and Holinshed. Sir Thomas More's account is now known, and is admitted by all recent authorities to be, so far as the incidents go, the work of Morton, Bishop of Ely, the one whom Richard sends in the play to get strawberries from his garden in Holborn. Morton was one of Richard's bitterest enemies, and a Lancastrian. Even if his narrative had been perfectly clear and consistent, the attitude of the author to the subject would prevent its being accepted on any point adverse to Richard without outside corroboration. But it is not even consistent with itself, and can be pulled to pieces by a critical examination almost without reference to other authorities. Yet it was received for a long time as final, and is still adhered to, even by modern writers, to a surprising degree. The story gained its authority chiefly from the fact that it passed through the hands of Sir Thomas More, who wrote it in a dignified style, and in language which was an immeasurable improvement on any English prose that had then appeared. It was this that gave it weight and acceptance; and as Dr. Mahaffy says of Thucydides, it is astonishing how a solemn manner and a noble style will carry unsupported and unfounded statements without dispute for generations. The work was left a fragment by its re-

puted author, and was not published in his lifetime. It was not an age of historical research. Sir Thomas More made, and could have made, no investigation in the modern sense. He simply took the tale as it was told him by his patron, dressed it in a fine style, and left it to posterity, who, receiving it through Shakespeare, has found it sufficient to damn Richard with for all time.

Rather more than a hundred years elapsed, and then Richard found a defender in Sir George Buck, an old antiquarian who died in 1623. After his death what he had written about Richard was published, and he was set down as an untrustworthy lover of paradoxes, and passed unheeded. A century and a half went by, and then came another defender in the person of Horace Walpole with his "Historic Doubts." The author's wit and reputation gained fame for the book, which showed much critical acumen, and which fatally discredited the received accounts. But it failed of its purpose, for it was regarded rather as the fanciful recreation of a literary epicure than as the serious historic criticism which it really was.

The present century has produced many painstaking and elaborate histories of Richard III.—notably Miss Halsted's and Sharon Turner's, both favorable to the King, and Jesse's on the other side. None of these writers, however, had access to the vast mass of state rolls and records which have lately been brought to light, and therefore they wrote at a disadvantage. Since then there have been two large works of authority on Richard—Mr. Gairdner's "Life," and Mr. Legge's "Unpopular King." Mr. Gairdner, a specialist on the period, an expert, and a trained historian, with the new material before him and completely master of it, has done more for Richard than anyone else. He has adopted the adverse view, and has undertaken to sustain the traditional and Shakespearian account by the new evidence at his command. As he is perfectly candid, his failure to make the new and unimpeachable testimony bear out the old case is better for Richard's cause than any defence. For, if in his skilled hands the best testimony, beside which the traditional accounts have no standing, is unable to sustain the Shakespearian view, the break-

down is fairly complete, and the time has arrived for the acceptance in history of a view of Richard and his reign very different from that popularly held.

Last of all comes Mr. Legge, as accurate and painstaking as Mr. Gairdner, with all the latter's material at his command and some further new and important matter, which he himself has discovered. Mr. Legge takes what may be called the modern and more favorable view, and supports his case strongly, although in his eagerness he falls into the very natural error of going too far, and of trying to show that Richard was right in all points and clear of blame in many cases where it is impossible to prove his innocence, and where, in the broad historical view, it is not very essential to the general theory to show anything of the kind.

Now, let us consider the facts in Richard's case, not the various theories—for that would occupy volumes, and one hypothesis differs from another not in value, but in ingenuity. For the purpose of this brief study, the undisputed and reasonably certain facts are all we can deal with. Indeed, we have no right to go beyond the story they tell to reach a just conclusion.

Richard III. was the eleventh child and eighth son of Richard Plantagenet, Duke of York, and Cicely, daughter of the Earl of Westmoreland, of the great house of the Nevilles. His father was descended through the female line from Lionel, Duke of Clarence, third son of Edward III., and thus held an unimpeachable hereditary title to the throne as against the Lancastrians, who derived from John of Gaunt, the fourth son of Edward III.

Richard was born at Fotheringay Castle on Monday, October 2, 1452. After his defeat and death, it was stated that his mother was pregnant with him for two years, that he was brought into the world feet foremost by the Cæsarean operation (an experience which his mother, in a manner highly creditable to the surgery of that period, seems to have survived for more than thirty years), and that at his birth he had a full set of teeth and long hair down to his shoulders. These are unusual circumstances—all the more unusual when we reflect that no one noted them at the time, that there is not a scintilla of contemporary evidence to support them, that

they were never hinted at until forty years after the event, and that they are absurd on their face. Yet this silly fable has been made part of the traditional Richard, most of it has been gravely used by Shakespeare, and historians have seriously discussed it. It is, of course, only fit, historically speaking, to be consigned to the dust-heaps so much spoken of by Carlyle.

Let us deal with the rest of the physical horrors of Richard, and be rid of them all at once. His deformity is a great feature in Shakespeare, and is used with all Shakespeare's knowledge of human nature to explain much of what would be otherwise incredible. It is the bitterness of the deformed which makes Richard hate the world, which hardens his cruelty, and sharpens his already keen-edged ambition with the desire to overcome the scorn of mankind for defects he could not help, by reaching a place where he could put the world under his feet. Yet there is but little better evidence of his deformity than there is of his having been born with teeth.

The cheerful originator of both legends was one Rous, a monkish writer of Guy's Cliff. He wrote a eulogy of Richard while Richard reigned, and an invective against him after Henry VII. was on the throne. This fact alone disqualifies Rous as an authority, and it is not easy to understand why anyone should take anything he wrote as by itself trustworthy testimony. Yet even Rous, with all his worthlessness, only said that Richard had the left shoulder a little lower than the right. The work of Morton and Sir Thomas More says the right shoulder was lower than the left, and Polydore Vergil, who was not contemporary, says there was an inequality, but does not mention which shoulder was the higher. This conflicting evidence is all there is on the subject, and it only proves that, if there were any deformity, it was so trifling that no one could tell exactly what or where it was.

It is hardly necessary to call witnesses to disprove such triviality as this, but it is easily done, and the refutation is complete. No contemporary other than Rous even alludes to Richard's deformity, and these others who are silent are the only writers of real authority. Fabian, the Londoner, who must have seen Richard often, and who was a Lancastrian,

says nothing of any deformity. The Croyland Chronicler, a member of Edward IV.'s council, is equally silent, and so, too, is Comines, although he twice speaks of Edward as the handsomest prince he had seen, thus showing that he noted physical appearance. Stowe said he had talked with old men who had seen Richard, and they declared "that he was of bodily shape comely enough, only of low stature." Even Rous himself in his portrait of Richard indicates no deformity. The portraits indeed—and there are several authentic examples—show us a man without any trace, either in expression or feature, of bodily malformation. The face is a striking one, strong, high-bred, intellectual, rather stern, perhaps, and a little hard in the lines, but not in the least cruel or malignant, and with a prevailing air of sadness.

The only other point to be considered in this connection occurs in the famous scene at the council board, where Richard, denouncing Hastings, bares his arm, shrunk and withered as it always had been, according to Morton, and says that it was due to the sorcery of the Queen and others. If it always had been withered, it is difficult to see how Richard could have been so dull as to suppose that, even in that superstitious age, he could make anyone believe that his arm had been lately crippled by the machinations of the Queen and Jane Shore. The thing was in fact impossible. He very probably accused Hastings of witchcraft or conspiracy, or anything else, when he wished to sweep him from his path, but he bared no withered arm, because the King, who at Bosworth unhorsed Sir John Cheney, cut down Sir William Brandon, forced his way through ranks of fighting men nearly to Richmond himself, the general who led the van at Barnet and Tewkesbury, could not have been maimed in this way. The man who performed these feats of daring and of bodily strength must have been quick, muscular, and adroit, a vigorous rider, and skilled in the use of weapons. That he performed these precise feats is proved and unquestioned, and they were not performed by a man with a withered, shrunken, useless arm.

In the way of positive evidence we have the statement of the Countess of Desmond,

quoted by Hutton, that Edward, who was notorious for his beauty, was the handsomest man present on a certain occasion, and that Richard was the next. So we may leave the deformity. There is a little poor evidence that it existed in a very trivial form. There is a great deal of good evidence that it did not exist at all. As a physical horror, an index to a black soul, which filled the onlooker with repulsion, the tradition of Richard's deformity is as idle a myth as that about his monstrous birth, and like that may be dismissed to the limbo of historical rubbish.

So far as the facts go, Richard was born much like other people, and did not differ from them in appearance by any malformation. We know nothing of his early childhood, except that he was with his mother in England. During that time his father first took up arms for the redress of abuses, then asserted his claim to the crown, was constituted heir to the throne by Henry VI., and finally was killed in the battle of Wakefield. At this time Richard was eight years old, and all the scenes of the play in which he appears with his father as a full-grown fighting-man of savage temper are necessarily pure invention.

After Wakefield, George and Richard were sent by their mother for safety to the court of Philip the Good, of Burgundy, whence they returned to find their brother, victor in the battles of St. Albans and Towton, firmly seated on the throne as Edward IV. George was created Duke of Clarence, Richard Duke of Gloucester and Admiral of the Sea, and large estates were conferred on both. Richard then appears to have been placed, for training and education, under the guardianship of the great Earl of Warwick. By the time he was fifteen he was out of tutelage, and we hear of him as chief mourner at the ceremonies incident to the reinterment of the bodies of the Duke of York and the Earl of Rutland. A little later we hear of him again with the army upon the Scottish border, and we know that he was then leading an active military life.

Meantime Edward IV. made his foolish marriage with Elizabeth Woodville; the Woodville, or Queen's faction, rose to power, and a series of quarrels ensued with Warwick, which resulted in the great Earl going over to the Lancastrians.

With him went the Duke of Clarence, moved thereto by hatred of the Woodvilles and by the temptation of becoming heir to the crown of Henry VI. The uprising which followed was completely successful. Edward was dethroned and deserted. He fled the kingdom to France, accompanied by Richard, who, boy as he was, remained faithful in the dark hour, while Clarence betrayed his brother, assisted in his overthrow, and plotted to get the throne himself.

Early in the next year, 1471, Edward and Richard landed in England with a mere handful of men, got possession of York, and thence marched rapidly on London, gathering strength as they advanced. Clarence now abandoned Warwick and came over to his brother's side—according to later authorities, induced to do so by the diplomacy of Richard. London received Edward favorably, and on Easter Eve the brothers marched out and met Warwick at Barnet. In the hard-fought battle of the next day Richard, only nineteen years old, led the van and bore the brunt of the fighting. The Yorkists won and Warwick was killed. Meantime Queen Margaret and her son had landed with a powerful army, and less than a month later, on the fourth of May, Edward met and defeated them at Tewkesbury. Again Richard was given the most responsible post; again he led the van, and, storming the Duke of Somerset's intrenched camp, won a quick and decisive victory.

We have now come to the first of his stage murders, in which Shakespeare represents him as a leading participant, the killing of Prince Edward, son of Henry VI. Mr. Gairdner, though he does his best by it, honestly admits that this affair is "a tradition of later times," which is a mild way of putting it. There is no contemporary evidence to sustain the charge that the King and his brothers stabbed young Edward. The Croyland Chronicle, the Fleetwood Chronicle, Dr. Warkworth, and two manuscript contemporaries, all say Edward was slain "in the field." It is a distinct affirmative statement. Fabyan later, and Lancastrian, says the King, before whom Edward was brought, struck the Prince with his gauntlet, and that the boy was then slain by

the "Kynge's servants." On this statement the fable was built, and even this later writer makes no shadow of accusation against the royal brothers, who were certainly not the "Kynge's servants." But the inferior and later evidence must give way to the higher. The statement of the five contemporaries, who agree with each other, of whom one was present and another a Lancastrian, by all rules of historical evidence must be accepted as final. They say Edward was slain in the field, and give no hint that he was ever brought before the King at all. The whole scene is an invention, but, even if it were not, there is not a suggestion, even in the later writer with whom the tale originated, that Richard had anything to do with the killing of the young Prince.

We now come to the second stage murder, that of Henry VI., which Richard in the play commits single-handed. Henry VI. was confined in the Tower and, after the battle of Tewkesbury, the bastard Falconbridge, who had command of the fleet, came to London to liberate him and renew the struggle. Falconbridge was repulsed by the citizens and retired to Kent, while Edward marched rapidly to London on hearing the news of the revolt. He arrived there May 21st, and passed that night with his court in the Tower, where were held a cabinet council and a great banquet. The next day Richard set out for Canterbury in pursuit of Falconbridge. On the night of May 21st, while all these affairs of business and pleasure were in progress, Henry VI. died or was killed in his neighboring prison. The Fleetwood Chronicle, Yorkist, says he died of "pure displeasure and melancholy" at the disaster which had befallen his family. As he was nearly, if not quite, imbecile, this story seems unlikely on its face. The Croyland Chronicle says that King Henry was found lifeless, and that the "doer thereof deserves the name of tyrant," which though vague can fairly point at only one person, the King, Edward IV. Dr. Warkworth says that Henry was put to death, the "Duke of Gloucester and many others being then at the Tower." Fabyan simply says the King "was stykked with a dagger." The later writers all tell different stories varying from Sir Thomas More, who of

course says that Richard killed Henry with his own hand, to Habington, who blackens Richard in every possible way, but on this occasion defends him and charges the murder direct to Edward and his cabinet council.

That Henry was murdered there can be no reasonable doubt. The rising of Falconbridge had sealed his fate and had shown that, imbecile though he was, he was still a source of danger. How he was killed no one but those directly concerned knew, and they did not tell. The manner of his death was unknown, but there is no evidence whatever of the first class to fix the actual killing on Richard, and a good deal to fasten the responsibility on the King. Apart from the evidence, it is absurd to suppose that the King's brother should have played the part of an executioner. The Tower was swarming with the victorious Yorkists, soldiers of desperate character, inured to bloodshed, and the King's brother-in-law, Earl Rivers, was in command. Henry was a danger and in the way, and it was not an age of scruples. But while generally for the interests of the House of York to be rid of him, it was the especial interest of Edward, and not of Richard, who was then too remote from the throne to be affected at all by Henry's existence. The natural explanation is the one best supported by such evidence as is worth considering, that Henry was put to death by Edward's order or with his sanction. That Richard approved the step it is reasonable to suppose. Most persons appear to have accepted it as a painful but necessary political action, for politics at that time were of that pleasant cast. But that Richard was more responsible than the rest of his family, there is no reason to suppose; and that he himself went sword in hand and stabbed Henry is not sustained by any good evidence, nor can it be accepted by any fair rules of reasoning.

In any event the House of York was now firmly established, and the last Lancastrian of the legitimate line was gone. For twelve years Edward was to rule England undisturbed. There is no need here to give any account of his reign. It is enough simply to bring together the known facts about Richard during that period. In the first hours of triumph he received

his share of the spoils, made larger by the fidelity which he had shown when Clarence played Edward false. He was appointed Lord Chamberlain and steward of the Duchy of Lancaster, and received the forfeited estates of Oxford, a portion of Warwick's, and the whole of divers others. He also received the thanks of Parliament, which indicates that he was popular. Soon after this began the contest about his marriage with Anne Neville. The famous wooing scene in Shakespeare, and his treatment of Richard's marital relations, are pure invention. At the time of the Shakespearean wooing, which must have been May 22, 1471, Richard was in Kent quelling an insurrection, and Anne, who had not yet completed her fourteenth year, was a prisoner in the Tower, having been captured at Tewkesbury with Queen Margaret. She was never married to Prince Edward, and is spoken of as "puella" in the Croyland Chronicle. It is probable that she was betrothed to the Lancastrian Prince, although there are doubts even on this point.

The historic facts are, that Richard and Anne were cousins and had been brought up together, and that after the final settlement of Edward upon the throne Richard sought her in marriage. Anne, however, was the sister and co-heiress of Isabella, daughter of the great Earl of Warwick and wife of Clarence. The Duke of Clarence wished to get all the Warwick estates, and having no mind to divide them with his brother, abducted Anne and hid her in London in the disguise of a kitchen-maid. Richard discovered her, took her away with her own apparent good-will, and put her in sanctuary. Then came a fierce dispute between the brothers, who argued the case before the council, and it was even feared that they would take up arms. Finally the decision went in Richard's favor, the King sustained him, he got half of the Warwick estates, and married Anne, probably in 1473. There is no evidence to show that they lived together otherwise than happily, or that Richard ever neglected her. On the contrary, they were constantly together, she bore him children—one of whom became Prince of Wales; and the intimation of Shakespeare that Richard had a hand in her death is sustained by no evidence worth considering.

The four years succeeding the battle of Tewkesbury, Richard, who was Warden of the Marches and High Constable, spent almost entirely on the northern borders. It was a difficult position, for there was much disaffection in that region. Richard governed wisely and well, and proved himself a strong administrator. He achieved a popularity in the north which never failed him, and even after his death the people there defended his memory.

In 1475 Edward, after burdening his subjects with terrible taxation, raised a fine army and invaded France. Once there, instead of fighting and winning, as he undoubtedly could have done, he came to a treaty with Louis, and for money down and an assured tribute, withdrew. All the great nobles and courtiers about him were bribed largely and openly, and gave their assent. Richard alone stood out, refused all bribes, and denounced the treaty as shameful. His attitude was as well known as it was exceptional, and established his strength and popularity with the people of England, who, wrung with taxation for a war, resented bitterly the conclusion of a sordid peace.

Soon after the King's return from France the trouble with Clarence culminated. Edward had never been on good terms with his brother George since the latter's double treachery to himself and Warwick. He treated him coldly, and discriminated against him in exemptions and gifts. Clarence sulked and withdrew from court. He was rich and popular, he began to talk about the bastardy of Edward's children, in which case he was the next heir to the throne he had already tried to reach, and finally, on the death of his wife, he set about to marry the daughter of Charles of Burgundy. In a word, he became dangerous. He was arrested, tried publicly, and condemned. The King gave the order for his death, urged thereto by the Woodville faction, but to save a public execution the Duke was assassinated in the Tower in 1478. There is not only no proof, or even hint of proof, that Richard had anything to do with it, but the only fact we know is that Richard endeavored to prevent extreme measures. Even Sir Thomas More admits that Richard's guilt was doubtful, and merely surmises that he really desired

Clarence's death, while he openly opposed it. Mr. Gairdner says that there is nothing in the original sources (which clearly prove Clarence's death to have been wholly of the King's doing) to connect Richard with the crime. Yet none the less, and this is a fair example of the way Richard has been treated, he endeavors to throw suspicion on him by showing that he received some advantages from Clarence's death in the way of an estate, and he hints that Richard's religious foundations at that period might have been works of repentance for his brother's execution. The plain truth on all existing evidence is that Richard had nothing to do with the death of Clarence, except to try vainly to prevent it.

The year before Clarence's assassination there were indications of difficulties with Scotland, which were fomented by France, and which culminated in war in 1481. Richard, as Lieutenant-General in the north, was in command of the army. He took the town of Berwick, marched on Edinburgh, and entered the city, making a treaty or arrangement with the Lords in control which satisfied the English claims. He then marched back to the borders, besieged and took the castle of Berwick, and thus restored to England the powerful fortress which Margaret and the Lancastrians had surrendered to Scotland twenty-one years before. Throughout he showed the military ability and the administrative capacity for which he was distinguished, and he was thanked again by Parliament.

The following year, on April 9, 1483, Edward IV., worn out by dissipation, died of a surfeit. Long years after, Tudor historians, who felt it necessary to attribute all the current mortality of that period to one source, insinuated a suspicion that Richard, who had not been in London for some time, and who was then at his government in the north, was in some way responsible for the King's death. The story is so silly that it is not worth considering, and is abandoned even by those writers who take the traditional view of Richard. What concerns us here is to trace Richard's subsequent course.

Edward had endeavored to bring about some arrangement before his death which should prevent the war of factions and secure the peaceful accession of his son, Ed-

ward V., then in his thirteenth year. It was in vain. The breath was hardly out of his body before the struggle was begun by the Woodville faction to get possession of the person of the young King and of the government. The Marquis of Dorset, young Edward's half-brother, seized the treasury, and began illegally to equip a navy. The others undertook to raise an army to escort the King from Ludlow, and were only prevented from doing so and compelled to cut the retinue down to two thousand men by the efforts of Lord Hastings, one of the most powerful nobles in the country, and a bitter enemy of the Woodville faction. All these movements were distinctly treasonable, for Richard had been constituted by the will of Edward IV. guardian of his son, and Protector of the realm. The contest, therefore, at the start was between the lawful authority and a powerful faction headed by the Queen.

Richard, on his side, was as prompt as his adversaries. With a small following, and accompanied by the Duke of Buckingham, he started for London and succeeded in intercepting the Prince's retinue at Northampton, the Prince himself having been hurried on to Stony Stratford. Briefly stated, Richard arrested Earl Rivers and Lord Grey, the King's uncle and half-brother, and Sir Thomas Vaughan, sent them to prison at Pontefract Castle, and then went on to Stony Stratford. Masters of the young King's person, Richard and Buckingham then marched to London and established their charge in the Tower, which, it should be remembered, was at that period a palace quite as much as a prison. Meantime the Queen, the rising which she had projected having failed, had taken sanctuary with her daughter and her second son, the Duke of York, at Westminster. Then followed six weeks of plotting and intrigue. The Woodville faction held one council in the Tower, Richard another in Crosby Place. Lord Hastings, who had helped Richard against the Woodvilles, had no mind to sustain him in power as Protector—still less as King—and Richard, acting with the suddenness and determination which were part of his character, arrested Hastings for high treason at a council meeting, and had him executed without even a form of trial that

very afternoon. At the same time Rivers, Vaughan, and Grey, after due trial, were executed at Pontefract.

With the death of Hastings, Richard had swept his last powerful opponent from his path and was master of the situation. From this point he moved rapidly to the throne, which we cannot doubt he had intended from the moment he heard of his brother's death. Into the management by which it was brought about, it is not necessary to enter. He based his claim on the bastardy of Edward's children, owing to the latter's pre-contract with Lady Eleanor Butler. This, although worthless in point of mere justice and according to the ideas of the present day, was at that period a perfectly good technical ground, and Richard produced direct evidence amply sufficient for his purpose. His case was considered so strong that, after his death, Henry VII. ordered all the petitions of the city of London, asking Richard to be King and setting forth the reasons for the bastardy of his nephews, to be destroyed. The accidental preservation of one or two of these petitions has alone enabled us to know on what grounds Richard made his claims. By these it is also proved that the later historians falsified them in saying that they set forth a pre-contract between Edward and his mistress, Elizabeth Lucy, as given by Shakespeare, which was idle on its face, and in suppressing the real pre-contract with Lady Eleanor Butler, which was witnessed by Stillington, Bishop of Bath. Richard was unscrupulous, but he was not fatuous, and he did not attempt to impose on the public so feeble a story of the bastardy as that set forth by Shakespeare.

The city of London petitioned him to assume the crown. After a feigned declination, he consented. The council confirmed the action. Parliament, which had been summoned, and then by a writ of supersedeas—issued probably by the Woodville faction—postponed, met nevertheless and confirmed Richard's title, which was later confirmed again by a Parliament formally brought together. If the bastardy of Edward's children is not admitted, Richard, according to the ideas of that day, was, like Henry IV. and Henry VII., a usurper. According to modern theories he was a constitutionally

chosen King, with the election of lords, commons, council, and city, as much so as any ruler who ever sat upon the throne.

He secured the throne with far less bloodshed than marked any of the changes of the crown from the accession of Henry VI. to that of Henry VIII. He executed three noblemen representing the Woodville faction at Pontefract, and one, Lord Hastings, in London. His action in regard to the Woodvilles was popular and is so admitted by all historians, for that faction was hated as oppressive and luxurious. Hastings's death was regretted, but regarded as a political necessity. Richard's management of the city and of his own claim to the throne was perfectly open, and he became King by the assent of every branch of the government and of the popular voice. Whatever his purposes—and they were no doubt as ambitious and selfish as his methods were violent and unscrupulous—it could not have been otherwise, for Richard did not have the usual weapon of usurpers, an army. It was reported that his forces from the north were coming, twenty thousand strong, to his support. These troops did not arrive until after Richard had assumed the crown, been proclaimed and accepted King, and taken the royal oath. When they came, there were only four or five thousand, according to Fabyan, raw levies in rusty armor and unfit really for service. They remained until after the coronation, but played no part and were not considered as of any importance by the Londoners.

Richard, therefore, reached the crown in eight weeks with no army at his back, and but trifling opposition. He could have effected this on only one condition. The community wanted him. If they had not, he would have been helpless and defeated at the start. It was natural enough, if we look at it without traditional prejudice. Richard was recognized as the ablest man in the kingdom, both as general and administrator. He had opposed the French peace, conquered Scotland, and brought peace to the borders. He was a strong man, capable of rule. On the other side was a boy king whose accession meant a period of violence and disorder as factions struggled for control, and that worst of all tyrannies, the rule

of contending nobles. Richard offered the best chance of law, order, and strong government, and that is the sole reason that he was able to carry his adroit schemes to such quick success.

The coronation took place almost immediately, on July 6th, and was performed with great splendor. The new King signaled his accession by a general pardon, extending his clemency even to some of the most bitter enemies of himself and his house. He then set out on a progress through the kingdom. Everywhere he was received with acclamation, and many of the towns voluntarily offered him gifts of money to defray the expenses of his journey, which is the strongest proof of his popularity. Such offers were rare, but Richard declined them all. Every sign that we can now discover points to the fact that he himself was very popular, and that among the masses of the people his accession to the throne was regarded as the best thing that could have happened.

While he was on this progress the report went out that his nephews, the Princes, had died by foul means in the Tower. Thus we come to the deed which has formed the darkest stain on Richard's character, and which has done more to damn him with posterity than all else. Yet, curiously enough, we know less about it and have less evidence concerning it than any other event in his career. The narrative of Sir Thomas More, which has always been the accepted version, carries in itself its own refutation. No outside evidence is needed. Careful criticism of the story, as More or Morton tells it, shows it to be full of contradictions and impossibilities. It falls to pieces on examination. Let us put together what we actually know. The young King Edward V. went to the Tower as soon as he arrived in London, in the spring of 1483. Late in June, just before Richard became King, the Queen-mother gave up the second boy, the Duke of York, and he likewise went to the Tower. Early in the following autumn it was rumored that the royal children were dead. Two of the contemporary chroniclers are entirely silent on the subject. The third merely mentions the report of their death. Nothing was known clearly at that time beyond the fact that a rumor to that effect was abroad. Richard preserved absolute

silence. He never denied the rumor. He never declared the Princes dead as a means of perfecting his title. After his death he was attainted, and in the bill of attainder no mention is made of the murder of the princes. His bitterest enemies did not then number that among his crimes. Not until seventeen years after Richard's death, not until Perkin Warbeck had attempted to personate the Duke of York, and it had become the direct interest of Henry to establish the death of the Princes, did anything like a definite account of their taking off appear. It was then said that Tyrrel and Dighton had confessed to smothering the two boys in the Tower.

Sir James Tyrrel, who had been Master of the Horse under Edward IV. and Richard, and subsequently trusted and advanced by Henry VII., was then in prison for complicity in aiding the Duke of Suffolk, for which he was subsequently executed. Dighton, also in prison, was released and rewarded by Henry VII., because "his statement pleased him." What they really confessed, if anything, is unknown, for all we have is what the King "gave out;" and what the King "gave out" we know only by hearsay and report. This sums up all the meagre evidence in regard to the death of the Princes; for the bones dug up in the reign of Charles II., and honored by royal burial, are worthless as testimony. They might have been the bones of anyone, even of an ape whose skeleton found in a turret passed for a time as that of Edward V., and the place where they were found does not agree with the accepted story, or indeed any other.

All that we actually know, therefore, is that the Princes went into the Tower in the summer of 1483, and though it was generally believed, by their mother among others, that one escaped, there is no proof that they were ever seen again alive outside the Tower walls. We also know that it was rumored in the autumn of 1483 that they had been murdered, and there knowledge stops. They may have been murdered by Richard's order, or have died, being delicate boys, of neglect and confinement. They may have survived Richard and died or been murdered under Henry, whose interest in having them

dead was greater than Richard's, for Henry could not, without destroying his wife's title, admit their bastardy. One conjecture, so far as proof and contemporary evidence go, is just as good and almost as well supported as another. We can only fall back on general reasoning. There is no proof that they survived Richard, the rumor of their death started in his time, and it was to his interest to have them out of the way, as movements were on foot among the nobles to assert Edward V.'s claim to the crown. The fairest inference is that they were put to death by Richard's order, and in the darkness that covers the whole business, an inference is all we have. The murder of the Princes is the blackest crime charged to Richard, and although direct proof of it seems impossible, he cannot be relieved from it unless new and positive evidence to the contrary is discovered.

At the time when this sinister rumor started, Richard was confronted with a much more practical danger. The Duke of Buckingham, whom Richard had declined to make too powerful, went into open rebellion, influenced largely by Morton, Bishop of Ely, who had been committed to the Duke's charge as a prisoner. This revolt was the signal for like movements by Lancastrians, the remnants of the Woodvilles, and the Earl of Richmond. It was a formidable situation for a King scarcely three months on the throne. Richard met it with his accustomed courage and capacity. He raised forces, moved with his usual quickness, and struck hard. The risings in the south were crushed, Richmond was repulsed from the coast, while by great floods in the west Buckingham's army was broken and dispersed, and he himself made a prisoner and promptly and justly executed for high treason.

This display of power brought quiet and gave Richard opportunity to enter on the public work of his short reign. It is only possible here to give a summary of what he accomplished, but that is sufficient to show, not only his wisdom and ability, but that he had a strong new policy which ran consistently through every act. It was this policy vigorously carried out which makes good Richard's place as the harbinger of the new epoch,

which vindicates his ability as a statesman, and which at the same time wrought his destruction.

In the first place he had two Parliaments in his short reign. The Plantagenets as a race were not afraid of Parliament, and in their struggles for power they were fond of appealing to the Commons and seeking a parliamentary title. There was nothing of the huckstering spirit which the Tudors showed, and still less of the quarrelsome timidity and bad faith of the Stuarts in the relations of the Plantagenets to their Parliaments. They were quite ready to fight with or domineer over a Parliament, but they were equally ready to meet with it and seek its assistance. Richard was conspicuous for this, and he was equally marked in his regard for the courts. Almost his first act was to take his seat with the judges on the King's Bench, and he devoted himself to re-establishing and strengthening the administration of justice between man and man, and to the enforcement of the laws for the protection of life and property. He abolished Benevolences, the most oppressive form of wringing money from individuals in the form of gifts. It was a cruel system, harsh, unequal, and indeterminate in the amounts demanded. For it he substituted, or rather relied on taxation, which, if burdensome, was at least determinate in amount, and was imposed with some regard to equality and justice.

He prohibited the wearing of any badges or cognizances but those of the King. This was a fatal blow to the private armies of the great nobles, and meant the end of private wars and a check upon constant insurrection. It carried in principle the overthrow of the feudal system, and the substitution of one responsible king for a multitude of irresponsible and petty tyrants.

He gave his protection and patronage to the New Learning. He was the friend of Caxton and the encourager of printing, and ordered that no obstacle should be placed in the way of the introduction of books and of all that could promote the new art in the kingdom. He devised a method of carrying despatches and news in which may be traced the first germ of the letter post. He gave liberally to the

Church, after the fashion of his time, but superstitious as he was, he curbed the overgrown power of the clergy, and sought to check some of the gross abuses of the day by bringing them within the jurisdiction of the secular courts. All this, in addition to extensive relations with foreign powers and several progresses through the kingdom, represents a great work for two troubled years, work that only a vigorous mind filled with new and definite ideas could have conceived.

At the close of two years the end came. Richmond landed with a mercenary force, and gathering some of the ever-ready and discontented nobles, marched toward London. Richard rapidly raised a much more powerful army and hastened to oppose him. They met at Bosworth. The royal forces were made up on the old feudal system of bands commanded by nobles, and these bands looked for command to their immediate chief, and not to the King. If the leaders failed or were false their troops went with them, and this was precisely what happened at Bosworth. There was really hardly any battle at all, as we can see from the trivial loss of the invaders. The Stanleys, commanding two large bodies of troops, deserted the King's standard almost immediately, and then turned upon the army they had betrayed. The royal forces were thrown, of course, into panic and confusion. Richard was urged to leave the field. He had ample time and opportunity to escape, but he refused. "I will die as I have lived," he said, "King of England." The wild fighting spirit of the Plantagenets was roused. Putting himself at the head of a handful of faithful followers, he charged straight into the enemy's lines, making for Richmond himself. He unhorsed Sir John Cheney, a knight of gigantic stature. He cut down Sir William Brandon, Richmond's standard-bearer, and mortally wounded him. His desperate valor brought him nearly to his rival, and then the men of Stanley closed in around him and he was beaten to the earth and killed with a hundred blows from the hands of the common soldiers. His crown was found later in a hawthorn bush. His body disappeared. There are various accounts as to what befell it, but it is only certain that it was obscurely buried.

So fell the last Plantagenet, fittingly upon the field of battle, heading a desperate charge. So fell also the first King who saw the coming of a new time in England, and who was great statesman enough to begin a policy which would break the power of the nobles, overthrow the feudal system, and bring from the union of crown and people law and order out of chaos and anarchy. The accepted tradition is that Richard was overthrown because he was so universally hated for his cruelty and tyranny that everyone was eager to desert him and to compass his downfall at the first opportunity. For this tradition there is no solid foundation. To begin with, Richard was not a tyrant. All his legislation and his whole general policy were popular and liberal. As to his cruelty, admitting once for all every crime that can be charged against him on any reasonable evidence, the cold-blooded execution of Hastings, Rivers, Vaughan, and Grey, and the murder of the Princes, there is no doubt that, according to the views of the nineteenth century, Richard was indifferent to human life, bloodthirsty, and cruel. He did not live, however, in the nineteenth but in the fifteenth century. He lived among feudal nobles in a period of constant and savage war, and in a society whose views as to the sacredness of human life and as to murder, treachery, and the like, were those of North American Indians. If Richard be tried by the only proper standard, that of his own time, he will be found to be, not more but less, cruel and bloody than either his predecessors or those who came after him. The act which has especially blackened his memory is the mysterious removal or murder of the Princes. Yet Clifford, backed by Margaret of Anjou, had killed in cold blood Richard's brother, the Earl of Rutland, a boy of sixteen, while Henry VII. imprisoned and executed the feeble-minded Earl of Warwick, the son of Clarence. In mere numbers of executions, excluding, of course, on both sides those who were taken in open rebellion, Richard has much less to answer for than Queen Margaret or Henry VII., and far less than Henry VIII., who put to death anybody who happened to be distasteful to him on political, personal, or religious grounds. There was no public opinion in that day

against putting to death anyone who had played and lost in the great struggle of politics. Executions were a recognized part of the business. When the game went against a statesman in those days, as Mr. Speaker Reed once said, he did not cross the aisle and take his place as the leader of His Majesty's opposition; he was sent to the Tower and had his head cut off. *Autres temps, autres mœurs.* At every turn of the wheel in the long struggle between the Lancastrians and the Yorkists, the victorious party always executed every leader of the other side upon whom they could lay hands. Such were the rules of the society, and such the politics in which Richard was brought up, and he played according to those rules and without excess, paying the final forfeit himself with undaunted courage.

Nothing is farther from the truth than the notion that Richard was unpopular with the masses of the people. He had never injured them, and they did not care how many nobles or princes he put to death. There is no evidence that there was any popular uprising against Richard at any time, but on the contrary, all the evidence we have shows that he was supported and liked by the people, especially in the north, where he was best known. This was but natural. Richard represented law, order, and authority. All his legislation was for the benefit of the people, and they knew it. Their enemies and his were the same, and they knew that too.

Yet it is true Richard was hated. Fabian records that there were mutterings against him on the very day of his coronation, but the men who muttered thus under their breath, according to the old chronicler, were the nobles, not the people. Now we come to the real unpopularity of Richard. He was hated by the classes, not by the masses. The nobles who had opposed him hated him because he had beaten them; those who had supported him, because they found a master when they intended to have a puppet. All classes of the nobility soon grew to hate him with a common and bitter hatred, because they recognized in him the enemy of their order and saw that every move he made tended to destroy their power. He was fighting the battle of crown and

people against the feudal system of petty tyrants, and the nobles, who saw political and military ruin advancing upon them, rose against the King who led the march. They raised a rebellion under Buckingham and failed. They took breath, set up a claimant to the throne, supplied him with forces, and then, by treachery, wrecked the royal army at Bosworth, and slew their foe. It was their last effort; they were exhausted and, although they had changed kings, they had not changed royalty or checked the movement of the time. The feudal system fell at Bosworth with the King who had given it its death-blow and marked out the road for his successor to follow.

It is here we come on the real importance of Richard III., when we find him a part of the great movement of the time, and leading the real forces which make history. If Richard's character as a man were all, it would not be more than a matter of curiosity to inquire into the truth concerning him. But behind this personal question there rises one of real importance, which has just been indicated, and to which those who have written upon him have given but little attention. On this side we are no longer dealing with doubtful or prejudiced chroniclers, no longer delving in dark corners whence the best issue is a probability. Here we come out into the broad light of day, where our authorities are the unquestioned witnesses of laws and state records, which tell us nothing of persons but much of things. In them, as we have seen, a strong consistent policy is disclosed, and that policy reveals to us the great social and political change then in progress.

It was the period when an old order of life was dying and a new one was being born. The great feudal system of England was drawing to its unlamented close. It had worked out its destiny. It had rendered due service in its time, it had curbed the crown in the interests of liberty, but its inherent vices had grown predominant, and it had come to be a block to the movement of men toward better things. In its development the feudal system had ceased to be of value as an aid to freedom against a centralized tyranny. It had become purely a dissolving and separatist force. When it culmi-

nated under Henry VI., we can see its perfect work. The crown, the central cohesive national power, had ceased to be. The real rulers of England were the great nobles, who set up and pulled down kings and tore the country with ambitious factions. Warwick was the arch-type, and the name he has kept through the centuries of the "king-maker" really tells the story. More men wore his livery and cognizance, more men would gather to the Bear and Ragged Staff of the Nevilles, than the king himself could summon. In a less degree all the great nobles were the same. Each was practically the head of a standing army. If the king did not please them, they took up arms, set up another king, and went to war. As they were always rent into bitter factions, the king could not please more than a portion of the nobility at any time, and the result was organized anarchy or the Wars of the Roses. The condition was little better than that which led Poland to ruin and partition.

The other powers in the state were king and people. To both the situation was hateful. The king did not like to hold his crown by sufferance and lie at the mercy of two or three powerful subjects. The people, especially in the towns, began to long for peace and order, and greatly preferred the chance of one man's tyranny to the infinitely worse oppression of a hundred petty tyrants. Steadily king and people were drawing together, and the only question was when they would be able to crush the feudal nobility and break their power. Edward IV. saw what it was necessary to do, and made some spasmodic efforts in the right direction. But Edward, although a brilliant general, was no statesman. He was too sensual, too indolent, too worthless, except on the field of battle, for such work. Richard was as brilliant a soldier as Edward, but he was also a statesman, and he was neither sensual nor indolent. Short as his reign was, a great work was done, and we have seen that a clear, strong policy of maintaining law and order and of crushing the nobility runs in unbroken line through his statutes.

It was wise and able work. Unluckily for himself, although it made no difference in the result, Richard was just a little too early. The feudal nobility were dying,

but not quite dead. There were still enough of them to set up a claimant for the crown, still enough to betray Richard and kill him on the field of battle. He was their enemy, and as a class they knew it. It was not his cruelty, even if we admit as true all the Shakespearian crimes. Executions and murders of royal and noble persons were too much the fashion of the day to base a campaign on for the crown. They called Richard tyrant and murderer and "bloody boar," and he retorted with proclamations in which he denounced them not merely as traitors but as murderers, adulterers, and extortioners. There was just as much truth in one charge as the other, and neither was of any importance in the fight. Mr. Legge is right in saying that there was no national or popular uprising. Indeed the people of York mourned publicly over Richard's "treacherous murder," when such lamentation was far from safe, and quarrelled in defence of his memory six years later. There was, in reality, no reason for a popular revolt against Richard, for, as has been shown, all his legislation and public acts made for the benefit of the people as much as the crown, and, as Richard represented the new movement in politics, was bound to do so.

If Richard had been a little more thorough and a little more cruel; if he had sent Lord Stanley to the block as his successor afterward did, and as he was warranted in doing by the code of the day; if he had sent Stanley's wife along the same road and procured, as he might have done, the murder of the Earl of Richmond, all would have gone well with him. He would have died, probably, according to his sneer, "a good old man," and he would have left an immense reputation as the king who stamped out feudalism, opened the door to learning and civilization, brought crown and people together, consolidated the English monarchy, and set England on the triumphant march of modern days. His executions and cruelties would have been glossed over, and his exploits and abilities enlarged. But he struck the first intelligent blow from the throne at the anarchic nobility, and they had still strength to return the blow, kill him, and then load his memory with obloquy.

Richard's immediate vindication as a statesman lies in the fact that his successor continued his policy, and, enforcing the law against private liveries, fined heavily his great supporter, the Earl of Oxford, because on a royal visit the Earl received him with two thousand retainers wearing the cognizance of the house of Vere. The movement toward the consolidation of the monarchy and the development of the people as a force proceeded from the points fixed by the last Plantagenet. Richard came just at the dawn of the new movement, and thus marks by his reign no less than by his legislation a turning-point of momentous importance in the history of the English-speaking race.

He was the beginner of new things, but he was also the end of an old order. He was the last of a great dynasty. For four hundred years the Plantagenets held the English throne. In all history there has never been of one blood and of one lineage, unbroken and untainted, a reigning family which has shown so much ability of so high an order. They produced great soldiers and great statesmen, and these were the rule. The weaklings were only a few marked exceptions. They were essentially a royal, ruling, fighting race. Their end was coincident with that of the old feudal nobility and its system. The change was startling. The great dynasty of fighting monarchs and statesmen was succeeded by a set of bourgeois kings. Henry VII. was the grandson of an obscure Welsh gentleman, and his methods answered to his origin. He was a shrewd, able man, unscrupulous and crafty, every whit as cruel as Richard, and, as Horace Walpole says, one of the "meanest tyrants" who ever sat upon a throne. He recognized in the light of what Richard had done the true forces of the time and went with them. But the old conquering, adventurous spirit of the Plantagenets had gone, and the bourgeois monarchy had come. A bourgeois monarchy it remained, despite the false romance cast over the Stuarts, and became more so than ever when a third-rate German family was called to the throne. In the four hundred years since the Plantagenets there have been three dynasties in England, Oliver Cromwell, and William of

Orange. Among them all, since the last Plantagenet fell at Bosworth, closing a long line of statesmen and warriors, England has had but two great rulers, and one was a country squire, the other a Dutch prince. There was ability in the Tudors and common-sense, much meanness and cruelty, and highly imperfect morals. Of the Stuarts Charles II. had some sense, but the rest had neither sense nor morals, and were as worthless a family as accident ever brought to a crown. The Guelphs have answered their purpose, but it would be flattery to call them mediocre in ability. It is a picturesque contrast to the brilliant Plantagenets, and yet it must be admitted that these mediocre bourgeois sovereigns, in the main plain and sensible folk, have been best probably for England and for the marvellous development of her people.

The change in the nobles was no less sharp than in the occupants of the throne. The old feudal nobility was practically extinct when Henry VII. came to the throne, and new men took their places. This old nobility had grievous faults, and their political system was deadly. They were sunk in superstition; not merely the superstition of the Church, but that of the necromancer and the witch, the wizard and the soothsayer. In cruelty and bloodshed they had the habits of Red Indians. They were illiterate, tyrannical, vindictive, and often treacherous. Yet, despite all this, they were brave and adventurous, a fighting, conquering, ruling class. As to the crown a bourgeois monarch, so to the dead feudal nobility a bourgeois nobility succeeded. Empson and Dudley typify at the worst the new men who rose to power under Henry VII. The new nobility was a land-grabbing, money-getting set. They plundered the Church and seized her lands; they inclosed the commons and added them to their domains. As a class they were sharp political managers, rarely statesmen, and they had none of the bold, adventurous spirit of their predecessors. They made no wars, they sought no conquests, they engaged in no dangerous enterprises. If the old nobility had the failings usually attributed to pirates, their successors had the faults commonly given to usurers.

Last remained the people, who were not

extinct nor dethroned, but who were just taking the first painful steps which were to lead them to supremacy. The abolition of military tenures and the breakdown of the feudal system wrought a great change in their condition. Villanage disappeared, and from holding land by military service they became rent-payers. Then the commons were inclosed, and the struggle for life became desperate. Some were forced down until they sank into agricultural laborers. Others remained tenant farmers; others rose to be small squires and country gentry. Very many were forced off the land and took to the sea, to trade, to the professions. In the earlier days the daring English spirit was embodied in her Plantagenet kings and her feudal nobility. After the coming of the bourgeois monarchy that spirit deserted kings and nobles, but it was as strong and undimmed as ever in the descendants of the men who had drawn the bow and followed the Edwards and the Henrys at Poitiers and Cressy and Agincourt. While the bourgeois kings and nobles controlled England, she displayed, as a nation, none of the old spirit. We find it then only in men like Drake and Raleigh, but they came from the people, from the old fighting stock. At last crown and people clashed, and under Cromwell England rose once more to the rank of a great power able to dictate to Europe. The Plantagenet spirit came again with the man of the people. There was a brief interregnum, then the descendants of the feudal retainers consolidated and obtained control of the nation; and, beginning with William and Marlborough, England entered on that wonderful course of conquest and extension which ran through the whole eighteenth century, and subdued new continents and old civilizations alike. The spirit of the Plantagenets and their nobles came to a new and more glorious being among the descendants of the men who had followed them, and while the bourgeois nobility produced the Duke of Newcastle, the commons of England gave her the elder Pitt.

Such was the change which began under Richard, and which modern research among rolls and records has brought to light by exhibiting to us the course and purpose of his legislation. The importance of his place in history is plain enough

to those who care to look into it with "considerate eyes." The ability of the man, his greatness as a soldier, his wisdom as a statesman are also clear. These things were his alone; while his crimes and his overmastering ambition, although his own too, were also the offspring of his times, of which he, like other men, was the child and prototype.

Yet the helplessness of history when it comes in conflict with the work of a great imagination has never been more strikingly shown than in the case of the third Richard. Historians and critics may write volumes, they may lay bare all the facts, they may argue and dissect and weigh and discuss every jot and tittle of evidence, but, except to a very limited circle, it will be labor lost so far as the man Richard is concerned. The last Plantagenet will ever remain fixed in the popular fancy by the unsparing hand of genius. To the multitude who read books, to the vaster and uncounted multitude who go to the theatre, there will never be but one Richard, the Richard of Shakespeare. There in the drama and on the stage he has been fixed for all time, and nothing can efface the image. He will be forever, not only to the English-speaking world, but to the people of Europe, to whom Shakespeare's language is an unknown tongue, the crook-backed tyrant.

Always, while art and letters survive, will the last Plantagenet limp across the stage, stab Henry with a bitter gibe, send Clarence to his death with a sneer, and order Buckingham and Hastings to execution as he would command his dinner to be served. The opinion of posterity probably does not trouble Richard much since the event at Bosworth; but if it did he nevertheless has one compensation. Despite the lurid light in which he appears, it is still he, and not his rival, who has the plaudits of the countless people who have watched, and will yet watch, his career upon the mimic stage. They know that he is a remorseless usurper, a devil incarnate, for it has been set before them with the master's unerring art. But the same art has shown them the man's ability and power, his force of will, and his dauntless courage. When the supreme moment comes, the popular sympathy is not with Henry, loudly proclaiming his virtuous sentiments, but with his fierce antagonist. The applause and cheers which greet the final scene are not for the respectable Richmond, but for him who kills five Richmonds, who enacts more wonders than a man, and who dies King of England, hemmed in by enemies, as full of valor as of royal blood, desperate in courage as in all else, fighting grimly to the last like a true Plantagenet.



Sign Manual of Richard III.



THE MINIATURE PORTRAIT

By Evangeline Wilbour Blashfield



F Greek legend whispers that the portrait art was discovered by affection when the potter's daughter traced the shadow of her lover's profile on the wall, prosaic research proves that the miniature portrait also owes its origin to tenderness.

When the flower of French knight-hood jingled away southward to the Italian wars with Charles VIII., some disconsolate lady, left behind with no defence against regrets and heartache but a needle or a novel, had an inspiration. Why not replace the image of Madonna or patron saint, which pious usage had hung around all Christian

throats, by a tiny portrait of him who loved and rode away? A device so simple and so practical attained immediate popularity. There was no lack of skilled miniaturists and there was a touch of romance in the idea of having the image of the beloved always present, which appealed to a court where gallantry had inherited the language and ideals of chivalry.

The life-size portrait had an official character, it was the property of the family, of the *gens*; its place was above the hearth, between the blazoned shields; it was immovable, and counted as an item of household furniture; but the miniature, the little picture that could be