

**AN HISTORIOGRAPHICAL LANDSCAPE OF THE LATE FIFTEENTH CENTURY:
THE METAMORPHIC ERA OF MEDIEVAL ENGLAND AND ITS
TRANSFORMATION INTO THE AGE OF THE
ENGLISH RENAISSANCE**

**A THESIS
SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS
IN THE GRADUATE SCHOOL OF THE
TEXAS WOMAN'S UNIVERSITY**

DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY AND GOVERNMENT

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DENTON, TEXAS


MAY, 1994

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April 5, 1994

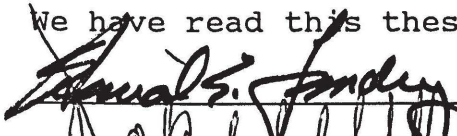
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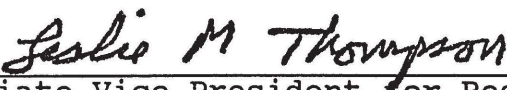
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ABSTRACT

AN HISTORIOGRAPHICAL LANDSCAPE OF THE LATE FIFTEENTH CENTURY: THE METAMORPHIC ERA OF MEDIEVAL ENGLAND AND ITS TRANSFORMATION INTO THE AGE OF THE ENGLISH RENAISSANCE

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May 1994

The purpose of this thesis is to examine current historiographical literature to determine if scholars should re-establish an earlier date for the beginning of English Renaissance by giving credit where credit is deserved, to the Yorkist Kings and their fellow countryman, William Caxton. With the end of the reign of Richard III in 1485, the Yorkists' claim to the throne, as well as the dynasty ended in defeat on the field of battle. After the Battle of Bosworth Field, historians wrote the history of that period, and they wrote as the victors, the survivors of battle. These historians were strongly influenced by the Tudor government in the reigns of Henry VII and Henry VIII, and more recent research seems to indicate that their writings do not portray accurately the picture of that period.

Much has been written concerning this period of English history, but most of the information, though concerned with change in England, does not label the era as a "Renaissance."

Historians have written about the sensationalism of the era, describing particularly the events surrounding the rumors and allegations that Richard III murdered his nephews. More information has been written on him than any other English monarch, and he has always been portrayed as somewhat of a "monster." The Wars of the Roses encouraged this uncivilized image with more death and destruction within England.

The research for this project was approached from a historical perspective. Materials were gathered from local as well as university libraries. One library in particular that has an extensive collection on England during the fifteenth century was the William A. Blakley Library on the University of Dallas Campus, Irving, Texas.

Information was gathered on the three royal families of the era, the House of Lancaster in the middle of the century, the House of York in the latter part of the century. A look was also taken at society as a whole under the reigns of each, for society and the royal house were closely intertwined if not synonymous with each other. This research indicates that a new era was beginning in England and evolving ever so slowly, but leading the country into modern times.

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CHAPTER ONE

THE RENAISSANCE MILIEU OF AN ERA IN CHANGE

The "Renaissance" was a time of dramatic artistic, political, economic, geographical and intellectual expansion, when creative artists, literate intellectuals, middle class merchants, and aspiring political leaders were discovering and exploring new worlds and viewing new horizons. Renaissance was the spirit of self-discovery and fulfillment, and it was the pursuit of recognition of human worth, with an outpouring of artistic activity. It was a time of spiritual devotion and artistic sensitivity and, above all, a time of change. The Renaissance has been called a "rebirth" of society as medieval culture declined; the new society thus formed challenged and changed many old ideas and institutions. It encompassed millions of human beings who lived, worked, built, suffered and died during the period, but who were able to reveal their character, personality, feelings and aspirations in their thoughts and in their accomplishments.¹

¹ There are several works which discuss the era in England and on the continent. See especially The Wars of the Roses Chronicles edited by Elizabeth Hallam (New York: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1988); The Yorkist Age: Daily Life During the Wars of the Roses by Paul M. Kendall (New York: The Norton Library, W.W. Norton and Co., Inc., 1962); The Community of the Realm 1154-1485 by Michael R. Powicke (New York: Knopf, distributed by Random House, 1973); The Later

There was a rise of Renaissance monarchies and the modern emergence of new nations, both in England and on the continent. Moreover, it might well be argued that, in Italy, where the Renaissance is traditionally thought to have begun, the middle class created the Renaissance. In contrast, in England, the Renaissance, led or inspired or empowered by the royal court created the middle class. It might also be argued that by the power of their personalities and positions, women in England influenced the Renaissance society to a greater extent than did women on the continent, where men tended to lead the "rebirth" of society. It is difficult to impose an exact date or time frame as to when the Renaissance began. The movement began in the south of Europe in the late century

Plantagenets: a survey of English history between 1307-1485 by Vivian Hubert Howard Green (London: E. Arnold, 1966); The Wars of the Roses by J.R. Lander (New York: Putnam Press, 1966); The Last Plantagenets by Thomas Bertram Costain (Garden City, New York: Doubleday Publishers, 1962); Historie of the Arrivall of Edward IV in England and the Finall Recouerve of his Kingdomes from Henry VI A.D. M.CCCC. LXXI. edited by John Bruce (London: Printed for the Camden Society by J.B. Nichols and Son, 1838); History of the Life and Reign of Richard the Third to which is added the story of Perkin Warbeck: from original documents, edited by James Gairdner (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1898); An history of the Memorable and Extraordinary Calamities of Margaret of Anjou, Queen of England by Michael Baudier (London: by J. Bettenham for G. Strahan, 1937); England in the Later Middle Ages by Kenneth H. Vickers (London: Methuen Press, 1930); Fifteenth-Century English Drama: the early moral plays and their literary relations by W.A. Davenport (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer; Totowa, New Jersey: Rowan and Littlefield, 1984); The Hundred Years War: England and France at War, 1300-1450 by C.T. Allmand (Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1988).

and rapidly spread northward. No single feature of Renaissance times adequately describes the age. The Renaissance encouraged individualism, humanism, artistic beauty, and new learning with an awareness of literature and scholarship as the birth of printing encouraged literacy and gave the common people access to the written word.

Due partially to its "splendid isolation," the Renaissance came to England much later than to the European continent.² But was it as late as the sixteenth century? Most historians have taught that the English Renaissance began in 1509, with the reign of Henry VIII.³ Historically, the fifteenth century in English history has been described as one of stagnation and civil wars, but, nevertheless, it may well be that the Renaissance began in the fifteenth century with the reign of Edward IV.

The civil wars during his era were labeled the Wars of the Roses. These civil conflicts have overshadowed other areas

² The term "splendid isolation" was created later to describe British foreign policy, but it might well be apropos in positioning England in the flow of Renaissance ideas. Moreover, at that time, English territories included holdings on the continent, such as Calais, with a corresponding English interest in continental affairs.

³ For more information on the life and times of Henry VIII see The Making of the Tudor Dynasty by Ralph Alan Griffiths (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1985); Henry VIII by A.F. Pollard (New York: Harper and Row, 1966) and Henry VIII: A Study of Power in Action by John Bowle (New York, Dorset Press, 1964).

of English life and helped create a false image of English culture.⁴ A concentration of historic interest on this turmoil distorts views of what social, economical and political changes that were taking place. In reality, the English made strides in education, foreign trade prospered and Parliament intensified its functions.

In English history, in the struggle for power at court the fifteenth century belonged to the Houses of Lancaster and York. The Lancastrian reigns of Henry IV, 1399-1413, and Henry V, 1413-22, were short, but gave England military glory and security. After 1422, Henry VI's years on the throne were disastrous and disappointing as he was a totally ineffective King, more interested in religion and books than in governing.

In 1453, with the end of the Hundred Years' War in France, the two rival English houses, with their own private, not public, armies fought each other for the next thirty years in a struggle for the throne. The Wars of the Roses were significantly named for the white rose emblem of the House of York and the red rose of the House of Lancaster. While these struggles between aristocratic factions decimated the ranks of the nobility, since the battles were brutal, they were mostly fought on a small scale by groups of noblemen and their

⁴ For more information concerning the Wars of the Roses see "Recycling the Early Histories: The Wars of the Roses and the Plantagenets" by Lois Potter, Shakespeare Survey Vol. 43 (1991): 171-181.

private soldiers, and they made little impact on the country as a whole.

Except for short intervals, the Yorkists controlled the government throughout the period with Edward IV reigning as the first of three Yorkist Kings. Edward ruled for 22 years from 1461-83. He was an astute and brilliant soldier who spent a great deal of his time protecting his throne from the Lancastrians. He preferred love affairs and luxury to the arduous task of governing.⁵ England, and especially the middle class, prospered under his reign.

The second Yorkist King was the son of Edward IV, twelve year old Edward V; however, young Edward was never crowned, as his uncle, Richard, Duke of Gloucester, claimed the throne for himself. The reign of Richard III was filled with turbulence amidst accusations of greed, jealousy and murder. While he sought a government that would yield justice as well as order in the land, it was not to be in his short reign. With deceit and deception from within his own ranks, as well as a never ending threat from his enemies, his reign ended at the Battle of Bosworth Field.

This battle ended not only his reign but the Wars of the Roses. Richard III has long been the villain of the fifteenth century, as Tudor historians painted him as a dark and

⁵ To pay for these pursuits, Edward IV himself became not only King but also a merchant, an importer of foreign goods.

sinister character. The mystery that surrounded his short reign has been one of the most fascinating in the history of England.

The Queens of these Kings, though excluded from much of the official powers in the government, had frequently exercised considerable authority in affairs of state. Queen Margaret of Anjou, wife of Henry VI; Elizabeth Woodville, Queen of Edward IV; and Richard III's Queen, Anne Neville, were all characters of historical importance to the era. Edward IV's sister, Margaret of York, was wed to the Duke of Burgundy, ruling a continental duchy with the richest and most lavish court in northern Europe. She transmitted Renaissance ideas to the English court.

All of these individuals helped to shape the civilization, reinforcing learning and refinement within the realm of England. At first glance the latter part of the fifteenth century in England looks barren of Renaissance thoughts and ideas, with all creative energies being channeled into the wars and conflicts within society.⁶

It is true, Renaissance ideas were almost nonexistent in the reign of Henry VI. However, with the Yorkist Kings, changes began to occur. These changes were a result of

⁶ Tudor publicists liked to reflect on the chaos and darkness of the pre-Tudor era in order to enhance the glories of change in the reigns of Henry VII and Henry VIII.

actions of the royalty as well as of the realm; as much a product of the times as of the court. Cities were beginning to grow and so was a middle class. A powerful merchant class developed as trade and shipping prospered, and with the economic growth money flowed. With wealth, the middle and upper classes had the time for more leisurely pursuits, such as entertainment and pageantry, artistic decoration of palaces and churches, and the importation of luxury goods as well as books which encouraged learning. With the wars, there was an excitement in the elections or transitions of power in the government, as loyalty was for sale and there seemed to be a shifting absence of honor where money and integrity and loyalty changed hands lightly and quickly. All of these characteristics reveal that the medieval milieu was in the process of becoming a Renaissance one, or that the medieval era had already gone, almost unnoticed even by those who had hastened the change.

CHAPTER TWO

THE DECLINE OF THE HOUSE OF LANCASTER, 1422-1461 AND 1470-1471

The reign of Henry VI of England, 1422-1461 and 1470-1471, of the House of Lancaster, has strong claims to be considered the most calamitous in the whole of English history.⁷ When only an infant, Henry inherited the united crowns of England and France. His father, Henry V, who had gained such glory at the Battle of Agincourt, died suddenly when young Prince Henry was only nine months old.⁸ Although the consensus, and the hope, had been that the marriage of his father, Henry V, to Catherine of Valois, would unite the two countries, England and France, the wars in France continued and kept England in turmoil during his reign.

In 1429, court leaders in London held the coronation of Henry VI to the English throne at Westminster. Henry was eight years old and though only a child, he seemed to

⁷ Fifteenth Century England, 1399-1509: Studies in Politics and Society, eds. S.B. Chrimes, R.A. Griffiths, and C.D. Ross (New York: Manchester Univ. Press, Barnes and Noble Books, 1972), 29 and also see "The Counsels of King Henry VI, 1435-1445" by J.L. Watts, English Historical Review Vol. 106 Issue 419 (April 1991): 279-298.

⁸ Janice Young Brooks, Kings and Queens, The Plantagenets of England (Nashville and New York: Thomas Nelson Inc., Publishers, 1975), 107.

recognize the importance of the occasion. The ceremony was impressive and well attended and it stressed the King's dual heritage in England and France.⁹ Afterwards, preparations were made for his trip to France, especially to Paris. More than three hundred English people were to escort Henry to that destination. The cost of food and supplies was a large sum plus the cost of transportation. At Notre Dame Cathedral on December 16, 1431, the court crowned Henry, now ten years old, as King of France in a rather hurried ceremony and then whisked him back to England. At the time, due to the open hostility of the Anglo-French, tensions were strained to a breaking point in a war, part of the "Hundred Years' War," and some French people resented the Englishmen on their soil.

In 1444, Henry was betrothed to Margaret of Anjou.¹⁰ Henry at the age of twenty-two was still a child, gentle and timid and given to his studies and religious devotions. He had nothing to do with any woman. The members of his court decided to choose a bride who was not so grand a lady, one who would be under obligation to those who had made her Queen of England.

⁹ Ralph Griffiths, The Reign of Henry VI: The Exercise of Royal Authority, 1422-1461 (Berkeley, California: Univ. of California Press, 1981), 190.

¹⁰ Marriages of royalty were more often than not arranged; the betrothal meant a solemn promise to marry.

Even across the channel, the English knew Margaret of Anjou for her charms. She was the daughter of Duke Rene of Anjou, France. The Duke spent most of his time involved in the arts of the day. It was his wife who had the strong domineering personality that her daughter Margaret would inherit. At fourteen she was to become the wife of her cousin Henry VI of England. The ceremony was performed by proxy in France with members of the English court in attendance. Then Margaret traveled to England with the Marquis of Suffolk, Henry VI's government representative. From this time forward, Suffolk would be linked to Margaret's private as well as her public life.

Margaret's journey to England was expensive. Not since 1429, when Henry was inaugurated, did ceremonial rites place such a heavy financial burden on the income of the English crown. The expense now extended the royal household costs to unprecedented levels. Seldom had a foreign-born queen been brought to England with such pomp. She was accompanied by as large a group as had escorted Henry on his trip to France. However, her trip took much longer than expected, running up the cost even more.

When Henry and Margaret finally met in April 1445 at Southampton, he was at once infatuated by her. He was twenty-three and a shy, quiet almost frail creature. He was a gentle soul in a society that was often harsh and brutal, and

Margaret at once developed an affectionate respect for him that she would carry with her always.¹¹ They did not enter London until May 28. The delay was caused by Parliament and its reluctance to vote the necessary funds. There were also rumors that clothes had to be purchased for the new queen because she brought no dowry to the marriage. Parliament finally consented to the markers, but Henry had to pledge some of his own property.¹²

Their entry into London was quite a ceremony. Due to constraints in his own household accounts, Henry VI usually had to be economical. But on this occasion he wanted to dazzle his new wife; he was, after all, King of both England and France, in title if not in fact. There were decorated arches across every street and fountains of ale and malmsey at every crossroads.¹³ Ladies dressed in elaborate costumes came to welcome her. In the main square, miracle plays enacted

¹¹ In view of the characterization of Henry at the time, the contemporary description of Margaret of Anjou at that time was curious. Accounts would soon include descriptions of her as "The she-wolf of France," and as a "cold, uncaring, remorseless wife."

¹² It was at that time assumed that the royal family would pay all necessary expenses of the household and the court from the income of the royal estates. Henry VI seems not to have understood the value of money or the need to control his accounts.

¹³ Malmsey was a sweet fortified white wine, originally made in Greece.

scenes from the Bible.¹⁴ Margaret had not been prepared for such a spectacle. But in all the celebration she seemed to sense a foreboding premonition, for in the crowd there were shouts for King Henry, but few or none for a foreign queen. Margaret was crowned Queen at Westminster Abbey, and three days of celebrations and tournaments brought the festivities to a close.

The marriage of Henry VI and Margaret of Anjou was the first step toward a new peace between France and England.¹⁵ It is often thought that with the marriage Henry had compromised and demoralized the English war effort, causing it to dissolve into defeat. However, Joan of Arc had already turned the tide of battles, and she had spurred the Dauphin Charles to go to Rheims and get himself "crowned" as Charles VII. Henry VI secretly, without the knowledge of his council during 1445-49, kept in touch with him. The French forces were winning more and more battles, until in 1453 the English still occupied only the city of Calais.¹⁶ The frustration and

¹⁴ Philippe Erlanger, Margaret of Anjou: Queen of England (London: Elek Books, 1970), 81 and see also "Elizabethan Civic Pageantry in Henry VI" by Randall Martin, University of Toronto Quarterly Vol. 60 Issue 2 (Winter 1990): 244-264.

¹⁵ Fifteenth-Century England, eds. Chrimes, Griffiths, and Ross, 38.

¹⁶ Calais is a city on the south side of the English channel in northern France. In the fifteenth century, the city was of significant importance to the English economy because of the lucrative trade and commerce in the area.

defeat and the perceived weakness of the Lancastrian Henry VI finally led to the beginning of the English civil wars.

Henry's reign amounted to forty years of impotence causing the English monarchy to decline to its lowest ebb. The government fell into the hands of a council dominated by the great magnets of the realm.¹⁷ The council was more powerful than Parliament itself in that it would elect its own officers without the consent of Parliament. There was a constant battle between the council and Parliament. One would instigate a law only to have the other counteract it. Constant defeats in the Hundred Years' War with France had embittered politics at home and depleted the treasury.

The humiliation of losing territory in France increased popular dissatisfaction with Henry VI and his administration. A strong or a popular king could have deflected popular dissatisfaction, but Henry VI was neither strong nor popular, nor was he able to either acquire or desire strength or popularity. Discontent and disputes among the nobility which Henry could not control also undermined the government; there was a growing, flourishing financial and administrative corruption within the ranks. There were nobility who had more wealth than the King. Worldly possessions seemed to mean

¹⁷ Selected Documents of English Constitutional History, 1307-1485, eds. A.L. Brown and S.C. Chrimes (New York: Barnes and Noble, Inc., Publishers and Booksellers, 1961), 251.

nothing to him as he gave freely the coinage and estates of the realm to the royal household. The consequent royal debts became one of the political grievances of the day. As a contemporary squib bitterly expressed it:

"Ye have made the Kyng so poore, That now he beggeth
fro dore to dore."¹⁸

Most of the blame for the situation of the realm was placed on Queen Margaret and her favorites at court. She was not well liked and she seemed to continue to assume more and more of the royal power from her weak husband. Henry believed wholeheartedly in his divine right to rule, but he did not feel any political responsibility to govern.¹⁹ He spent most of his time founding schools for religious education, praying, studying and discussing religious issues. In a crisis he would but pray and encourage everyone to act peaceably and with love.

Margaret was everything that Henry was not. She was attractive, intelligent, sophisticated and of strong character. She took over the decision making for Henry and he did not seem to mind. Margaret felt threatened by some members of Henry's court. One person in particular was

¹⁸ J.R. Lander, Government and Community, England, 1450-1509 (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1980), 182.

¹⁹ Brooks, Kings and Queens, 109.

Richard of York.²⁰ She felt that he was such a threat that she persuaded the council to send him to Ireland to serve for ten years. This decision was only the beginning of a hostility that would grow. And in years to come, Margaret would lead many battles against Richard.²¹ Shakespeare called Margaret the "she-wolf of France" with a "tiger's heart wrapped in a woman's hide" and "stern obdurate, flinty, rough remorseless."²²

²⁰ Richard, Duke of York, was one of the great magnates of England, and a member of that small group of "princes of the blood royal" whose high birth set them apart from the rest of the peerage. Like others of the group, he had a claim, as a descendant of Edward III, to the throne of England, then occupied by the third King of the House of Lancaster, Henry VI. In all probability, Richard, Duke of York, actively coveted the crown for himself, although he advanced no formal claim until after an outbreak of civil war in 1459.

²¹ Richard of York, 1411-1460, became heir to the throne in 1447. Then Margaret of Anjou had a son, Edward, in 1453, who displaced York as heir. York did serve as Protector of the realm during the insanity of Henry VI. Richard of York would be slain at the Battle of Wakefield in 1460, and his son Edward IV would seize the throne in 1461. Later Richard of York's youngest son, Richard, Duke of Gloucester, would become King Richard III.

²² Goldwin Smith, A History of England (New York: Charles Scribner's sons, 1974), 175. See also Shakespeare The Complete Works edited by G.B. Harrison (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, Inc., 1948) for a further description of Queen Margaret as a ruthless and domineering woman who hated her husband and took a court gentleman as her lover. Later historians, such as Philippe Erlanger, saw Margaret of Anjou as an admirable wife, and a loving and devoted mother, forced to do what she did as a means of survival not only for her family, but for the Lancastrian government as well.

When Henry went into a state of mental and emotional depression, Margaret thought she would be appointed Protector of the realm. But Henry's council selected Richard, Duke of York. During this time Margaret gave birth to a son, Edward.²³ Meanwhile, Henry's madness came and went. When he seemed well he could rule, and Richard of York was not needed; Margaret was then in control. Power in hand or swinging back and forth of power between Margaret of Anjou and Richard of York. Many, if not most, of the nobility and knights of England divided their loyalties in supporting either the House of Lancaster or the House of York, later symbolized by the red rose and the white rose, respectively.

Thus, the twin disasters, the combination of Henry's ill health and the losses in the wars in France, led to the first battle of the Roses in 1455 at St. Albans, a borough of southeast England, near London.²⁴ The Duke of York won the

²³ This son, Edward, is usually referred to as Prince Edward to distinguish him from Edward, the son of Richard of York. Prince Edward's mother, Margaret of Anjou, arranged his marriage to Anne Neville, the young daughter of Richard Neville, Earl of Warwick. The marriage was a political strategy and was probably never consummated. After the death of Prince Edward in battle, Richard of Gloucester, later Richard III, married Anne Neville.

²⁴ The Wars of the Roses were not fought about the ideals or contracts or theories of government. It was a struggle between two branches of the royal line and their supporters. The nobles hired large private armies consisting of Englishmen and foreign mercenaries. Nobles such as the powerful Richard Neville, Earl of Warwick, had thousands of men in their forces. Most of the mass of English people viewed the wars

battle, capturing Henry VI, who now suffered a bout of insanity, and York became regent. In 1459, Margaret of Anjou would lead the Lancastrians to victory. This time Richard of York was forced to flee to Ireland. The Yorkist leaders were declared guilty of treason. Perhaps the implication of treason was justified because until Margaret's son was born, Richard, Duke of York, was heir apparent to the throne

Richard of York had never threatened Henry VI's claim to the throne and time and time again he had tried to make peace with the royal family. However, Margaret of Anjou was relentless and remorseless in her quest to rid the realm of Richard. In the summer of 1460, Richard of York returned to England. When he arrived in London he claimed the crown. But Parliament refused to dethrone the saintly Henry, whom, in his weakness, Parliament could control. They did, however, decide to set aside Henry's son, Edward, and declare Richard the recognized heir to the throne. Margaret would never stand by

with indifference. Many nobles shifted from side to side as their interest or fortune changed. There really were no principles to desert. Most cities opened their gates to forces from either side. The main concern of the rural people was ruined crops with the passing of troops, horses and carts across their lands. The majority of Englishmen were neutral and suffered little, as the weight of the wars fell on the nobles. The battle casualties and executions reduced their numbers greatly. In 1455, with the first battle began the period of sustained conflict, though not of continuous warfare, ending with the Battle of Bosworth in 1485. For defined phases of events and engagements of the wars see The Cambridge Medieval History VIII edited by C.W. Previte and Z.N. Brooke (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1964).

and see her son, Prince Edward, cast aside as heir. The wars waged on as she took command of the armies of the red rose. In the fall of 1460, at the Battle of Wakefield, her forces killed Richard, Duke of York.²⁵ But Margaret had not eliminated the Yorkist claim; she had only driven it to the next generation.²⁶

"Iron" Margaret was yet to be defeated. Richard's son Edward took up the challenge.²⁷ She then defeated the Yorkists at the second Battle of St. Albans, took control of London, and freed her husband, Henry VI, from the Tower. Her army then fled northward with Edward in close pursuit. As the Yorkist army marched the ranks grew. Edward seemed to have a genius for war. Late in March, 1461, at Towton a bloody battle ensued and a Lancastrian defeat left many dead on both sides. That same year Parliament crowned Edward IV as King as Margaret and her family fled to Scotland.

²⁵ Queen Margaret had moved the Lancastrian troops northward. She enlisted Scots to join her army by offering them free land along the northern English border. In the meanwhile, Richard, Duke of York, recruited troops in Wales. When both armies again moved southward, they met at Sandal Castle at Wakefield in the north central region of England. It was here that the Lancastrian army broke the Christmas truce in pursuit of war.

²⁶ Brooks, Kings and Queens, 115.

²⁷ This is the Edward of York, who would later become Edward IV.

While she had been Queen of England, Margaret's one activity for the good of the community had been her establishment of Queen's College at Cambridge.²⁸ This effort was probably due to Henry's involvement with Eaton and King's Colleges. No college at Cambridge had ever been founded by a queen. The establishment, which opened in 1464, fell into difficulties after the London court removed Margaret as Queen, but later another queen would refound the college.

Queen Margaret had been reared in a female dominated household, but she inherited her father's love for the arts; she especially liked the French romances. She had a love for the outdoors. She also liked to hunt and ordered that the game in her forest be reserved strictly for her. She had begun early in her marriage to take more and more control of the administrative part of government. From the beginning of her reign as Queen she had been an active administrator of her own estates. She even obtained, in a rather unscrupulous

²⁸ In the latter part of the fourteenth century the term university designated a community of teachers and scholars whose joint existence was recognized by civil and ecclesiastical authority. In the fifteenth century, young men's course of study prepared them for careers in church and state. The basic courses were grammar, logic and rhetoric. The student then chose his major subject, usually law, medicine or theology. The university was an organization of many colleges. The colleges were affiliated with universities because universities were the only institutions of higher learning allowed to confer degrees. But English universities founded after 1879 - commonly called "red brick" universities - have no colleges.

manner which somewhat indicates her greed, her own license to export wool and tin whenever she pleased.

At twenty-six years of age Margaret of Anjou had wide experience in the wielding of power, but she never developed a talent for either diplomacy or how to handle people. But she had courage and will and these caused her to persevere. For a time she had moved out of London to Coventry Castle in the heart of Lancaster country. There she had felt secure for a few years. She had surrounded herself with artists and scholars. She protected those industries which, in modern language, might be called the luxury trades, founded schools and hospitals, and entertained in a royal fashion.²⁹ The peace she found at Coventry was not to last, as the Yorkists were waiting their chance to arm militarily once again.

Henry VI's important legacy to his regime had been his establishment of both Eaton and King's Colleges at Cambridge. Henry himself was well educated and seemed to have a love for books, especially those of a devotional nature. He authorized the building of a church library in 1445, but there is no indication of what books he had in his personal library. He had been told by a church official that education was on the decline as fewer and fewer persons learned Latin, considered the true Christian language of the Church. So with much zeal

²⁹ Erlanger, Margaret of Anjou, 161.

he laid the foundation stones of Eaton and King's Colleges and supervised the building details personally. The plans for these establishments changed as he revised them more than once to make them bigger and more elaborate. Henry loved the ceremony of public worship.

Eaton College, Cambridge, honored the Virgin Mary and commemorated the King's parents, but its purpose was educational as well, and that motivation had placed the King among a growing number of his wealthy subjects who were founders of English grammar schools.³⁰ A few months later he started plans for King's College, Cambridge. Henry's motives were educational in nature and not solely for reasons of piety. He even had the blessing of Parliament as they supported him on these projects. Henry's pursuits were so popular that other grammar schools sprang up around London, making the capital city not only England's center of

³⁰ Griffiths, Reign of Henry VI, 244. The hunger for books is in part accounted for by the growth of literacy. Here it does not do to exaggerate. Large numbers of people did not get beyond the reading and writing stage reached under local schoolmasters. Yet by the middle of the fifteenth century, England possessed a considerable number of grammar schools. These schools often began in chantries. The priest conducted not only religious services for them, but also taught the elementary skills of reading and writing, for they taught their pupils to be "perfect Latin men." Later in the reigns of the Yorkists Kings, Latin declined as the primary language and a native language emerged. Some officials of the King's government, as well as members of the community, established schools to promote the "New Learning."

government and commerce, but also one of the intellectual centers of the realm.³¹

Henry VI was capable of taking an interest in affairs that were to his liking. The problem was that most things that dealt with governing the realm did not interest him, thus making him an ineffectual King. When Henry was finally deposed in 1461 the Bishop of Exeter referred to him as "this puppet king."³² Even the Pope described Henry VI as "more timorous than a woman, utterly devoid of wit or spirit, who left everything in his wife's hands."³³ Thus, it may seem apparent that Margaret, if Henry was to remain in power, had little choice except to take control of the government.

Margaret of Anjou has since taken her place in the history books as a tragic figure, caught up in the warring politics and feuds of the Houses of Lancaster and York. With Henry VI's weakness in body and mind, she tried to make the Lancastrian government work.³⁴ She might have succeeded had

³¹ Ibid., 245.

³² Bertram Wolffe, Henry VI (London: Eyre Methuen, Ltd., 1981), 20.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ In Tudor opinion Henry VI was accepted as the saintly King of Lancastrian tradition. That is the Henry of Shakespeare's plays, the holy King, the gentle, mild and virtuous Prince with a horror of bloodshed who thought it would be a much happier life for him if he was but a common man. The Yorkists described him as fearful and despairing, faint hearted and degenerate. However, his burial place

she been an "English" Queen. Yet, in spite of all the bedlam, she and Henry made strides in education. Though few in number or wide in scope, perhaps Renaissance ideas were there in the reign of Henry and Margaret. However, the Yorkist regime to follow, though hindered in the beginning by financial difficulties and continuing civil wars, would encourage and promote these English Renaissance ideals to an even greater extent.

became a shrine, and it was later that Richard III moved his body to St. George's Chapel, Windsor, to put a stop to the pilgrimages and the talks of miracles. Yet Henry must take his share of responsibility for the events that brought him down. See also, The Lives of the Kings and Queens of England, edited by Antonia Fraser (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1975) that implicates that Henry VI was manipulated all his life by one person and then another. The Wars of the Roses sprang from his failure to meet the enormous demands of medieval kingship. Some historians describe him as a saintly man, but as a King he was a simpleton, who would neither provide leadership nor delegate to those who could. Henry VII petitioned three Popes in vain to get Henry VI canonized, so that he could appear as his saintly uncle.

CHAPTER THREE

THE HOUSE OF YORK, 1461-1470 AND 1471-1483, IN THE ERA OF EDWARD IV AND ELIZABETH WOODVILLE

The young man who claimed himself King of England in 1461 was in every way a contrast to Henry VI. Edward IV was well over six feet tall and of strong build. He was considered to be very handsome with an easy going personality, and he had the physical presence of a king. At nineteen years of age he had already proven himself as a brave and resourceful general. After the Battle of Wakefield which claimed the life of both his father, Richard, Duke of York, and his younger brother Edmund, he defeated Queen Margaret and won a victory at Towton. He was not only remarkable on the battlefield, but he seemed to have a gift for political showmanship. He loved to be seen in public dressed in the latest fashions. He treated all his subjects with an ease and familiarity no matter what their station and had a reputation for remembering names which allowed him to address them personally.

Although Edward IV inherited a depleted treasury as his legacy from Henry VI, and although he was poor, he spared no expenses. His coronation ceremony lasted three days and

projected a splendid image of the new King.³⁵ When he marched to London to claim his crown he journeyed from York. Upon his arrival outside the city of London, he was met by churchmen, the mayor and principal burgesses and merchants. He entered St. Paul's Cathedral where he gave thanks. He rode to the River Thames with a great noise of trumpets and clarions around him. At the Thames, he found a barge prepared and hung with rich tapestries. Princes, barons, knights and squires embarked with him at Westminster. They were led to the palace, which was also prepared and hung with tapestries, where he entered his own chamber and received much honor.

Later in the rich robes of a king and the cap of estate, Edward took his seat on the marble chair or King's Bench in Westminster with sceptre in hand. Possession of the sceptre was synonymous with possession of the kingdom.³⁶ His subjects could see early in his reign that Edward was very aware of his handsome person, fond of fine clothes, and loved feasts, ceremonies and entertainment. It was his opportunity to project the splendid new image of their King. Society was

³⁵ The coronation ceremonies were encrusted rites at the English court. The fact that Edward IV followed the full ceremonial proceedings indicates the degree to which he had captured not only the throne of England, but that he had also captivated the hearts of his new English subjects.

³⁶ C.A.J. Armstrong, "The Inauguration Ceremonies of the Yorkist Kings and Their Title to the Throne," Transactions of the Royal Historical Society, Vol. 30, Series 4 (1948): 51-73.

competitive and fluid; therefore it needed the social cement of an acknowledged social hierarchy.³⁷

The conspicuous splendor of his court was a direct yardstick to measure a king's wealth and power.³⁸ Edward's ability to unite government policy and his personal inclination for pomp and ceremony left a favorable impression on anyone who visited his court. His coronation was only the introduction of what was to follow.

King Edward IV understood and knew the necessity of making the crown financially solvent. Insolvency had been one of the major problems of the reign of Henry VI. He put the crown lands into the hands of salaried government officials rather than renting them to fortune seeking members of the court. He also confiscated Lancastrian land from many of those who had supported Henry VI. Edward had rules that governed the royal household expenses. He realized he owed a great deal of his support to the promise of better government and financial reform.

In the first part of Edward's reign, he was dominated by his older cousin, Richard Neville, Earl of Warwick.³⁹ Neville

³⁷ Charles Ross, Edward IV (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1974), 257.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ A foreigner writing from England in March 1464 said there were two rulers in England. One was Richard Neville, Earl of Warwick; the name of the other he could not remember.

was an example of acquired property and distinction through prominent marriages. Edward's mother had been Richard's aunt. However, without the help of the Nevilles, Edward probably could not have won over the nobility who had supported Henry VI. Neville was ambitious and domineering, and he held the office of Chamberlain of England. The upbringing of Edward's youngest brother Richard, Duke of Gloucester, who was only nine years old at the time, was entrusted to Neville's care. Neville did labor on the King's behalf by continuing to war on the last of the Lancastrian strong holds.

Finally, in 1464 there arose signs of dissension between the Earl and the King. The King was an insatiable womanizer. He won many a heart and body by promises and payoffs. Usually when Edward IV had what he wanted, he dismissed them. It is notably stated that he never took any woman by force. Early in his reign he had entered into a marriage contract with a certain widowed lady, Eleanor Butler, only to coax her to his bed. However in 1464, when he met Elizabeth Woodville, she refused to surrender at any cost. Elizabeth is said to have told Edward, "While I'm not good enough to be your wife, I'm

This was not quite a fair judgment on Edward IV, but it does no more than justice to Warwick, and probably expresses what the Earl would have liked men to feel. He was a representative of the baronial class, wealthy and powerful, and had much ambition.

far too good to be your mistress."⁴⁰ She was a penniless widow of a former Lancastrian.⁴¹ His marriage has been viewed as an impulsive and unstatesmanlike act. He acted rashly and he acted alone and as Polydore Vergil aptly remarked, he "was led by blynde affection and not by rule of reason."⁴² So they were married secretly.⁴³

Edward IV and Elizabeth Woodville had been married in a quiet private ceremony and no English manuscript exists that records her coronation. However, William Worcester's Latin Chronicle, gives details of the creation of the Knights of the Bath and of the procession of the Queen from Greenwich to the Tower and from the Tower through London to Westminster Palace, prior to the coronation. His account omits any information about the coronation ceremony and the banquet which followed, beyond stating that the Queen was crowned by the Archbishop of

⁴⁰ Brooks, Kings and Queens , 119.

⁴¹ Fifteenth Century England, eds. Chrimes, Griffiths, Ross, 50. It was particularly noted by Yorkists now in power, that she was the widow of a Lancastrian knight. Yorkists viewed the crossing of lines of allegiance as especially distressful.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Richard Neville, Earl of Warwick, who had labored and fought for the Yorkists, was bitterly disappointed at the news of the marriage. He had hoped, and been led to believe in the possibility, for a marriage of Edward IV into the French royal family, for commercial reasons.

Canterbury on the Sunday (May 26, 1465).⁴⁴ On April 14, 1465, King Edward IV sent a letter "from our Manor of Shene" to the "Maire of oure citie of London" informing him that:

"we have certainly appoynted and concluded the Coronacion of our mooste dere and moost entierly beloved wiff the quene to be at our paloys at Westm upon the Sondag before Witsonday next comyng we woll and pray you that at the saide day and place ye for that cause yeve your personall attendance theire in such apparell as is according to youre astate and honour. And that ye leave not this in any wise."⁴⁵

Invitations from the King were also sent to other English nobility and middle class, as well as to church officials, who deserved to be at the ceremony.

Upon arrival in London, Elizabeth Woodville was escorted to the Tower and was eventually taken to Westminster Palace. The following day she was crowned. The ceremony was followed by a tournament and much celebration. A banquet was held with

⁴⁴ George Smith, ed., The Coronation of Elizabeth Wydeville, Queen Consort of Edward IV, on May 26th, 1465 (London: Ellis, 29, New Bond Street, 1935), 5. The fifteenth century manuscript was noted by the Historical MSS. Commission, but was not identified with Elizabeth Wydeville. Neither the Record Office nor the British Museum possesses any manuscript dealing with her coronation, and even the existence of such a record was unknown to the late C.L. Kingsford, the author of "English historical literature in the xvth century." The manuscript is written in a clear hand upon six leaves of paper, bearing the watermark of a crown with centerpiece; a similar watermark is found in paper on which some of the Paston letters are written. On the last page is written the name "Edward Lloyd Vohem," possibly the earliest possessor of the record, and an ancestor of the family in whose Library it remained through the centuries until it was acquired by the English writer, George Smith.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 7.

much food and wine, and between courses the King's minstrels played. Even though the country was in a state of sporadic civil war, which demanded the services of the nobility, there was a grand assemblage for this special occasion. During the ceremony, Queen Elizabeth in her regal attire was escorted on each side by statesmen and their wives as she walked under the royal canopy.⁴⁶ There are two things of special interest that concerned the coronation; one was the Queen's father, Lord Rivers, and his souvenir of this event included in his library, The Romance of Alexander, in which he recorded the date of the ceremony for the crowning of the royal Elizabeth. The second point of note was the absence of Richard Neville, Earl of Warwick, who had been dispatched to the Court of Burgundy on business for the King.⁴⁷ His mission was cause for relief for him as well as for the Woodvilles.

In 1466, the splendor of Edward's court was becoming known in other parts of the world, thanks to foreign visitors. A Bohemian visiting the court was invited to be present at a church service attended by the Queen after the birth of her first child. He relates how the Queen:

⁴⁶ These ceremonies were entirely normal for the coronation of a queen. What is remarkable is that this Queen was, in the eyes of many, a Lancastrian widow of a Lancastrian knight at a Yorkist court.

⁴⁷ Burgundy is a historic region in east-central France. During the fifteenth century it was considered a "showplace" of Europe.

"went to church in stately order, accompanied by many priests bearing relics and by many scholars singing and carrying lights. There followed a great company of ladies and maidens from the country and from London . . . then came a great company of trumpeters, pipers, and players of stringed instruments. The King's choir followed, forty-two of them, who sang excellently. Then came twenty-four heralds and pursuivants, followed by sixty earls and knights. At last came the Queen escorted by two dukes. Above her was a canopy. Behind her were her mother and maidens and ladies to the number of sixty . . . (afterwards) she returned to her palace in procession. Then all who had joined the procession remained to eat. They sat down, women and men, ecclesiastical and lay, each according to rank and filled four great rooms. Everything was supplied in such costly measure that it is unbelievable that it could be provided. Rich gifts were made to the trumpeters, pipers, jesters and heralds. All those who had received gifts went about the tables crying out what the King had given them. The visitors were then taken to an unbelievably costly apartment where the Queen was preparing to eat. My lord and his gentlemen were placed in an alcove so that my lord could observe the great splendor The meal lasted for three hours. The food which was served to the Queen, the Queen's mother, the King's sister and the others was most costly. Much might be written of it."⁴⁸

The visitor from Bohemia concluded that Edward IV had the most splendid court that could be found in all Christendom.⁴⁹ This appraisal is especially significant in that the visitor had earlier left the Court of Burgundy, then considered one of the most magnificent in Europe. But Edward's desire was to show that his kingdom could rival that of anyone else. It is

⁴⁸ Ross, Edward IV, 258.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 259.

evident, if this description is correct, that he spared no expenses to do so.

Edward IV arranged the marriage of his sister, Margaret of York, to Duke Charles of Burgundy. Edward had to borrow money to fulfill the expenses of this obligation. Margaret had an elaborate trousseau and a large escort as she crossed the channel to meet her new family. The bride was not to be a poor relation at her own wedding.⁵⁰ Through this marriage, Margaret transmitted Renaissance thoughts and ideas from Burgundy to the English court in London. It was also during Edward's exile in Bruges that he visited one of the finest libraries in Europe.⁵¹

In 1471, when he returned to England from Bruges, Edward IV began purchasing expensive Flemish illuminated manuscripts. Though much smaller in scale, Edward's collection resembled the Burgundians' in a preference for showy and lavish volumes which he preferred be written in French rather than in Latin, and he shared, too, their liking for histories and historical romances. Edward IV seems to have been the first English

⁵⁰ Ibid., 260.

⁵¹ Edward IV had fled to Burgundy when Richard Neville, on his return to England from France, briefly restored the imbecilic Henry VI to the English throne.

sovereign to accumulate a substantial and permanent royal library.⁵²

It was also at the request of Edward that a book was compiled for him by a member of Duke Charles' court containing information on the organization of the Burgundian court and household, including all ceremonies and elaborate entertaining. The desire to vie with the Court of Burgundy, or at any rate the need for the English court to achieve a certain degree of magnificence and order, may well have been one of the reasons which prompted the compilation of The Black Book of the Household of Edward IV.⁵³ After all, a king who failed to keep up the state expected of royalty would forfeit support at home as well as abroad.

It was not only the Renaissance organization of the Burgundian court and household that drew the attention of the English nobility, but also a desire to copy the latest fashions in dress, to have portraits painted by famous European artists and to see English churches decorated by Flemish wall painters and glaziers. Books on etiquette began to appear, telling one how to behave in courtly circles according to rank. The trappings of chivalry grew more

⁵² Ross, Edward IV , 264.

⁵³ The Household of Edward IV: the Black Book and the Ordinance of 1478, ed. A.R. Myers (Manchester, England: Manchester University Press, 1959), 4.

splendid, as orders of knighthood increased in numbers as well as in pomp and ceremony. The English tournament became not only a show of strength, but one of much color in costume and gear as inspired by the Burgundian court.

The English King never stinted himself on his personal finery. Not only was he elaborate in dress and footwear, but he also purchased jewelry with precious stones in abundance. On important family occasions, such as, for example, the Queen's coronation and at the birth of his first daughter, Edward IV spent money on an especially elaborate scale. Moreover, the jewelry represented a useful form of investment which could be pawned or used as security for loans in times of need.

Before the marriage of Edward IV to Elizabeth Woodville, Richard Neville had negotiated for a treaty of friendship with France that would have incorporated the marriage of Edward IV and a French princess. Neville's endeavors had been self-serving as well, for he would have received French lands and titles from the French King. When informed of Edward's secret marriage to Elizabeth, Neville was outraged. Not only had Edward married below his station, but his bride's former husband had fought on the side of Henry VI. The worst of it all was that she brought all her relatives to court, two sons, five brothers and seven sisters, all eager to advance their lot. The marriage market at the London court was soon in full

swing.⁵⁴ There followed a series of arranged marriages which definitely improved the social as well as political standings of Elizabeth's family. Perhaps the most notorious marriage was that of the Queen's twenty year old brother, John, to the dowager Duchess of Norfolk, who was eighty years old. At best the family are said to have been the unworthy instruments of Edward IV's supposed attempts to build up a new nobility to counterbalance the old, in particular to counterbalance the overwhelming might of his cousins, the Nevilles.⁵⁵ However, Edward himself did not seem overly fond of his wife's family and they never seemed to exercise much influence over him. While Edward lived, the Woodvilles did not have to be taken very seriously as politicians.⁵⁶

Over the next few years, Edward made it abundantly clear that he intended to rule his realm in fact and not just in name. Where Richard Neville favored an alliance with the French King, Edward favored an alliance with the Duke of Burgundy. Burgundy had been an English ally as well as a

⁵⁴ C.S.L. Davies, Peace Print and Protestantism 1450-1558 (London: Hart-Davis Macgibbon, 1976), 84.

⁵⁵ "Marriage and Politics in the Fifteenth Century: The Nevilles and the Wydevilles," Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research Vol. XXXVI, No. 94 (November, 1963), 120.

⁵⁶ The Cambridge Medieval History VIII, the Close of the Middle Ages, eds. C.W. Previte-Orton, Litt D., FBA and Z.N. Brooke, Litt D. (Cambridge: Cambridge at the University Press, 1964), 433.

trading partner. Burgundy controlled Flanders, and Flanders was extremely important to England's export wool trade. It was for commercial as well as political reasons that Edward IV had arranged a marriage between his sister, Margaret and Charles of Burgundy. That marriage had led to a conspiracy between Edward's brother, George, Duke of Clarence, and Richard Neville.⁵⁷ Neville, also known as Warwick, the Kingmaker, had after all made one king, so why not another. Edward refused to approve the marriage between his brother, George, and Isabel Neville. But George defied the King and secretly married her across the channel in Calais.⁵⁸

In a re-opening, or continuation, of the Wars of the Roses, rebellions were breaking out in the north of England. Edward IV set out to squelch the disturbances, only to find himself outnumbered by the rebel force. He decided to let himself be captured and he fell into Neville's hands. Neville had intended to depose Edward, but his plan was unsuccessful and in order to keep further violence from erupting, he had to

⁵⁷ It should be noted that George, Duke of Clarence, was one of the most treacherous and conniving persons at court. The fact that his brother was King seemed to have given him even greater opportunity for deceit. Edward IV will eventually be forced to arrange the execution of this brother for treason.

⁵⁸ George, Duke of Clarence, apparently married Isabel Neville to gain control, as her husband, of her considerable inheritance. After all, her father had now embarked on a dangerous, and treacherous journey in life, one that could, and perhaps would, end with his death.

release the King. Edward IV could not come to a truce with a man who had rebelled against him, had captured and executed the Queen's father and brother, and had turned his own brother, George, Duke of Clarence, against him. Neville and George fled to France.

While in France, Neville and Margaret of Anjou, who had been bitter enemies in the past, had reached a truce. Together they now plotted Neville's return to England. When Neville did return to England, he caught Edward IV unprepared, and he and his brother, Richard, had to flee to Burgundy. Neville and Margaret of Anjou now released the insane Henry VI, broken and imbecilic, from the Tower and the "Kingmaker" put him back on the throne."⁵⁹ However, with the help of his brother-in-law, the Duke of Burgundy, who furnished ships and troops, in March 1471, Edward IV reclaimed his kingdom. Edward even recovered the allegiance of his brother, George, although George's allegiance was always temporary and always for sale to the highest purse. George had been deceived by Neville, for Neville had restored Henry VI to the crown instead of offering it to him, a silly notion in the first place, and one which only a silly avarice could have sustained or believed. Such was the character, or lack of it, of George.

⁵⁹ Goldwin Smith, History of England, 181.

Now restored, the second half of Edward IV's reign lacks the drama and excitement of the first, although it still had prosperous stability. To add familial continuity, Queen Elizabeth presented Edward with first one son and then another son, who were heirs to the throne. Edward, in his last years as King, was able to deliver reforms that he had long promised. He freed the crown from its burden of debt and for several years he went without asking Parliament for new taxes. One aspect of the Yorkist program was that Edward claimed to be intent on the reconquest of France. However, for a hefty annual pension, Edward abandoned the whole enterprise. Edward signed a seven year truce with the French king. The peace caused grumbles of complaints among some of the English troops, including Edward's brother, Richard, Duke of Gloucester.⁶⁰

On Edward IV's return to England from France, he was faced once again with the unstable behavior of his brother George. George had been forgiven for his treacherous involvement with Neville, but now he involved himself in a quarrel with his younger brother, Richard, Duke of Gloucester

⁶⁰ There is evidence to indicate that Edward IV very cleverly arranged the threats of a French war in order, not to fight a war, but to augment his royal finances. He allowed Parliament to grant him funds for war, then he allowed the King of France to pay him more for not going to war. Edward used these profits for pomp and ceremony, and for commerce and trade. For him, war was costly, peace was profitable, a thoroughly Renaissance concept.

over the division of Neville's confiscated lands. George wanted all of Neville's wealth, even though Richard was now married to Anne Neville.⁶¹ George had been married to Isabel Neville, now deceased, and he pursued Mary, daughter of the Duke of Burgundy. Edward refused to sanction the plan of this Burgundian marriage. Mary, upon the death of her father became a great heiress and far too important a person to match with the unreliable George. George, steadfast only in his shifting treacheries, was outraged at Edward IV's defiance, and he immediately began to plot treason again.

⁶¹ Anne of Warwick came from a distinguished line of English nobility. She was the daughter of Richard Neville, Earl of Warwick, also called Warwick the Kingmaker, and had previously bore the title of Princess of Wales through her marriage to King Henry VI's only son Edward, Prince of Wales, now deceased. Through her marriage to Richard, Duke of Gloucester, she briefly became Queen of England. Some historians think she was compelled to marry Richard, but it is not inconceivable that from childhood the couple had a strong affection for one another.

CHAPTER FOUR

EDWARD IV, THE RENAISSANCE ARTS AND A CHANGING ENGLAND

Though Edward IV expressed no written or oral wish to be remembered as a patron of learning, he did encourage wise and learned men in their "new learning" and he sought their endeavors at court. Many of his councillors and servants, who also included churchmen, did much to promote education and found schools and colleges. Edward never seemed to acquire a personal interest in scholarship or education. Unlike the Burgundian Duchy, he did not maintain writers or historians at his court. Moreover, he never established any educational facilities in the realm. He envisioned and associated most of these institutions with the former reigns of the Lancastrian Kings, preserving a dislike, not of learning, but of the political alienation, or at best neutrality, of educational institutions. He stripped King's College and Eton, both at Cambridge, of their revenues to the point that both nearly collapsed. He finally relented and restored some of the revenues and property after almost irreparable damage had been done.

The University of Oxford fared much better under Edward IV, but only because of the Queen's brother, who acted as its chancellor and who also served as negotiator between the

school and the King. On one visit, Edward was so moved by a formal address presented in his honor that he founded a free divinity lectureship. This gesture seems to have been his sole significant educational benefaction.⁶² As a result of this lectureship the school realized a great increase in the number of theology students. His Queen, Elizabeth, on the other hand, was a notable patron of Queen's College, Cambridge, which had been originated by Margaret of Anjou; in 1475 the college received from Elizabeth Woodville a set of statutes as its true foundress.⁶³

Peace and security at home increased leisure. This happy ambiance, coupled with ample funds, enabled Edward IV to increase his magnificence at court. In the later years of his reign the court became an important center of patronage for architects and masons, sculptors and glaziers, goldsmiths and jewellers, dealers in fine fabrics and tapestries and illuminators of manuscripts.⁶⁴

Edward definitely had a taste for fine things. One of his most important activities was a wave of building projects. In the first part of his reign he had been limited by a shortage funds, but during the second part of the reign he

⁶² Ross, Edward IV, 270.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

financed more ambitious and costly projects. The nature of these projects was largely dictated by his own taste and the movement of the court. As he loved personal comfort, he devoted his attention mostly to secular buildings and his own favorite residences.

During the last few years of Edward's reign he toured his realm less and less. In 1476, he visited the north of England on one of his infrequent visits, to move the bodies of his father, Duke Richard, and his younger brother, Edmund, from their battlefield graves to the family vault at Fotheringhay Castle.⁶⁵ This was a ceremony of much excellence, as he was accompanied by lords and ladies and family members. The event ended with a funeral feast which was shared by several thousand visitors and court officials in attendance.

However, after this trip, he rarely moved from the vicinity of his capital in London except on occasion to visit his hunting lodges. Many of his residences were not far from London itself. Yet even during this later part of his reign the court was far from stationary, as the household accounts for September 1478 to September 1479 show that the King changed the place of his night's lodging about sixty times within the twelve months.⁶⁶

⁶⁵ Ibid., 271.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 272.

In these royal residences Edward spared no expenses on renovations. In the north at Nottingham Castle, he built a new tower with marvelous windows and chambers. At Fotheringhay Castle, he constructed new chambers with latrines and added a new kitchen. Closer to London, Edward loved the palaces of the Thames River Valley, especially Windsor Castle. On these, where he spent most of his time, he heaped the most lavish renovations in the way of large halls and chambers, all designed for both comfort and privacy.

Within this splendid circle of royalty belonged the members of the Order of the Garter. Edward used knighthood in this elite order as a political tool. When he wished to win the friendship of a foreign prince, he led in electing the foreign prince to membership in the Garter. Under the leadership of Edward IV, craftsmen built a special Garter Chapel at Windsor and the King persuaded the Pope himself to bless it. The celebration was called the Feast of St. George for St. George's Chapel and was honored yearly. Another chapel of the west was St. Stephens, known for its music and musicians in the fifteenth century. By 1471, this courtly musical establishment was of such repute that the Duke of Milan sent his chapel master to seek out English singers and musicians to retain them for his service in Milan.⁶⁷

⁶⁷ Ibid., 275.

The Chapel at St. George shows the true achievement of Edward IV as a patron of architecture. It was dedicated to the splendor of the House of York in this world and as a fitting mausoleum where Edward would be laid to rest. Stonecutters, carpenters and other craftsmen acquired stone, timber, glass and lead for this project. Edward spent money on rich vestments and hangings, on statues in precious metals and on service books for the chapel. He endorsed rich panelling on the walls, intricate carving of the vault, screens and stalls, and stained glass windows. It was and is still considered a remarkable achievement of the English Gothic style of perpendicular architecture.

Edward IV has some claim to be regarded as the first "Merchant King" in English history.⁶⁸ His constant need to improve his financial status may have been the reason for his middle class mercantile enterprises. It was largely owing to this private trading that the King was able to rebuild the family fortunes and the financial stability of the nation. He actively engaged in the wool trade which for so long had been a principal English export. Later, he became an active importer as well. In developing his import and export business, he enlarged the English fleet. When the fleet had

⁶⁸ Ibid., 351.

extra ships not in use, they were leased as commercial charter vessels.

King Edward IV was not only interested in commercial affairs, but he welcomed new and innovative ideas that would improve his nation. For example, he brought craftsmen to England from abroad to instruct the English in new methods of finishing and dyeing cloth. Edward promoted native ship building and rewarded those who developed and constructed new vessels. Another innovation sometimes claimed by Henry VII which Edward developed was "wafting, or providing protection vessels for English ships at sea."⁶⁹ He developed new markets for English goods, some as far away as Africa. In creating new avenues for trade, he encouraged exploration. It has long been debated that a grant issued by Edward in 1480 to merchants allowing them to trade "to any parts," may have resulted in the discovery of America in 1481.⁷⁰

⁶⁹ English royal ships were in demand to convoy the wool fleets to Calais in 1474-75. The practice of privately hiring wafters to protect fishing vessels is known as early as 1473, but in 1482 it received official authorization and was extended to include ships of any nation fishing off the east coast of England. The royal ships, as well as privately owned ones, were armed vessels employed as protection against piracy which was a common threat to sea-going vessels in this era.

⁷⁰ Ross, Edward IV, 355. See Also "Edward IV and Exploration" by D.B. Quinn, Mariner's Mirror, xxi (1935), 275-84; and "The Argument for the English Discovery of America Between 1480 and 1494," Geographical Journal, cxxvii (1961), 227-85.

Edward IV may have had another reason for his interest in merchant trade and commerce. He knew he could depend on importers, exporters, shipbuilders, merchant fleets and the wool and textile trades as a source for government loans. Merchants seemed more willing to help Edward IV than the former King Henry VI. Edward courted, flattered and rewarded them on every opportunity, and included them in invitations to visit the royal court, where he treated them to lavish meals and entertainment and royal gifts. From their point of view, the ties of self-interest and social connection with the court ensured for the merchants ready access to the King and his great men, along with the support and protection of a royal fleet for their mercantile enterprises.

The two primary merchant groups, the Company of the Staple and the Merchant Adventurers, were often at odds with each other due to different government regulations concerning import and export trade. But one thing upon which they both agreed was their dislike for alien merchants and residents in England; their apprehension was so vocal the King from time to time intervened in foreign trade in order to protect English merchants. On the other hand, Edward IV also found it necessary sometimes to favor foreign merchants, as England was so dependent on many of their imports. For example, the German merchants provided grains, timber, pitch, and tar and ashes so important in the clothing industry. However, Edward

did not want a financial drain on the English economy. He tried to temper one group situation with the other. Therefore, during his reign, Parliament enacted considerable legislation which dealt with commerce and industry of both alien and native merchants, but definitely favorable to his country's commerce.⁷¹

To rescue the crown and country from the financial stress imposed by the Lancastrian reign was no small task for Edward. He was not excessively businesslike in his methods, and often he seemed willing to sacrifice financial for political gain, but he managed to become a popular and wealthy King. Also because of that popularity and wealth, and his temperament and personality, he was able to have more time for the "finer things," Renaissance imports from the continent and the expansion of Renaissance ideas in England. Without the constant threat of possible financial ruin, a nation, as well as a royal court, was able to build on its social, cultural and artistic endeavors.

The second half of Edward IV's reign was truly a brilliant period. Soon after the invention of printing, the printing trade came to England. Edward spent large sums on the transcription of books in manuscript. Books were

⁷¹ For more information on alien merchants see also "The City and the Crown 1456-1461" by J.L. Bolton, London Journal (Great Britain) 12(1) (1986): 11-24.

dedicated to Edward as he encouraged men of learning to write. In his reign, he promoted and patronized exploration of the seas. He was also responsible for establishing a postal service, whereby relays of horsemen at twenty mile stops could average one hundred miles a day delivering dispatches.⁷² Musically and architecturally the latter part of Edward's reign was glorious as if caught in a new breath of life and energy. A glorious Renaissance was beginning that would culminate in Tudor times.

After Edward's death in 1483, Queen Elizabeth proposed in council that her son, young Edward, twelve years old at the time, should come home from Wales with a strong escort.⁷³ The Woodvilles knew that it would clearly be a struggle for them to maintain themselves at court.⁷⁴ When Richard, Duke of Gloucester, intercepted young Edward and his party, the Queen's brother, Lord Rivers and all attendants were killed. The act seems to have met the approval of both officials and citizens of London as Richard took control of the government,

⁷² John Harvey, The Plantagenets 1154-1485 (London, New York, Toronto and Sydney: B.T. Batsford Ltd., 1948), 134.

⁷³ Dictionary of National Biography Vol. VI, S.V. "Elizabeth Woodville," (London: Oxford University Press, 1973), 616.

⁷⁴ The problem of the Woodville family was all the more precarious because of the enmity of Richard, Duke of Gloucester, the younger brother of the late King Edward IV, and Elizabeth Woodville, the widow of the late King.

acting in the capacity of Protector of the realm for the child-King, his nephew, Edward V.⁷⁵ Queen Elizabeth withdrew into sanctuary at Westminster Abbey taking her second son Richard and her five daughters with her.⁷⁶ She remained in sanctuary during the whole of Edward V's brief reign. She later delivered her remaining son out of sanctuary to keep his brother company in the Tower. Both of her sons were thought to have been murdered in the Tower, when they simply vanished.⁷⁷ Richard III was declared King and that declaration was confirmed by Parliament in 1484, on the alleged accusation that Edward IV's marriage was invalid and therefore his sons were not legal heirs to the throne. From that day forward, the Queen dowager was officially recognized only as dame Elizabeth Grey.⁷⁸

⁷⁵ Richard, as Protector, with the support of the council, never arranged the coronation of Edward V.

⁷⁶ Sanctuary is a sacred place, such as a church or temple that provides refuge, asylum or immunity from arrest.

⁷⁷ For more criticism of Richard III see "Richard III and the Tropes of Treachery" by Russ McDonald, Philological Quarterly Vol. 68 Issue 4 (Fall 1989): 465-483, and "This Son of Yorke: Textual and Literary Criticism Again" by James P. Hammersmith, Shakespeare Quarterly Vol. 39 Issue 3 (Autumn 1986): 359-365.

⁷⁸ Dictionary of National Biography, Vol. VI, Elizabeth Woodville, 617. Due to legal formalities, when Elizabeth Woodville was stripped of her royal title, she was once again given her previous "married" name, as though she had never been married to Edward IV.

When Elizabeth and her daughters did come out of sanctuary, King Richard made her the promise that he would care for her and see her daughters safely and suitably married. She had previously made arrangements that her oldest daughter would marry Henry Tudor, the Earl of Richmond, later to become Henry VII of England.⁷⁹ After the Battle of Bosworth Field, Henry did marry her daughter, Elizabeth of York. Elizabeth Woodville regained her rights as the Queen dowager after their marriage, but for only about a year. Her lands were then given to her daughter who was Queen of England, and Elizabeth went into sanctuary again to live a wretched and miserable life on a small pension. She died in 1492, and was laid to rest at Windsor with her husband, Edward IV, in St. George's Chapel.⁸⁰

⁷⁹ For more information on the arranged marriage of Henry VII and Elizabeth of York see "Bishop John Morton, the Holy SEE and the Accession of Henry VII" by C.S.L. Davies, English Historical Review Vol. 102 Issue 402 (1987): 2-30.

⁸⁰ In the sixteenth century the early Tudor writers, such as Sir Thomas More and Polydore Vergil, saw Edward IV as an active business-like King, who had done much to make his realm peaceful and prosperous, and whose rule had been both firm and popular. In the eighteenth century, historians presented a different view of Edward. He now appeared as debauched, cruel, avaricious, lazy and capable of energy and decision only in times of crisis. Edward IV was possibly a combination of both descriptions. Modern historians, such as J.R. Lander, now see him once again in a more flattering light. Charles Ross, Edward IV, elaborates that unexplored records during his reign indicate that he was an able and astute ruler who had the capacity to rescue England from the horrors of civil strife and replace them with order, wealth and prosperity. Moreover, his responses to the problems of late medieval

CHAPTER FIVE

THE FORMATIVE YEARS OF RICHARD, DUKE OF GLOUCESTER, 1452-1483

In April 1483, when Edward IV died, he left the throne to his twelve year old son, Edward. Edward V was born in 1470. The circumstances of his birth are well known, the circumstances of his death are not.⁸¹ He spent his early years under the care and instruction of his mother's brother, Anthony Woodville. While he was supervised and well schooled, his structured world fell apart with the death of his father.

Assuredly, the Woodvilles had anticipated, without forethought, that Edward IV would live until his heir had reached his majority; the transition then would probably have been a peaceful and uneventful one. The Queen and her relatives, the Woodvilles, who had held so much power in the

government provided the essential foundations on which his brother, Richard III, and the Tudors were to build. One main flaw in his reign was that he did not secure the safe succession of his son to the throne in the event of his premature death.

⁸¹ The fact that Edward V was never again seen outside the Tower fueled rumors about his fate. It was to the advantage of Henry Tudor and his supporters to repeat, circulate and perhaps embellish those rumors. Ordinary citizens have the right to trial by a jury of peers and the right to be presumed innocent until proven guilty. Kings, particularly kings caught up in civil wars, have, by virtue of being king, no peers in the realm. They do not have the luxury of either of those rights.

previous reign, intended to continue to hold the reins of government for the young Edward. They were not popular at court or with the English people, and a few days before his death, Edward IV had added a codicil to his will naming his brother, Richard, Duke of Gloucester, as Protector and Defensor of the realm.

During his reign, Edward IV had alienated many powerful families trying to benefit the crown through estate manipulation of their inheritance. These nobles would support anyone who might be subject to reversing these grievances. These families were strong supporters of Edward IV's brother, Richard, Duke of Gloucester, known widely for his very earthen sense of justice.

At the time, the Woodvilles held high offices at court. The Queen's son, by a previous marriage, was deputy constable of the Tower of London and controlled the famous treasure hoard accumulated by Edward IV; and her brother commanded part of the English navy.⁸² Too, her young son, Prince Edward was under the guardianship of the Queen's brother, Lord Rivers (usually referred to as Earl Rivers), who had authority under Edward IV to move the young boy at will as he desired. Now, Rivers continued to move the boy even after Edward's death. Thus the stage was set; it almost guaranteed an open struggle

⁸² Lander, Government and Community, 311.

for control of the English throne between Richard of Gloucester and the Woodvilles.

It is easy to understand the greed and desire for power of the Woodvilles, but to understand Richard, Duke of Gloucester, it is important to return to his childhood during the reign of Henry VI. Richard had been born in October 1452. He was the twelfth of thirteen children born to Richard, Duke of York, and his wife, Cicely Neville. During his first seven years, he lived at Fotheringhay Castle in the companionship of his brother George, who was three years older, and his sister Margaret, who was six years older.⁸³ Edward and Edmund, the two oldest boys, lived at Ludlow Castle in the Welsh Marches. The children saw their parents rarely as Cecily traveled with her husband, leaving the children in the care of others.⁸⁴

During Richard's childhood, England was changing from the old feudal system of loyalty based on land tenure to the

⁸³ Richard lived with the Nevilles and it was here that he first met Anne Neville. They grew up as childhood friends.

⁸⁴ The lives of nobles were almost entirely lacking in family intimacy. They lived to a large extent in public, surrounded by attendants. Husband and wife were often apart, keeping separate households in different parts of the country. Children were sent out to wet nurses at birth, were reared almost entirely by servants, and dispatched at a tender age to learn courtesy and manners in another lord's household. In the circumstances, the willingness of parents to use their children as pawns in the political game (for instance by marriage), the tendency to sacrifice the happiness of individuals to the good of the long-term interests of the family were quite common and totally acceptable in the society of the era.

system of livery and maintenance. For the good lordship of a powerful magnate, a retainer promised his services in peace and war.⁸⁵ Thus the lord had armed men when he needed them and the retainer had protection from his enemies. Many retainers received wages and often immunity from punishment. This often proved true in the reign of Henry VI as he was so seldom in control and his wife Margaret of Anjou dominated the court. She treated Richard, Duke of York as her enemy; therefore, he became one.

When Richard was seven years old, and it appeared that Margaret of Anjou intended to dominate if not eliminate the Yorkists, Richard of York moved his entire family to Ludlow. It was there that young Richard met his two oldest brothers. Edward was seventeen and Edmund was sixteen.⁸⁶

Their father, Richard, Duke of York, prepared an army. When part of the Yorkist troops deserted and fled to the King, Duke Richard and his two oldest sons fled, leaving Cecily and their three youngest children behind at Ludlow Castle.⁸⁷

⁸⁵ A "retainer" was one who served in a noble household, as in the feudal period, but who ranked higher than a servant. A "lord" was a man of high rank and renowned power. The system of livery and maintenance refers to the wearing of the lord and livery, or colors, by those who served him, and the maintenance, or support, of his retainers by the lord.

⁸⁶ Paul Murray Kendall, Richard the Third (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, Inc., 1955), 34.

⁸⁷ Ludlow Castle was a military fortification in the very center of Yorkist territory.

Lancastrian knights looted and sacked Ludlow Castle as enemy territory. Cecily and the children were taken away and their estate confiscated.

The Duke of York and Edmund escaped to Ireland, while the Earl of Warwick and Edward fled to Calais. The Archbishop of Canterbury sheltered Cecily and her younger children at Canterbury where they remained for several months. Late in the year 1460, Warwick and Edward returned to England and with an army marched north to meet the King's army. The Yorkists were able to capture King Henry VI, take him as prisoner, and defeat his troops. Edward returned to London and was joined by his mother and brothers. Cecily left shortly thereafter, to go north, to meet her husband who had returned from Ireland.

Richard and his brother George remained in London. It was during this stay that Richard spent so much time with Edward. It is possible that the loving attention from his older brother during this unsettled period in his life can explain Richard's lifelong devotion and loyalty to Edward.⁸⁸

When Richard, Duke of York, reached London he tried to claim the throne. Everyone, including Edward, was shocked. He felt his father should reform the government, not seize the crown. Henry VI was finally permitted to keep the crown for

⁸⁸ Kendall, Richard the Third, 39-40.

life and Richard of York was declared his legal heir. Margaret of Anjou would not stand for this agreement to happen; her son, Prince Edward, was being disinherited. She prepared for war. At the Battle of Wakefield, York and his son, Edmund, were killed. Margaret had them beheaded and their remains displayed. In mockery, the Duke's head was adorned with a paper crown. With the death of Richard of York, his son, Edward became the Yorkist heir to the throne. When war erupted again, the Duchess of York sent her two young sons to Burgundy.

In London the Yorkists defeated the Lancastrians and Edward IV was declared King. George and Richard returned to England. Richard, not yet nine years old, had experienced much in his brief lifetime. He had been subjected to being imprisoned and in exile. He had experienced the death and loss of his father and his brother, Edmund. At last his older brother, Edward IV, was King, and perhaps the young Richard would find peace under his protection. Edward IV gave him a title, naming Richard as Duke of Gloucester, and elected the young brother as a Knight of the Garter.

Richard, Duke of Gloucester, was placed in apprenticeship in the household of one of the richest and most powerful nobles of the realm, his cousin, Richard Neville, Earl of Warwick. During his apprenticeship, he formed friendships with other young men that would last his lifetime. The young

men received instruction in all matter of subjects from law and mathematics to Latin, music and etiquette, and fighting and chivalry. Each day they would ride and hunt; in the evening they would sing and dance and play musical instruments. However, Richard's greatest efforts were directed on his development of the use and skill of military arms.⁸⁹

During the next few years, during the time that Richard matured from a child to a young man, again events around him influenced his attitudes. Both he and George received honors and land from the King. Perhaps without even being aware of it, Edward definitely showed favoritism to Richard.⁹⁰ This apparent favoring infuriated George and may have marked the beginning of the hostility that he would develop toward his two brothers. When Edward announced his marriage to Elizabeth Woodville the results were far reaching and serious. By this act, Edward alienated his cousin, Richard Neville, the Earl of

⁸⁹ For the young Richard, military prowess became his chief occupation and his refuge. His childhood friendship with Anne Neville was apparently a genuine attachment to and with her.

⁹⁰ The reason for the favoritism was simple, if unstated. The young Richard was the most courageous, loyal and victorious military leader that Edward IV had. Richard was absolutely, totally reliable, and he always won. It is little wonder that a king who owed his crown to military victory would feel a close appreciation to the brother whose arms so successfully defended his possession of that crown. This alleged partiality was particularly understandable in view of George's intermittent disloyalty, greed and deviousness.

Warwick, called the "Kingmaker." The defiant marriage was a move that showed Neville that Edward intended to rule in fact as well as name, and not as a puppet for the powerful nobleman.

Richard was soon removed from the "Kingmaker's" care. He then spent the next five years in a London court full of the Queen's, sometimes greedy, relatives. The Woodvilles secured for themselves the greatest offices and the most prosperous marriages in the land.

Neville tried to win the King's brothers to his side; only George, no stranger to deceit, responded.⁹¹ Richard might have been flattered by Neville's attention, but he remained loyal to Edward. And at that time, in 1469, Richard was still quite young and was possibly not considered of much importance as an ally. George, against the King's wishes, secretly married Richard Neville's daughter, Isabel. He and his new father-in-law gathered an army, captured Edward IV and executed the Queen Elizabeth's father and brother. Richard proceeded to raise an army to rescue his brother, the King. When the army arrived where Edward was held prisoner, the King announced that he intended to return to London with Richard. This act deepened and strengthened the brothers' relationship.

⁹¹ George was given the title, Duke of Clarence. He is subsequently usually referred to in correspondence and court records simply as "Clarence," as if that were his given name.

On returning to London, Edward IV named Richard to the position of Constable of England for life. This position was a powerful one and carried much responsibility. The Constable, as president of the court of chivalry and court martial, could determine and punish acts of treason.⁹² Also, through his first independent military campaign, Richard secured both North and South Wales and became Chief Justice there.⁹³

Meanwhile, Neville and George continued to plot rebellion. The patience of Edward IV, even for a cousin, Neville, and a brother, George, finally withered, and he arranged for them to be declared traitors. Richard set out to aid the King. Neville and George could not win against the combined armies of the King and Richard, so they fled to France. Edward IV knew they would return and he prepared for war once more. In France, Neville, Earl of Warwick, did not remain idle, but plotted against Edward with the help of the aging, embittered Margaret of Anjou. In their plot, they

⁹² Kendall, Richard the Third, 89. In medieval monarchies, an officer of high rank usually served as military commander in the ruler's absence. During his long absences from London, Richard placed his duties as Constable in the hands of experienced, competent judges.

⁹³ As Chief Justice, Richard's position required supervisory authority over a region of the East and Middle Marches which was frequently attacked by the Scots. Seeing that frontier fortresses were garrisoned, provisioned and repaired took much of his time.

schemed to defeat Edward IV, restore the now insane Henry VI to the throne, and arrange the marriage of Margaret's son, Prince Edward to Neville's daughter, Anne. George, Duke of Clarence, realized that he was being left out, except that in the event Anne Neville and Prince Edward produced no heirs, he would inherit the crown.

In 1470, when Richard Neville returned to England, he defeated Edward IV; and Edward with a small company, which included his brother, Richard, fled to Burgundy. Once again Richard, Duke of Gloucester, found himself in exile. Charles of Burgundy was married to Margaret, the sister of Edward and Richard; therefore, they were welcome at the Burgundian court.

On the heels of Neville's triumph, Margaret of Anjou, with her son Edward and her new daughter-in-law, Anne, planned to return to England. Elizabeth Woodville, who had taken sanctuary at Westminster during the turmoil, gave birth to a son and new heir to the throne. The day Margaret of Anjou landed in England, Neville was defeated and killed at the second Battle of Barnet. Shortly thereafter, Margaret's army met the combined forces of the King and Richard's armies at the Battle of Tewkesbury where they soundly defeated her. She lost not only the battle, but the life of her only son, Prince Edward.

After Tewkesbury, Edward and Richard returned to London in triumph.⁹⁴ Margaret of Anjou and her now-widowed daughter-in-law, Anne Neville, were their prisoners. Henry VI died shortly thereafter in the Tower of London, possibly as a result of an order from the King now grown wary of toleration. Although Richard has been accused as Henry's executioner, there is no sufficient evidence to indicate that he took part in Henry's death.

The court heaped further rewards on Richard. Not only did Edward IV and the council restore him to the position of Constable of England, but they also gave him Neville's former office of Great Chamberlain.⁹⁵ The King needed a strong military leader in the North and because of Richard's love for that area, Edward gave him Neville's estates there. Included in the gift was Middleham Castle where Richard had spent his young apprenticeship with the Neville family. The Duke of Gloucester was now the greatest magnate in the North.⁹⁶ Before he left London to claim his northern domain, Richard asked the King's permission to wed Anne Neville. They had developed a deep and abiding affection for one another in

⁹⁴ Tewkesbury is a town west and north of London on the Severn River.

⁹⁵ The chamberlain is a high ranking official who manages the household and also acts as treasurer for a sovereign.

⁹⁶ Kendall, Richard the Third, 124-25.

childhood during Richard's stay at Middleham. The King gave his permission and Richard prepared to claim his bride.

However, she was now under the protection of his brother, George, Duke of Clarence. George was unhappy that he had to share Neville's estates with Richard and saw the proposed marriage as a further threat. George refused to let Anne leave his charge and hid her away. Richard found her and took her to sanctuary. A bitter feud erupted between the two brothers over the Neville inheritance and Anne's guardianship. Richard wanted to marry Anne even if she had no inheritance. In the settlement the Duke of Clarence got the greatest amount of the estate, but Richard did keep Middleham Castle and some Yorkshire estates.

Anne Neville and Richard, Duke of Gloucester, were married in 1472, and they immediately went to Middleham Castle to live.⁹⁷ In 1473, Ann delivered their only child, Edward. In 1475, King Edward IV called Richard to London. Edward IV had decided to invade France and reclaim the territories that Henry VI had lost in France. The Duke of Clarence, once again

⁹⁷ Middleham Castle was a great Yorkshire stronghold of the Neville family at Middleham. Edward IV entrusted it to Richard's care after the death of Richard Neville. Castles built in the fourteenth century were meant for defense and present a more warlike appearance than castles built a century later, as gun ports protected the causeway approach to the main gates which were narrow and window openings were small. In the late fifteenth century, the castles took on the look of mansions as more open and wide windows and doors appeared.

in the King's good graces, and the Duke of Gloucester were to raise armies. When Richard sent out a call for troops, he raised far more than necessary. It seemed the northern men were eager to wear Richard's badge of the white boar. However, the invasion of France was a disaster, Edward, under the terms of the Treaty of Pequigny, received a large annuity for life. It was a humiliating defeat for England and Richard. He refused the French King's bribe which won him praise in England, but only caused the French to dislike him.

Richard returned to his home in northern England, only to be called back to London in 1477 because of the crisis due to the death of the Duke of Burgundy. George, Duke of Clarence, now a widower, wanted to marry the Duke of Burgundy's heir to keep the English and Burgundian alliance secure. Edward refused to sanction the marriage. George again plotted treason against the King, and the King sentenced him to death. Richard rushed to George's defense. He pleaded with Edward to spare George's life, but the Woodvilles, pressing from the other side, persuaded the King not to yield.⁹⁸ At George's trial, Edward was the sole accuser and only George spoke to defend himself. He died in the Tower under mysterious circumstances; popular stories circulated that he supposedly chose death by drowning in a vat of his favorite wine.

⁹⁸ Kendall, Richard the Third, 147.

Throughout these turbulent years, Richard of Gloucester spent most of his time in northern England where he developed the reputation as a wise and firm leader. He returned to the north country again after George's death and in the next few years he returned to London only twice. One visit was to see his sister, Margaret, who visited from Burgundy, and the other visit was to inform the King of the war with Scotland.

Richard was very busy in his northern domain. He delegated much of the judicial work to judges connected with his national offices of Constable and Admiral of England. But in many of the lesser positions he did the work personally, which created a very demanding schedule on his part. Later, merely keeping the peace along the Scottish border would prove a major task that his successors found difficult to maintain. Richard was never too busy to attend to problems brought to his attention by citizens of his area, and his concern earned him their devotion. He was often asked to settle disputes of nobles as well as those of the poor, and he treated all with fairness and equality. His concern and support was so appreciated by the citizens of York that they remained faithful to him and his memory well into the Tudor period.

In 1482, with Edward IV's declining health, Richard was given complete control to settle the problems of the Scottish borders once and for all. Richard was so successful in war that in 1483, when the Scots sued for peace, Richard returned

to London in triumph and received much acclaim and reward for the success of the campaign.⁹⁹ He received grants that included the permanent wardenship of the West Marches and many lands, manors and perquisites.¹⁰⁰

Richard left London to return to his home at Middleham in February, 1483. Edward IV had grown fat and lazy and he seemed to live only for pleasure. Richard, who viewed life in an almost puritanical fashion, no doubt blamed Edward's condition on the forces at court, particularly the Woodvilles. Richard, on his departure from London, had no way of knowing he would never see his beloved brother again.

Edward IV died in April, 1483. Richard did not know of his brother's death for a week. When the message came it was not from the Woodvilles, but from Lord Hastings, the court's Lord Chamberlain, who informed Richard that he had been appointed Protector of the realm according to his brother's will.

⁹⁹ Ibid., 170.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid. As warden, Richard was chief executive or administrative officer of all the area.

CHAPTER SIX

THE CORONATION OF RICHARD III AND ANNE: THE WEAVING OF RENAISSANCE POLITICS AND ART, 1483

Until the death of his father, Edward IV, the young child, who would become Edward V, had been living at Ludlow Castle in the Welsh Marches under the care of his uncle, Anthony Woodville, Earl Rivers. As soon as Richard, Duke of Gloucester, learned of his brother's death, he sent a message to Rivers requesting the route he would take, that they might join forces and enter London together. Although Richard received no official notification from the Queen of the death of Edward IV or of his appointment as Protector, he sent a note to Elizabeth expressing his condolences and he pledged his loyalty to the young King Edward. Richard became alarmed when a second note from Lord Hastings informed him that the Woodvilles were taking over the government. Richard wrote the court council and reminded them that according to his brother's wishes, he was Protector and should be recognized as such. This precaution did not prevent the Queen from attempting to use the council to gain power. The council itself, with the death of the King, no longer had any power, nor did the Parliament called by the now deceased Edward IV, which was convening at the time of his death.

As Richard traveled to meet the young King, Edward V, and Earl Rivers, he received yet another report from Hastings in London. The Queen's faction, ignoring Richard's appointment as Protector, had gone ahead with plans for an immediate coronation.¹⁰¹ Once the King was crowned a protector would no longer be necessary, and the Woodvilles could rule through the child King. The Woodvilles were desperate to hold on to power. They were disliked by the old nobility and the Commons because of their greed.

The Woodvilles' only hope to keep power was through the young King, so they tried to prevent Richard's protectorship. A member of the family controlled the treasury and armaments, another controlled part of the English navy and yet another had custody of the young King. If they had succeeded with the coronation the whole government would have been in their hands. The old council of London was alarmed at their actions, especially when the Queen appeared before the council and declared that the title of Protector carried no more weight than a council position, and that position would be null and void after the coronation. The council did finally vote to deprive the Protector of any power.

Ultimately Richard overtook the King and his escort on the way to London. Richard arrested members of the King's

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 196.

party and accused them of plotting to deprive him of his protectorship and of his life. In London, the Woodvilles tried to rally persons to their cause. When attempts failed, the royal family went into sanctuary at Westminster Abbey, taking much of the royal treasury and treasures of the realm with them.

When Richard and the young uncrowned King, Edward V, entered London an enthusiastic crowd greeted them. Richard's first act as Protector was to stabilize the government. The council members that Richard assembled were principally the same as had served his brother, Edward IV. They also set the coronation date for the new King.

Another lord of the realm offered Richard, the Protector, his support and swore allegiance to the new King, Edward V. The Duke of Buckingham, who under the reign of Edward IV had been forced to marry a Woodville, became Richard's staunchest supporter. He quickly emerged as a powerful member of the council. This apparent favoritism caused jealousy among the other members, especially with Lord Hastings who was a supporter of the Woodville faction. It was not long before Hastings and the Woodvilles were having secret meetings using the dead King Edward's former mistress, Jane Shore, as their

emissary. It seemed they planned to end the power of the protectorship and reinstate the Woodvilles to power.¹⁰²

Richard of Gloucester was aware that something was amiss and he would have to act in order to keep his position as Protector. He called on his supporters in the north for assistance, and the city of York did send armed men; however, they did not arrive in London until after Richard's coronation.

Richard, Duke of Gloucester, met with the council and informed it of the conspiracy against the government by the Woodvilles and their followers. The council voted to execute Lord Hastings, an event that caused no stir in the community despite his station and popularity. It is quite likely that many members of the London community already knew of Richard's intent to claim the crown.¹⁰³ After the execution, Richard hoped that the danger from the Woodvilles would cease. Richard asked Elizabeth to come out of sanctuary as a gesture of peace. Elizabeth allowed her younger son, Richard, to join his brother, Edward, in the Tower, where he resided while awaiting his coronation.

Rumors began to circulate that the late King Edward IV's marriage to Elizabeth Woodville was not valid, and the

¹⁰² Ibid., 243.

¹⁰³ Ibid., 449.

children were illegitimate because of an earlier marriage contract that Edward had broken. Richard, Duke of Gloucester, accepted the story, and a short time later the council declared him the rightful heir to the throne. Parliament reinforced the move by drawing up a petition to review the charges against the Woodvilles and asked Richard to take the throne. Though he was, or seemed, reluctant at first, Richard accepted the petition and the crown. On July 6, in an elaborate, well attended ceremony, Richard and Anne were crowned in Westminster Abbey.

The coronation of the King and Queen of England has always been regarded as the single most important event in their lives.¹⁰⁴ During the ceremony the new monarch is sworn to power and authority to carry out the tasks of the realm. Unlike the two previous reigns, in 1483, it was a double coronation for a king and a queen. Because of its rarity, it was treated as an important event and there are more records relating to this coronation than to any other in the fifteenth century. These records are valuable in that they show the splendor and beauty of the ceremony and provide an understanding of the event. Too, they reveal the extent to which Renaissance fashions and arts had spread to England,

¹⁰⁴ The Coronation of Richard III, the Extant Documents, eds. Anne F. Sutton and P.W. Hammond (Gloucester and New York: Alan Sutton, St. Martin's Press, 1983), 1.

particularly to London, and offer a glimpse of the interweaving of Renaissance politics and the arts.

The coronation of Richard, Duke of Gloucester, and Anne Neville planned quickly over a ten day period, required organization and hard work on the part of not only the royal household, but of artisans and merchants of London. The event employed tailors who designed and made the clothes for the participants, and skinners who oversaw the dressing and work of producing the finest furs for the event. The King's embroiderer not only perfected embroidered patterns for elaborate designs, but he also saw to the work of the painters. Essentially his job was to embroider everything the King might desire him to embroider, from the royal robes to horse trappers and banners, from altar cloths to cognizances for the jackets of his servants, and his duties in some cases overlapped with those of the painter.¹⁰⁵

The King's painter had the task of painting everything that the King required him to decorate, from his palaces and furnishings, horsegear and ceremonial flags, to the clothes and properties of pageants staged for entertainment. The development of oil painting in the fourteenth century had meant that brilliant colors could be achieved on silk fabrics once they were prepared. If the paint was laid on thickly and

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 64.

accompanied by the foil of beaten gold, so desirable for flags of heraldic designs which included such emblems as the leopards of England, the softness of the supporting fabric was lost and the flag became almost rigid.¹⁰⁶ They were trimmed with fringe and cords of metal and silk. Artists and painters also applied oil paints and gold foil to wood, leather, silk, linen or plaster.

Silkwomen spun silk thread from imported raw silk. From this thread they made ribbons, tassels, fringes and laces for the coronation. This silk thread was often interwoven with gold and silver thread, creating magnificent laces.¹⁰⁷ In the fifteenth century this artistic skill was a feminine craft with sufficient organization to enable women to join together in petitions to the King in Parliament, such as those under the Yorkist Kings in 1463, 1482 and 1484, which secured prohibition of the importation of the goods of their craft.¹⁰⁸ These statutes were not always entirely effective as accounts reveal the use of Venetian silk in their work. Mercers

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 65.

¹⁰⁷ According to Anne Sutton in The Coronation of Richard III, the lace used in 1483 was lace in the sense of silk cords and not the flat openwork lace which was essentially a sixteenth century development.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 66 and see also "Women's Social Life and Common Action in England from the Fifteenth Century to the Eve of the Civil War" by Ralph A. Houlbrooke, Continuity and Change (Great Britain) 1(2) (1986): 171-189.

involved in trade imported many luxury goods such as satins, velvets and cloths of gold and silver for royalty or for anyone who could afford them.

The Great Wardrobe served regularly as a lodging place of royalty under the Yorkist Kings. It contained not only warehouses for royal goods, but elaborate quarters and apartments. The royal apartment consisted of a great hall with glass windows, with a porch attached. A winding staircase led to the King's personal chamber, which housed his private kitchen, a chapel and a large closet with altars, and a private latrine. The Queen's chamber consisted of a hall, a gallery, an entry and a parlor. Furnishings were sparse because each time they stayed in the facility they brought their own furniture with them. The Great Wardrobe was not the only store of the King's supplies; all his many other residences had their own store, some of which had come originally from the Great Wardrobe.¹⁰⁹

On the day of the coronation, Richard rode in a splendid procession through the streets thronged with cheering crowds to Westminster Abbey. He wore a long robe of purple velvet, furred with ermine. Richard's Queen rode on a richly adorned horse litter closely behind his group. Anne was also attired

¹⁰⁹ The Coronation of Richard III, eds. Sutton and Hammond, 70.

in a royal purple robe requested by special order of the King.¹¹⁰ Upon reaching Westminster Hall, the King and Queen proceeded to the Abbey on foot, led by musicians and heralds, and followed by church officials carrying a great cross. The nobility, including family members of the royal couple, followed the clergy. According to Paul Kendall, "As they approached the west front of the Abbey, Richard and his lords could glimpse, in the courtyard of the Almory, the sign of the Red Pale, where William Caxton, the former mercer, was producing quantities of books by means of his amazing machine."¹¹¹

After a sermon in Latin in the Abbey nave, the couple moved to the high altar for the anointing. Their robes removed, they were naked to the waist to receive the sacred oil.¹¹² Then re clothed in gold cloth, they each received a crown for their head as the organ began to play and the choir led in singing hymns. After high mass, the royal couple received communion and then returned to Westminster Hall. Later the King and Queen were honorees at a large banquet with

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 75.

¹¹¹ Kendall, Richard the Third, 274.

¹¹² Lives of the Queens of England From Official Records and Other Authentic Documents Private as Well as Public, ed. Agnes Strickland (Philadelphia: Lea and Blanchard, 1848), 249.

more than 3,000 in attendance.¹¹³ They were served lavish dishes of a variety of meats, fishes, vegetables and fruits, with the best wines to drink. These foods were served in lavishly decorated containers and dishes, set on elegant table linens. The court used the coronation banquet to show that in the matters of beauty and elegance few could compete with the royalty of the realm. The banquet began at four and was of immense length, lasting over five hours.¹¹⁴ There were long pauses between courses allowing persons to converse, and performers to entertain. This was a time for the King to interact with individuals and inspire them to support the new reign. Finally, the banquet ended with a toast of wine all around, and the King and Queen retired. It is possible that when he retired that evening, Richard III may have felt a strong sense of satisfaction that all was well in a realm that seemed to accept him so openly. It was now up to him to prove that he would be an honorable King, and his good government would heal the injustices of the country.

The coronation gave an indication that Richard III possessed the same taste for finery and elegance as his brother, Edward IV. He had a fondness for fine clothes and

¹¹³ The Coronation of Richard III, eds. Sutton and Hammond, 285.

¹¹⁴ E.F. Jacob, The Oxford History of England: The Fifteenth Century 1399-1485 (Ely House, London: Oxford at the Clarendon Press, 1961), 622.

life at court was far from gloomy and restrained. He entertained foreigner visitors who left his presence in awe of the grandeur he presented at his court. The music and entertainment at the English court was known in the courts of Europe. The musicians were not only known for their religious presentations at mass, but also for their courtly renditions of tunes in the dances of the day. There was much discussion of "the goings-on" at court during the Christmas festivities of 1484.¹¹⁵

¹¹⁵ Charles Ross, Richard III (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1981), 142. Ross uses a colloquialism in his description of the English court's Christmas festivities in 1484. This selection of words fits in with the comments of the Croyland Chronicler, who, with a disapproval too shameful to speak of, comments on matters concerning the dresses of Queen Anne and the Lady Elizabeth, the eldest daughter of the late King Edward IV; the two ladies made entrance to the dancing and festivities attired in apparel of identical shape and color. Some historians have questioned that perhaps there was much "going on" in Richard III's court, in spite of his pietistical attitude!

CHAPTER SEVEN

RICHARD III AS KING OF ENGLAND, 1483-1485

Soon after the coronation, Richard and Anne left London on a trip through the kingdom. While they were away from the city, they rendezvoused with Lord Buckingham. It was to be the last meeting between the new King and his chief supporter.¹¹⁶ Later, Richard would learn that Buckingham had revolted against him in favor of the Tudor faction, freshly landed on the English coast from France. Richard declared Buckingham a traitor and prepared arms against him. Richard's army later caught and beheaded Buckingham; with the report of his fate, the Tudor supporters returned to France. Richard showed clemency to many of the rebels and granted them pardons. Some of the Yorkist supporters profited from the confiscated estates of the dead Duke.

In January, 1484, Parliament convened at Westminster. Although this was the only Parliament called during Richard III's reign, he pressed for passage of several important pieces of legislation. They made benevolences illegal and reformed the legal system of government in order to guarantee

¹¹⁶ Kendall, Richard the Third, 302.

protection of the ordinary citizen.¹¹⁷ The nobility had had more control, particularly of the land, with the old laws and were alienated by Richard's reforms, but the Commons gave him their support.

An important legislative act passed by Parliament in his reign regulated the activities of foreign merchants. However, at Richard's request Parliamentary leaders inserted an exempt clause which encouraged any foreigner engaged in the printing, binding or selling of books. This act was the first piece of legislation in England which protected and fostered the art of printing.¹¹⁸

In March 1484, Elizabeth Woodville and her daughters left sanctuary. Richard granted her a pension, and gave her daughters small dowries and agreed to find them suitable husbands. Elizabeth evidently felt that Richard III was no longer a threat, plus she was probably tired of living a cloistered existence.

Many characteristics of Edward's court were carried over into his brother's reign, but unlike Edward in his laziness, Richard had a vital energy for manly pursuits as he loved the out-of-doors and outdoor sports such as hunting and hawking. This love could well have stemmed from his love of warfare,

¹¹⁷ Documents of English Constitutional History, eds. Chrimes and Brown, 355.

¹¹⁸ Kendall, Richard the Third, 343.

and his founding of the College of Herald's was a testimony to his military interest.¹¹⁹

Another interest Richard III shared with his late brother Edward IV was the art of building. Like his brother, he carried out extensive work and repairs on secular buildings. He continued modernization of many of his castles, revealing a personal desire for the comforts of living by adding large halls and extensive glass windows. Richard, too, enjoyed the personal comforts.

Though Richard III carried to his reign many of his brother's tendencies for a luxurious and elegant court, he possessed a trait that his brother had lacked, piety. In public he showed little evidence of religion, but in private life he was extremely interested in the mysticism which spread across Europe in the later Middle Ages. This evidence was found in books which had belonged to Richard. One such book was a copy of the first version of John Wycliffe's New Testament in English, which contains Richard's signature.¹²⁰ There was also a Book of Hours which included a private

¹¹⁹ English Historical Documents 1327-1485, ed. A.R. Myers, Vol. IV (New York: Oxford University Press, 1969), 1135.

¹²⁰ Ross, Richard III, 128-29. It should perhaps be noted that years before Parliament had declared the possession and/or reading of Wycliffe's Bible illegal.

prayer, full of a sense of oppression and danger.¹²¹ The prayer gives the impression that Richard probably felt a strong need for salvation beyond the scope of everyday life. Richard's books were not elaborate in fancy bindings; he used them often, and their appearance give indications of being well read.

The most fashionable form of piety during the later fifteenth century was the founding of chantries and collegiate churches.¹²² Henry VI's purpose was first pietistical and then educational. Edward IV's purpose had little to do with either piety or education; Edward ordered chantries and churches designed to leave splendid memorials of the House of York. Perhaps Richard III's purpose was a combination of both, as he seemed willing to devote his energies to educational as well as religious endeavors.

Richard III was responsible for many collegiate foundations, and he contributed money, gifts and land to religious houses, chapels, parish churches and houses of friars and monks. Some of his major contributions were located in the north of England. The college at his beloved

¹²¹ Ibid., 129.

¹²² A chantry is an altar or chapel endowed for the saying of masses and prayers. A collegiate church is a Catholic or Anglican church other than a cathedral, having a chapter of canons and presided over by a dean or provost. Both are an indication of the growing attention to the Renaissance ideal of education.

Middleham was not completed during his short reign and was probably his first choice, as his designs and documents indicated a personal and pious need of understanding. The phrases suggest a genuine personal devotion rather than a mere conventional formula, even if the array of titles also stresses Richard's worldly pomp:

Richard, Duke of Gloucester, Great Chamberlain, Constable of England, Lord of Glamorgan, Morgannoc, Bergavenny, Richmond and Middleham, to all Christian people to whom these presents shall come, greeting in our Lord everlasting . . . to the great estate, honour and dignity that he hath now called me unto, to be named, knowed, reputed and called Richard, Duke of Gloucester . . . I . . . am finally determined, unto the loving and thanking of his Deity, and in the honour of His Blessed mother our lady St Mary . . . and of the holy virgin St Alkild to establish, make and found a college within my town of Middleham¹²³

Richard III's actions picture him as a good friend and protector of the church in England. The church officials indicated they were appreciative of his support. He promoted the learned scholar as well as the humanist. Humanistic scholarship was beginning to be noticed in England at this time.

Queen Anne was a patron of Queen's College, Cambridge, as her predecessors had been. Richard, in her name, lavished money and lands on the college. Eaton and King's College, Cambridge, had suffered at the hands of Edward IV. But in

¹²³ Ross, Richard III, 131. The "holy virgin St Alkild" was a reference to the patroness of Middleham.

Richard's reign, he gave them land and income allowing their plans for building and facility expansion to resume. When Richard visited King's College in 1484, the university singled him out for special mention due to his benefaction. Part of Richard III's generosity might have been due to public sentiment for the saintly Henry VI who had been such a benefactor himself of the college. Richard had Henry's remains moved to St. George's Chapel at Windsor where Henry was laid to final rest not far from his destroyer, Richard's brother, Edward IV.

Richard III's reign was too short to allow him to make many changes in the government of the realm. In his brief time, he carried on the methods of Edward IV's reign. He was a fair and just King, and he took a personal interest in his kingship. Richard had advisors, but the final decisions were made by him. Many of his council members had served under his brother; however he dismissed those with Woodville sympathies.

King Richard III moved with regularity throughout the realm on progresses, rarely staying in one place more than a few weeks.¹²⁴ He was most energetic making government decisions at each stop along his journeys. On the whole he seemed to be well liked by his subjects, especially those in the north of England. Richard and his advisors were

¹²⁴ A progress was a state journey made by a sovereign through the realm.

constantly striving to improve and strengthen government procedures. But his close-knit advisors gave Richard a narrow power base, and with mistrust and avarice among them, the smooth surface gave a false illusion of the storms that were brewing beneath.

In April 1484, the only child of Richard and Anne, Edward, Prince of Wales, died at Middleham Castle. He had been in ill health from birth, but his death was a blow from which neither of his parents ever fully recovered. Whether it affected Anne's health we do not know, but she did not outlive her son a whole year.¹²⁵ In March 1485, Anne Neville died. Rumors circulated that the King planned to marry his niece, Elizabeth of York, who had been pledged earlier to Henry Tudor. Richard III denied the rumors and stressed that they were started by the Tudor faction.

Henry Tudor was in France, and, with the hope of French aid, he prepared to invade England. Richard suspected war and prepared the defense of his realm. He sent ships to patrol the channel and built the defenses of the towns. At this time, Richard III took Nottingham as his principal residence; because of its central location, he could receive news from any quarter in the event of an invasion.¹²⁶

¹²⁵ Dictionary of National Biography Vol. I, S.V. "Anne Neville," 425.

¹²⁶ Ross, Richard III, 176.

When Henry Tudor landed in England again, it was with an army at first comprised mostly of criminals released from Normandy's jails. Henry was totally unfamiliar with war and war tactics. However, he did recruit soldiers on his way through Wales.

Richard III thought, with some skepticism, that he was ready for war. His cause for concern was the support, or lack of support, of some of the nobles of the realm. He wondered how many planned to betray him. Richard instructed his captains to join him at the town of Leicester. Some of his key people lagged behind; their support would go to the victor, whomever he might be.

On August 22, outside the town of Market Bosworth, King Richard addressed his troops. He told them that no matter who won the battle, the England that they knew would be destroyed. If Tudor won, he would annihilate the House of York and rule in fear.¹²⁷ If Richard won, he would rule by force since his attempts to rule in fairness had failed. As Richard prepared to go into battle he placed the crown upon his head. Members of his group thought it would make him an easy target for the enemy. He reassured them and replied that he would live or die the King of England.

¹²⁷ For more information concerning the background of Henry VI see "Henry Tudor: The Training of a King" by R.A. Griffiths, Huntington Library Quarterly (Great Britain) 49(3) (1986): 197-218.

Richard III's army was larger than Henry Tudor's, but Richard could not be sure that some of his troops would not defect to the enemy. During the battle, Richard decided the only way for a sure victory was the death of Henry Tudor. He decided to take care of the matter personally. Richard and his knights rode straight into the Tudor lines. Richard fought gallantly, but then some of his own troops turned and bore down upon him as treason infiltrated his ranks. Still he continued to fight until the blows of many weapons smashed his armor and he fell, mortally wounded, to the ground.

According to legend, Richard III's crown was retrieved from a bramble bush and placed on the head of Henry Tudor. Richard's naked body, covered with bloody wounds, was placed across a horse and taken to the town of Leicester. After two days, the local Grey Friars received permission to bury Richard in an unmarked grave. Years later, Henry VII allowed a modest tomb be built for Richard III.¹²⁸ During the reign

¹²⁸ For the reign of Richard III, all the English writers of the sixteenth century followed closely the history commonly attributed to Sir Thomas More, Complete Works of St. Thomas More: Richard III Vol. 2, ed. Richard S. Sylvester (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1963), and when that work failed adopted for the most part Polydore Vergil's history of the era. But More and Vergil wrote with prejudices and preconceptions giving Richard such a black reputation that all attempts to whitewash him since have broken down and the picture of him as a villain stands today. The problem of his character is not so difficult if we recognize in him not the consistent monster of the tragedy of William Shakespeare's "Richard III," Shakespeare: The Complete Works, ed. G.B. Harrison, but a typical man in an age of strange contradict-

of Henry VIII, when monasteries were being dissolved, mobs destroyed Richard's tomb and threw his remains into the River Soar.¹²⁹

ions, of culture combined with cruelty and of an emotional temper that was capable of unscrupulous means to reach high ends. Sir Clements R. Markham, Richard III: His Life and Character (London: Smith, Elder and Co., 1906) is an excellent source for the life of King Richard III and he devotes a chapter to discussing the views of earlier historian James Gairdner's Richard III, (1878). Gairdner saw Richard as a "Jekyll and Hyde." However, some later historians, such as Paul Murray Kendall, chose to ignore the Tudor tradition of Richard. Kendall bases his writings on source material available with Richard's day. In his study he promotes the idea that Tudor historians created Richard III as an ogre destroyed by Henry VII, England's rescuer and savior.

¹²⁹ Kendall, Richard the Third, 553.

CHAPTER EIGHT

THE RENAISSANCE AND THE ENGLISH REALM: WILLIAM CAXTON AND THE BIRTH OF PRINTING

With the death of Richard III, the Plantagenet line of descent to the English throne ended. However, the Yorkist Kings, in spite of the civil wars in England, had promoted Renaissance ideas. The wars involved the nobility and effected the common people very little. The other classes, for example, merchants, artisans, craftsmen, shopkeepers, importers and exporters, etc., were able to pursue and develop ideals of their own and fulfill them with little interference from the government of the realm.

One most important pursuit was that of William Caxton, whose work culminated in the birth of printing in England, a most significant event in English history. The contribution he made to England in the assimilation of learning through his printing press was incalculable. Printing was to change society by growth and accumulation of knowledge, and it spread ideas of knowledge that would usher in the modern world.

By the end of the second century A.D, the Chinese apparently had discovered, empirically, a means of printing texts; certainly they had at their disposal the three elements necessary for printing (1) paper, the techniques for the

manufacture of which they had known for several decades; (2) ink, whose basic formula they had known for 25 centuries; and (3) surfaces bearing texts carved in relief.¹³⁰ The original relief was probably carved in marble or stone; however, late in the sixth century the wooden block appeared. Chinese printers drew the design on paper, then inked and transferred it to the wooden block. They then cut away the area outside the design, leaving the raised pattern in reverse. They then inked the design or pattern, covered it and pressed it to paper. This procedure was a slow and tedious process, and it was not until the eleventh century that the Chinese invented movable type which could be molded from clay. A major disadvantage facing the Chinese was that their language called for something like 30,000 ideographs to represent it in visual form, whereas European languages needed an alphabet of only two dozen or so letters.¹³¹

In Europe, the invention of movable type in alphabetical form resulted in the growth of literacy. From the sixth to the twelfth century, the manuscript copies of religious and secular writings from the monasteries had sufficed for the

¹³⁰ New Encyclopaedia Britannica, 1988, Vol. 26, 15th.Ed., S.V. "Printing, Typography and Photoengraving," 69.

¹³¹ Edmund Childs, William Caxton a portrait in a background (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1976), 19-21.

relatively small demand.¹³² From the medieval era, Europe had seen intellectual activity accompanying the growth of universities. In addition, the crusades and pilgrimages had led to unprecedented cultural exchanges. The books turned out by the monks could not be produced quickly enough.

In order to meet the demand in universities, scribes would copy texts. Students would then hire an "exemplar," who worked as an employee of the university bookstore or stationer's shop, to copy the text produced by the scribes. Subsequently, other bookshops began to open, offering manuscripts that could be purchased by the general public. This development produced the impetus for the invention of the printing press. However, the press had to wait for the invention of paper. Up until this time manuscripts had been written on parchment or vellum, and would have been far too expensive for mass printing.¹³³ It is remarkable that although circumstantial evidence sufficiently shows that Johann Gutenberg was the inventor of the first practical method of printing from movable type, there is not one single

¹³² Colin Clair, A History of European Printing (London, New York and San Francisco: Academic Press, 1976), 1.

¹³³ Vellum or parchment is a paper processed from the skins of calf, lamb or kid and used for the pages and binding of fine books.

book or piece of printing in existence which bears his name.¹³⁴

Johann Gutenberg, a goldsmith, began using raised metal type around 1440. He invented a printing machine from a press used for grapes and cheese. He set his type in a form, and then he inked the form. By placing paper over the type and turning a large wooden screw he brought a block of wood down on the paper. Gutenberg could print about 300 copies a day. From Maize, Germany, Gutenberg's home, the art of printing spread rapidly.¹³⁵

Printing was introduced into England by William Caxton, who learned the craft in Cologne, Germany in 1472. He then operated a press for several years in Bruges, Flanders where his first book to be printed in English, The Recuyell of the Histories of Troy, was produced around 1475, in the reign of Edward IV. The following year, Caxton established the first press in England, bringing printing to England comparatively late.¹³⁶ But the man who brought this new art to Westminster was different from the other early practitioners.

Much of what is known of Caxton's early life comes from his own printed materials, which gave information of a

¹³⁴ Clair, History of European Printing, 6.

¹³⁵ Ibid., 8.

¹³⁶ Colin Clair, A History of Printing in Britain (New York: Oxford University Press, 1966), 1.

personal nature. As noted in the introduction of The History of Troy, written by Caxton himself, he was born in Kent, England. Though exactly where, and when, in Kent has never been established. Little else is known about his early childhood. He referred to his parents, and stated that they sent him to school. It is possible that his father was a merchant, and that they were comfortably well-off.

Several families of the name of Caxton or Cauxton can be traced to the Kent area during the Middle Ages. It is clear that the name was fairly common in Kent county or shire, and any Caxton could have been related to the printer. A Thomas Caxton was living at Tenterden in 1420, a Hugh Caxton at Sandwich in 1453, and two more men, both named Thomas Caxton, lived at Lydd about the same time.¹³⁷ If the matter of the printer's birthplace is subject to scrutiny, so too is his birth date. Caxton's apprenticeship to the rich London Mercer, Robert Large, is recorded as having begun in 1438.¹³⁸ The age that a youth was usually apprenticed was between fifteen and seventeen. Therefore, it is assumed that Caxton was born between 1421 or 1423.

The fact that Caxton was apprenticed to the wealthy Mercer Company merchant, Robert Large, who also served as

¹³⁷ Ibid., 8.

¹³⁸ A Mercer was a dealer in textiles, especially in luxury fabrics, such as silks.

Mayor of London for a time, is a significant indication that Caxton's parents might have been well-to-do. Only by knowing the "right" people could he have been placed in such an advantageous position. Being the custom of the day, many apprentices were accepted through personal friendships, rather than mere contracts. An apprentice was a pupil, not a wage earner. Robert Large had a flourishing business and employed several apprentices, many of whom later became important men in their own time.¹³⁹ Caxton's own achievement of rising to Governor of the Merchant Adventurers, as well as his ability to read and translate manuscripts, indicates he was well educated.

London guilds were based on a variety of commodities.¹⁴⁰ The Merchant Adventurers, which dealt in cloth, held a monopoly on the trade between England and the Low Countries. It was in this influential association of merchants that Caxton became a member.

Robert Large died in 1441, while William was still his apprentice. Caxton is mentioned in Large's will. At this point no one knows for certain what happened to Caxton, but it

¹³⁹ N.F. Blake, Caxton England's First Publisher (New York: Barnes and Noble Books, a Division of Harper and Row Publishing, Inc., 1976), 15.

¹⁴⁰ Guilds were medieval associations or societies of merchants, craftsmen or artisans who were interested in the same trades or pursuits.

is assumed that the apprenticeship was continued under the instruction of Large's widow. It was quite common at this time for a woman to assume control of her husband's business in the event of his death.

In the 1440's, Caxton became a trader on his own and started to engage in commerce with Belgium and Holland.¹⁴¹ Existing records do not indicate exactly when and where Caxton left the apprenticeship. However, Caxton was to spend a great deal of his life in Flanders, of which Bruges was the commercial capital. Because Robert Large had overseas connections, Caxton could well have been there finishing his training.

One thing known for certain is that Caxton was already a person of some prominence in Bruges by the year 1450.¹⁴² Records contain evidence of a lawsuit in which Caxton stood bail for another Englishman. The Englishman, on being released from jail, jumped bond. Caxton was ordered to pay the debt, which he did. This court proceeding indicates that Caxton was probably well known in Bruges, the court having accepted him on his word for surety.

The city of Bruges where Caxton became such a personage of note was renowned in the Middle Ages as the " Venice" of

¹⁴¹ Blake, Caxton England's First Publisher, 16.

¹⁴² Childs, William Caxton a portrait, 71.

the North, a compliment which acknowledged not only its commercial importance, but its preeminence as a cultural center.¹⁴³ Its staple industry was the cloth trade, which brought prosperity to Flanders in general, and to Bruges in particular. The city had many guilds and fraternities and a population of 100,000.¹⁴⁴ Traders came from everywhere for the fine cloth for which Bruges was famous. They imported the raw material - wool - from England. At one time English wool exporters sold 35,000 sacks of English wool a year to Flanders.¹⁴⁵ This amount dropped considerably when England decided to make its own woolen cloth, thereby becoming Flanders' principal rival in the world cloth market.

William Caxton prospered while in Bruge. As a merchant, he knew the trade between England and the Low Countries. He could handle financial matters, raise capital, acquire loans and, most importantly, he had contacts with influential men. At a later date all of these characteristics and qualities would be advantageous to an apprentice printer learning the printing trade.

¹⁴³ Ibid., 75.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., 76.

Caxton was elected Governor of the Merchant Adventurers in or around the year 1465.¹⁴⁶ This position made him chief officer and spokesman for the English community in Flanders. It was not an easy job, and his functions were highly responsible. He settled disputes, regulated the importation and exportation of merchandise and other goods, and corresponded with the English government on matters of commerce. There were constant negotiations to get better terms for English merchants, or to smooth out difficulties which arose between England and Burgundy.

Burgundy was the richest and most lavish court in northern Europe.¹⁴⁷ Though not alienated from the French government, Burgundy kept a safe distance from the French court and was able to maintain and carry on a lucrative trade with England. England and Burgundy needed each other. It was part of England's desire to keep a stable relationship with Burgundy that prompted Edward IV to arrange a marriage between his sister, Margaret, and the Duke of Burgundy, Charles the Bold. William Caxton, being well known in both political circles, may have helped to make arrangements for this marriage.

¹⁴⁶ Dictionary of National Biography Vol. III, S.V. "William Caxton," 1291.

¹⁴⁷ Blake, Caxton England's First Publisher, 17.

Before the death of the former Duke of Burgundy, Philip the Good, the trade agreement between England and Burgundy had lapsed. Because Philip the Good was unhappy with the English competitive edge on the cloth trade, he would not renegotiate.¹⁴⁸ Caxton became the diplomat and courtier chosen by the English court to negotiate with Philip, but he failed. With Philip's death and the marriage of Margaret to Charles, the English government persuaded Burgundy to sign a new treaty.

It was at about this time that Caxton became interested in manuscripts. There is evidence that Caxton built a trade of his own in illuminated manuscripts, for which Bruges, under the enlightened rule of Philip the Good, was famous.¹⁴⁹ Philip had a love of literature and he left a library of hundreds of manuscripts.

More and more Caxton was pulled away from his personal business to fulfill the duties of the Mercer Association. Transacting courtly business allowed him to become acquainted with Margaret, Duchess of Burgundy, and sister of Edward IV of England. They both gained from their association. He was delighted to move in circles of the court. She was neglected in marriage and, therefore, welcomed the attention of a fellow

¹⁴⁸ T.H. Lloyd, The English Wood Trade in the Middle Ages (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 281.

¹⁴⁹ Childs, William Caxton a portrait, 79.

countryman. Apparently, Charles was more interested in war than in matters of the heart.¹⁵⁰ Though Margaret spoke fluent French, as did many English persons, it was a pleasant change for her when she and Caxton had long conversations in English.

At the time, Caxton was in the process of translating, The Recuyell of the Historyes of Troye, from French to English, which Margaret strongly encouraged him to finish. It is difficult to state the exact nature of their relationship; it was part business, and part friendship. She was struck by his worldly ways and knowledge, and he probably helped her fill many lonely hours in her exile from England. She was intelligent and also well read. Through her relationship with Caxton, she probably received manuscripts in her native, English tongue.

With Caxton's wide range of business dealings and travel, he was well aware of what was happening in the world around him. He was no scholar, so he probably developed an interest in printing strictly from an economics point of view. In its first years printing was almost exclusively the servant of the "New Learning", as the first printers ignored the vernacular languages of Europe.¹⁵¹ Caxton would produce, in English, the sort of books the literate classes wanted.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., 116.

¹⁵¹ Ibid., 123.

At this time Caxton traveled to Cologne to learn the art of printing, remaining there for several months. He arrived in Cologne about July 1471 and left in December of 1472. In that time, he learned the art and also acquired supplies needed to set up his own press. Caxton, however, did not return directly to England. He returned instead to Bruges, and worked there for a short period of time.

While Caxton was in Bruges he printed his first book, The History of Troy, which he dedicated to Margaret, Duchess of Burgundy, in approximately the year 1473. The publication was probably a long and tedious process for a person, new to the printing trade, as the text was quite long, running over 700 pages.¹⁵² Apparently, paper had been the biggest expense for Caxton. He next translated and printed, The Game and Play of Chess, which he dedicated to Margaret's brother, George, Duke of Clarence. Caxton probably traveled to London to promote the books, where books published in English would have the largest market. He undoubtedly sold some books to members of the English community in Bruges, but his most lucrative market was the French themselves. Abruptly he stopped printing in English, and printed his next four books in French.

¹⁵² Blake, Caxton England's First Publisher, 28.

Caxton returned, with his press, to England in the year 1476.¹⁵³ An indulgence, which he hand-dated, 13 December 1476, was apparently one of the first documents issued from his press. After thirty years residency abroad, Caxton had returned to his native land.

There is much debate as to why Caxton chose Westminster for the location of his shop.¹⁵⁴ Caxton had served his Mercer apprenticeship in London, where he still had many connections, so it seemed natural that he would return there. However, there is no evidence that he even considered the City of London for his print shop.

Perhaps Caxton chose Westminster because the Mercer Company held certain tenements of the Abbots of Westminster, as the rent records are duly recorded. The Wool-Staple at Westminster was an important mart. Though Caxton's official

¹⁵³ Ibid., 33.

¹⁵⁴ In the late fifteenth century, most of the area outside the walled City of London proper was sparsely populated, to the east and downstream of the River Thames, stood the Tower of London, a great fort protecting the city from any invasion from the sea and also serving as a royal palace. To the west, two miles upstream lay the Royal City Of Westminster. The City of Westminster and the City of London were legally and geographically quite distinct. Westminster (like Washington) was the seat of the national government; London (like New York) was the center of trade, commerce, and wealth. Westminster itself was, in the late Middle Ages, but a small place, though the presence of the Palace and law courts attracted merchants, courtiers, lawyers, etc., to dwell there. Today, London proper consists of the City of London and many surrounding boroughs, such as Westminster.

relationship with the city Mercers had been dissolved, he still had many personal friends in the trade. A favorite place to frequent in the Westminster area was the Greyhound Tavern. There were lavish dinners which the Mercer Company held in 1477 at the tavern, in honor of the Staplers who supplied them with their principal raw material, wool.¹⁵⁵ Caxton would be a most welcome guest at these functions. He and his friends probably met at the tavern on numerous occasions, in the evenings, to discuss the labors of the day over a tankard of ale.

Another theory as to why Caxton finally settled in Westminster was that he had family there. The William Caxton who was buried at St. Margaret's in the year 1478 could have been his father.¹⁵⁶ Another Caxton buried there was one Oliver Cawston, who might have been his grandfather. Abbey records indicate that a Richard Caxton, or Caston, was a monk there from 1473 until his death in 1504. In 1490, a burial took place at St. Margaret's, of one Maude Caxston, who might have been Caxton's wife. Records indicate he did marry, and he had one daughter named Elizabeth. One Elizabeth Croppe, involved in a marital dispute that was settled in court, is the only person of whose relationship with Caxton there is

¹⁵⁵ Childs, William Caxton a portrait, 150.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid., 152.

documentary proof. The others can only be regarded as possibly being relations of his, and even if they were, these family relationships would not account for his setting up his business among them.¹⁵⁷

A third reason for debate as to why Caxton set up his shop in Westminster instead of London, is that he would not be welcomed by stationers and copyists who were already entrenched in London. They might feel their livelihoods threatened by a printer. However, printing was so new to the area that it was not considered competitive to the stationer's trade. In addition, Westminster Abbey was the home of a very important monastic scriptorium.¹⁵⁸ It is well known that Caxton made use of the services of these scribes on many occasions.

The most logical reason he located at the Abbey in 1476, was because Westminster was home of the monarch, Edward IV, and the seat of Parliament and the Judiciary. Here, close to the royal court, he would find a ready market for his books and publications. Instead of needing to distribute his books over the country, his customers came to him. He was already known to the English court, so he did not need letters of recommendation. He more than likely was welcome and could

¹⁵⁷ Ibid.

¹⁵⁸ Blake, Caxton England's First Publisher, 40.

move in courtly circles with ease. The courtiers were likely customers for the chivalric romances that were so popular during this age. He could also seek work at the nearby Abbey for more modest jobs, such as the printing of indulgences and other church publications.

Some later writers have conjectured that Caxton first set up his press in the very sanctuary of Westminster Abbey. He states in several of his prologues, "that said material printed in the Abbey at Westminster." But it is highly unlikely that he established the press in the Abbey; printing, being a very messy and smelly art, would not have been allowed within the walls of the church. When Caxton said his press was in the sanctuary of Westminster, he no doubt referred to the safety which the Benedictine Abbey offered in its precinct. At this time, certain large churches and abbeys had special privileges relating to sanctuary and Westminster was just such a place. A refugee could seek protection there. Sanctuary was denied to no one except Jews, infidels and traitors. The area of the church and its buildings was known as the " Westminster City of Refuge."

Some who sought refuge at Westminster were from the Court of England itself. Elizabeth Woodville, the Queen of Edward IV, twice took sanctuary at Westminster, once when Edward fled from the throne during invasion of England, and again at his death when she had no safe place to go. As noted earlier, the

administrator to the throne after Edward's death was his brother, Richard, Duke of Gloucester. Although Richard felt the Woodville family was a threat to the throne, he would not violate the sanctuary of the Abbey and Elizabeth remained in Westminster Abbey for quite some time before entering a convent. So the structures of Westminster Abbey encompassed a large area. Any buildings in the radius of Westminster might have been called "Westminster Abbey," or at best, considered within the sanctuary of the Abbey.

All physical indication of where Caxton's shop was located are gone today. There is significant evidence that Caxton also occupied a second space at Westminster. Apparently, his first space was between the buttresses of the Chapter House near the entrance to the south transept of the Abbey - the door which now leads to Poet's Corner.¹⁵⁹ When Parliament was in session, the Commons conducted their business in the Chapter House, while the Lords conducted business in the Palace of Westminster. Caxton's shop was on the path that linked the two. The south door into the Abbey was also used by the royal family and courtiers when they attended services in the church.

Later the need for more storage space took Caxton to new rooms just inside the Abbey precincts at the gate leading to

¹⁵⁹ Geoffrey Hindley, England in the Age of Caxton (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1979), 236.

the Almonry. This latter location is presumed to have been the shop of the Red Pale. The fifteenth century printers in Holland and Flanders were known to use armorial bearings for their trademarks outside their shops. Having learned his trade in those areas of the European continent, Caxton probably picked up this characteristic practice. In his trademark, the shield is represented as hanging from the branch of a tree. A broad band down the center of the shield was, in heraldic language, called a "pale" and this, if painted red, would be a "red pale."

In addition to being a printer, Caxton was also a translator, but first and foremost he was a businessman. What he printed in his fifteen years in Westminster is proof of this description. Many of the English printed books in Caxton's lifetime can be divided into two groups - those printed by command or at least under the protection of a patron, and those, as works of factual, devotional, or edifying nature, printed to fulfill a particular need.¹⁶⁰ However, not all of his publications fall in either of these two groups. Some of Caxton's publications were financial risks. This quality of capital enterprise indicates that Caxton was not only a good businessman, but also a critic of

¹⁶⁰ Donald B. Sands, "Caxton as a Literary Critic," Literature Criticism from 1400-1800 Vol. 17 (Detroit and London: Gale Research Inc., 1992), 14.

what literature was marketable, if not acceptable, during his age.

Caxton printed titles that would satisfy the needs of clergymen. There was a ready market for these pieces, such as Quatuor Sermones and Liber Festivalis, and no financial risk was involved. Two language texts printed by Caxton, Donatus, and The Vocabulary in French and English, met the need for instruction in both Latin and English.

Caxton also printed materials for the reading public, such as prayers and devotions. Small projects in devotional works probably sold well. If the devotionals were long and elaborate, he printed them with the help of a patron. Caxton also printed indulgences, but records indicate he did only a few of these. Some major works produced under patronage of either court nobility or members of the middle class included, The Knight of the Tower, printed "at the request of a lady," The Dicts or Sayings, at the command of Earl Rivers, and The Book of Good Manners, at the suggestion of a wealthy London Mercer. With other works, Caxton took a risk and printed on his own, for example, The Game and Play of the Chess, which he later dedicated to George, Duke of Clarence. In 1484, he printed Caxton's Aesop, which contained 167 fables and tales.¹⁶¹ It also contained the life of Aesop, a brief

¹⁶¹ William Caxton, Caxton's Aesop, ed., R.T. Lenaghan (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1967), 4.

biography, which was itself a composite of various types of folktales. A very significant work that Caxton translated for his book on Aesop was, The History of Reynard, the Fox, from the Dutch original in 1481; six copies are known to survive.¹⁶² He also produced a medical text, The Gouernall of Health.

Caxton produced pieces on the art of war, history and politics. One significant category he produced was the romances of the age. A good example is Malory's Morte D'Arthur, desired by "many noble and diuers gentlemen." He printed it in 1485 at Westminster, and only two copies are known to exist today.¹⁶³ Caxton printed The Boyke of the Fayt of Armes and of Chyualrye, which he dedicated to Henry VII in about 1489. The Charlemagne Romances, Caxton's "lyf of the noble and crysten prynce, Charles the Grete," survives only in the unique copy preserved in the British museum.¹⁶⁴ Caxton also printed the works of three of England's finest poets;

¹⁶² William Caxton, The History of Reynard the Fox, ed. N.F. Blake (London, New York and Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1970) p. lix.

¹⁶³ William Caxton, The Morte D'Arthur Sir Thomas Malory's Book of King Arthur and of his Noble Knights of the Round Table, ed. Sir Edward Strachey, Bart. (London: Macmillan and Co., Limited, 1907) p. xxxi.

¹⁶⁴ William Caxton, The English Charlemagne Romances III and IV, Charles the Grete, ed. Sidney J.H. Herrtage (London: Oxford University Press 1880-1881, reprinted (as one volume), 1967), p. v.

Geoffrey Chaucer, John Lydgate, and John Gower. These were published with financial risk to Caxton, as there is no record of patrons for these particular works.

Caxton had no choice when he was producing for the Queen or Earl Rivers. They usually selected the works and presented them to Caxton for printing. Those works of a factual or devotional nature were no test of his ability to choose because in each instance he was supplying a need. But with the other presentations, Caxton took risks. He had to use his critical ability to decide what books the fifteenth century English public wanted to read.

One major academic question concerns the puzzle of whether Caxton formed the taste of his age or whether he reflected it.¹⁶⁵ It could be said he reflected his era, for he lived in England in an age of great civil strife and civil war, the Wars of the Roses, the dynastic conflict between the Houses of York and Lancaster for the throne of England.¹⁶⁶ Attitudes toward the Church of Rome were changing since Wycliffe's Bible. There was a marked and rapid growth of "New Learning." It had begun in Italy and was slowly spreading

¹⁶⁵ Sands, "Caxton as a Literary Critic," Literature Criticism, 16.

¹⁶⁶ The Shorter Cambridge Medieval History Vol. II, The Twelfth Century to the Renaissance, ed. C.W. Previte-Orton (London: Cambridge University Press, 1962), 1054.

northward, creating educational reform and the growth of new universities. The demand for books was clearly growing.

The Act of 1484, passed in the reign of Richard III:

allowed any artificer, or merchant stranger of what nation or country he be . . . or any scrivener, alluminor [illuminator], binder, or printer to exercise their trade and to reside in England.¹⁶⁷

The original intent by King Richard III was to encourage and stimulate book trade and printing. The English fifteenth century attitude to the book trade was liberal, simply because the industry was so new there was as yet nothing to protect.¹⁶⁸ An influx of foreigners came into a ready market. The Act, however, was not helpful to native printers trying to establish themselves. Imported textbooks were much cheaper than those produced in England.¹⁶⁹

But Caxton was a determined Englishman. He had to find some sheltered branch of the trade from which he could confront a well established foreign competition. Therefore Caxton, in his attempt at commercial survival and to reduce his financial risks, devoted himself to satisfying the surest

¹⁶⁷ Austin Lane Poole, Medieval England Vol. II (London: Oxford at the Clarendon Press, 1958), 565.

¹⁶⁸ Marjorie Plant, The English Book Trade An Economic History of the Making and Sale of Books (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1965), 27.

¹⁶⁹ Henry F. Plomer, Wynkyn De Worde and His Contemporaries from the Death of Caxton to 1535 (Kent, England: Printed in Belgium by Jos Adam for Dawsons of Pall Mall, Canon House, Folkestone, 1974), 39.

home demand, which at this time was romance literature. Caxton's love for knightly deeds and chivalric themes can probably be traced to his long association with the Court of Burgundy.¹⁷⁰ Of the hundred or more books which he printed before his death in 1491, there is no record to indicate that he lost money on any of his publications. Caxton did seem to possess the ability to pick what the public wanted to read.

Some later writers have indicated that Caxton's printing was a hobby, but in his prologue to Charles the Great he states that he printed for a "living." His success in many of these endeavors, however, was assured through the patronage of the well-to-do; his early appointments to the English nation at Bruges and as steward to Margaret, Duchess of Burgundy, together with his close connection with the Mercer Company provided him with influential friends in his publishing career.

Caxton died in the year 1491, and was buried in the Church of St. Margaret's in Westminster. In 1820, the Roxburghe Club erected a tablet there in his memory.¹⁷¹ In 1883 a stained-glass window was also set up in his honor by the London printers and publishers, and upon it is emblazoned

¹⁷⁰ Diane Bornstein, "William Caxton's Chivalric Romances and the Burgundian Renaissance in England," English Studies, Vol. 57 (February, 1976), 1-10.

¹⁷¹ Dictionary of National Biography S.V. "William Caxton," 1293.

an inscription by Lord Tennyson.¹⁷² Fifteenth century English history has always been noted as the age of the Wars of the Roses. But the publication of the first printed book by William Caxton was far more significant, as it held implications for what was to come in the future.

¹⁷² Ibid.

CHAPTER NINE

THE OTHER ARTS IN THE EARLY ENGLISH RENAISSANCE

No century in the history of English literature has been more often reproached for its literary and artistic barrenness than the fifteenth century.¹⁷³ Many factors could have contributed to this dilemma; however, the truth may have been that while there was a considerable amount of literary activity there were few good writers. Miracle and morality plays, such as "Mankind" and "Everyman" were written. Balladry was common and also the writing of chronicles and letters. The Paston letters comprise over 1,000 letters and documents of the century, most of them written by, or to, the various members of one family.¹⁷⁴ These letters focus attention upon a small group of people and allow a look at individualism.

The chronicles and letters written during the fifteenth century are important as they trace the gradual process of

¹⁷³ George K. Anderson, Old and Middle English Literature From the Beginnings to 1485 (New York, New York: Collier Books, 1962), 255.

¹⁷⁴ H.S. Bennett, M.A., The Pastons and Their England (Cambridge: Cambridge at the University Press, 1951), p. x and see also "The Pastons and their Norfolk" by R.H. Britnell, Agricultural History Review (Great Britain) 36(2) (1988): 132-144.

development of the age.¹⁷⁵ At the beginning of the century, chroniclers who were for the most part monks, preserved the characteristics of the past. The middle period of the century was broken somewhat by the civil wars of the nobility, but had little impact on the society as a whole, and the latter period indicated change, as if England were on the verge of a new era. The Paston letters were correspondence exchanged by family members that gave insight into the day to day living of the people.¹⁷⁶ This series of letters also indicates that many people of the century were literate and educational progress was intensifying.

Chronicles of London, later edited by C.L. Kingsford at Oxford in 1905, was written as a result of the need to establish records of year by year notices, whether of landmarks in the history of the city or of some great event that made the year memorable.¹⁷⁷ The lyric was plentiful as was romances. Some writers followed in the style of Geoffrey Chaucer, but only a few managed to push above the crowd. In

¹⁷⁵ Charles Lethbridge Kingsford, Prejudice and Promise in Fifteenth Century England (New York: Barnes and Noble, Inc., Publishers and Booksellers since 1873, first edition, 1925; reprinted, 1962), 19.

¹⁷⁶ G.M. Trevelyan, Illustrated English Social History Vol. I (New York: David McKay Company, Inc., 1942), 59.

¹⁷⁷ Chronicles of London, ed. Charles Lethbridge Kingsford, M.A., first published in 1905 by Oxford University Press (Dursley, Gloucestershire: Alan Sutton Publishers, 1977), p. v.

prose, the most significant writer was Sir Thomas Malory, an aristocrat, who wrote medieval romances. His Morte D'Arthur, published by Caxton, is a living classic today.

English prose was still a fledgling art, with poetry as a more popular art form. John Lydgate devoted himself to the writing of poetry in the manner, as he saw it, of his "maister Chaucer."¹⁷⁸ However, he was never considered a master of words as was Chaucer. Two enormously long poems written by Lydgate in the English vernacular were based on the legend of Thebes and the siege of Troy. It is to be observed that one of the first symptoms of the Renaissance in fifteenth century England was the change in the English vocabulary; a change that would evolve into the new English language used throughout the land.

Architecture was rising in England on a grand scale, not so much for the populace as for the ecclesiastical churches and educational institutes, as the "Gothic," style reached its peak. The style had developed not for arts sake but as a way of roofing the cathedrals permanently in stone so as to help reduce damages to churches, which were frequently destroyed by fire. With the Gothic architecture, artists used stained-glass windows to decorate the expanse of spaces on the walls heightened by the high vaulting of the interior.

¹⁷⁸ Anderson, Old and Middle English Literature, 259.

Sculpture was also inspired, increasing both the number and the artistic quality of the many statues used in churches and above the remains of mortals. These figures often were shown clad in the appropriate dress of the person concerned. Likewise, craftsmen carved statuary and building enhancements in wood. These statues were designed in the figures of angels and heavenly bodies, as well as in the figures of the gargoyle beasts who directed rainwater from the rooftops away from the sides of the buildings. Much of the church carving was done in wood because it was a material so readily available in England. Wall paintings were few in late medieval England, but they do exist. In parish churches, artisans painted them with scenes depicting the life and death of Christ, as well as the lives and miracles of the saints.¹⁷⁹

As mentioned earlier, England developed a love for stained-glass, and often preferred the colored glass to the convenience of light, as they developed larger and larger windows. The windows were manufactured in England, most notably in London and York, for export.

Few and scanty relics of embroidery and tapestry of the era remain today. Records indicated that this art in England was well sought after by ecclesiastics of all rank as well as

¹⁷⁹ J.C. Dickinson, An Ecclesiastical History of England: The Later Middle Ages From the Norman Conquest to the Eve of the Reformation (New York: Barnes and Noble Books, 1979), 426.

by the Pope. One such garment was the "cope," a short cape which swirled around the shoulders, held in place in the front at the neck by one button. Some of these copes designed for royalty and ecclesiastical officials were made of the most luxurious materials, heavily embroidered and often adorned with pearls and gems.

Tapestries were made to adorn walls and furniture, and were one of the artistic luxuries affordable only in the wealthier circles of society and the larger churches. The tapestries usually depicted stories of historical, mythical or Biblical events. Of all the artistic products of medieval times, none has left such scanty remains as the objects of precious metal, yet originally there were numerous gold and silver art objects.¹⁸⁰ Over the centuries, even the large churches and universities have lost all but a small number of pieces. Many are thought to have been melted down to aid in the English wars, or confiscated during the reign of Henry VIII and the Dissolution of the Catholic churches and monasteries.

In order to support these visual arts, there had to be prosperity in the community. In many cases the churches and parishes in less prosperous areas only kept their churches according to Canon law, which required merely that they make

¹⁸⁰ Ibid., 431.

repairs and enlarge the structures as necessary to accommodate parishioners. However, in areas prospering economically, such as London with the cloth industry, for example, indications are that the churches prospered due to generous donors and benefactors. Records are scarce concerning this period. However, they do indicate that the Pope often gave indulgences, no doubt to mark munificent contributions.

Besides engagements in huge architectural ventures, the English sovereigns often gave aid to the minor churches. Richard III's account book indicated on several occasions that he gave generously to several small parishes. With the vast number of churches throughout England, the monarchs could only contribute a limited amount. Therefore, it was most often left to the rich parishioners to dip into their own pockets. As a reward for generous gifts, they were often commemorated in the establishment by a stained-glass window which contained their likeness, or perhaps their family coat of arms.

In painting of all kinds there were strong Flemish influences. With the growing individualism of the period came the desire for painted portraits done by foreign painters. Flemish artists like Hugo van der Goes and Hans Memling painted for Englishmen. It would be much later that England would produce native painters.

Music was also a most important art form of the fifteenth century. Edward IV had established a choir and after his

death Richard III maintained it. The Chapel Royal offered the best prospects to composers and was the center of the musical revival of this period.¹⁸¹ Edward IV also had organized a household band of minstrels which also continued to flourish under his successors. They were skilled musicians often with university degrees in music. These organized minstrels were not only maintained by the King, but also by the noblemen and the towns. Groups began to tour the country, and entertainment in the towns as well as in the private upper class homes became increasingly common, particularly at festival times in the year and at Christmas. There was developing the Renaissance ideal of the cultured gentleman, who should be able either to sing or play a musical instrument.¹⁸²

In conclusion, in this century, England began to move from an undeveloped primary producer to an industrial exporter. The population was becoming more literate as learning spread. English merchants were developing commerce and trade with the rest of the world. It was a time of injustice and civil war, but it was, most of all, a time of excitement and change. The era brought forth artistic

¹⁸¹ A.R. Myers, England in the Late Middle Ages (Middlesex, England: Penguin Books, Ltd., Harmondsworth, 1952), 261.

¹⁸² Ibid., 262.

imagination and creative life, and, it inspired discovery and hope for the future.

William Caxton was a business man and not an intellectual adventurer. This accounts for his success as a printer, along with his connections at court in both France and England. When he set up his press at Westminster, he started an industry that would mark a turning point in the history of the country. Printing was a new way of spreading ideas on an unprecedented scale, at an unprecedented rate. It was a new powerful mass medium, that transformed the field of communications. Printing launched the Renaissance in England, and opened the path for the Reformation.

And as noted earlier, the fifteenth century in English history has always been overshadowed by the Wars of the Roses. But these were not civil wars. It might be best to label them as uncivil quests for power by a few, struggles that seldom touched the lives of most English people, save in the question of to whom they owed whatever loyalty they may have felt was due. As a matter of fact, Richard III would probably have changed this characteristic and brought England straight into a Renaissance as political as it was artistic and literary. And when Richard III promised change, most of the old nobility had little left to lose. However, they abandoned absolute change for the uncertainty of yet another House - that of Tudor, not knowing that Henry Tudor would pursue Renaissance

ideals even more forcefully than did Richard III. From start to finish the fifteenth century was evolving through Renaissance to a new modern era.

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