

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-04282-6 - Letters and Papers Illustrative of the Reigns of Richard III and Henry VII: Volume 1

Edited by James Gairdner

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

## CAMBRIDGE LIBRARY COLLECTION

*Books of enduring scholarly value*

### Rolls Series

Rerum Britannicarum Medii Aevi Scriptores, or The Chronicles and Memorials of Great Britain and Ireland during the Middle Ages, usually referred to as the 'Rolls Series', was an ambitious project first proposed to the British Treasury in 1857 by Sir John Romilly, the Master of the Rolls, and quickly approved for public funding. Its purpose was to publish historical source material covering the period from the arrival of the Romans to the reign of Henry VIII, 'without mutilation or abridgement', starting with the 'most scarce and valuable' texts. A 'correct text' of each work would be established by collating 'the best manuscripts', and information was to be included in every case about the manuscripts used, the life and times of the author, and the work's 'historical credibility', but there would be no additional annotation. The first books were published in 1858, and by the time it was completed in 1896 the series contained 99 titles and 255 volumes. Although many of the works have since been re-edited by modern scholars, the enterprise as a whole stands as a testament to the Victorian revival of interest in the middle ages.

### Letters and Papers Illustrative of the Reigns of Richard III and Henry VII

This collection, published 1861–3 in the Rolls Series, contains documents from the period 1483 to 1509, when the House of York was replaced by the Tudor dynasty. It was one of many selections of source material on the period 1450–1550 compiled by James Gairdner (1828–1912), a long-serving archivist at the Public Record Office, whose work laid the foundations for much subsequent scholarship in British history. Volume 1 includes a contemporary description of the funeral of Edward IV, almost thirty letters from a previously unpublished manuscript assembled by the Chancellor of England during the short reign of Richard III, and sixty-nine items from the reign of Henry VII, together with an editorial introduction and a chronological summary of its contents. The correspondents, from across Europe, write in many different languages, on topics ranging from international peace talks and commercial treaties to the arrangements for Catherine of Aragon's arrival in England.

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-04282-6 - Letters and Papers Illustrative of the Reigns of Richard III and Henry VII: Volume 1

Edited by James Gairdner

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

---

Cambridge University Press has long been a pioneer in the reissuing of out-of-print titles from its own backlist, producing digital reprints of books that are still sought after by scholars and students but could not be reprinted economically using traditional technology. The Cambridge Library Collection extends this activity to a wider range of books which are still of importance to researchers and professionals, either for the source material they contain, or as landmarks in the history of their academic discipline.

Drawing from the world-renowned collections in the Cambridge University Library and other partner libraries, and guided by the advice of experts in each subject area, Cambridge University Press is using state-of-the-art scanning machines in its own Printing House to capture the content of each book selected for inclusion. The files are processed to give a consistently clear, crisp image, and the books finished to the high quality standard for which the Press is recognised around the world. The latest print-on-demand technology ensures that the books will remain available indefinitely, and that orders for single or multiple copies can quickly be supplied.

The Cambridge Library Collection brings back to life books of enduring scholarly value (including out-of-copyright works originally issued by other publishers) across a wide range of disciplines in the humanities and social sciences and in science and technology.

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-04282-6 - Letters and Papers Illustrative of the Reigns of Richard III and Henry VII: Volume 1

Edited by James Gairdner

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

Letters and Papers  
Illustrative of  
the Reigns  
of Richard III  
and Henry VII

VOLUME 1

EDITED BY JAMES GAIRDNER



CAMBRIDGE  
UNIVERSITY PRESS

Cambridge University Press  
978-1-108-04282-6 - Letters and Papers Illustrative of the Reigns of Richard III and  
Henry VII: Volume 1  
Edited by James Gairdner  
Frontmatter  
[More information](#)

---

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS

Cambridge, New York, Melbourne, Madrid, Cape Town,  
Singapore, São Paulo, Delhi, Mexico City

Published in the United States of America by Cambridge University Press, New York

[www.cambridge.org](http://www.cambridge.org)

Information on this title: [www.cambridge.org/9781108042826](http://www.cambridge.org/9781108042826)

© in this compilation Cambridge University Press 2012

This edition first published 1861  
This digitally printed version 2012

ISBN 978-1-108-04282-6 Paperback

This book reproduces the text of the original edition. The content and language reflect the beliefs, practices and terminology of their time, and have not been updated.

Cambridge University Press wishes to make clear that the book, unless originally published by Cambridge, is not being republished by, in association or collaboration with, or with the endorsement or approval of, the original publisher or its successors in title.

The original edition of this book contains a number of colour plates, which have been reproduced in black and white. Colour versions of these images can be found online at [www.cambridge.org/9781108042826](http://www.cambridge.org/9781108042826)

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-04282-6 - Letters and Papers Illustrative of the Reigns of Richard III and  
Henry VII: Volume 1

Edited by James Gairdner

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

RERUM BRITANNICARUM MEDII ÆVI  
SCRIPTORES.

OR

CHRONICLES AND MEMORIALS OF GREAT BRITAIN  
AND IRELAND

DURING

THE MIDDLE AGES.

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-04282-6 - Letters and Papers Illustrative of the Reigns of Richard III and  
Henry VII: Volume 1

Edited by James Gairdner

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

---

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-04282-6 - Letters and Papers Illustrative of the Reigns of Richard III and Henry VII: Volume 1

Edited by James Gairdner

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

**THE CHRONICLES AND MEMORIALS**  
OF  
**GREAT BRITAIN AND IRELAND**  
DURING THE MIDDLE AGES.

PUBLISHED BY THE AUTHORITY OF HER MAJESTY'S TREASURY, UNDER THE  
DIRECTION OF THE MASTER OF THE ROLLS.

ON the 26th of January 1857, the Master of the Rolls submitted to the Treasury a proposal for the publication of materials for the History of this Country from the Invasion of the Romans to the Reign of Henry VIII.

The Master of the Rolls suggested that these materials should be selected for publication under competent editors without reference to periodical or chronological arrangement, without mutilation or abridgment, preference being given, in the first instance, to such materials as were most scarce and valuable.

He proposed that each chronicle or historical document to be edited should be treated in the same way as if the editor were engaged on an Editio Princeps; and for this purpose the most correct text should be formed from an accurate collation of the best MSS.

To render the work more generally useful, the Master of the Rolls suggested that the editor should give an account of the MSS. employed by him, of their age and their peculiarities; that he should add to the work a brief account of the life and times of the author, and any remarks necessary to explain the chronology; but no other note or comment was to be allowed, except what might be necessary to establish the correctness of the text.

a 2

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-04282-6 - Letters and Papers Illustrative of the Reigns of Richard III and Henry VII: Volume 1

Edited by James Gairdner

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

4

The works to be published in octavo, separately, as they were finished; the whole responsibility of the task resting upon the editors, who were to be chosen by the Master of the Rolls with the sanction of the Treasury.

The Lords of Her Majesty's Treasury, after a careful consideration of the subject, expressed their opinion in a Treasury Minute, dated February 9, 1857, that the plan recommended by the Master of the Rolls "was well calculated for the accomplishment of this important national object, in an effectual and satisfactory manner, within a reasonable time, and provided proper attention be paid to economy, in making the detailed arrangements, without unnecessary expense."

They expressed their approbation of the proposal that each chronicle and historical document should be edited in such a manner as to represent with all possible correctness the text of each writer, derived from a collation of the best MSS., and that no notes should be added, except such as were illustrative of the various readings. They suggested, however, that the preface to each work should contain, in addition to the particulars proposed by the Master of the Rolls, a biographical account of the author, so far as authentic materials existed for that purpose, and an estimate of his historical credibility and value.

*Rolls House,  
December 1857.*

---



Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-04282-6 - Letters and Papers Illustrative of the Reigns of Richard III and  
Henry VII: Volume 1

Edited by James Gairdner

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

---

# LETTERS AND PAPERS

ILLUSTRATIVE OF THE

REIGNS OF RICHARD III. AND HENRY VII.

№1

№2.

Nº2 Handwriting of Wolsey See Page 432.

[www.cambridge.org](http://www.cambridge.org)

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-04282-6 - Letters and Papers Illustrative of the Reigns of Richard III and  
Henry VII: Volume 1

Edited by James Gairdner

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

LETTERS AND PAPERS

ILLUSTRATIVE OF

THE REIGNS

OF

RICHARD III. AND HENRY VII.

EDITED

BY

JAMES GAIRDNER.

PUBLISHED BY THE AUTHORITY OF THE LORDS COMMISSIONERS OF HER MAJESTY'S  
TREASURY, UNDER THE DIRECTION OF THE MASTER OF THE ROLLS.

VOL. I.

LONDON:  
LONGMAN, GREEN, LONGMAN, AND ROBERTS.  
1861.

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-04282-6 - Letters and Papers Illustrative of the Reigns of Richard III and  
Henry VII: Volume 1

Edited by James Gairdner

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

---

Printed by  
**EYRE and SPOTTISWOODE, Her Majesty's Printers,**  
For Her Majesty's Stationery Office.

Cambridge University Press  
978-1-108-04282-6 - Letters and Papers Illustrative of the Reigns of Richard III and  
Henry VII: Volume 1  
Edited by James Gairdner  
Frontmatter  
[More information](#)

TABLE OF CONTENTS.

							PAGE.
PREFACE	-	-	-	-	-	-	ix
CHRONOLOGICAL SUMMARY	-	-	-	-	-	-	lxv
FUNERAL OF EDWARD IV.	-	-	-	-	-	-	3
LETTERS, &c. OF RICHARD III.	-	-	-	-	-	-	11
LETTERS, &c. OF HENRY VII.	-	-	-	-	-	-	89
APPENDIX	-	-	-	-	-	-	375

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-04282-6 - Letters and Papers Illustrative of the Reigns of Richard III and  
Henry VII: Volume 1

Edited by James Gairdner

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

---

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-04282-6 - Letters and Papers Illustrative of the Reigns of Richard III and  
Henry VII: Volume 1

Edited by James Gairdner

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

---

## PREFACE.

---

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-04282-6 - Letters and Papers Illustrative of the Reigns of Richard III and  
Henry VII: Volume 1

Edited by James Gairdner

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

---



# P R E F A C E.

IN the Preface to a former Volume of this Series, Special im-  
 the Editor had occasion to speak of the extreme paucity portance of  
 and meagreness of contemporary narratives of the reign documents  
 of Henry VII. The information derived from these where  
 amounts to little more than a mere outline of events, other his-  
 and requires in a peculiar degree the collateral light of torical ma-  
 documents. It appeared, therefore, to be an object of terials are  
 some importance to collect in one publication whatever scanty.  
 fragments of unedited correspondence the period might  
 be found to yield.

Such materials are for the most part unknown, Difficulty  
 and where known are not easily consulted. of knowing  
 portant original letters have lain buried among the and con-  
 confused and long neglected stores of the Chapter House sulting  
 at Westminster ; others, no less important, have been them.  
 turned into mere shreds and fragments, if not totally  
 destroyed, by the disastrous fire in the Cottonian  
 Library ; others have been, too evidently, separated at  
 times from the collections to which they originally  
 belonged, to enrich private libraries and, in the course  
 of time, to be sold at auctions as curious autographs.  
 There is no clue to their lurking places, even where  
 they are most accessible. In the best known collection  
 of all, that of Sir Robert Cotton, things are heaped  
 together with little or no arrangement, and many im-  
 portant papers, imperfectly or inaccurately catalogued,  
 are certain to escape the diligence of the most studious  
 inquirer.

x PREFACE.

Their  
 places of  
 deposit.

Documents, such as we should call State papers, were in early times preserved in the treasury of the Exchequer. Of those which were once kept there a large number of the most interesting are now in the Cottonian library. But the great bulk is still in the original collection, till lately kept in the Chapter House at Westminster, and now in the General Repository of the Public Records. The principal contents of this volume relating to the reign of Henry VII., are derived from these two sources.

For the age preceding Henry VII. this country does not afford any great store of similar materials; but there is a very valuable register of the correspondence of Richard III., from which hitherto only extracts and single letters have been printed. By transcribing this so far as it has not been published, we have been able to bring together papers both of Richard III. and Henry VII., in which it will be seen that the historic interest of the two reigns is inseparable. For though the battle of Bosworth, which placed Henry on the throne, is one of the most marked eras in English history, the events which immediately led to it, and have a most important bearing on the whole of Henry's reign, date from the death of Edward IV.

Insecurity  
 of the  
 throne  
 shown by  
 letters of  
 the period.

The chief point illustrated by the papers here collected,—the great fact that pervades nearly every one of them, is the insecurity of the throne, both in Richard's time and in Henry's. This may perhaps be attributed to the circumstance that neither of these sovereigns had a legitimate right; but in truth it was hard to tell in that age wherein legitimate right consisted. According to the view which posterity has sanctioned, such right did not belong originally to the house of Lancaster, and if it had accrued to them by long possession, it was finally lost by weakness and misgovernment. It might be thought to have rested with the house of York, but it was forfeited by internal dissension, cruelty, and usurpation. Much certainly was

done to establish it by the union of the two dynasties, but for some time that union was precarious, and not altogether free from objection. Divine right had not yet been invented to tell men where allegiance was due. It could not have been recognized in such an age.

In truth, this celebrated doctrine has scarcely had justice done to its historical significance. Its extravagance has been made the theme of well merited satire by many great writers, and it is now so generally viewed as an exploded absurdity that it may seem strange to speak of it as an abiding constitutional truth. Yet such it undoubtedly is, and the principle, though no longer spoken of by name, is practically operative still. By a modified theory of divine right the king never dies, nor requires his Parliament to ratify his title. It was otherwise in early times. Before the 17th century we look in vain for anything like that clear recognition of a definite hereditary principle which governs the succession in our own days. Under the old Saxon and Norman kings, when the throne fell vacant, the power of nominating a successor was exercised by the witan or lords of the council. But the English respect for birth, proceeding from a strong belief in the virtue of blood and lineage, which practically limited the elective principle, operated gradually to weaken and annul it. In the days of the later Plantagenets the crown was clearly looked upon as an inheritance, but the question from whom it was derived occasioned civil war. Under the Tudors it was anxiously sought to establish a clear principle, but in vain; the many marriages of Henry VIII. served only to complicate the difficulty which, it seems, they were intended to remove. A Protestant faction attempted to prevent the succession of Mary; the Jesuits thought the title of Elizabeth indefensible. Some conceived that Mary queen of Scots was the rightful queen of England. Some expected on the death of Elizabeth

Different principles which regulated the succession in different ages.

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-04282-6 - Letters and Papers Illustrative of the Reigns of Richard III and Henry VII: Volume 1

Edited by James Gairdner

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

a bloody competition for the crown.<sup>1</sup> Conspiracies to dethrone that queen produced a strong popular reaction, and a sanctity was ascribed to royalty which it had never known before. The rights of the crown must be above all question, whether of pope or parliament. James I. succeeded accordingly by divine right alone; there was no other principle on which his claim could be vindicated. His succession was in distinct opposition to more than one Act of Parliament,<sup>2</sup> but there

<sup>1</sup> In 1594, nine years before James's Accession, Parsons the Jesuit published "A Conference about the next succession to the Crown of England." In this work he entered very minutely into the history of the succession, and pointed out the claims which might be advanced on the death of Elizabeth by many different families descended from Edward III., claims which there was some danger might even be disputed with bloodshed. Owing to various acts of bastardy, attainders, and other statutes, the question of law was extremely perplexing. Parsons himself, after reviewing the arguments for and against each possible competitor, comes to no definite conclusion. When the question came to be decided the practical good sense of the nation at once adopted a principle which cleared it of all legal subtleties.

<sup>2</sup> In fact, the legislation upon the subject had overshot the mark, and tended rather to increase than to diminish uncertainty. On the fall of Anne Boleyn, a flaw was discovered in her marriage with Henry VIII., so that Elizabeth was declared illegitimate, as Mary had been before. Parliament, there-

fore, in 1536, limited the succession to such legitimate issue as the king should have by Jane Seymour or any other; and in default of such issue gave Henry himself power to dispose of the crown by will (Stat. 28 Hen. VIII., c. 7.) A few years later, when it appeared evident that Henry would leave no legitimate issue except Edward, he obtained the concurrence of parliament (Stat. 35 Hen. VIII., c. 1), to an arrangement that if Edward should die without issue, Mary should succeed, and if she died without issue, Elizabeth. And in the contingency which actually happened of Elizabeth also dying without issue, it was again enacted that the descent should be as Henry should think fit to order in his will. It was a strong proof of confidence in the king, but a bad precedent, especially as it encouraged Edward VI. to think he, too, might will away the crown, even without an Act of Parliament, which was the occasion of very sad events. However, by the Statute Henry's will was law, and Henry willed that on his son and his two daughters all dying without issue, the crown should go to the descendants of his younger

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-04282-6 - Letters and Papers Illustrative of the Reigns of Richard III and Henry VII: Volume 1

Edited by James Gairdner

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

## PREFACE.

xiii

could be no doubt it was for the peace of England. Happy would it have been for this country if the new doctrine could have been at once accepted in the same moderate form in which it is accepted now. We need not recall further how sadly it was mistaken,—how civil war again broke loose,—how royalty erred and suffered, and a new dynastic rivalry was created. Thank God, all these controversies have long been ended, and are not to be revived.

The politic rule of the Tudors generally, and of Henry VII. in particular, did much to secure for England the blessings of domestic peace. In the latter part of Henry's reign we find men debating the chances of the succession in a manner which shows that even then the true principle of descent had not been sufficiently determined. "It is not long sithens," said Sir Hugh Conway, "his highness was sick, and lay then " in his manor of Wanstead. It happened the same " time me to be amongst many great personages, the " which fell into communication of the king's grace, " and of the world that should be after him if his " grace happened to depart. Then, he said, that some " of them spoke of my lord of Buckingham, saying " that he was a noble man and would be a royal " ruler. Other there were that spake, he said, in like " wise of your traitor Edmund De la Pole, but none of " them, he said, that spake of my lord prince."<sup>1</sup> It would appear that those personal qualities which com-

sister Mary, passing over those of his elder sister Margaret Queen of Scots, from whom James I. was descended. This arrangement was confirmed by another act on the succession of Elizabeth (Stat. 1., Eliz. c. 3), and unquestionably during the greater part of Elizabeth's reign there was no desire for a Stewart's succession. It

might have been questioned, also, whether James was not excluded by the Statute 17 Eliz. c. 1., which enacted that any attempt against the Queen in behalf of one who might have a prospective title to the Crown, barred the pretender's claim for ever after.

<sup>1</sup> Page 233.

mand the respect of the multitude might tempt any nobleman of the blood royal to aspire to the crown. The father of the duke of Buckingham above mentioned did so and suffered for it in the reign of Richard III.;<sup>1</sup> he himself did so and suffered for it in the reign of Henry VIII.; and the great dramatist who has made every one familiar with the story of his arrest and execution, paints also the sympathy of the populace with his fallen greatness, and makes the king himself bear witness to his personal accomplishments.<sup>2</sup>

Harl. MS.  
433.

The register of Richard III.'s correspondence, of which mention has been made above, is contained in MS. 433 of the Harleian Collection in the British Museum. The volume appears to have been a docket book kept by Russell, bishop of Lincoln, of all the letters and documents that passed through his hands in his official capacity as Chancellor during the reigns of Edward V. and Richard III. It may be considered as divided into two sections. The larger consists of copies or minutes of formal documents, such as the grants and warrants which passed the Great Seal, the Privy Seal, or the king's Signet; the other is a letter book, containing copies of the correspondence of Richard with foreign sovereigns, instructions to ambassadors, proclamations, and other papers relating to affairs of state. It is from this latter portion only that our gleanings have been made.

The historical importance of such a MS. requires no comment. The volume is well known and has been often referred to by historical writers, though few of the entries have hitherto been printed entire. It is said to have belonged to the great lord Burleigh; at a later period it was the property of Strype. It is

---

<sup>1</sup> By his own confession to Morton, though his subsequent rebellion was ostensibly in favour of Richmond, he at first entertained a hope of obtaining the crown himself. I have no doubt his rebellion was animated by that hope only.  
<sup>2</sup> Shakespeare's Henry VIII., Act i., Scene ii.

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-04282-6 - Letters and Papers Illustrative of the Reigns of Richard III and Henry VII: Volume 1

Edited by James Gairdner

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

## PREFACE.

xv

described by Wanley in the Harleian Catalogue at much greater length than any other MS. of the collection. Several of the letters it contains will be found in Rymer; some in Ellis, and other more recent publications. Mr. Nichols has edited for the Camden Society such of its contents as belong to the Reign of Edward V. But many of the most important papers of Richard the Third's time have not been printed till now, some having apparently escaped notice altogether. The interest of No. xii. especially is so peculiar that there can be no doubt the French hand in which it is written has been the only cause why it has not been quoted.

None of the entries in the second or letter-book part of the volume belong to the reign of Edward V. The earliest in the first part is dated 5th of May 1483, the day after that young king's arrival in London. About that time or shortly after, Russell was appointed Chancellor. For nine years previously he had been keeper of the Privy Seal, and he is mentioned in More's History of Richard III. as "a wise man and " a good, and of much experience, and one of the " best learned men, undoubtedly, that England had in " his time." It is important in many respects that the character of Richard's chancellor is vouched for on such good authority.

Our volume commences with an account, derived from a MS. in the Herald's College, of the funeral rites of Edward the Fourth. It is characteristic of the olden time that pageants were so minutely and carefully recorded, while events of such awful moment as the *coup d'état* of the 13th of June, when the Protector suddenly ordered Hastings to the block, the executions of Rivers, Vaughan, and Grey, the usurpation of Richard III., and the death of his nephews, are so slightly noticed in contemporary letters and narratives, that doubts have been raised as to every circumstance connected with them. Yet we cannot consider this due

Funeral of  
Edward  
IV.



so much to any general indifference to crime, as to the high importance then attached to whatever was visible and tangible. Pageants were not only regarded with an interest as mere shows for which the world has now grown too old, but were in themselves affairs of state of some importance. It must also be considered that the act of writing was not then so natural and spontaneous as it is with us. Private letters in the fifteenth century were almost always of a business character, and when the minds of men were strongly excited their hands were accustomed to wield heavier weapons than goose quills.<sup>1</sup> A pageant on the other hand, was essentially a peaceful exhibition. It was arranged beforehand to the smallest detail,—it could be observed minutely and chronicled with accuracy.

In this case we have a complete muster roll of the lords and gentlemen of rank who were in London at the time of Edward the Fourth's death. The principal actors in the events which followed were all absent,—Gloicester, Buckingham, Rivers, and the young king himself; but there was a large attendance both of the old and new nobility. The blood relations of Edward's queen—the marquis of Dorset, Sir Richard and Sir Edward Woodville, met in peace over the grave of Edward with Hastings, Stanley, and the Earl of Lincoln. In less than four weeks the marquis and the Woodvilles were declared enemies of the Government, and ships were fitted out to take Sir Edward at sea.<sup>2</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> Thus Simon Stalworthe in one of his short letters to Sir William Stonor (*Excerpta Historica*, p. 16) mentions the general distrust that prevailed after the execution of Hastings, and says that a large body of men from the North was expected in London, adds that he "is so sick" (apparently from mere

agitation) "he can hardly hold a pen." Under the pressure of danger men now write letters of considerable length, as was shown by the correspondence during the Crimean war.

<sup>2</sup> Nichols' *Grants of Edward V.*, pp. 2, 3.



Cambridge University Press  
 978-1-108-04282-6 - Letters and Papers Illustrative of the Reigns of Richard III and  
 Henry VII: Volume 1  
 Edited by James Gairdner  
 Frontmatter  
[More information](#)

PREFACE.

xvii

Another contemporary account of this funeral is to be found in the MS. journals of Roger Machado, also in the Herald's College (Arundel MS. 51.) It is written in French, is imperfect at the beginning, and not so minute in its details, but so far as it goes, agrees pretty closely with that which we have printed. The conclusion of the ceremony, which the latter omits to relate, is worthy of notice.

“ After the said noble king was thus placed in the ground the great officers of his noble house, to wit, the great steward, the chamberlain, the treasurer of his noble household, the controller, threw all their staves into the grave of the king in token of being men without a master, and out of their offices. And in like manner all the heralds threw their coats of arms, which belonged to the king, into the said grave; and immediately there were rendered to the said heralds other coats of arms of the kings of England, which they put on. And after the said coats of arms were given them they all cried “ Le roy est vif! Le roy est vif! “ Le roy est vif!” Praying to God; and saying Pater noster, and Ave Maria, for the defunct.”

Of the three short months of violence and terror which compose the reign of Edward the Fifth, our letters and papers give us no further intelligence. All such materials connected with that period have been already printed either in Drake's Eboracum, Davis' York Records, the Paston Letters, or Mr. Nichols' Grants of Edward V. Mr. Nichols' Historical Introduction contains some important remarks in correction of Lingard and Sharon Turner, which show how difficult it is to avoid rash assumptions in dealing with this obscure portion of our history. It is my desire in these pages to avoid as far as possible, making statements, the truth of which is open to controversy, but one important fact relating to the accession of Richard III. appears to me to have been misunderstood even by Mr. Nichols. It is known that writs were sent out on the 13th of May for a Parliament to meet on the 25th of June. On the 21st of June, however, a writ of *supersedeas* was received in the City of York to prevent its assembling; and Mr. Nichols considers that the Parlia-

ment did not actually meet, a fact which he says is further declared in the act of settlement of the first year of Richard III. Now the words of that Act do indeed declare that there was no true and legal parliament, but they appear no less distinctly to show that there was the semblance of such a thing. In plain ordinary language the parliament really did meet, but the meeting was an informal one, and what was done was of doubtful validity until confirmed by a parliament regularly assembled. Parliament did meet, and the petition to Richard to assume the Crown was presented by a deputation of the lords and commons of England, accompanied by another from the City of London, on the very day<sup>1</sup> that had been originally appointed for its meeting. The previous issuing of the *supersedeas* to some of the boroughs may, perhaps, account for the informality. That act may, as likely as not, have been the work of Richard's enemies; the portion of the council which met at the Tower, while Richard and his friends held meetings at Crosby's Place.

---

<sup>1</sup> Sir Thomas More's History of Richard III. (which, there is reason to believe, is a translation of a work of Morton), though it speaks slightly of the whole affair, fixes the date exactly. Dr. Shaw's celebrated sermon at Paul's Cross was on Sunday the 22d June. Buckingham's speech at the Guildhall, according to More, was on the Tuesday following (i.e., the 24th.) Then he tells us, "on the morrow after (the 25th) the mayor with all the aldermen and chief commoners of the city in their best manner apparelled, assembling themselves together, resorted unto Baynard's Castle where the Protector lay. To which place repaired also the

"duke of Buckingham with divers noblemen with him besides many knights and other gentlemen," &c. This 25th of June, as we have said, was the very day originally appointed for parliament to meet. "The next day," we then read, "the Protector with a great train went to Westminster Hall," &c. It is true that Richard himself, in his instructions to Lord Mountjoy hereafter mentioned, speaks as if the petition was not presented to him till the 26th, the same day that he took his seat on the throne in Westminster Hall, and commenced to reign as king. But here, I have little doubt that More is more accurate.

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-04282-6 - Letters and Papers Illustrative of the Reigns of Richard III and Henry VII: Volume 1

Edited by James Gairdner

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

## PREFACE.

xix

This much at least is certain that a speech was prepared for the opening of that Parliament by the Lord Chancellor, which has been printed by Mr. Nichols. The Chancellor expected that the young king was to meet his Parliament in person, and according to custom he grounded his oration upon a text of Scripture. The words occurred in the service of the Nativity of St. John the Baptist, which was the day before the speech was to be delivered; *Audite, insulæ, et attendite, populi de longe; Dominus ab utero vocavit me*<sup>1</sup> (Isaiah xlix. 1.) The isles, he said, were the lords Spiritual and Temporal, the people from afar were the Commons. God had called the king to rule over them in his tender age. The simile was dwelt upon after the fashion of the times, and apparently with a pointed personal allusion. Islands, although surrounded with water, were themselves firm ground; there was more surety and firmness in them "than in the sea or any great *Rivers*." The unstable water which surrounded them was the lower people, as St. John said in the Apocalypse (xvii. 15), "The waters which thou sawest are peoples and nations." There were many important things in which the king required the advice of Parliament to assist his inexperience. His father in his latter days had felt much anxiety on account of the bad faith frequently exhibited by his allies. But it was of chief importance that the authority of the Protector should be confirmed until the king attained his majority; "among all the causes of the assembling of the Parliament in this time of the year, this is the greatest and most necessary first to be affirmed."<sup>2</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> "I have taken a trimembered text, such as I found in the divine service of yesterday's feast, the which to my purpose implieth the present estate of our nobles,

our commons and of our glorious prince and King, Edward V. here present." Nichols' Grants of Edward V. p. xxxix.

<sup>2</sup> *Ib.* p. xlix.

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-04282-6 - Letters and Papers Illustrative of the Reigns of Richard III and Henry VII: Volume 1

Edited by James Gairdner

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

## xx

## PREFACE.

This speech, most probably, was not delivered. When Parliament met it agreed to strengthen Richard's authority, not by confirming him as Protector, but by placing him upon the throne.

Let us here say what can be said, not to palliate the conduct of Richard III., but to make it intelligible, as far as our knowledge and judgment will permit. In the broad view of history which necessarily presents itself to most minds, the murder of his nephews must appear virtually to have been a part of the act of usurpation. In point of time it followed very close; and the natural inference seems to be that it was deliberately planned to give security to a throne so wrongfully acquired. It is not necessary, however, to entertain quite so dark a view. Detestable as the act must be under any aspect, we had rather not regard it as having been cogitated and considered for several weeks before. If it was, it certainly was the reverse of politic, for there can hardly be a doubt that whatever disaffection was previously felt to Richard's cause, gained strength from the moral indignation which that act aroused. However we may be accustomed to regard the celebrated scene in the Guildhall, he was certainly at first supported by more than a few hired retainers of Buckingham; and we may be tolerably certain that the mere change of sovereigns was not at that time so repugnant to the feelings of Englishmen, as it afterwards appeared when the sequel was divulged. Whether Richard's plea was true that his brother's children were by law illegitimate, is a question which need not be here discussed; but there had been enough of evil in the minority to reconcile most men to its termination. The state of anarchy had been simply intolerable; London had been kept in a continual ferment with plots and counterplots; and it is certain the spirit of faction was not wholly on Richard's side.

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-04282-6 - Letters and Papers Illustrative of the Reigns of Richard III and Henry VII: Volume 1

Edited by James Gairdner

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

## PREFACE.

xxi

Two days after his accession Richard sent an important message to Calais by Lord Mountjoy. The garrison there had, on receiving the news of Edward the Fourth's death, taken an oath of fealty to his son, declaring that they would keep the town, castle, and marches for king Edward the Fifth, and not suffer any one to enter with an armed force except the king himself or lord Hastings his lieutenant. Shortly afterwards, perhaps after the execution of Hastings, which took place on the 13th of June, lord Dynham wrote from Calais to the duke of Gloucester as Protector, desiring an answer to certain questions and petitions from the inhabitants, of which the first related to this oath. In answer Mountjoy, who was soon afterwards appointed lieutenant of Guines, was instructed to say that as the oath had been taken in ignorance of "the very sure and true title which our sovereign lord that now is hath and had the same time to the crown of England," every true Englishman was bound to disregard it and tender his fealty to the real king, "whose sure and true title," say the instructions, "is evidently showed in a bill of petition which the lords spiritual and temporal and the commons of this land solemnly porrected unto the king's highness at London, the 26th day of June. Whereupon the kings said highness, notably assisted by well near all the lords, spiritual and temporal, of this realm went the same day unto his palace of Westminster, and there in such royal [estate] honourably apparelled, within the great hall there, took possession and declared his mind that the same day he would begin to reign upon his people; and from thence rode solemnly to the cathedral church of London, and was received there with procession, with great congratulation and acclamation of all the people in every place and by the way that the king was in that day." The estimate which a king like Richard the Third chooses to give of his own popularity is of course open to suspicion, but the above

extract manifestly contains some facts which could not have been misstated.

His rela-  
 tions with  
 foreign  
 powers :—  
 Spain.

We see most of Richard, however, in his relations with foreign powers. A friendly message was received from Spain, desiring alliance with England against France, and the ambassador gave a singular explanation of the causes which had led queen Isabella before to favour France against England. Edward the Fourth had committed a most unkingly act in making a real love match, and Isabella “was turned in her heart from England for his refusing of her and taking to his wife, a widow of England ; for the which cause, also, “was mortal war betwixt him and the earl of Warwick, the which took ever her part to the time of “his death.” Edward IV., however, was now dead ; Lewis XI. had broken four principal articles of his treaty with her, and would not allow her to marry her son to the heiress of Navarre. She was, therefore, anxious to renew a good understanding with England. Her ambassador was received by Richard with great magnificence at Warwick. According to Rous, who lived in the neighbourhood, and probably was present on the occasion, he also brought a proposal for the marriage of Richard’s only son with one of the daughters of Ferdinand and Isabella. To this we know not what reply was made. To the other overture, Richard returned a cordial answer, and proposed to renew a league made with Henry IV. of Castile. But he seems to have had no wish to provoke hostilities with France, and made no reply to that part of her proposal.

Britanny was at this time offering an asylum to his most dangerous enemies. In July Richard sent thither Dr. Hutton to propose a diet for putting an end to private acts of hostility which had taken place between the subjects of England and the duchy. The death of Edward IV. had been supposed to put an end to existing treaties, and the commerce between the two countries had suffered in consequence. While anxious