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# Richard III

His Life and Character Reviewed in the Light of Recent Research

CLEMENTS R. MARKHAM





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LIFE OF RICHARD III





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King Richard 111 From a picture in the National Portrait Gallery

London, Smith Flder & Co IS, Waterloo Place.



# RICHARD III: HIS LIFE & CHARACTER

REVIEWED IN THE LIGHT OF RECENT RESEARCH = = = =

BY SIR CLEMENTS R. MARKHAM, K.C.B. = = AUTHOR OF 'THE LIFE OF THE GREAT LORD FAIRFAX' AND 'THE FIGHTING VERES' = =

#### WITH A PORTRAIT

LONDON: SMITH, ELDER, AND CO. 15 WATERLOO PLACE. 1906 ===

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## PREFACE

THERE are periods of history when the greatest caution is called for in accepting statements put forward by a dominant faction. Very early in my life I came to the conclusion that the period which witnessed the change of dynasties from Plantagenet to Tudor was one of The caricature of the last Plantagenet King was too grotesque, and too grossly opposed to his character derived from official records. The stories were an outrage on common-sense. I studied the subject at intervals for many years, and in the course of my researches I found that I more or less shared my doubts with every author of repute who had studied the subject for the last three centuries, except Hume and Lingard. My own conclusions are that Richard III. must be acquitted on all the counts of the indictment. The present work is divided into two parts, the first narrating the events of his life and times, and the second examining the various accusations against him. I did not contemplate publication because I thought that in these days prejudices were too strong to make it possible that a fair and candid hearing should be given to the arguments. But I determined to consult



vi

#### LIFE OF RICHARD III

some historical friends, and I was pleased to find that to a great extent I was mistaken.

In the first place, I wrote a full abstract of my arguments, for publication in the 'Historical Review,' acting under the advice of my old schoolfellow, Professor Freeman, to whom I sent it in the first instance. It so happened that Mr. Freeman had given attention to part of the subject. He upset some odious fabrications of the chroniclers affecting the character of Margaret of Anjou, by proving that she was in Scotland at the time when the battle of Wakefield was fought. Freeman seldom wrote on so late a period of our history, and we owe this modern excursion to a visit to Mr. Milnes Gaskell at Thornes.

After reading what I sent him, Professor Freeman wrote on August 13, 1890: 'Your abstract has set me a-thinking. It is only a Robert of Bellême who does that kind of thing. On your main point I will talk to Gardiner and Stubbs. Meanwhile, I have shown your manuscript to Sidney Owen, who read it and held it to be what lawyers would call considerable. Owen had been at those times, and holds Henry VII. to be at least capable of it.

'It would be a self-denying ordinance in Gairdner if he accepted your view, for he has gone more straight at that time than anybody else. Gardiner has written to him, and he is a little fierce, as was to be expected, but if you are like me, no man's fierceness will hinder you from dining and sleeping as well as usual. The matter is at all events worth discussing.'



#### PREFACE

vii

Professor York Powell read my manuscript, and wrote: 'I have read the manuscript and think there is something worth looking into. Henry's conduct to Tyrrell is exceedingly suspicious. Either Richard or Henry might have put the boys to death, but it would be interesting for many reasons to know which it was. I am not convinced by Markham, but I do not think Gairdner has the right to be cocksure. The Morton suggestive idea is very ingenious and pretty, and quite probable. It has interested me much to read Markham's letter, for I remember my difficulties in the matter and the point I got to, that the great men did not, for a time, hold the now vulgate view of the murder of the princes. I should rejoice should Markham light upon additional evidence in favour of his thesis, which à priori is by no means unlikely. There is something about Richard's character, ability, and reign which, I think, attracts every real student of history, and gives one a feeling that he has been unfairly dealt with.'

In 1891, the abstract of my work was published in the 'Historical Review,' and Bishop Creighton, who was then the editor, wrote: 'Thank you for your paper, which I have read with great interest. It certainly makes out a strong case.'

There were two rejoinders from Mr. Gairdner, which enabled me to recast and improve parts of my work by the light of his criticism.

I lost my adviser, Mr. Freeman, in 1892. One of the last things he did was to warn me of an objection



viii

#### LIFE OF RICHARD III

taken by Miss Edith Thompson, which enabled me to meet it.1

After careful revision I showed my manuscript to the late Sir Archibald Milman, who had given close attention to those times. On December 27, 1897, he wrote: 'It is your bounden duty to tell your story of Richard III., giving the date for every fact. It is only by sticking to dates that you get at truth in criminal causes, and the same method must be followed at the bar of history. It would be a pleasure to think that the last Plantagenet was not a cruel scoundrel. giving dates and authorities for them, you render a great service. Richard's loyalty and able administration in the north seem inconsistent with such ferocity. I was much interested in one of your facts, that, according to the story put forward by Henry VII., the bodies of the little princes were taken up from the place of hasty interment and placed in consecrated ground. But lo! they remained under the staircase, where they were found in Charles II.'s reign.'

In consequence of Sir A. Milman's letter I made another close scrutiny of dates given by various authorities for the same events with important results. I also went very carefully over the ground of the battlefields of Wakefield, Towton, Barnet, Tewkesbury, and Bosworth; and I added some chapters to the work.

<sup>1</sup> She pointed out that the titles of Norfolk and Nottingham, granted by Edward IV. to his second son Richard, were given by Richard III. to Lords Howard and Berkeley, and that, therefore, young Richard must have been dead. The answer is that the grants to Lords Howard and Berkeley were made on June 28, 1483, before it was even pretended that young Richard had been murdered.



#### PREFACE

ix

The correspondence to which I have referred has led me to the conclusion that students of history are not, as I once believed, unwilling to reconsider the questions which form the subject of the present work, when they are presented from new points of view; and that the well-known arguments which were supposed to suffice for the defence of the Tudor stories in the past are in these days insufficient. The numerous points now raised and submitted for the judgment of students are at all events worth discussing. The present work is about as complete as very frequent revision can make it.





# CONTENTS

PREFACE
PART $I$
CHAPTER I
BIRTH'AND CHILDHOOD
Description of Fotheringhay Possessions of the Duke of York. Marriage 2, Birth of Richard Letter of Edward and Edmund to their father Children of the Duke of York Richard a prisoner of war aged 7 Refuge in John Paston's chambers
CHAPTER II
DEATH OF RICHARD'S FATHER AND BROTHER AT THE BATTLE OF WAKEFIELD
The Duke of York declared Heir-Apparent The Duke and his family united at Baynard's Castle March to Sandal Description of Sandal Castle and its neighbourhood 12, 13 Battle of Wakefield. Death of the Duke 14, 14 Death of Edmund, Earl of Rutland 15, 16 Cruelty and inhuman folly of the Lancastrians 16 Edward's victory at Mortimer's Cross 17 George and Richard sent to Holland for safety 18, 19



#### xii

#### LIFE OF RICHARD III

#### CHAPTER III

THE CROWNING VICTORY OF TOWTON	
	PAG
Description of Edward IV	. 20
	21, 22
March to the north. Yorkist leaders	. 28
Lancastrian leaders	. 24
Sir Andrew Trollope	. 25
Description of the country round Towton	. 26
Surprise at Ferrybridge	. 27
Chase and death of Clifford	. 28
Yorkists march to Saxton	29, 30
Yorkists march to Saxton	. 31
Battle of Towton	32, 33
Flight of Henry and his partisans. Edward at York	. 34
Coronation of Edward IV	. 35
Edward's generous treatment of his foes	. 36
Chapel built by Richard at Towton	. 37
THE CROWN LOST AND WON-BATTLE OF BARNET	r
Return of George and Richard from Holland	. 38
Return of George and Richard from Holland	
mi i m i i m i i m i i m i	. 38
Their Dukedoms, Earldoms and Richard's K.G	. 38
Their Dukedoms, Earldoms and Richard's K.G Richard chief mourner at his father's obsequies	. 38 . 38
Their Dukedoms, Earldoms and Richard's K.G Richard chief mourner at his father's obsequies	. 38 . 38 . 39
Their Dukedoms, Earldoms and Richard's K.G Richard chief mourner at his father's obsequies	. 38 . 38 . 39 . 40 . 41
Their Dukedoms, Earldoms and Richard's K.G Richard chief mourner at his father's obsequies	. 38 . 38 . 39 . 40
Their Dukedoms, Earldoms and Richard's K.G Richard chief mourner at his father's obsequies	. 38 . 38 . 39 . 40 . 41 . 41
Their Dukedoms, Earldoms and Richard's K.G Richard chief mourner at his father's obsequies	. 38 . 39 . 40 . 41 42, 43 . 44
Their Dukedoms, Earldoms and Richard's K.G Richard chief mourner at his father's obsequies	. 38 . 38 . 39 . 40 . 40 . 41 42, 43
Their Dukedoms, Earldoms and Richard's K.G. Richard chief mourner at his father's obsequies Military training under Warwick Description of Richard Treason of Warwick Flight of Edward and Richard to Holland Expedition fitted out at Veere Landing at Ravenspur Edward's brilliant campaign	. 38 . 39 . 40 . 41 . 42, 43 . 44 . 45
Their Dukedoms, Earldoms and Richard's K.G. Richard chief mourner at his father's obsequies Military training under Warwick Description of Richard Treason of Warwick Flight of Edward and Richard to Holland Expedition fitted out at Veere Landing at Ravenspur Edward's brilliant campaign Richard's negotiation with Clarence Battle of Barnet	. 38 . 39 . 40 . 41 42, 43 . 44 . 45
Their Dukedoms, Earldoms and Richard's K.G.  Richard chief mourner at his father's obsequies  Military training under Warwick  Description of Richard  Treason of Warwick  Flight of Edward and Richard to Holland  Expedition fitted out at Veere  Landing at Ravenspur  Edward's brilliant campaign  Richard's negotiation with Clarence	. 38 . 39 . 40 . 40 . 41 42, 43 . 44 . 45
Their Dukedoms, Earldoms and Richard's K.G. Richard chief mourner at his father's obsequies Military training under Warwick Description of Richard Treason of Warwick Flight of Edward and Richard to Holland Expedition fitted out at Veere Landing at Ravenspur Edward's brilliant campaign Richard's negotiation with Clarence Battle of Barnet	. 38 . 39 . 40 . 40 . 41 42, 43 . 44 . 45

Birth of Edward . .

Adventures in the wars

. 55



CONTENTS	xiii
Home at Kœur-la-Petite Edward's conversations with the Chief Justice Agreement with Warwick Description of young Edward	PAGE 60 61, 66 67
CHAPTER VI	
THE BATTLE OF TEWKESBURY	
Margaret and Edward land at Weymouth Advance to Bristol King Edward's plan of campaign Description of the battle field March of King Edward's army Battle of Tewkesbury. Death of Edward of Lancaster on the battle field Execution of some leaders. Pardon of the rest Death of Henry VI. Ransom of Margaret. Her death	69 70 71 72 73 74, 75 76 77 78
CHAPTER VII	
MARRIED LIFE AND PUBLIC SERVICES OF RICHARD DUK GLOUCESTER	E OF
Richard with his brother in France	
Death of Edward IV. Lady Grey. Children	50, 01
CHAPTER VIII	
ACCESSION OF RICHARD III	
Conspiracy of the Woodvilles	. 88 . 89 . 90



XIV	LIFE O	FF	RICH	ARI	) [	П			
									PAG
Account of Richon	Stillington								
Account of Bishop Foundation of the Children of Edwar	College at A	nasta	r						. 96
Children of Edwar	d IV illegiti	mete			_	٠.			97
Hastings Woodville	a congniracy	marc		•	•				98. 99
Hastings-Woodville Execution of River Richard's title to the	e conspiracy	ای وم[ا		•		•	٠.	٠.	. 99.100
Richard's title to the	h <i>e e</i> rown	iica8		•	•				. 101
Accession	no oroma .	•		•		٠.	-	·	102
ilocossion	• •	•	•	•		-			
	CF	IAP <sup>7</sup>	ľER	IX					
	CONDITIO	N OF	тн1	E PE	OP	ЬE			
Results of the Lan	castrian usu	rpati	on .						. 10
Effects of the War						٠.	٠.		104
No destruction of	the nobility	<b>.</b>	•	•	•				
Scenery Country	nic nobiney . 7 life		•	•		•	٠.		
Scenery. Country Castles		•	•	•	•				
Hunting and hawk	· · ·	•	•	•		٠.	٠.		108
The Peerson		•	•	•	•	•			. 109
Town residences		•	•	•		٠.		•	110
Hunting and hawk The Peerage . Town residences . Magnificence of the	e Court	•	•	•	•				
Wealth of merchan	e Court .	mna	niae ·	•					112
Introduction of pri	inting	шра	nica	•	•				. 113
Introduction of pri Caxton's works .	nung	•	•	•			٠	•	114, 116
Literary noblemen		•	•	•	•	•	•		115, 116
Education	• • •	•	•	•		٠.			
Bishops. Clergy.	Monastaria	. P	ilarim	•	•				118-119
Judges	Idonastciie	3. I	1181111	iages		•			119
Lawlessness .			٠.			•	•		. 120
	iltivation		•	•		•	•	•	
Manor houses. Co Condition of the po	eonle	•	•	•	•	•	•		122_129
Prices			•	•		•	٠.	•	123
111005	• •	•	•	•	•	•	•		120
	(1)	ET A TO	m ta to	v					
	C)	LAP	TER	Λ					
	REIGN	OF I	RICHA	ARD	ш				
Description of the	King								. 124
Treatment of his n	ephews .								125
Coronation .									126-127
Claim of Buckingh	am .								128
Claim of Buckingh Royal Progress Rebellion of Bucki									129-130
Rebellion of Bucki	ngham .								131-132



CONTENTS	xv
	PAGE
THE AT STATES	-133
Parliament	
Reforms. Revenue. Navy	135
Convocation. Agreement with the Queen Dowager	136
Death of the Prince of Wales. His tomb	137
Edward Earl of Warwick made Heir-Apparent	138
King Richard's popularity	139
Conspiracy of Henry Tudor	140
The King assembled troops at Nottingham	141
Proclamation against Henry Tudor	143
Peerage of Richard III	143
	144
Ministers of Richard III	145
Judges and Law Officers	145
Judges and Law Officers	146
Knights of the Garter	146
Knights of the Bath	147
CHAPTER XI	
THE BATTLE OF BOSWORTH	
Treachery of the Stanleys explained 148	, 149
King Richard's military talent	150
English pluck displayed by Richard Loyal men flocking to the King's standard	150
Loyal men flocking to the King's standard	151
Description of the country round Bosworth	152
Positions of the two armies	153
King Richard leads his men to the encounter	154
Treachery of Lord Stanley	155
The King's gallant charge	155
Death of the King	-157
Richard buried at Leicester. Memorials	158
Character of King Richard	159
His generosity. Arbitrations	160
Able administration. Building operations	161
Literary tastes. Founded the Heralds' College	162
Comparison of Richard and the Tudors	, 163
His married life	164
Contemporary Sovereigns	165



xvi

The Plantagenet Dynasty

#### LIFE OF RICHARD III

#### PART II

### CHAPTER I

#### THE AUTHORITIES

Character and position of the acc	cuse	rs											167
Extravagance of their caricature													167
Writers in the pay of the Tudors	3												168
The notorious pamphlet by Mort	ton											168	_171
Bernard André													171
Polydore Virgil	•				•							171-	-172
Rous				•						•			173
Fabyan	•		•		•								174
Warkworth						•		•					175
Continuators of the Croyland Ch	roni	cle					•				•	175-	-178
Official documents				•									179
Hall, Grafton, Holinshed, Stow,	Buc	k	•				•		•		٠		179
Reaction. Modern authors .		•				•		•					181
Miss Halsted			•		•		•		٠		•	•	182
Upholders of the Tudor stories	•	•		٠		•		•		•		182-	-183
CHA					~ .		~-						
CHAE					ЗA	IN	sī	' F	RIC	Н	AR	111 <b>a</b>	
EXAMINATION OF THE C.	HAI	kG1	es	A	GΔ •	IN	sī	' F		H	AR	<b>D</b> III	184
EXAMINATION OF THE C	HAI	kG1	es	A	3Δ •	IN	sī	! F	RIC		AR.	D III	
EXAMINATION OF THE Confidence of Reckless profusion of abuse and Deformity. Statement of Rous of The truth	HAI	kG1	es	A	GA •	IN	s <b>ı</b>	' F		:н <i>а</i>	AR	<b>D</b> III	184
EXAMINATION OF THE C.  Reckless profusion of abuse .  Deformity. Statement of Rous a  The truth  Object of the calumny .	HAI and	Mo	es ort	A(							AR ·	D III	184 185
EXAMINATION OF THE Concepts of the concepts of the calumny and the truth to the concepts of the concepts of the truth to the concepts of the c	HAI and	Mo	es ort	A(						• HZ	AR	D III	184 185 186 187
EXAMINATION OF THE C.  Reckless profusion of abuse .  Deformity. Statement of Rous a  The truth  Object of the calumny .  Tewkesbury. The truth told by  Fable by Fabyan	HAI and	Mo	es ort	A(							AR		184 185 186 187 -189 190
EXAMINATION OF THE C.  Reckless profusion of abuse .  Deformity. Statement of Rous a  The truth  Object of the calumny .  Tewkesbury. The truth told by  Fable by Fabyan  Polydore Virgil .	HAI and	Mo	es ort	A(						·			184 185 186 187 -189 190
EXAMINATION OF THE C.  Reckless profusion of abuse .  Deformity. Statement of Rous a  The truth  Object of the calumny .  Tewkesbury. The truth told by  Fable by Fabyan  Polydore Virgil .  Subsequent embellishments	HAI and all	Mo	es ort	A(						· · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · ·		188-	184 185 186 187 -189 190 190
EXAMINATION OF THE C.  Reckless profusion of abuse .  Deformity. Statement of Rous a The truth  Object of the calumny .  Tewkesbury. The truth told by Fable by Fabyan  Polydore Virgil .  Subsequent embellishments Silence of Morton and Rous	HAI and all	Mo	es ort	A(						· · ·	AR		184 185 186 187 -189 190 190 190
EXAMINATION OF THE C.  Reckless profusion of abuse .  Deformity. Statement of Rous a The truth  Object of the calumny .  Tewkesbury. The truth told by Fable by Fabyan  Polydore Virgil .  Subsequent embellishments Silence of Morton and Rous Henry VI. Insinuations	HAI and all	Mo	es ort	A(						·	AR		184 185 186 187 -189 190 190 -192 193
EXAMINATION OF THE C.  Reckless profusion of abuse .  Deformity. Statement of Rous a The truth  Object of the calumny .  Tewkesbury. The truth told by Fable by Fabyan  Polydore Virgil  Subsequent embellishments Silence of Morton and Rous Henry VI. Insinuations  Warkworth and Fabyan	HAI and all	Mo	es ort	A(						· · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · ·	AR		184 185 186 187 -189 190 190 -192 193 -195
EXAMINATION OF THE C.  Reckless profusion of abuse .  Deformity. Statement of Rous a The truth  Object of the calumny .  Tewkesbury. The truth told by Fable by Fabyan  Polydore Virgil  Subsequent embellishments Silence of Morton and Rous Henry VI. Insinuations  Warkworth and Fabyan The Croyland Monk	HAI and all	Mo	es ort	A(						· · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · ·			184 185 186 187 -189 190 190 -192 193 -195
EXAMINATION OF THE C.  Reckless profusion of abuse .  Deformity. Statement of Rous a The truth  Object of the calumny .  Tewkesbury. The truth told by Fable by Fabyan  Polydore Virgil  Subsequent embellishments Silence of Morton and Rous Henry VI. Insinuations  Warkworth and Fabyan The Croyland Monk  Polydore Virgil contradicts	HAI and all	Mo	es ort	A(						· · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · ·			184 185 186 187 -189 190 190 -192 193 -195 195
EXAMINATION OF THE C.  Reckless profusion of abuse .  Deformity. Statement of Rous a The truth  Object of the calumny .  Tewkesbury. The truth told by Fable by Fabyan  Polydore Virgil  Subsequent embellishments Silence of Morton and Rous Henry VI. Insinuations  Warkworth and Fabyan The Croyland Monk	HAI and all	Mo	es ort	A(									184 185 186 187 -189 190 190 -192 193 -195

PAGE

166

167



CONTENTS	ii
Henry VI. (continued)	ВE
	86
	99
	00
Attack of Miss Strickland, a specimen of the sort of argu-	
	)1
	)1
	$\mathbf{)2}$
Death of Clarence. Charge absolutely groundless 20	-
Another specimen of argument	-
The truth	)4
CHAPTER III FURTHER CHARGES AGAINST RICHARD III	
OF 00	
Some account of Morton, the chief accuser 205-20	
$\begin{array}{cccccccccccccccccccccccccccccccccccc$	LU
Cunning misrepresentations respecting Hastings	Z
Falsification of dates	
The accession. The true claim	
Attempt of Henry VII. to destroy the evidence 21	
Polydore Virgil's version	
Morton's version	
Fabyan	32
Further falsification of dates	23
Buckingham's treason. False reason given for his discontent . 22	
The truth	
Morton's account of conversations	26
* · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · ·	27
Death of the Queen. Slanders of Polydore and Rous 22	
Elizabeth of York. Absurd rumour spread	29
Elizabeth's letter to the Duke of Norfolk	30
Intrigues of Henry's mother	31
Lord Strange. The truth	32
CHAPTER IV THE MAIN CHARGE AGAINST RICHARD III	
Rests on the truth or falsehood of previous crimes	33
	34 35
Nothing to fear from his nephews	99
я	



# xviii LIFE OF RICHARD III

			PAGE
Treatment of others in the same position			236
His nephews were probably members of his household			000
Bill, in March 1485, for the elder nephew			237
Conduct of the mother and sister		238	-239
Alleged rumours		240	<b>_242</b>
Assertion of the French Chancellor			242
Statements of Fabyan, Rous, Polydore, André			244
Sir William Stanley's conduct			244
Baseless rumours promulgated by Henry			245

#### CHAPTER V

#### HENRY TUDOR IN THE DOCK

Description of Henry VII		246
His lawless executions after Bosworth		247
Responsible for the lives of royal children		248
Henry's character		249
Necessity to strengthen his position		250
His Parliament of outlaws. Unjust attainders		251
Loyal men attainted		252
Silent about the late King's nephews. Were they missing?		253
If alive, Henry's marriage necessitated their deaths		254
Henry's treatment of other victims in his way		255
The fate of the princes, if alive, was sealed by the marriage .		256
Imprisonment of the Queen Dowager		257
Henry put forward a story, in Polydore Virgil		258
A more detailed story, published by Rastell and Grafton .	260	-263
Rewards alleged to have been given by Richard to murderers		265
Confession of Tyrrel and Dighton fabricated		267
Genesis of these stories		267
Some account of Sir James Tyrrel	•	
		268
		268 269
Henry's grant to John Green	• •	269
Henry's grant to John Green Tyrrel taken into favour. His two pardons	•	269 269
Henry's grant to John Green Tyrrel taken into favour. His two pardons Murder of the two Princes	  	269 269 269
Henry's grant to John Green Tyrrel taken into favour. His two pardons Murder of the two Princes Relations silenced	270-	269 269 269 -271
Henry's grant to John Green Tyrrel taken into favour. His two pardons Murder of the two Princes Relations silenced Hush money to 'Black Will'	270-	269 269 269 -271 271
Henry's grant to John Green Tyrrel taken into favour. His two pardons Murder of the two Princes Relations silenced Hush money to 'Black Will' Reward to Dighton	270-	269 269 269 -271 271 272
Henry's grant to John Green Tyrrel taken into favour. His two pardons Murder of the two Princes Relations silenced Hush money to 'Black Will' Reward to Dighton Rewards and employments for Tyrrel	270-	269 269 269 -271 271 272 272
Henry's grant to John Green Tyrrel taken into favour. His two pardons Murder of the two Princes Relations silenced Hush money to 'Black Will' Reward to Dighton Rewards and employments for Tyrrel Treacherous arrest and hurried execution of Tyrrel	270-	269 269 269 -271 271 272 272 273
Henry's grant to John Green Tyrrel taken into favour. His two pardons Murder of the two Princes Relations silenced Hush money to 'Black Will' Reward to Dighton Rewards and employments for Tyrrel	270-	269 269 269 -271 271 272 272



CONTENTS	xix
	PAGE
Judicial murder of the Earl of Warwick	275
Henry's remorse	276
Elizabeth saw the cruel treatment of her mother and cousin.	
Her death	277
Henry's design to kill the Earl of Suffolk	277
His death. Successful as this world counts success	278
Things unexplained	, 280
CHAPTER VI	
MR. GAIRDNER'S RICHARD III	
Mr. Gairdner's view of the alleged crimes	281
Views stated in Mr. Gairdner's preface	282
Richard's character	283
Richard acquitted of several charges	285
W 1 4 1	285
Mr. Gairdner's latest view of the Tewkesbury charge	
On Edward IV.'s proceedings after Tewkesbury	
His view of the Henry VI. charge	290
His rejection of the evidence of the writer in Fleetwood	292
Acquits Richard of responsibility for the death of Clarence . 294	
Position with regard to the title to the crown	296
Believes in the Duchess of York slander	297
His reason for the belief	297
Murder of the Princes. Story admitted to be full of inaccuracies	20.
and improbabilities	298
Richard could not have been a cool, calculating villain	298
Must have been headstrong and reckless	298
Such a man might have committed the crime on a sudden impulse	299
The rising in Kent supposed to be the motive	299
But the murders are stated to have been in August, the rising	200
in October	299
Thus Mr. Gairdner's theory fails	299
Mr. Gairdner supplies proofs of the King's popularity	300
Richard was the victim of the perfidy of a few traitors	300
Mr. Gairdner's testimony to Richard's good qualities	300
Great value of Mr. Gairdner's work	
INDEX	303



#### GENEALOGICAL TABLES

SEIZE QUARTIERS OF EDWARD I	V. AN	D Ric	HARI	III.		to	face 1	page 6
SEIZE QUARTIERS OF ANNE NEV	TLL	•	•	•	•	•	,,	82
	M	ΆP						
BATTLE OF BOSWORTH FIELD						to f	ace pa	ge 328