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Historical Notices of Robert Stillington; Chancellor of England, Bishop of Bath & Wells.

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(Dean of Wells.)

EARLY in 1894 the Dean and Chapter of Wells made extensive excavations east of the Cloisters and south of the Cathedral, to ascertain the exact site, condition, and measurements of the foundations of two chapels, of the thirteenth and fifteenth centuries respectively. The chapel of the fifteenth century was known to be Bishop Stillington's, and was found to be of unexpected magnificence; a second cathedral, in fact, with transepts; 120 feet long from east to west, and 66 feet from north to south in the transepts. The foundations were superb, as will be seen from the architectural plans and descriptions made in detail by Mr. Edmund Buckle, the Diocesan Architect.

Canon Church undertook to collect the notices of Bishop Stillington and his work, in the Diocesan Registers and the Cathedral Records : and at the request of Mr. Elworthy, our Secretary, I promised to find out and put together whatever I could learn of Bishop Stillington from ancient and modern history and records. His splendid chapel might have been standing to this day, as little injured as the Cathedral or the Chapter House by the troubles of the Cromwellian period, or by Monmouth's brief campaign, if only it had been spared for a twelvemonth : for it was destroyed in the very last year of Edward VI : the greed of a courtier trading on the need of the greatly impoverished Dean and Chapter.

The notices of Robert Stillington are meagre and few, scattered up and down a variety of authors, and the activity of the man made itself felt in four reigns. The historic interest of the four reigns of Edward IV, Edward V, Richard III, and Henry VII is continuous and inseparable, alike in the annals of England and in the fragmentary record of Robert Stillington.

At one time I thought I had got hold of a speech[1] actually prepared by him for the opening of Edward V's parliament, June 25th, 1483 ; and also of one actually addressed by him a few months later to the parliament of Richard III. The speeches are most curious, both as political and literary monuments of the time. Each is based on an appropriate text, one from Isaiah i, 2, the other from St. Matthew vi, 22 ; most befitting basis for a chancellor who was a bishop. The pity is, the chancellor of that day was John Russell, Bishop of Lincoln ; for Stillington had resigned finally the Great Seal, July 27th, 1475. I need hardly say that two speeches by Lord Chancellor Stillington would to me have been pearls of great price.

(1). Grants, etc., from the Crown during the Reign of Edward V : Introduction by I. G. Nichols, F.S.A. *Camden Society*, 1854.

Lord Campbell, in his "Lives of the Chancellors,"[2] speaks of Stillington as of humble origin: but as he founded in the reign of Edward IV a Collegiate Chapel of St. Andrew at Acaster, near York, for a Provost and Fellows, on land which had been his father's,[3] his father must have been a man of position, and in fact was Stillington of Nether Acaster. John de Stillington was Bailiff of York,[4] 1383; some thirty years, perhaps, before the Bishop of Bath and Wells was born. The bishop must, as a boy, have known well the stone quarries at Acaster, and may have there conceived early ideals of fine building, which his later years realised. He became a student of the college of All Souls in the University of Oxford, where he took the degree of Doctor in both laws. His[5] first ecclesiastical preferment was a canonry in the Cathedral of Wells, 1445; and he became Treasurer of the same church in 1447. He became Rector of St. Michael, Ouse-Bridge, in York, 1448; Archdeacon of Taunton in 1450; Canon of York in 1451; Dean of St. Martin's, London, 1458; Archdeacon of Berks, 1463; and of Wells, 1465; and lastly Bishop of Bath and Wells on January 11th, 1466. In politics, he was an unflinching Yorkist: hence the lavish plurality of patronage heaped upon him. He became Keeper of the Privy Seal, 1461, with a salary of twenty shillings a day—equal perhaps to fifteen pounds a day now: an office which confers upon its present holder a priority over all members of the Cabinet, two only excepted. He receives the Great Seal, June 20th, 1467; resigns it during a few months of Henry's restoration, 1470; is still chancellor, October, 1472, having obtained a general pardon the previous February from his old patron, Edward IV, for all crimes previously committed. During the interlude of Henry VI, in 1470, the position of a Yorkist ex-

(2). *Campbell's* Lives of the Chancellors, vol. i, p. 283.
(3). *Foss'* Judges iv, 458.
(4). *Drake's* Eboracum, p. 361. For Pedigree and Arms, *see* Appendix, Note B.
(5). *Foss'* Judges iv, p. 455.

chancellor must have been hard indeed; and some apparent disloyalty to his real chief may have been indispensable to continuity of existence. He resigns finally the Great Seal to Laurence Booth, Bishop of Durham, July 27th, 1475. He adheres firmly to Richard, Duke of Gloucester, when,[6] on the very day named for the opening of the Parliament of Edward V, June 25th, 1483, the Duke walks with Stillington at his right hand in procession, declares himself King of England, and seats himself on the marble chair in Westminster Hall. He bastardizes the children of his great patron, Edward IV: feeling probably that the Yorkists could retain the crown only under the Duke of Gloucester. Yet he had been appointed, June 26th, 1471, one of the council of the Prince of Wales, when the prince was nine months old: with "large power to counsel the said prince . . . . . the said authority to continue till the prince should accomplish his age of fourteen years." M.S. Sloane 3479: quoted in Grants of Edward V, p. vii.

There is a warrant issued for his apprehension, August 22nd, 1485 (the very day the battle of Bosworth was lost and won), dated at Leicester,[7] where Henry VII slept that night. He is in prison at York, August 27th; is fully pardoned by Henry the same year, 1485, Patent[8] 22, Nov. 1, Henry VII; and when the Act of Bastardy is repealed, he is *not* called before parliament. He must have given an immense *quid pro quo*, to secure this exemption. He supports Lambert Simnel and Perkin Warbeck, the latter of whom had strong support[9]

(6). Grants of Edward V, p. xxi. *Camden Society*, 1854.

(7). There is still standing in the High Street a fragment of a house which was often the abode of royalty. The "Blue Boar" Inn, where Richard III slept the night before the battle, was pulled down about fifty years ago. It was a black-timbered (and white) high-gabled place. MS. from the *Rev. C. H. Wood*, of Leicester.

(8). *Gairdner's* Letters, etc., Richard III and Henry VII, vol. ii, p. 368. *See* Appendix A.

(9). Heavy fines were raised on Perkin's supporters: *e.g.* Wells. Borough, £313 13s. 4d.; North Petherton, £505 6s. 8d.; Sir John Speke, of Whitlakynton, £200—*Gairdner's* Letters, vol. ii, p. 335.

in Somerset, and probably would have joined the Yorkists in support of any possible impostor. At last, he is imprisoned at Windsor Castle for nearly four years, and dies there, May, 1491. His death is stated by Bishop Godwin[10] to have been *sub exitum Junii*; but it must have taken place before May 15th, for on that day the Dean and Canons of Wells,[11] meeting at 4 p.m. in a great parlour at the Deanery, granted to Bishop Cornish (Suffragan of the Diocese, Bishop of Tenos, a great pluralist to boot) a licence to perform the obsequies of the Bishop of Bath and Wells, lately deceased. The year Stillington died, Henry VIII was born.

From the days of the Historic Doubts of Horace Walpole[12] onwards, the character of Richard III has had defenders; and within the last three years Mr. Clements Markham[13] has done his best not only to whitewash Richard III, but to defame Henry VII; and has met with a brief but solid rejoinder[14] from Mr. James Gairdner, whose knowledge of the period is probably second to that of no living Englishman. Mr. Markham's attempt is none the stronger, because it apparently originates in a long-discarded theory of Mr. James Gairdner.

Horace Walpole states "the supposed crimes" of Richard III, thus :[15]

1st. His murder of Edward, Prince of Wales, son of Henry VI.

2nd. His murder of Henry VI.

(10). De Præsulibus Angliæ Commentarius, p. 438.

(11). Fasti. Eccl. Anglic. *Le Neve* i, 142. But Le Neve misquotes grossly : *see* correct extract from chapter register by Canon Church, summarized above.

(12). Historic Doubts regarding the Reign of Richard III, by *Mr. Horace Walpole.* Dodsley, 1768.

(13). English Historical Review, April, 1891, and October, 1891.

(14). English Historical Review, July 1891.

(15). Historic Doubts, p. 3. The solid judgment of Lord Bacon is adverse to Richard. Reign of Henry VII. Spedding's Edition of *Bacon's* works, vol. vi, p. 27, 28.

3rd. The murder of his brother George, Duke of Clarence.
4th. The execution of Rivers, Gray, and Vaughan.
5th. The execution of Lord Hastings.
6th. The murder of Edward V and his brother, the Duke of York.
7. The murder of his own Queen, Anne.

The verdict of the lively Horace assumes this form :[16] "It is shocking to eat our enemies, but it is not so shocking in an Iroquois as it would be in the King of Prussia. And this is all I contend for, that the crimes of Richard III . . . which we have reason to believe he really committed, were more the crimes of the age than of the man ; and except these executions of Rivers, Gray, and Hastings, I defy anybody to prove one other of those charged to his account, from any good authority."

The opinion of Richard's contemporaries was not favourable to him : The Chancellor of France, for instance, "Regardez[17] . . . je vous prie, [these are the words he used, speaking to the Estates General at Tours, 1483 :] les événements qui apres la mort du Roi Edouard sont arrivés dans ce pays. Contemplez ses enfans, déjà grands et braves, massacrés impunement, et la couronne transportée à l'assassin par la faveur des peuples." De Commynes writes to the same purpose, either generally, or as regards the murder of Edward V and his brother ; or on a point which touches Stillington very closely, the bastardizing of the children of Edward IV. This last was defended on the ground of an earlier marriage than that to Elizabeth Woodville, or at least a pre-contract ; and De Commynes[18] deals with the matter thus :

"Fin de compte, par . . . l'évesque de Bath (lequel avoit esté autrefois chancelier du roy Edouard, puis le désappointa, et le tint en prison, et prit argent de sa delivrance)

(16). Historic Doubts, p. 31.
(17). Quoted by *Gairdner* p. 457 : English Hist. Rev., July, 1891.
(18). Book v, c. 18.

il fit l'exploict dont vous orrez tantost parler. Cestuy évesque mit en avant a ce duc de Glocestre que ledit roy Edouard estant fort amoureux d'une dame d'Angleterre, lui promit de l'espouser, pourvu qu'il couchast avec elle, et elle y consentit, et dit cet évesque qu'il les avoit espousés, et n'y avoit que luy et eux deux : il estoit homme de cour, et ne le descouvrit pas, et ayda à faire taire la dame : et demoura ainsi cette chose ; et depuis espousa le dit roy d'Angleterre la fille d'un chevalier d'Angleterre appelé monseigneur de Rivières, femme veufve, qui avoit deux fils, et aussi par amourettes. (Elizabeth Woodville, widow of John Gray, by whom she had two sons.) A cette heure dont je parle, cet évesque de Bath découvrit cette matière à ce duc de Glocestre dont il luy ayda bien à exécuter son mauvais vouloir ; et fit mourir ses deux neveux ; et se fit roy, appelé le roy Richard. Les deux filles fit desclarer bastardes en plein parlement, et leur fit oster les hermines."

In another passage[19] De Commynes deals with the same point of the earlier marriage or pre-contract ; and reveals the astounding fact that a son of Bishop Stillington was destined by Richard III to marry Elizabeth who was the daughter of one King of England, Edward IV ; who became the wife of another King, Henry VII ; the mother of Henry VIII ; the grandmother of Edward the VI ; and of Mary and Elizabeth, Queens of England. Could an usurper King reward his best friend more highly ? Could he brand the rightful daughter of his deceased brother more distinctly as illegitimate than by marrying her to the son of a celibate Romish Bishop, *ex hypothesi* illegitimate ?

" Le Duc de Glocestre, qui s'estoit fait roy d'Angleterre, et se signoit Richard ; lequel avoit fait mourir les deux fils du roy Edouard son frère . . . . . en plein parlement d' Angleterre fit dégrader deux filles dudit roy Edouard, et

(19). Book vi, c. 9.

déclarer bastardes, sous couleur de quelque cas qu'il prouva par un évesque de Bath en Angleterre, qui autresfois avait eu grand credit avec ledit roy Edouard . . . . Le quel évesque disoit que ledit roy Edouard avoit promis foy de mariage à une dame d'Angleterre, qu'il nommoit, pour ce qu'il en estoit amoureux, pour en avoir son plaisir, et en avoit la promesse entre les mains dudit évesque ; et sur cette promesse coucha avec elle ; et ne la faisoit que pour la tromper . . . . . le mauvais évesque garda ceste vengeance en son cœur, par adventure, vingt ans ; mais il luy meschut ; car il avoit un fils qu'il aimoit fort, à qui le roy Richard vouloit faire de grands biens, et luy faire espouser l'une de ces deux filles, dégradeés de leurs dignités (la quelle de présent est[20] royne d'Angleterre, et a deux beaux enfans). Le quel fils estant en un navire de guerre, par le commandement du roy Richard son maistre, fut pris à cette coste de Normandie, et, par le débat de ceux qui le prirent, fut amené en parlement, et mis au petit chastelet à Paris ; et y fut tant, qu' il y mourut de faim et de pauvreté."

A greater statesman by far than Stillington, one who raised England from a third-rate kingdom to a level with the greatest in Europe ; who extorted an unwonted deference and respect for his master and his country, with little cost of money or of blood, from kings, popes, and emperors ; a celibate pre-Reformation bishop, Cardinal Wolsey, had a son who was Dean of Wells, Richard Wynter, and a daughter who was a nun of Shaftesbury, under the name of Dorothy Chansey. Their mother's name[21] was Lark, afterwards married

(20). Wife of Henry VII, already mother of Arthur, Prince of Wales, born 1486, ; and of Margaret, born 1488. *Bacon* writes (Life of Henry VII, p. 41, vol. vi of Works)—"He showed himself no very indulgent husband towards her, though she was beautiful, gentle, and fruitful. But his aversion towards the House of York was so predominant in him, as it found place not only in his wars and counsels, but in his chamber and bed."

(21). *Brewer's* Reign of Henry VIII, ii, p. 458, 9.

to "one Leghe of Aldington"; and both were born (circa 1509-1511) before Wolsey was created a Bishop, first of Tournay, afterwards of Lincoln. Stillington and Wolsey may[22] possibly each have had from the Court of Rome a license for his quasi marriage. Yet "In England" says Brewer, "the celibacy of the clergy was never universal. . . . "But as in all higher promotions,[23] for which the consent of the Pope was required, the strict Roman law of celibacy could be enforced, the parties separated by mutual agreement."

The marriage of Edward IV to Elizabeth Woodville had been closely connected[24] with the promotion of Stillington to the Chancellorship.

> "Also the iiij yere of kynge Edwarde, the Erle of Warwyke was sent into Fraunce for a maryage for the Kynge, for one fayre ladye, suster-doughter to the Kynge of Fraunce which was concludede by the Erle of Warwyke. And whyles the seyde Erle of Warwyke was in Fraunce, the Kynge was wedded to Elisabeth Gray, wedow . . . . . and the weddynge was prevely in a secrete place, the fyrst day of Maye the yere above seide . . . . . And thenne the Kyng put out of the Chaunceler-schepp the Bysshope of Excetre, brother to the Erle of Warwyke, and made the Bysshoppe of Bath Chaunceler of Englonde."

In the notes on Warkworth's Chronicle, is quoted, p. 35: "I find it stated in one place (MS. Harl. 2408) that Edward's brother attempted to hinder the marriage, by causing another contract to be alleadged made by him with the Lady Elizabeth Lucy, on whom he had begot a child befor."

The same points are touched on by Habington,[25] with a distinct expression of the lawfulness of the marriage with Elizabeth Woodville.

(22). *Bishop Hobhouse*, MS.
(23). *Brewer's* Reign of Henry VIII., ii. p. 461.
(24). Chronicle of the first thirteen years of the reign of Edward IV, by *John Warkworth. Camden Society*, 1839.
(25). *Habington's* History of Edward IV, 1640, pp. 33-35.

"But while policie acted severall parts abroade; love on the sudden chang'd the whole sceane at home. For the young King after hunting comming to visite the Duches of Bedford, at her Manor of Grafton, neer Stony Stratford, was solicited by a faire petitioner, the Duchesses daughter, widow of Sir John Gray, slaine on King Henrie's part at the battaile of St. Albans. . . . . And though afterward during the usurpation of Richard the III, in open Parlament was alleaged against the lawfulness of King Edwards marriage, strange potions and amorous charmes by which the Lady Elizabeth Gray bewitcht him to her love, and likewise another pre-contract with the Lady Eleanor Butler,[26] daughter to the Earl of Shrewsbury, and widdow to the Lord of Sudlye: I cannot but beleeve all those scandals by some of the tyrants wicked instruments, suggested into the mindes of that assembly. For had there been a just exception against this marriage, neither George Duke of Clarence, nor the Earle of Warwicke, in their frequent calumnies against the King, being in open rebellion, had left it unmentioned."

A cardinal point in Stillington's history was his embassy to Brittany, 1475, to demand the extradition of the Earl of Richmond, afterwards Henry VII:

"Impium facinus[27] abhorruit Dux Britanniæ et innocentem juvenem Regi œmulo in carnificinam tradere recusavit . . . . Medio demum anno 1485 sublato tyranno (Ric. III) regno que ad Henricum Comitem delato, Robertus ab Aula relegatus est."

Then he supports, 1486, Lambert Simnel: 1487, flees to

(26). In Sir Thomas More (61) Elizabeth Lucy is named instead of Lady E. B., of Sudlye. Both are said to have been *chères amies* of Edward IV.

(27). Lives of the Bishops of Bath and Wells, *Cassan*: pp. 257-260. Also *Godwin*, De Presulibus Angliæ Commentarius, p. 437.

Oxford as an asylum : asserts the privilege of sanctuary for all students : but in vain.

"Prehensus Windesoram ductus est 1487 mense Octobri, et usque ad obitum in carcere adservatus. Obiit anno 1491 : apud Ecclesiam Wellensem sepultus in Capellâ, quam juxta claustra construxerat, pulcherrimâ."

One passage in the Paston Letters shows at once a country gentleman's love of his horse, and Stillington's power as chancellor; while another indicates a fear on the part of his friends that his tenure of office might be short ; as in fact it was.

"And so by Fryday[28] at the forthest I tryst to have my perdon ensealyd by the Chanceler" *i.e.*, Robert Stillington, "and sone aftyr, so as I can fornyshe me, I tryst to se yow, if so be that eny of the Kings hows com in to Norwyche. I wold fayne my gray horse wer kept in mew for gnattys . . . . . and that the horse may be kept well, and have as myche mete as he will eate be twyx thys and that I come home, and that Jakys nage have mete i now also . . . . . .

Wretyn the Wednysday next before Mary Mawdelen
by your humblest sone, J.P.,"

A.D. 1471, 17 July. John Paston to Margaret Paston.

"I wold not that [you be] to besy in no such maters [ty]ll the werd [world] were mor suer, and in any wyse that w[hile my] Lord the Chaunceller" *i.e.* Robert Stillington,[29] "is in [occu]pation, labore to have an ende of your grete materes."

Wreten the Thursday next before Sent Kateryn, in hast,
Be your Moder."

A.D. 1472, 19 Nov. Margaret Paston to John Paston.[30]

(28). Paston Letters : edited by *James Gairdner*, No. 674. The pardon itself did not pass the Great Seal till the 7th February following.

(29). July 27th, 1475, Laurence Booth, Bishop of Durham, was invested with the office, which Stillington never afterwards recovered.

(30). Paston Letters : edited by *James Gairdner*, No. 705.

The character of Stillington, and the fate of his beautiful chapel is described by John of Whethampstede; Chronicon, pp. 689-691.

"Annum fere integrum vacarat haec sedes (B. & W.) quando administrationem illius capessit Robertus Stillingtonus legum Doctor, Archidiaconus Tantonensis et Decanus Sancti Martini: homo factiosus et prœcalido ingenio (ut mihi videtur) imbutus . . . . utcunque aliis, Stillingtono bene cessit hæc simultas (Edw. IV contra comitem Warwicensem); utpote quem ad honoratissimum Cancellarii munus extulit. Hoc nuper adepto, morte Bekintoni ad Episcopatum nostrum (B. & W.) via illi aperta est. Petente (id est, jubente) Rege, eligitur mense Julio 1465; quam electionem ratam habet Paulus 2us Papa Oct. 3, 1465. Consecratus videtur in fine Aprilis sequentis, et mortuus initio mensis Maii 1491 . . . . . Capellam juxta claustra B. Mariæ dicatam, œvo fatiscentem, demolivit, et suis sumptibus novam a fundamentis excitavit. Opus hercle prœclarum, sed infausto sydere susceptum. Si quidem, homines eosdem constructam atque dirutam vidisse, a majoribus natu annotatum accepi."

Three passages of William of Worcester speak of Stillington, though in the third the name is mis-spelt as Aillington. The first illustrates also the helpless position of an heiress.

"Mense Januarii Katerina, ducissa Norffolchiæ, juvencula ætatis xxiiii annorum, maritata est Johanni Wideville, fratri reginæ, ætatis xx annorum; maritagium diabolicum. . . . Eodem mense obiit magister Thomas Bekyngtone, cui successit magister Robertus Stillyngtone, decretorum doctor, custos Privati sigilli ac decanus S. Martini Londonensis.

Wilhelmi Wyrcester Annales. Rerum Britannicarum medii ævi scriptores."—*Rolls Series*, vol. ii, part ii, p. 783.

"Et tandem dominus Rex tradidit sigillum suum magnum magistro Roberto Stillingtone, Bathoniensi Episcopo, fecitque ipsum Cancellarium Angliæ."—*Rolls Series*, vol. ii, part ii, p. 787.

"A.D. 1494. Obiit magister Robertus Aillington, subtilissimus Doctor in jure civili, episcopus Bathoniensis qui est sepultus in Ecclesia suâ Wellensi (sic): ante cujus obitum, per medietatem quasi anni, scilicet in superiore hyeme, quæ fuit asperrima, apparuit cometa per tres noctes, mittens comam versus boream, locus (*sic.*) nativitatis ejus."—*Rolls Series*, vol. ii, part ii, page 792.

Two passages of De Commynes are worth quotation: the one on the general respect for person and property in England, even during the Wars of the Roses; and the other for the rapid turns of fortune in those days; and for the character of the English people and their King, Edward IV.

"Or, selon mon avis, entre toutes les seigneuries du monde dont j'ay congnoissance, où la chose publique est mieulx traictée, où regne moins de violence sur le peuple, où il n'y a nulz ediffices abbatuz ny desmolis pour guerre, c'est Angleterre; et tombe le sort et le malheur sur ceulx qui font la guerre."—*Mémoires De Commynes* (1477) book v, c. 19, vol. ii, p. 142. Dupont.

"En unze jours gaigna le conte de Warvic tout le royaulme d'Angleterre, au moins le mit en son obeysance. Le roy Edouard le conquit en vingt et un jours; mais il y eut deux grosses battailes, et aspres. Ainsi veez quelles sont les mutations d'Angleterre. Ledict roy Edouard feit mourir beaucoup de peuple en plusieurs lieux, par especial de ceulx qui avoient faict les assemblees contre luy. De tous les peuples du monde, celluy d'Angleterre est le plus enclin a ces batailles. Apres ceste journee est demouré le roy Edouard pacifique en Angleterre, jusques à sa mort; mais non pas sans grant travail d'esperit et grans pensées."—*Mémoires De Commynes*, book iii, c. 7, vol. i, p. 262. Dupont.

A sober review of moot points in the reigns of our four Kings, will be found in Lingard's "History of England," vol. ii. Appendix.

Note B deals with the alleged pre-contract of marriage between Edward IV and Eleanor Butler, or Boteler. "On the whole," writes Lingard, "it is evident that Elizabeth was the real wife of Edward, and the pre-contract was a fiction."

Note C reviews the attempts to clear Richard III from the murder of the two Princes, his nephews. Lingard believes him guilty.

Note D enquires "Was Perkin Warbeck an impostor?" Lingard says, "No doubt . . . Warbeck was an impostor."

Excellent reading on the period will be found in Mr. James Gairdner's Preface to vol. i and ii of "Letters, &c.—Richard III. Henry VII."—*Rolls Series*, 1861, 1863.

I cannot close this paper without expressing my warm thanks to the principal Librarian of the British Museum; to Mr. James Gairdner of the Record Office, whom I was so fortunate as to meet at the British Museum; to Mr. Fortescue, and to other officials of that Museum, for the great convenience of the arrangements made for me.

The paucity of material, not only regarding Stillington, but also on the whole period of the Wars of the Roses, is remarkable. For the times of Edward III there is no lack of records. For the reign of Henry VIII the materials are ample. Why this striking difference?

In the first place the "Black Death" (1348, 1349) devastated the homes of literature, the monasteries I mean, as well as the cities: the parsonages as well as the farms; and in Somerset at any rate the monasteries had not recovered from that great pestilence when their day of dissolution came. Neither had literature yet taken to the laity and the towns.

> "At Bath,[31] in 1344, the community at the priory consisted of thirty professed monks. . . . . A list on the roll of the Somerset clergy . . . in 1377 shows that the number had been

(31). The Great Pestilence, by *F. A. Gasquet*, 1893, p. 85.

reduced to sixteen, and at this number it apparently remained till the final dissolution of the house in the sixteenth century."

The mere fact of "the religious" living together in community, must have made contagion run like wild-fire along their ranks.

As early as January 17th, 1349, the Bishop of Bath and Wells, in a letter of advice to his flock,[32] wrote—

> "*In articulo mortis*, if they are not able to obtain any priest, they should make confession of their sins (according to the teaching of the apostle) even to a layman, and if a man is not at hand, then to a woman . . . . The sacrament of the Eucharist, when no priest can be obtained, may be administered by a deacon."
>
> "The Bishop of Bath and Wells remained[33] at his manor of Wiveliscombe till the worst was past, in May of 1349. Thither came the long procession of priests to receive their letters of institution to vacant benefices. Day after day for nearly six months the work went on without hardly any cessation . . . often four and five, once, at least, ten together, came to be instituted to cures which the great pestilence had left without a priest."

In the second place, the Wars of the Roses were a period of devastation: and many records written in the fifteenth century must have perished in flame. "In all our history," says Mrs. Green,[34] "there is no time so barren in literature as the reign of Henry VI."

Thirdly, the Record Office has as yet published nothing whatever of the date of our four kings: and until we reach Brewer's noble introduction to the papers of the reign of Henry VIII, we are "a people walking in darkness."

(32). *Gasquet*, p. 81.

(33). *Gasquet*, p. 84.

(34). Town Life in the Fifteenth Century, by *Mrs. J. R. Green*; Macmillan, 1894; vol. i, p. 38.

Really the Middle Ages close in England with Richard III, and modern organization begins with Henry VII. The one was the last of a family of soldiers: the other offered a new type of royal dignity, and was the founder of a dynasty of statesmen. The one administered his kingdom by executions and the sword: the other by import duties, political alliances, international treaties, fines, subsidies, benevolences, and ingenious taxation. "The Bishop of Worcester, in a poem, addressed the king as pastor," says Mr. Gairdner, "and the ready-witted monarch replied," in a neat pentameter—

"Si me pastorem, te decet esse pecus."

He sheared his flock closely, with method and on principle. "He checked his accounts with his own hand," says Mr. Gairdner[35]; "and governed the people by his cash-book; nor was his rule generally oppressive, except in its financial aspect." His policy was largely guided by industrial and commercial[36] interests. He put into triumphant operation the Navigation Act that had failed under Richard II.

He knew that the cardinal point of government lay in prosperity and finance. His love of money, but not his moderation or balance of character, was inherited by Henry VIII; who, through his mother, a beautiful woman herself, drew from Edward IV a superb physique, a beautiful and manly presence, unflinching courage, and an appearance of fascinating frankness: but also unscrupulous cunning, ingratitude and cruelty, a Yorkist temper, and eventually a mixed character of degraded magnificence.

(35). *Gairdner's* Letters, &c., of Richard III, and Henry VII, p. 29.

(36). "No limit was set to the pirate wars that raged from Syria to Iceland till a great statesman, Henry VII, made his splendid attempt to discover, through international treaties, the means of securing a settled order for the new commercial state."—Town Life in the Fifteenth Century, vol. i. p. 66.

APPENDIX.

(Note A).

"Henry by the grace of God King of England, and of Fraunce, and Lord of Ireland, to our trusty and well-beloved Robert Rawdon gentleman, greeting. For as moch as Robert Bishop of Bath and Sir Richard Ratcliff Knights, adherents and assistents to our grete enemy Richard late duc of Glocestre, to his aide and assistance, have by deverse ways offended against the crowne to us of right appurteyneying, we will and charge you and by this our warrant commit and geve you power to attache unto us the said bishop and knight, and them personaly to bring unto us, and to seaze into your hands all such goods, moveables and immoveables as the xxii^{d} day of August the first year of our reigne appurteyned and belonged unto them whersoever they be found . . . . Geven undre our signet at our towne of Leicestre the xxiii^{d} day of August, the first yere of our reign."[37]

"Per signet et sigillum Manuale"

FOX.

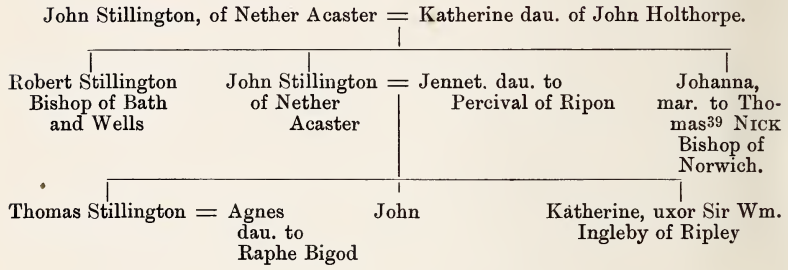
(37). *Drake's* Eboracum, p. 123.

(Note B).

From Visitation of Yorkshire, made in the years 1584-5, by Robert Glover, *Somerset Herald*; edited by Joseph Foster, 1875, p. iii, we learn the pedigree of—

Stillington of Acaster.

"Arms. *Gu.*, on a fesse *argent* between 3 leopards' heads cabossed *or*, as many fleurs-de-lis *sable*."[38]



On stone panelling below first-floor south window of a house at the north end of the Vicar's Close, west of the chapel, may still be seen four shields. Bishop Beckington's arms are displayed on the western shield, Bishop Stillington's on the eastern. Between these are two shields, one bearing St. Andrew's Cross, the other the Arms of the See. Traces of vermilion and gold are still visible on every one of the four shields.

(38). MS., 1571.

(39). Thomas, MS., 1415.