

RALEIGH LECTURE ON HISTORY  
THE WARS OF THE ROSES

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THE broken sequence of battles, murders, executions, and armed clashes between neighbours which we have chosen to miscall the Wars of the Roses has long made the second half of the fifteenth century in England repulsive to all but the strongest-stomached. Had it not been for the early discovery of some two or three collections of private letters, the whole period might have fallen with some show of justice under the reproach of utter inhumanity. As it is, the homely details preserved in the familiar correspondence of Pastons, Stonors, and their like may have been allowed to excuse too much. For they have suggested the consoling but possibly mistaken notion that while great lords were busy exterminating one another, lesser men, though enduring much at the hands of their betters, stood to some extent outside and below the conflict so that, unlike their betters, they were able to survive. And what is more deserved to survive, however humble their merits, because at least they were not monsters.

It might have been otherwise had we the private letters of but one ducal, comital, or even mere baronial family, what its members wrote to one another and to their friends. The magnates certainly sent and received letters in vast quantities, as their accounts prove. They may have been too wary to open their hearts often on paper where matters of state were at issue, but there were many other subjects on which circumspection was unnecessary. The letters which passed between Richard Nevill, Earl of Warwick, and his countess during their frequent separations are unlikely to have been less revealing than the correspondence of John and Margaret Paston. The mere accident of preservation has thus helped to establish and maintain the belief that the suicidal rancours which engulfed the old royal house, the ancient nobility, and such others from feed-men to misguided commons as allowed themselves to be drawn in, left the mass of the people indifferent to their senseless quarrels, and impatient only for the coming of a strong ruler who would see justice done on all lawbreakers. The participation of the

non-noble in the Wars of the Roses, save as hirelings, conscripts, or dupes is rarely allowed for, despite a strange partiality for chroniclers' estimates of the size of armies.

At the same time the motives and aims of the baronial contestants for want of their intimate letters have been so simplified and generalized that, soaked though they clearly were in innocent and guilty blood, they nevertheless remain bloodlessly unreal to us. Sir John Fastolf in his querulous old age is almost as living a figure today as Shakespeare's fat knight; not so Richard Plantagenet, Fastolf's last of many masters, who only speaks to the historian in his political manifestoes. The thoughts of Margaret of Anjou are less easy to read than those of Margaret Mautby. A mere handful of private letters enables us to feel that we know Thomas Mull and Thomas Betson as we do not have a chance of knowing Thomas Percy or Thomas Nevill or Thomas Grey. The features of the principal actors are so obliterated by what Horace Walpole lovingly called 'the true rust of the Barons' wars' that it is hardly possible to distinguish one from another. Instead of individual barons we are in danger of seeing only the representative baron; and since the average man must be a dead man he can tell us no tales. Yet though at this distance the members of the nobility are apt to look alike they differed widely for all their common stock of traditions, tastes, and prejudices, in native intelligence, practical experience, and ability to learn from their own and other people's mistakes. The thirteenth Vere earl of Oxford is no more likely to have resembled the ninth Fitzalan earl of Arundel than did the fifth Primrose earl of Rosebery the ninth Cecil earl (and third marquess) of Salisbury. To lump the former pair and their contemporaries together as feudal reactionaries or even as kites and crows without trying to understand why each behaved as he did is to make a doubtful virtue out of what has not yet been proved a necessity.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The reference to a belief in 'feudal reactionaries' may seem to flog a dead horse. But the horse was still alive eleven days after this lecture was read. Dr. J. H. Plumb, reviewing Dr. Neville Williams's life of Thomas 4th duke of Norfolk (1538-72), described the Howards as 'feudal dinosaurs, doomed to distinction'. Were it not clear from the context (*The Sunday Times*, 8 Mar. 1964) that the last word was misprinted, this might be taken for wit. Less than a century before the 4th duke's birth the Howards were middling Suffolk gentry. Before the unforeseen consequences of an earlier marriage raised them to ducal wealth they entered the peerage as servants of Edward IV, in that resembling the Tudor 'nobility of service'. Again, unlike dinosaurs they evolved and survived only slightly behind the times into our own day. It is vain to flog a dead horse, vainer to flog a dead dinosaur.

Badly served as we may be by both chroniclers and public records, differences can be traced. There can be little room for particulars in such a discourse as this, but the diversities of its members must never be forgotten in generalizations about the class.

The drying-up about 1450 of many familiar sources is only half the problem. It was accompanied by the virtual disappearance within a decade of another type of evidence, hitherto not much used by scholars, which would have been of particular value for the troubled years of civil war. In the first half of the century the financial and other records accumulated by landed families, both great and small, give promise of increasing abundance. Then for no apparent reason scarcity sets in. It is not obvious why the muniments of the Nevill earls of Salisbury and Warwick are less well preserved than those of their Montagu and Beauchamp forebears. Nor is it easy to understand why those of Richard duke of York failed to pass, reasonably intact, into the safe-keeping of the crown after 1461. Perhaps they did and perished later. Their few scattered remains leave us in no doubt of their capacity to lighten our darkness. It seems that most of them are now past praying for. Yet without them and their like only a superficial narrative of the war is possible; and without a narrative any analysis we attempt must be limited also.

In the 1450's not all these lamps had been extinguished. From York's few accounts and those of two branches of the widely ramified Stafford family we are allowed to catch a few glimpses of the political manœuvring and warlike preparation which led up to the first clash at St. Albans. The *Paston Letters* have long familiarized us with York's efforts to influence the choice of members of parliament for East Anglia immediately after his return from Ireland in the late summer of 1450.<sup>1</sup> An account belonging to one of his receivers shows that the same policy was actively pursued elsewhere. At or soon after Michaelmas the duke's auditor was dispatched to solicit the good offices of lords Zouche and Lovel, of Henry Green and John Vaux for the election of knights of the shire in the counties of Northampton and Oxford.<sup>2</sup> To judge from the names of those returned these

<sup>1</sup> *Paston Letters*, ed. J. Gairdner (Library edn., 1904), vol. ii, pp. 184-5; *Trans. Royal Hist. Soc.*, 4th series, vol. xxvi (1944), pp. 56-58.

<sup>2</sup> 'Et in expensis dicti auditoris equitantis de loco suo in comitatu Oxon' vsque Milton & Haryngworth in comitatu North' ad loquendum cum domino la Souche & Henrico Greene necnon vsque locum Johannis Vaux & deinde vsque Mynster Lovell in comitatu Oxon' pro colloquio habendo cum

efforts were at most only half successful.<sup>1</sup> Nevertheless York had every reason to be pleased with the support given him by the commons when parliament met.<sup>2</sup> What robbed him of victory

Willelmo domino de Lovell mandato domini pro suis amiciciis habendis in ellecione militum comitatus in eisdem comitatibus hóc anno' (British Museum, Egerton Roll 8783, m. 3: account of the duke's receiver, cos. Somerset and Dorset, for the year ending Michaelmas 1450). The previous entries refer to the audit at the end of the year. The auditor was Thomas Willoughby of Wardington, Oxon. (*Calendar of Close Rolls, 1447-54*, p. 431). He was receiver cos. Wilts. and Glos. on 24 June 1432 (B.M. Eg. Roll 8774) and had become auditor by 10 Jan. 1439 (Westminster Abbey Muniment 12168, m. 1 dorse). He was still auditor in 1452-3 (B.M. Eg. Roll 8784, m. 2), by which time he had become treasurer of the duke's household (*ibid.*, m. 3 and 8365 dorse). On 3 December 1453 he was appointed king's escheator cos. Northants and Rutland (*Calendar of Fine Rolls*, vol. xix, p. 74). On 21 Feb. 1455 the hundred of Fawsley, Northants, was farmed by him for ten years (*ibid.*, p. 121). There is as far as I know no other evidence that either William lord Zouche (c. 1402-1462) or William lord Lovel (1397-1455) was a supporter of the Duke of York. Lovel's son and heir was with Henry VI at Ludford in 1459 (*Calendar of Patent Rolls, 1452-1461*, pp. 534-5). Henry Green is presumably he of Drayton, Northants, grandson of Richard II's servant and described in 1450 as the king's esquire (*Rotuli Parliamentorum*, vol. v, p. 195*b*). I can find no John Vaux c. 1450, apart from a townsman of Leicester (*Cal. Close Rolls, 1447-54*, p. 422). It seems probable that William Vaux of Harrowden, sheriff of Northants. 1449-50 (*History of Parliament, 1439-1509, Biographies*, ed. J. Wedgwood, p. 904), is intended. He too had no obvious ties with York.

<sup>1</sup> None of the four shire-knights was a certain supporter of York in 1450. Sir Robert Harcourt of Stanton Harcourt, Oxon., and Ellenhall, Staffs., may have been one by 1459 (*Rot. Parl.*, vol. v, p. 368*b*). Thomas Mulsho of Newton and Geddington, Northants, was a near kinsman of Sir Edmund Mulsho, York's councillor, but I can find no evidence connecting Thomas with the duke or his service. Edmund Reade of Boarstall, Bucks., and Checkendon, Oxon., was a lawyer and was described in 1447 as a king's servant (*Cal. Pat. Rolls, 1446-1452*, p. 81). Thomas Seyton of Maidwell, Northants, had no known affinity and seems to have been of little importance.

<sup>2</sup> His undoubted dependents in the commons were (i) the speaker Sir William Oldhall, his chamberlain since at least 1444 (J. S. Roskell, 'Sir William Oldhall, Speaker in the Parliament of 1450-1', *Nottingham Mediaeval Studies*, vol. v (1961), pp. 97-98); (ii) Sir John Barre, and (iii) Sir Walter Devereux, each of whom was in receipt of an annuity of £20 from the duke in 1442-3 (Public Record Office, S.C. 11/818, m. 7); and (iv) Sir Edmund Mulsho to whom the duke had granted lands at Thaxted, Essex, for life by 1447-8 (Westmin. Abbey Muniment 12165, m. 9 dorse). All these witnessed York's charter to the friars of Babwell, dated Bury St. Edmunds 28 Feb. 1447 (*Cal. Pat. Rolls, 1446-1452*, p. 231). To them can be added (v) William Browning, senior, of Melbury Sampford, Dorset, who had been the duke's receiver for Somerset and Dorset since at least 1436-7 (B.M. Eg. Rolls 8781 and 8783-5) and surveyor there for life from 27 May 1449 (*ibid.*, 8783-4).

was rather the size and number of the armed retinues ranged against him.<sup>1</sup>

Already in the spring of that year, well before Cade's men had appeared at Blackheath, the outlook seemed to Humphrey duke of Buckingham so threatening that he caused some seventy-odd yeomen to be brought by the officials of his Stafford circuit to 'await upon' their lord in the capital during May and June.<sup>2</sup> For the next six years his knights, esquires, and gentlemen were from time to time ordered to come to him defensibly arrayed or warned to be ready to march at short notice.<sup>3</sup> For this reason he was not taken quite by surprise when York and his friends at last decided to fight on 22 May 1455. Ninety men from Kent and Surrey alone were later rewarded for 'beyng w<sup>t</sup> my lord

He was still receiver at the duke's attainder and was continued in office by Henry VI (*Cal. Pat. Rolls, 1452-1461*, p. 592). On the strength of this last entry Wedgwood (op. cit., p. 125) chooses to describe him as 'obviously a good Lancastrian'. His effigy in Melbury Sampford church wears the collar of suns and roses with the lion of March as pendant (*Royal Commission on Historical Monuments, West Dorset*, p. 162 and pl. 23). Later Yorkists whose attitude in 1450 cannot be presumed were Walter Blount, Thomas Frowick, Sir John Melton junior, Sir Thomas Parr, Sir William Peachey, Robert Poynings (though from his connexion with Cade he may at least be counted as against the court) and John Russell of Lydiard Millicent. The lawyers William Burley, Richard Forster, Thomas Palmer, and Thomas Young raise special problems which are discussed below, pp. 109-110; here it may be noted that Burley was not only retained as legal counsel by the duke but was chief steward of York's lordships of Denbigh and Montgomery by 1442-3 (P.R.O., S.C. 11/818). It seems likely that York may have had some ten or twelve servants in the commons on whose support he could rely. That other lords were electioneering is proved by the letter sent by the Duke of Exeter to the Earl of Devon for his interest in the return of Hugh Payne as M.P. for Exeter (Wedgwood, op. cit., *Register*, p. 162, n. 4, *ex inf.* Miss M. McKisack from Exeter Receivers Accounts; M. McKisack, *Parliamentary Representation of the English Boroughs during the Middle Ages*, p. 61 and n.).

<sup>1</sup> The Duke of Buckingham was later paid £400 for joining Henry VI at Kenilworth and Coventry 'with a strong guard' in Sept. 1450 (*Issues of the Exchequer*, ed. F. Devon, p. 478). See the remarks in *Historical Collections of a Citizen of London*, ed. J. Gairdner (Camden Soc.), p. 195.

<sup>2</sup> Staffordshire Record Office, D 641/1/2/20, m. 3 (declaration of account of Roger Draycote, Stafford receiver, for the year ending Michaelmas, 1450). There were seventy-four yeomen accompanied by Humphrey Cotes (former receiver), William Mytton, and Draycote. The costs amounted to £17. 10s.

<sup>3</sup> Only a few examples can be quoted here. Draycote's account for the year ending Michaelmas, 1451 (Staffs. R.O., D 641/1/2/57) mentions letters sent to Sir John Burgh of Wattlesborough, Sir Nicholas Longford of Longford, and thirteen named esquires, the summoning of sixty yeomen to meet the duke at Atherstone 'versus Thomam Mallery militem', of 'divers' yeomen

at Seynt Albons';<sup>1</sup> and there are traces that his ministers elsewhere were equally busy. Whether all arrived on the field in time is less certain. The duke's namesake and very distant cousin, Humphrey Stafford esquire of Grafton, almost certainly did, since he set out from Worcestershire on 16 May with a small band of servants for the same rendezvous.<sup>2</sup> He had close ties with the leaders of both armies;<sup>3</sup> to judge from other entries in his accounts it seems likely that he too fought on the losing side.<sup>4</sup>

Of York's success in mobilizing his retinue then and thereafter to be 'in presencia domini apud Leyc' essentis ibidem cum Rege' and of 'omnes valectos de retinencia domini in comitatibus Staff' & Cest' ad essendum paratos super premunicionem trium dierum' (m. 7 dorse). The accounts for 1452-3 and 1454-5 (D 641/1/2/58-59) contain similar entries. Finally, in Draycote's declaration of account for 1455-6 (D 641/1/2/22) there is this: 'And in diuerse foren expencez necessaries be þe seid receyuour done þis yere uppon diuerse messangerez þat were sent be my lordes commaundment frome Staff' vnto diuerse knyghtez and sqwyers for to come to my lord to Staff' for diuerse causez with other necessarie expenses —39/3' (m. 4). The Earl of Stafford, the duke's heir, can be seen taking an active part in his father's concerns.

<sup>1</sup> Staffs. R.O. D 641/1/2/22, m. 7 dorse (William Hexstall, receiver Kent and Surrey). They were paid 6s. 8d. a head. On m. 7 is also the following entry: 'And in the wages of diuerse yomen and gromes of my lordes with þe wages of þe pages of diuerse gentilmen and yomen of my lordes beyng at liuery at Tonbr', Hadele, Yeldyng and Penshurst at diuerse tymes withynne the tyme of þis accompt—£35-14-0¼.' Entries in other accounts show that the duke's officers and grooms were keeping large numbers of horses at or near Tonbridge during the early 1450's. Though the duke's household was usually at Maxstoke or Writtle, Tonbridge and Stafford seem to have been the headquarters of his retinue.

<sup>2</sup> B.M. Add. MS. 74174 (account of John More, receiver and steward of the household of Humphrey Stafford, esq., 11 Nov. 1454-10 Nov. 1455), m. 3: payments 'ad manus proprias domini' include £6. 13s. 4d. 'in crastino ascencionis domini ipso tunc equitanti versus Seint Albon'. John Lyghthert was paid 4d. 'eunti versus Hales [= Halesowen] & alibi pro seruientibus mouendis ad equitandum cum domino versus Seint Albon'.

<sup>3</sup> For these see below, p. 109. On 24 May 1455 Ralph lord Sudeley's servant was rewarded for bringing Stafford 'j togam de liberata dicti domini'. In 1448-9 Stafford had accompanied the Earl of Warwick riding towards Abergavenny (B.M. Add. MS. 74169). The Countess of Warwick stayed at Grafton on 5 and 6 Sept. 1454, her visit costing her host £4. 12s. 3d. (B.M. Add. MS. 74172, m. 2).

<sup>4</sup> B.M. Add. MS. 47174, m. 3: 'Et solutum seruientibus Ducis Somerc' deferentibus le Chariot &c.—33/4; et solutum alio garcioni eiusdem ducis deferenti equos &c. —3/4.' On the other hand there was another visit from the Countess of Warwick that year, costing £4. 10s. (ibid.). But since her husband seems to have decided not to fee Stafford and the Earl of Wiltshire was still paying him an annuity of 20 marks (B.M. Add. MS. 47173, m. 1) the balance of evidence favours the conclusion in the text.

much less is known, though one small group of documents preserved at Longleat helps to fill out the story of his last critical months. He had returned once again from Ireland in September 1460, now for the first time openly resolved to seize the crown for himself. As we learn from Wheathampstead and can infer from the deadlock in parliament that followed his arrival at Westminster, York's decision was as unexpected as it was unwelcome, even by his principal allies. That it was acceptable to at least some of his obscurer followers is proved by the terms on which they agreed to help him. In the indenture, sealed by the parties at Gloucester on 2 October, Simon Milburn, a Herefordshire esquire, was

belast and w<sup>t</sup>holdyn for terme of his lyf w<sup>t</sup> and toward the said Duc and his son Edward Erl of Marche, promitting & binding hym by the faythe of his body & by this present endentures to do trew, diligent & faithfull seruice vn to the said Duc & Erle and w<sup>t</sup> thaym for to be ayenst all erthly criatures of what estate, condicion or preeminence so euer thay be'.<sup>1</sup>

There was no longer any question of saving Milburn's ligeance to King Henry. And to emphasize the point both the indenture and the patent accompanying it are dated, not by the regnal year in conformity with the normal practice of York's chancery, but by the year of grace, A.D. 1460.<sup>2</sup> By comparison with the

<sup>1</sup> The muniments of the Marquess of Bath, Longleat 10494 (the seal of Simon Milburn is missing). Longleat 10493, now badly shrunk and partly illegible, is the counterpart, sealed with York's signet. There are two similar indentures (Longleat 10491 and 10492) of the same date and with the same terms retaining Thomas Holcot and Henry Hackleton. The annual fee for all three retainers was 10 marks from the issues of York's lordships, co. Herefs. My thanks are due to Lord Bath and to Miss D. Coates, librarian of Longleat, for welcoming my many visits to the muniment-room there.

<sup>2</sup> The patent (Longleat 10495) has a fine example of the duke's seal, France and England quarterly with a label of three points each charged with a lily. There is another original patent of York's at Longleat (Devereux Papers, box 1, no. 6) appointing Walter Devereux, esq., steward of Radnor and many other Welsh lordships. It has the same seal and is dated Usk, 7 Apr. 30 Henry VI (1452). On the patent rolls of Edward IV's first year there are copies of eighteen of his father's letters patent ranging between 26 Mar., 1434 and 14 Nov. 1460. All but three (*Cal. Pat. Rolls, 1461-1467*, pp. 60, 94, and 96) are dated by Henry VI's regnal years [*ibid.*, pp. 14, 15, 22, 44, 46, 51, 53, 57, 81, 82, 89, 97 (2), 121, and 146]; these three are dated Chester 13 Sept. 1460, Gloucester 2 Oct. 1460, and London 1 Nov. 1460; by 4 Nov. 1460 he had reverted to 39 Hen. VI and called himself 'true heir to the kingdom' (*ibid.*, p. 14). This suggests that even at Chester on 13 Sept. York had renounced his allegiance to Henry VI. He had used the year of grace in dating letters addressed to his receiver-general in France (B.M. Add. Chs. 8031-2 and 26043, &c.).

stout Earl of Warwick and his prudent father, Simon Milburn may have been a political innocent. On this occasion his gamble proved a sound one.<sup>1</sup> It was not long before a defeated Warwick was persuaded by events to follow his example.

These scrappy survivals reinforce the impression we derive from our sources that, for all the military preparedness, the repeated calls to arms, the sporadic outbreaks of violence in the provinces, and the frequent likelihood of a major clash, the onset of real warfare was agonizingly slow, because desired by no one. It is impossible to believe that York's course had been charted beforehand or that he—or indeed any one else among the nobility—was spoiling for a fight. Even the theory that he had before 1455 grasped the importance of Calais for the balance of power in England may well read too much back from later events.<sup>2</sup> For ten long years of crisis, apart from one morning of uninhibited action at St. Albans, he had been beset by doubts and hesitations, if not by scruples of conscience. In spite of these he had more than once overestimated the strength of his name and cause, and failed to assess correctly the temper of his fellow magnates. For much of the time he seems to have hoped that his objectives (and these surely changed with events) could be secured by political action backed by the mere show of force and assisted by electoral management in the shires. The news of the less-hesitant Warwick's victory at Northampton at length inspired him to go all out for the crown. But even that was a miscalculation, since others, including the indispensable Nevills, were still unwilling to depose a *de facto* king and only consented to disinherit Edward Prince of Wales to resolve a deepening crisis.

The bearing of these events upon the question of the cause or causes of the war should be obvious. To adapt Clausewitz's famous definition, civil war was the continuation of politics by other means. As is not unusual in politics, it was a conflict between ins and outs. Henry VI's advisers were blamed not only for the collapse of English hopes in France and for the incom-

<sup>1</sup> Simon Milburn of Tillington, co. Herefs. was made escheator in that county, 7 Nov. 1459 (*Cal. Fine Rolls*, vol. xix, p. 252). He became sheriff there on 5 Nov. 1463 (*ibid.*, 1461-1471, p. 122). He must be distinguished from a namesake who died in 1464 with lands in cos. Hants, Wilts., Berks., and Somerset (*ibid.*, p. 126). Thomas Holcot was also a Herefordshire landowner (*ibid.*, p. 176). Henry Hackleton has eluded me.

<sup>2</sup> For an able development of the thesis here rejected see G. L. Harriss, 'The Struggle for Calais: an aspect of the rivalry between Lancaster and York', *Eng. Hist. Rev.*, vol. lxxv (1960), pp. 30-53.



petence and partiality of their rule at home, but for the exclusion of the lords of the king's blood and other 'true' servants from his counsels. How far the anger they excited was from being confined to the magnates and their liveried hangers-on the pamphlet literature inspired by Cade's rebellion is there to show.<sup>1</sup>

Had the war any other origins? The 'family settlement' of Edward III? Is it suggested that a king could reasonably have made no provision commensurate with their birth for his younger sons? Or merely that Edward ought not to have had any? Having them, he treated them as his ancestors had treated theirs. It is too often forgotten that both Edward IV and Henry VII did their poor best to found and endow cadet lines of their own blood. In losing its chance of another King Arthur England was also deprived of the prospect of Henry Tudor, Duke of York, and whatever male issue he succeeded in begetting in that private station. Historians of the sixteenth century would be well advised to bear in mind that Arthur's childless death at Ludlow may alone have robbed them of the spectacle of an overmighty subject much closer to the throne than Edward of Buckingham.

Responsibility for the civil war has long been laid at the door of Sir John Fortescue's greatest bugbear. But in fact only an undermighty ruler had anything to fear from overmighty subjects; and if he were undermighty his personal lack of fitness was the cause, not the weakness of his office and its resources. Henry VI's head was too small for his father's crown, but it was long before anyone was prepared to dispute his right to it. In the mid-fifteenth century many of the nobility were descended from the third Edward, more still from the first. That in itself was not a source of danger to the king—unless he was himself totally unsuited to his task. Only then did the question of the succession arise. If Edward III must be blamed it would be more sensible to point to his failure to settle the crown when Lionel of Clarence's death without male offspring made it possible that

<sup>1</sup> This widespread and popular clamour is best summed up in the second clause of the bill circulated by the commons of Kent in 1450: 'his trewe Comyns' desired of Henry VI 'pat he woll voyde all the false progeny and afynyte of the Duke of Southefolke, the whiche ben opynly knowyn traitours, and they to be ponysshed affter custome and lawe of the lond. And to take abowte hym a nobill persone, þe trewe blode of þe Reame, pat is to sey the hye and myghty prince þe Duke of Yorke, late exiled from our soueraigne lordes presens of the false traitour Duke of Southfolke and his affinite, and take to yow þe myghty prince the Duke of Excetter, Duke of Bokyngham, Duke of Northefolke, Erlys and barons of this londe' (C. L. Kingsford, *English Historical Literature in the Fifteenth Century*, pp. 360-1).

the house of Anjou, though not extinct, might be displaced by a Mortimer. After all in similar circumstances Edward I had settled the crown in 1290, placing his daughter's descendants before his brother.<sup>1</sup> In 1368 Edward III might well have preferred John of Gaunt to the great-grandson of his father's murderer, all the more so because during the fourteenth century the heir male had been gaining ground upon the heir general.<sup>2</sup> But whichever way he might have decided it, such a settlement would have been a flimsy barricade against a resolute usurper. The dynastic issue was a side issue and so remained until it was embraced by the theologians of legitimacy a century or more after Lancaster and York had died out. Edward IV had to make himself a king *de facto* first; his questionable, though convenient, *ius* would not do it for him.

The want of precipitancy shown by the combatants makes it difficult to argue that the very existence of armed bands of retainers caused the war. These had often been present during parliaments and councils without coming to blows. Since they were the centuries-old means by which English society was organized for war—and, as the terms of their indentures regularly specified, for peace also—it would have been odd if the main burden of the fighting had not been borne by them. Surely it is more desirable to remark how well the lords were able to enforce discipline in their retinues. And before we place the blame instead upon a demoralized, unpaid, and mutinous soldiery fleeing from Normandy and Guyenne—such men certainly existed—we need to have some measure of their contribution. It was most obvious in 1450. Like the inmates of sanctuaries and prisons they may have been promising recruits—in subordinate positions. They went to swell the turbulent commons. When from time to time they are mentioned in the private accounts of contemporaries, it is to receive, along with the prisoners in Newgate and the Fleet, charity rather than weapons and a fee.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Fœdera* etc., ed. T. Rymer, Rec. Com. edn., vol. i, pt. ii, p. 742.

<sup>2</sup> The entailing of their inheritances on their male issue by Richard earl of Arundel (1347–54 (*Cal. Pat. Rolls, 1345–1348*, pp. 328–9; *ibid.*, 1354–1358, p. 131)) and by Thomas earl of Warwick (1344–69 (*ibid.*, 1343–1345, pp. 251–2 and 517–18; *ibid.*, 1354–1358, p. 416; *ibid.*, 1361–1364, pp. 48 and 105; *ibid.*, 1369–1374, p. 108)) suggests what their sovereign's attitude might have been.

<sup>3</sup> As Sir John Fastolf's executor William Worcester early in 1460 gave a mark to John Lawney esquire because he was Fastolf's kinsman '*& eciam fuit cum domino in guerris Francis pluribus annis non habens vnde viuere*', and a few months later 16*d.* to John Chambre gentleman, '*quondam soldarius*

Veterans of Henry V's army, many of them were old in years as well as in experience. There is an alternative possibility: that the magnates themselves, deprived of the profits of war which had compensated them for falling rents, sought to escape threatened ruin in the lottery of civil war. Though superficially attractive, this too must be discarded. The men readiest to take up arms, York, Salisbury, and Warwick on one side, Somerset, Buckingham, and Wiltshire on the other, were without exception richer than their fathers. Their ministers' accounts could show mounting arrears and unpaid debts, but the signs of a reckless indifference to consequences are wanting. They had still too much to lose. Lord Cromwell, whom Warwick held to have been 'begynner of all þ<sup>t</sup> journey at Seynt Albonez', had accumulated an immense fortune in lands and goods since the first decade of the reign.<sup>1</sup> He was a supporter, though a cautious one, of York. It was not poverty that made him and his like desperate but the political situation. The war was fought because the nobility was unable to rescue the kingdom from the consequences of Henry VI's inanity by any other means. It does not follow that they liked the task.

So far I have been speaking about the first of the wars. The plural may perhaps be taken to stand for three: the first beginning in 1450 but only reaching the boil in 1460 and 1461 to cool off by 1464, the second lasting from Edward IV's marriage to its climax at Barnet and Tewkesbury, and the third from Edward IV's death to the final terminus at Stoke. The causes of the last two were not very different from those of the first. Only a most thorough-going determinist would maintain that in no conceivable circumstances could Warwick have served Edward of York as loyally as (say) Buckingham served Henry of Lancaster. It just happened that for simple and quite understandable reasons *cum domino in Frauncia & valde pauper postea*' (Magdalen College, Oxford, muniments, Fastolf Paper 72, mm. 1 and 3).

<sup>1</sup> In 1429-30 the clear annual value of his and his wife's lands was estimated to be £1,020 (*Hist. MSS. Com. Report on the MSS. of Lord De L'Isle and Dudley*, vol. i, pp. 207-8. There are a few mistakes in the calendar but the total is correct). Towards the end of his life (he died 4 Jan. 1456) the clear value had risen to £2,263 (P.R.O., S.C. 11/822, m. 10). Unfortunately the head of the roll is wanting and the date is uncertain. For observations on the landed income of Lord Cromwell see T. B. Pugh and C. D. Ross, 'The English Baronage and the Income Tax of 1436', *Bull. Inst. Hist. Research*, vol. xxvi (1953), pp. 6-7). About January 1465 Cromwell's executors valued his cash and goods, including jewels and vestments given to Tattershall College during his life (£2,666. 13s. 4d.), at £21,456 (Magd. Coll., Oxford, muniments, Misc. 357).

he did not. Whose fault that was is a much more involved and possibly, given our sources, insoluble problem. Similarly no one but a member of the invincible brotherhood of the White Boar (our latter-day Baconians) could fail to agree that the secure position of the Yorkist house in 1483 was destroyed, even if for the best of reasons, by Richard of Gloucester and those who helped him to his nephew's throne. In talking of causes it is necessary to avoid the temptations of profundity. It was after all, as Henry VII's reign bears witness, at a superficial level that the cures were found. Neither the structure of English society nor of its administration was radically altered between 1450 and 1500. If there were the makings of a revolutionary situation in the year of Suffolk's murder and Cade's capture of London no revolution followed. Their grievances involved the commons in the struggle but they were unable to affect its outcome. Whatever divided the opposing armies it did not arise from differences of class. Those village Hampdens, the Robins of Redesdale and Holderness, were as gently born as Hampden himself.

Nor can the belligerents be given any definite geographical limits. These were neither wars between north and south nor between the lowland south-east and the dark corners of the north and west. The sides had no frontiers to defend, no large home-grounds where they could only be challenged in force.<sup>1</sup> Except at the Tower in 1460 and in the northern marches between 1461 and 1464 when Margaret's troops had a base in Scotland, there were few sieges: Denbigh, Thorpe Waterville, Harlech, Caister, St. Michael's Mount.<sup>2</sup> The great private

<sup>1</sup> That is in England and Wales. York's hold on Ireland and Warwick's on Calais in 1459-60 were exceptional. The invasions of 1470, 1471, and 1485 show that a foreign port could serve the same purpose as well.

<sup>2</sup> Caister's siege was scarcely an incident in the wars. And it is doubtful whether Thorpe Waterville, the duke of Exeter's castle in the Nene valley between Thrapston and Oundle, deserves its place in the list. On 1 Apr. 1461 Sir John Wenlock (who had been given authority to suppress Lancastrians in the area on 16 Jan. (*Cal. Pat. Rolls, 1452-1461*, p. 657)) was commissioned to summon the gentry of cos. Northants, Beds., Bucks., Cambs., and Hunts. to assist him to besiege it (*ibid.*, 1461-1467, p. 28). Since he was at Towton on 29 Mar. (J. S. Roskell, 'John Lord Wenlock of Someries', *Pubs. of Beds. Rec. Soc.*, vol. xxxviii (1958), p. 37) and Thorpe Waterville was reported on 4 Apr. to have surrendered (*Paston Letts.*, vol. iii, p. 267) it looks as if the threat was enough to reduce the garrison to terms (but see Roskell, *op. cit.*, p. 37, n. 89 for evidence of Wenlock's having been there, presumably before he went north with the Yorkist army). Another castle briefly held in 1461 was Buckenham, Norfolk (*Cal. Pat. Rolls, 1461-1467*, pp. 67, 83, and 135).

castles on which the higher nobility had spent so much since the beginning of the fourteenth century were scarcely ever held against an enemy.<sup>1</sup> Nor were those of the king. Though the walled towns might shut their gates against an approaching army they were not put to the test of assault. The 'wars' consisted of short sharp engagements in the field with intervals of inactivity as well as the longer periods of peace following the victory of one side. Sometimes the advancing or retreating armies behaved as if they were in a foreign country, but their indulgence in plunder and destruction did not interfere to any marked degree with the normal pursuits of everyday life.<sup>2</sup> The accounts submitted to Fastolf's executors by William Worcester cover in some detail the months between Warwick's landing in June 1460 and Towton, the longest stretch of intense military activity and disorder in all the wars. Five major battles and the passage of armies to and from them did not seriously interrupt the winding-up of Fastolf's estate. This took Worcester several times from Norwich to London; he also went on his own account to Coventry and Bristol.<sup>3</sup> Only once did he put off a journey. That was in February 1461 'because there were so many soldiers on the road to the battle joined at St. Albans that no one could safely go and return.'<sup>4</sup> However, conditions were not so bad that he was unable to send his servant Adam instead.<sup>5</sup> Otherwise the civil war takes its place beside the floods of November 1460 as a temporary obstacle to the conduct of business.<sup>6</sup> When there

<sup>1</sup> The contrary is implied but without evidence in *The History of the King's Works*, ed. H. M. Colvin, vol. i, p. 240.

<sup>2</sup> Margaret's moss-troopers provide the best-known case of devastation, but the habits of the Hundred Years War were not quickly forgotten. As late as 1471 the Londoners ransomed prisoners taken in Kent 'like Frenchmen' (*Chronicles of London*, ed. C. L. Kingsford, p. 185).

<sup>3</sup> Magd. Coll., Oxford, Fastolf Paper 72 shows Worcester in London 9 May–6 June, then via Cambridge and Bury St. Edmunds to Norwich. On 19 June he left Norwich and arrived in London on the 21st, remaining there until 28 July. Between 28 July and 11 August he went via Buckingham, Coventry, and Withybridge (in Boddington, Glos., where Lord Beauchamp of Powick lived) to Bristol. He was back in London 11 Aug.–2 Sept. He reached Norwich on 4 Sept. and remained in East Anglia until 24 Nov. Between 24 and 27 Nov. he went to London. On 3 Jan. 1461 he returned to Norwich, arriving on the 5th.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, m. 5: 'pro eo quod fuerunt tunc euntes tot numeri soldariorum per viam ad bellum commissum apud Sanctum Albanum quod nemo potuit secure ire neque redire'.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.* (24 Nov. 1460), 'tempore inundacionis magnarum aquarum per viam'. For these floods compare *Registrum Abbatiae Johannis Whethamstede*, ed. H. T. Riley (Rolls Ser.), vol. i, pp. 384–5.

were soldiers about it was only prudent to lock up your title-deeds; Worcester twice took precautions to ensure that those at Southwark came through the danger-periods unharmed, namely before the battles of Northampton and Towton.<sup>1</sup>

For the combatants the chances of survival were less good, but here again a tendency to exaggeration must be resisted. If blood-feuds did arise they were rare. It was natural that the young heirs of York's victims at the first battle of St. Albans should have been moved by the desire to avenge a father's death.<sup>2</sup> The evidence that such feelings markedly affected their behaviour is slight. Lord Clifford's cry when he struck Rutland down at Wakefield is of course always quoted as if it epitomized the spirit of the civil war: 'By God's blood, thy father slew mine and so will I do thee and all thy kin.' As evidence it stands alone and comes to us from no earlier source than Hall's chronicle, where it is followed by a statement that can easily be disproved.<sup>3</sup> Against it can be set the perhaps equally apocryphal story of Clifford's son, the 'Shepherd Lord', who dreamt so little of revenge that he waited tending his sheep for better times. In 1472 the king, who was Rutland's brother, instead of taking his life threw him a pardon.<sup>4</sup>

It would be idle to deny that the casualties in the field, at least among those of noble and gentle birth, were numerous. They were bound to be when all captured in arms against either of the rival kings were liable to summary execution by the law of England as well as that of Padua.<sup>5</sup> Surrender therefore had its

<sup>1</sup> Magd. Coll., Oxford, Fastolf Paper 72, m. 5: 'in custubus & expensis factis cum amicis meis custodientibus evidencias manerij domini in Southwark pro eorum salua custodia tempore advenientis soldariorum London' ad bellum de Northampton cum rege Henrico ac ad bellum commissum Ferybrygg in comitatu Ebor' mense Marcij die ramis palmarum'. It was as late as 9 July 1461 that Margaret Paston warned her husband: 'item, at the reverence of God, be ware howe ye ryd or go, for nowgty and evyll desposyd felacheps. I am put en fere dayly for myn abydyng here' (*Paston Letters*, vol. iii, p. 288).

<sup>2</sup> *An English Chronicle*, ed. J. S. Davies (Camden Soc.), p. 77.

<sup>3</sup> Edward Hall, *Chronicle*, ed. H. Ellis, p. 251. Queen Margaret, according to Hall, was 'not lying far from the field' of battle. She was in fact in Scotland.

<sup>4</sup> *Cal. Pat. Rolls, 1467-1477*, p. 327.

<sup>5</sup> The figures for the descendants of Edward III in the male line (Lancaster, York, and Beaufort) are 7 killed and 5 executed or murdered. For peers and the heirs of peers (excluding the royal houses) the figures seem to be, including the doubtful cases of the Earl of Kent in 1463 and John Ratcliffe in 1461, 31 killed and 20 executed. As might be expected, the worst years were 1460-1 (13 peers killed and 6 executed and 2 princes killed) and 1469-71 (10 peers killed and 7 executed; 3 princes killed and 1 murdered). For the jurisdiction

perils. But escapes often occurred and clemency, although not to be relied upon, was far from uncommon. Sometimes an enemy spared was a friend gained, but not so invariably as to encourage the most easy-going or humane to take risks. A few saved their skins by a timely desertion; others hung back long enough to make sure that it was the victors they joined. The savagery of one or two 'butchers' must be admitted and it is almost certain that some private scores were settled either out of court by violence or in by judicial murder.<sup>1</sup> If Margaret associated her seven-year-old son with the executions that followed the second battle of St. Albans, her anxiety to teach him too soon the way of his world may forfeit our sympathy; as it evidently did that of some of her contemporaries.<sup>2</sup> But the sentences then passed on Bonville and Kyriel had been legally incurred. As the evidence stands it is not Worcester, who however much he may have enjoyed the task was only obeying orders, but Warwick who has the worst record.<sup>3</sup> It was typical of Edward IV that his practice touched all extremes. To judge from the results its want of consistency was not due to superior insight.<sup>4</sup>

Given the penalties of failure and the absence, save for the kings and the few pretenders to kingship, of a cause worth dying

of the court of chivalry in later-medieval England see M. H. Keen, 'Treason trials under the Law of Arms', *Trans. R. Hist. Soc.*, 5th ser., vol. xii (1962), pp. 85-103.

<sup>1</sup> e.g. Humphrey Stafford of Southwick's alleged responsibility for Henry Courtenay's execution in 1469 (*Warkworth's Chronicle*, ed. J. O. Halliwell (Camden Soc.), p. 6) and the killing of Sir William Lucy after the battle of Northampton by John Stafford's servants (*Collections of a Citizen of London*, p. 207; *Letters and Papers . . . of the Wars of the English in France*, ed. J. Stevenson (Rolls ser.), vol. ii, pt. ii, p. 773).

<sup>2</sup> Margaret's unpopularity made them credulous of any slander at her expense, but this story is too well attested to be discounted (*ibid.*, p. 776; *Coll. Citizen of London*, p. 212; *Three Fifteenth-Century Chrons.*, ed. J. Gairdner (Camden Soc.), p. 76).

<sup>3</sup> The execution of Pembroke, Rivers, and others after Edgcote had, as Ramsay rightly observes (*Lancaster and York*, vol. ii, p. 343), no 'legal justification', since they were not in arms against the king Warwick then acknowledged. The beheading of Osbern Mundford and his two companions in 1460 at Calais, of which Warwick was captain, is an early example of such lawlessness.

<sup>4</sup> Political necessity did not justify the execution of Owen Tudor. The impaling of Worcester's victims at Southampton in 1470, we have contemporary evidence (*Warkworth*, p. 9), was unsuccessful as a piece of 'frightfulness' intended to deter others. The treatment of Henry duke of Somerset and that of the Veres suggest that Edward wobbled between the two possible policies of severity and appeasement.

for, it is easy to see why opportunism rather than loyalty prevailed among those with most to lose, the heads of the great landed families. They risked not only their lives but the rank, fortunes, and prospects of their issue. No doubt some, either from blind stupidity or blind devotion, took no thought for such morrows. Their chances of survival diminished with time and so, therefore, did they. But even the intelligent had no means of knowing who would be king at the close of the struggle or when that would be; they could not be sure from day to day. Between Northampton and Towton victories and disasters succeeded one another so rapidly that it was impossible to foresee what would be the outcome. Nevertheless it was difficult for any members of the class, however constitutionally wary, to hold aloof. Their position involved them. To opt out meant the sacrifice of their inherited responsibilities as patrons of a territorial clientèle, the local expression of their lordly status. Even so a surprising number preferred to lie low. Their absenteeism was as marked on the battlefields as it was in parliament. For those too ambitious to sit still the best hope lay in trying to foresee and lend their support betimes to the next *fait accompli*. The perils of the game were obvious and tempted them to hedge their bets. Without luck chances were thin.

Yet among those who did manage to survive were a few who could be described as die-hards from choice. Jasper Tudor remained loyal throughout to his half-brother and then to his nephew. He had a long wait for his reward.<sup>1</sup> By 1464 impenitent Lancastrians were either dead or in exile. The failure of the readeption added to the dead and to the penitent; the exiles were fewer. Faithful Yorkists, if not killed, benefited for most of the time and were therefore more numerous. Richard III's treatment of Edward V even helped some of them to finish up on the winning side at Bosworth, though the sincerity of their professions in favour of Henry Tudor may be open to doubt. William Hastings, had he lived, would scarcely have quarrelled with his son's decision to offer loyal service to the new dynasty.

<sup>1</sup> John earl of Oxford's acceptance of a Yorkist king before 1468 and his betrayal of some of his Lancastrian fellow conspirators in that year make it impossible to regard him as an unwavering supporter of Henry VI (*Plumpton Correspondence*, ed. T. Stapleton (Camden Soc.), pp. 18-20; J. S. Roskell 'Sir Thomas Tresham, Knight', *Northamptonshire Past and Present*, vol. ii (1959), p. 320). He may also have joined Warwick in July 1469 well before the latter had decided to drop Clarence in favour of the readeption (John Stone, *Chronicle*, ed. W. G. Searle (Cambridge Antiq. Soc.), pp. 109-11). See also p. 103, n. 4, below.



Whatever they may have been by preference most reconciled themselves to the inevitable when it had become so. At every stage the majority of the survivors were trimmers either by conviction or necessity. Lord Rivers spoke for them when in 1461 he came to tender obedience to Edward of York on the ground that his former master's cause was 'irretrievably lost'.<sup>1</sup> A willingness to accept the *de facto* king was on the increase for the next quarter of a century, but it was already potent on the morrow of Towton. Many of the 'Yorkist' lords in the 1461 parliament had been 'Lancastrians' in that of 1459.<sup>2</sup> If the labels are to mean anything they need to be exactly dated. Outward conformity may have covered strong attachments to temporarily lost causes; then they are hidden also from us. It is unlikely that every treasonable correspondence with the enemy was inspired by a calculation of what was likely to happen next, though we cannot be sure. The spies and informers who brought exposure, ruin, and death to those whose treason had not yet arrived at overt acts were not concerned with the motives of their victims. It may be safe to deduce that in 1495 William Stanley was engaged, like John Churchill in the 1690's, in an unnecessary piece of reinsurance.<sup>3</sup> On the other hand the Veres in 1462 could equally well have been moved by their attachment out of season to a fading cause.<sup>4</sup>

For those in doubt the higher clergy set an example, albeit one hard for a layman to follow, of passive obedience. As

<sup>1</sup> *Cal. State Papers Milan*, ed. A. B. Hinds, vol. i, p. 102.

<sup>2</sup> A calculation is hindered by uncertainty about the attendance of those summoned at these, as at other, parliaments (J. S. Roskell, 'The Problem of the Attendance of the Lords in Medieval Parliaments', *Bull. Inst. Hist. Research*, vol. xxix (1956), pp. 153-204). But of the thirty-seven known to have been present at least once between 28 Nov. and 11 Dec. 1461 (*Fane Fragment of the 1461 Lords' Journal*, ed. W. H. Durham Jr., Yale Hist. Pubs. (1935), pp. 3-25. 'A New Fragment of the Lords' Journal of 1461', ed. R. Virgoe, *Bull. Inst. Hist. Res.*, vol. xxxii (1959), pp. 86-87, unfortunately adds no new names) 9 were new since 1459. In 1459 Warwick and Clinton were among those attainted and Worcester was in Italy; all were present in 1461. Of the remaining 25, 11 took the oath to maintain the house of Lancaster in parliament at Coventry on 11 Dec. 1459 (*Rot. Parl.*, vol. v, pp. 351-2) and at least 3 more (Oxford, Rivers, and Lovel) were then Lancastrians.

<sup>3</sup> W. A. J. Archbold; 'Sir William Stanley and Perkin Warbeck', *Eng. Hist. Rev.*, vol. xiv (1899), pp. 529-34.

<sup>4</sup> C. L. Scofield, 'The Early Life of John de Vere, thirteenth Earl of Oxford', *Eng. Hist. Rev.*, vol. xxix (1914), pp. 228-45, and the same author's *Life and Reign of Edward IV*, vol. i, pp. 230-4. The various chronicle accounts of these incidents are difficult to assess and reconcile.

professional non-combatants they escaped the worst consequences of being on the losing side. Though they were busy, if ineffective, peacemakers there is little excuse for regarding most of the bishops as neutrals aloof from the rivalries which divided others. Until it came to blows they had taken their share in the debates that ended in war.<sup>1</sup> Some were the close kinsmen of the men who fought. Others had risen in their service and were deep in their counsels. Yet only a Nevill or a Stillington showed too much partisan zeal to be acceptable to a victorious opponent. The long-lived and respected Bouchier and Wainfleet, whatever their ties and secret preferences—and they are unlikely to have been wholly secret—accommodated themselves to every change.<sup>2</sup> If for this they are to be dismissed as unheroic time-servers it is as well to remember that their lay colleagues and successive masters were more charitable. It was, after all, a problem with which these too were familiar. With reason they were less vindictive towards churchmen than their ancestors had been less than a century before. There were no martyrs like Richard Scrope.

While individuals in the main conformed, with or without reservations, until the next turn of the wheel, the families of the dead found the transition all the easier. That the widow and son of the murdered Suffolk should, by 1460, have found temporary safety in the Yorkist camp may appear odd to those who believe that fifteenth-century England resembled the Verona of the

<sup>1</sup> For example, both archbishops and sixteen bishops took the Coventry oath to maintain the Lancastrian dynasty (*Rot. Parl.*, vol. v, p. 351).

<sup>2</sup> The archbishop's half-brother, Humphrey duke of Buckingham, seems to have shown him respect and affection (see a copy of the duke's letter to him, written not earlier than December 1457 (Stafford, William Salt Lib., D 1721/1/1, fol. 346<sup>v</sup>; C. A. J. Armstrong, 'Politics and the Battle of St. Albans, 1455', *Bull. Inst. Hist. Res.*, vol. xxxiii (1960), p. 69, n. 8), but the Bouchiers were cautious supporters of York, whose sister the eldest brother Henry had married, in and after 1455, cautious supporters of Henry VI in 1459 and open supporters of York after Warwick's landing in 1460 (*ibid.*, p. 21; *Rot. Parl.*, vol. v, pp. 351–2; *Cal. S.P. Milan*, vol. i, p. 38). Though Buckingham and Henry Bouchier fought on opposite sides at Northampton there is no evidence that they were personal enemies. The youngest of the Bouchier brothers John had been granted an annuity of 40 marks for life by his half-brother on 4 Mar. 1443, and was still being paid it as late as 1456–7 (Staffs. R.O. D 641/1/2/18, m. 6; /21, m. 7; /23, m. 6; P.R.O., S.C. 6/1305/4, m. 5; Longleat 6410, m. 2 dorse). He and Henry Bouchier were hunting in Kent and Surrey for the duke's larder in 1445–6 (Staffs. R.O., D 641/1/2/233 (2)). By 1449–50 Henry Bouchier was a member of York's council (B.M., Eg. Roll 8364).

Capulets. It was a precaution others followed. To speak of a Yorkist or a Lancastrian family, apart from the royal houses themselves, is almost impossible when successive generations changed sides with so much freedom.<sup>1</sup> Not that families themselves were often split, in the words which eloquent but careless chroniclers borrowed from the Gospels, 'brother against brother, son against father, kin against kin'.<sup>2</sup> Clarence's disloyalty, which may have helped to inspire the belief, was exceptional. Step-brothers, like the Mountfords of Coleshill, rival claimants to their father's lands, might easily fall out and take opposite sides. Apart from such special cases the ties of blood proved strong, though they did not hold beyond fairly narrow limits. Remote consanguinity and connexion by marriage could mean little or much. But it was only a fratricidal war in a metaphorical sense.

Chroniclers may also have led historians to overstate the extent to which local disputes between families played a part in bringing about the general conflict. The central government's failure to compose the quarrels of Nevill and Percy, Courtenay and Bonville, in their early stages was evidence of its collapsing authority. On the other hand, the civil war did not grow out of them; rather they grew out of the paralysis at the centre induced by the struggle of Somerset and York for control. There is a want of proportion in describing the encounters at Stamford Bridge and Clist Heath as battles. Such clashes had in any case occurred often enough before without leading to civil war. It was a function of government to pacify the contestants and impose a solution.<sup>3</sup> Thanks to the practice of entailing land, inheritances disputed between heirs male and heirs general were becoming commoner in the Lancastrian period. Of the major examples which threatened the peace after 1422, Fitzalan against Mowbray, Lovel against Hungerford, Berkeley against Beauchamp,

<sup>1</sup> The Staffords of Stafford provide an excellent case in point, the Beaumonts the one notable exception.

<sup>2</sup> It seems to be derived from Matthew x. 21 and Mark xiii. 12. To the examples cited by C. A. J. Armstrong (op. cit., p. 31, n. 2) may be added the Croyland chronicler (*Rerum Anglicarum Scriptores*, vol. i, ed. W. Fulman, 1684, p. 529).

<sup>3</sup> To cite two earlier examples: (i) the disorders caused by the Courtenays in Devon in the early 1390's and at the beginning of Henry IV's reign (*Select Cases before the King's Council, 1243-1482*, ed. I. S. Leadam and J. F. Baldwin (Selden Soc.), pp. ci-ciii and 77-81; J. F. Baldwin, *The King's Council*, p. 490; *Rot. Parl.*, vol. iii, pp. 302, 488-90, and 493b); (ii) the feud between Ferrers of Chartley and Erdswick of Sandon 1413-14 (*ibid.*, vol. iv, pp. 32-33).

and—a variant on the usual theme—Nevill against Nevill, all were equitably settled by the efforts of Henry VI's council and courts.<sup>1</sup> Only one of them burst forth afresh, after the civil war had started, to contribute its mite at Nibley Green to the disturbances of the war period. It has still to be demonstrated that they did much to influence the alignment of Lancastrians and Yorkists.

A lord already hesitant about committing himself had another reason for holding back: the doubt whether the members of his affinity would respond to his call. He could punish them for their disobedience if his gamble came off but that was not always sufficient to compel attendance.<sup>2</sup> For the gentry shared the baronial dislike of lost causes and desperate ventures. Hence Wedgwood's failure to classify the knights of the shire by their allegiances. They turned their coats as often and with the same chequered success as their betters. Since many of them were wise or greedy enough to have more coats than one to turn, they may well have been more dexterous than the lords at changing them to suit the demands of survival, though the casualties in battle and on the scaffold show how many were unlucky or misguided.<sup>3</sup> To command their exclusive service against all men save the king—which king being left conveniently vague—was beyond the reach of all but the greatest and best-placed lords in England. The indentures of William lord Hastings's retinue,

<sup>1</sup> Following the deaths of Thomas earl of Arundel (1415), Hugh lord Burnell (1420), Thomas lord Berkeley (1417), and Ralph earl of Westmorland (1425). The last case differs from the others in that the earl wished to deprive the heir in tail in favour of his male issue by his second wife. None of these complicated disputes has been adequately described and since only one played any part in the Wars of the Roses the details may be omitted here. For the Berkeley–Beauchamp and Berkeley–Talbot troubles see J. Smyth, *The Lives of the Berkeleys*, ed. J. Maclean (Bristol and Gloucs. Archaeol. Soc.), vol. ii, pp. 41 et seq., J. H. Cooke, 'The Great Berkeley Law Suit', *Trans. Bristol and Gloucs. Arch. Soc.*, vol. iii (1879), pp. 305–24, and C. D. Ross, 'The Household Accounts of Elizabeth Berkeley, Countess of Warwick, 1420–1', *ibid.*, vol. 70 (1951), pp. 81–105.

<sup>2</sup> In 1455 Sir William Skipwith refused to follow York to St. Albans, and on the advice of Sir John Nevill, Sir James Pickering, and Thomas Colt was expelled from his stewardship of the manors of Hatfield and Conisbrough, from the chief forestership and parkership there, the constablership of Conisbrough, the keepership of Hatfield warren and annuities of £40, all granted to him for life by the duke (*Cal. Pat. Rolls, 1452–1461*, pp. 552–3). He got them back temporarily from Henry VI during the Coventry parliament of 1459.

<sup>3</sup> So too do the lists of those attainted in 1459 (*Rot. Parl.*, vol. v, pp. 348–50) and 1461 (*ibid.*, pp. 476–83).

in that they mostly date from the period after 1471, when Edward IV was secure and his chamberlain high in the royal favour, may give a false impression on this point.<sup>1</sup> The success with which Hastings had called out his friends to join the Yorkist army as it advanced into the midlands from Ravenspur had left the king deeply in his debt.<sup>2</sup> Even before the flight from England he had enjoyed great influence. But it is significant that that shrewd trimmer Henry lord Grey of Codnor (who had been with Queen Margaret at St. Albans in 1461 and lived it down) in his indenture of 30 May 1464 excepts his duty to the Duke of Clarence and Sir Thomas Burgh in addition to his ligeance;<sup>3</sup> and that his disciple Sir Thomas Stathom two years later made a like reservation in his favour.<sup>4</sup> We remember that when the axe suddenly ended Hastings's life in June 1483 it was soon reported that 'all þe lord Chamberleyne mene be come my lordys of Bokynghame menne.'<sup>5</sup> It was, in Friar Brackley's immortal phrase, 'a coysy werd';<sup>6</sup> or, as another of the Pastons' correspondents remarked, '*Circumspecte agatis*, and be war of lordis promysses.'<sup>7</sup> It is to be doubted whether gentlemen's promises were any less fragile. At the first sign that a lord's power was tottering his 'well-willers' were quick to look elsewhere.<sup>8</sup> Even when it was firm they were not averse from contracting other ties when it suited them.

<sup>1</sup> W. H. Dunham Jr., 'Lord Hastings' Indentured Retainers 1461-1483', *Trans. Connecticut Acad. of Arts and Sciences*, vol. xxxix (1955), pp. 1-175. All but 6 of the 67 retainers belong to the years 1474-83.

<sup>2</sup> *Arrivall of Edward IV*, ed. J. Bruce (Camden Soc.), pp. 8-9: 'At Leycestar came to the Kynge ryght-a-fayre felawshipe of folks . . . suche as were veryly to be trustyd . . . And, in substaunce, they were suche as were towards the Lorde Hastings, the Kyngs Chambarlayne, and, for that entent above sayd, came to hym, stiryd by his messages sent unto them, and by his servaunts, frinds, and lovars, suche as were in the contrie.'

<sup>3</sup> Dunham, p. 133. For Grey's presence at St. Albans *ex parte Henrici sexti* see *Letters and Papers . . . Wars of the English in France*, vol. ii, pt. ii, p. 776.

<sup>4</sup> Dunham, p. 124. For 'disciple' as a synonym for client see *Paston Letters*, vol. iii, p. 47.

<sup>5</sup> *The Stonor Letters and Papers, 1290-1483*, ed. C. L. Kingsford (Camden Soc.), vol. ii, p. 161. It was an exaggeration. Some like William Catesby had climbed into Richard III's service by betraying Hastings (*The English Works of Sir Thomas More*, ed. W. E. Campbell, p. 53).

<sup>6</sup> *Paston Letters*, vol. iii, p. 196 (1459-60).

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. ii, p. 159 (James Gresham, perhaps 1450).

<sup>8</sup> e.g. Edmund Paston's report on the men of Norfolk's attitude when Suffolk's 'rule' there was thought to be in jeopardy: 'I fele by him he wold forsake his master and gette him a newh yf he wyste he schuld rewle; and so wene I meche of all the contre is so disposyd' (*ibid.*, vol. ii, p. 80).

A letter from one of Hastings's esquires to the Bishop of Winchester, dated 27 June 1481, well illustrates the Lord Chamberlain's inability to command a servant's undivided adherence:

Pleasith it your lordship to wit that on Seturday in the vigil of seint John Baptist sir Robert Markh<sup>a</sup>m knyght with other diuerse seruauntes of the lorde Lovell come to Briggeford and ther made an entre in the title of the said lorde Lovell in the manoir that ye haue ther;<sup>1</sup> and caused the tenauntes to retourne and made officers therof. And if I had hade afor that tyme interest ther as your officer by your writing I shulde haue put theym oute of possession agayn or this tyme. Bot as it is now, considering he is a lorde, I may not soo deale. Neuertheles if ye muste nedist juperde in the lawe with hym I shall be w<sup>t</sup> you to the vttermast that I can or may. I trust to God to make you bigge ynough to trye with hym within the shire w<sup>t</sup> help of such other as ye shall easely haue the goode willes of, soo that my lorde Chaumbreleyn take not the contrarie parte. And what seruice I can doo shall be readye to your lordship at all tymes. With the grace of Jhesu whom I beseche to preserue your goode lordship with good liff and long. Scribiled at Notingh<sup>a</sup>m the xxvij daye of Juyn. By youre seruaunt Gervas Clyfton.<sup>2</sup>

It is hardly surprising to find that Clifton came to no harm in 1483, served Richard III, and made his peace with Henry VII.<sup>3</sup>

The ties binding another and even more useful retainer, Sir James Strangways, to the Nevills, though close and for a time profitable to both parties, were as conditional. In the indenture of 1 October 1446 in which he was retained for life by the Earl of Salisbury, he saved not only his ligeance but also his obligations to 'y<sup>e</sup> high and myghty princesse Katerin duchesse of

<sup>1</sup> Wainfleet had acquired a manor in East Bridgford, Notts., which had come to Ralph lord Cromwell by his marriage with Margaret Deincourt. After Cromwell's death without issue it passed into the possession of his niece, Joan Stanhope, who died childless on 12 Mar. 1481 (*Hist. MSS. Com., De L'Isle and Dudley MSS.*, vol. i, p. 227). Thereupon, despite a quitclaim of 1 July 1468 (*Cal. Close Rolls, 1468-1476*, p. 25) by Alice lady Sudeley through whom he claimed, Francis lord Lovel as the other coheir of Deincourt entered as described in this letter. Wainfleet's title derived from Ralph Cromwell's feoffees, but it was entailed on the heirs of William Deincourt (ob. 1364) and Lord Lovel's claim was just (Magd. Coll., Oxford, East Bridgford 11 and 21).

<sup>2</sup> Endorsed: 'To my Lorde of Wynchestre' (Magd. Coll., Oxford, East Bridgford 33). Only the signature and the three words preceding it are holograph. The writer's uncle and namesake, who was executed after Tewkesbury, had been the husband of Ralph Cromwell's other niece, Maud Stanhope (G.E.C., *Complete Peerage*, vol. xii, pt. ii, ed. A. B. White and R. S. Lea, p. 666; Wedgwood, op. cit., *Biographies*, pp. 194-6).

<sup>3</sup> *Cal. Pat. Rolls, 1476-1485*, pp. 439-40 and 475; *Testamenta Eboracensia* (Surtees Soc.), vol. iv, pp. 64-71.

Norfolk, y<sup>e</sup> reverend fadre in God Robert bisshop of Duresme'—all Nevills so far—'and y<sup>e</sup> kynne and alies of y<sup>e</sup> said James at and within the thirde degree of mariage.'<sup>1</sup> This was a commodious escape-route. Sir James avoided the fate of his Nevill connexions, having taken advantage of their prosperity, to die a natural death in 1480.<sup>2</sup>

The giving and receiving of fees had by the middle years of the century become so indiscriminate that their effectiveness may be doubted. For example, in 1449 Sir Humphrey Stafford of Grafton, killed at Sevenoaks a year later, received forty marks from the Duke of Buckingham, twenty marks each from the Duchess of Warwick and the Earl of Wiltshire, ten marks from Sir Andrew Ogard, and smaller sums from four ecclesiastical lords.<sup>3</sup> By 1451 his young heir had already collected ten marks a year each from the Earl of Wiltshire and Lord Beauchamp of Powick, forty shillings from Lord Sudeley, six other fees from neighbouring prelates, and the promise or at least the hope of two more from the Earl of Warwick and the Bishop of Worcester.<sup>4</sup> Lawyers naturally attracted such patronage. In 1435 Edmund Brudenell of Chalfont, when still at the beginning of a successful career, drew small annual retaining fees from seventeen clients ranging from the Countess of Cambridge and the Abbot of Westminster to the gentry of Buckinghamshire and their ladies.<sup>5</sup> The men of law were an influential element in the commons and in the shires, but their profession did not allow them to keep both feet planted firmly in one camp. William

<sup>1</sup> Fitzwilliam muniments, Milton, Northants, no. 2051. I have not seen the original and take my quotation from a typescript catalogue formerly in the Northants Record Office at Lamport Hall.

<sup>2</sup> J. S. Roskell, 'Sir James Strangeways of West Harlsey and Whorlton', *Yorks Arch. Journal*, vol. xxxix (1958), pp. 455-82.

<sup>3</sup> B.M., Add. MS. 74168, m. 2. The total of £70. 13s. 4d. p.a. was made up by £4 from the Abbot of Evesham, 53s. 4d. from the Bishop of Worcester, and 40s. each from the Prior of Worcester and the Abbot of Pershore.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, Add. MS. 74171, m. 2. The names of the Earl of Warwick and Bishop of Worcester appear on the list of fees with the sums left blank. Later accounts (*ibid.*, Add. MSS. 74173-4) show that in 1453-4 and 1454-5 the earl and the bishop have disappeared. Since Wiltshire and Sudeley remain it is reasonable to suppose that they influenced Stafford's actions in May 1455. The ecclesiastics paying fees in 1451 were the Abbots of Pershore (£4), Evesham (£4), Halesowen (26s. 8d.), and Bordesley (20s.) and the Priors of Studley (53s. 4d.) and Worcester (40s.). By 1453-4 they seem to have fallen to Evesham, Halesowen, and Studley.

<sup>5</sup> Westm. Abb. Muniment 6036, m. 6. The total only reached £15. 6s. 8d. p.a. The largest fee was 40s. from the dean and chapter of Windsor. Maud (Clifford) Countess of Cambridge was York's step-mother.

Tresham's last journey in 1450 seems to need no other explanation; his death does not prove that he was much of a Yorkist.<sup>1</sup> Thomas Young, on the strength of his petition of 1451, has generally been regarded as a wholehearted one.<sup>2</sup> Yet on 27 October 1446 he had been retained by Humphrey of Buckingham as a councillor learned in the law receiving his fee of forty shillings during pleasure;<sup>3</sup> and, despite his petition of 1451 and the imprisonment it earned him, the ducal pleasure continued to be shown to him until at least 1457-8.<sup>4</sup> Nor does Young's later career as a judge give much excuse for labelling him a political zealot.<sup>5</sup> It is hardly surprising that Wedgwood found it necessary to add the category of lawyer to those of Lancastrian and Yorkist.

The truth is that the lawyers were not the only ambidexters. The relationship between a paymaster and his feed-men was both complex and delicate. For one thing, he was not always their superior in rank and political influence. By offering fees, often in the guise of sinecure stewardships, all kinds of landowners hoped to attract the favour and protection of those in power. Thus during the first year of Edward IV's reign Anne duchess of Buckingham, the widow of the slain Lancastrian leader (though herself a Nevill), had engaged herself to pay annuities for life to William lord Hastings, John lord Wenlock, and Sir Thomas Burgh, pillars of the new Yorkist regime.<sup>6</sup> The very number of such sinecures collected by influential courtiers makes it evident that although the grant of an annual fee for life conferred some kind of obligation upon the recipient it cannot have been felt by either party to tie his hands.<sup>7</sup> Those who

<sup>1</sup> J. S. Roskell, 'William Tresham of Sywell', *Northants Past and Present*, vol. ii (1957), pp. 201-3.

<sup>2</sup> J. Wedgwood, *op. cit.*, *Biogs.*, pp. 981-2.

<sup>3</sup> Staffs. R.O., D 641/1/2/175, roll 8.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, D 641/1/2/176, roll 8 and /179.

<sup>5</sup> He was dismissed from his office as Justice C.P. by Edward IV in 1471 for the support which he had given to the readeption but in 1475 he was appointed Justice K.B. (Wedgwood, *u.s.*).

<sup>6</sup> P.R.O., S.C. 6/1117/11, m. 6. Hastings was granted 20 marks p.a. for life on 25 Nov. 1461 as constable of Oakham castle and her steward co. Rutland; Wenlock was granted the same amount on 20 Feb. 1462 as her steward cos. Hunts., Beds., and Bucks.; Burgh, late esquire of the body, was granted 40 marks p.a. for life as surveyor of all her lands in England and Wales on 1 Apr. 1461. The first two are specifically allowed to perform their duties by deputy.

<sup>7</sup> W. Dugdale long ago called attention to William Hastings's windfall of fees after Edward IV's accession (*Baronage of England*, vol. i, p. 580).



made the grant obviously nursed expectations. They also feared to be isolated and at a disadvantage at times when 'it semythe that the worlde is alle qwaveryng.'<sup>1</sup> As the *Paston Letters* more than once emphasize, friendship was as desirable as lordship '*quia ibi pendet tota lex et prophete*.'<sup>2</sup> A feeling of insecurity prompted the search for both patrons and clients.

Though wealth and inherited position could do much, successful patronage was an art to the mastery of which the lord had to bring a number of obvious but by no means universal qualities: a cool judgement, some insight into other men's springs of action, some firmness of purpose, an affability however rough and a reputation for success. His councillors might supply some of his deficiencies but not all. John lord Strange of Knockin, to judge from his letter to Sir William Stonor, was too blustering;<sup>3</sup> John the last Mowbray duke of Norfolk was both obstinate and weak-willed;<sup>4</sup> neither did much to influence events. Nothing did more to destroy a flourishing connexion than an obvious want of political sense. So, despite his great past achievements, was Warwick ruined in 1471. We see it happening in the bunch of letters he and Clarence addressed to Sir Henry Vernon of Haddon during the crisis before Barnet. 'Henry I pray you ffayle not now as ever I may do ffor yow' wrote Warwick in his own hand to the man he imagined to be his 'right trusty and welbeloued Harry Vernan esquier' just when Harry, after waiting carefully on events, was about to slip off with his other lord, Clarence, into the opposite camp.<sup>5</sup> No obligation

<sup>1</sup> As it was to Sir John Paston in 1477 (*Paston Letters*, vol. v, p. 270).

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. ii, p. 180. See also *ibid.*, p. 179: 'Ze have both lordshp and frendshp in your countre'; obviously both were necessary.

<sup>3</sup> *Stonor Letters*, vol. ii, p. 70: 'as for my graunt of a fee I wold ye thought yf ye do me servyce, as the wrytinge is, I woll dele more largely with yow, but I woll not be ovirmastred with none of my feed men; notwithstanding, at this tyme I have done for yow of my voluntary send yow xls. . . . Yf ye dele as ye owght I wolbe your goode lorde, and eke I dare better displese yow than ye me.'

<sup>4</sup> He started with great advantages and in 1465 Margaret Paston had a high opinion of his worship: 'It ys thoght here that yf my Lord of Norffolk wolld take uppon hym for you . . . that then all the contray wyll a wayte uppon hym and serve your entent; for the pepyll lovyth and dredyth hym more then any other lord except the King and my Lord of Warwyk' (*Paston Letters*, vol. iv, p. 207). Edward IV on the other hand in 1469 thought the duke a puppet in the hands of his councillor Sir William Brandon (*ibid.*, vol. v, p. 31). But when my lord was angry and 'the tempest aros' neither my lady nor his whole council could manage him in 1472, though lord Hastings was expected to 'meve' him (*ibid.*, pp. 150-1).

<sup>5</sup> *Hist. MSS. Com., Rutland MSS.*, vol. i, pp. 2-6 and frontispiece. Warwick's

could deprive the esquire of the ability to judge the political prospects for himself and come to the correct decision.

Whether the common people, either in town or country, possessed the same degree of flexibility and discrimination may be doubted. Whatever they were they cannot be described as indifferent. It was the Thames watermen who lynched Lord Scales in 1460 when he was spared at the capitulation of the Tower.<sup>1</sup> It was the men of Northampton whose hostility to Henry duke of Somerset undid the good effects of Edward IV's magnanimous or politic willingness to be reconciled.<sup>2</sup> And, according to one reliable source, the Earl of Salisbury's death after Wakefield was not due to the implacability of the Lancastrian commanders but to the resentment felt by the countrymen thereabouts against a local magnate.<sup>3</sup> On the other hand, the success with which Edward IV persuaded the citizens of York in 1471 that he had returned to claim only his duchy indicated that they were also gullible; possibly they were only pretending to be.<sup>4</sup> With little to lose and grievances that were real enough, the commons were easily incited to rebellion by magnates they admired. Warwick for long possessed the dangerous ability to draw the simple after him and used it with effect.<sup>5</sup> So did others: Robin of Redesdale, Robin of Holderness, Sir Robert Welles, the Bastard of Fauconberg, and Richard of Gloucester.<sup>6</sup> It is understandable that Edward IV grew tired of

description of him comes from the earl's warrant to Thomas Throckmorton, his receiver in Glamorgan, dated 22 Nov. 1469 to pay him £30 (Throckmorton muniments, Coughton Court, Warwicks., no. 177. I have to thank the late Dowager Lady Throckmorton for permission to see these).

<sup>1</sup> *Three Fifteenth-century Chrons.*, p. 169; *Wars of the English*, vol. ii, pt. ii, p. 773; *Coll. Citizen of London*, p. 211 ('But the lordys were fulle sory of hys dethe').

<sup>2</sup> 'The comyns a rosse uppon that fals traytur thee Duke of Somersett and wolde have slayne hym with yn the kyngys palys' (*ibid.*, p. 221).

<sup>3</sup> 'But the commune peple of the cuntre, whyche loued hym nat, tooke hym owte of the castelle [Pontefract] by violence and smote of his hed' (*Eng. Chron.*, ed. J. S. Davies, p. 107). The lords had proposed to ransom him. A bastard brother of the Duke of Exeter is said to have done the killing (*Wars of the English*, vol. ii, pt. ii, p. 775).

<sup>4</sup> *Arrivall*, pp. 4-6. One has to suppose that Henry of Lancaster's employment of that ruse in 1399 had been completely forgotten in Yorkshire. The *Arrivall*, though an admirable account of the king's return, is a piece of 'official history'.

<sup>5</sup> The policy of killing the gentry and nobility and sparing the commons which he initiated at the battle of Northampton (*Eng. Chron.*, p. 96) must have reinforced the popularity he had earned at sea in 1458-9.

<sup>6</sup> Bishop Lyhert in 1455 was said to have 'so flattered the lay pepill as he

sparing the commons. With them the policy of clemency failed.<sup>1</sup>

On the degree of participation of the various classes a survey of the imperfect evidence prompts some very tentative conclusions. The first is that the commons may well have been the most genuinely committed. Their discontents were not readily assuaged by the substitution of one dynasty for another. Inevitably they were disposed to regard whoever was in power as responsible for the evils they suffered. Some of them could usually be relied upon to join in any attempt to turn out the existing government, Henry VI's in 1460-1, Edward IV's in 1469-70. In 1471 they had not had time to forget the shortcomings of Yorkist rule or to realize those of the Lancastrian readeption. Their welcome for Edward when he came back from Flanders was notably unenthusiastic, as even the Yorkist author of the *Arrivall* does not conceal. In Kent their hostility was manifest even after Barnet. Much the same feeling was astir in 1484 and helped to isolate Richard when Henry Tudor landed. Nevertheless the battles were not won by the commons. Their influence on the course of the wars was largely negative.<sup>2</sup>

Discontent at the lack of governance was not confined to them. It permeated all classes and for the same reasons. If it moved the gentry, the well-to-do citizens and the nobility to less spontaneous, more calculated actions, that was natural to men who of necessity and by political training were apt to reckon the consequences. With much more hesitation than Cade had shown, the Yorkist lords steeled themselves in the early 1450's to perform the nobility's traditional duty, that of ridding the king and kingdom of unworthy and rapacious favourites. The first battle of St. Albans was not followed, as Radcot Bridge had been, by an easy political triumph, though in the long run the outcome was similar. Civil war bred civil war. At no time in the Middle Ages had a baronial attempt to compel the king to reform his ways and those of his servants had more than a temporary

hath redyn a bought his visitacion that he hath thers herts' (*Paston Letters*, vol. iii, p. 46).

<sup>1</sup> C. L. Scofield, *Edward IV*, vol. i, p. 580 (at Barnet 1471). But as recently as 1470 he had used 'plentyvously his mercy in saving of the livez of his poure and wreched commons' ('Chron. of Rebellion in Lincolnshire', ed. J. G. Nichols (*Camden Misc. I.*) p. 10).

<sup>2</sup> Gregory's vivid account of the second battle of St. Albans makes it clear that he had a low opinion of the military value of the commons: 'The substance that gate that fylde were howseholde men and feyd men' (*Coll. Citizen of London*, p. 212).

success. What was needed was a new king. But he, whether his predecessor's heir or a usurper, had to restore and reimpose the crown's shaken authority. A change of dynasty made this task all the harder. Edward of York had not been king long before it became doubtful whether he was the man to give nervous politicians the stability they desired. Until he did their support would be withheld. The real blame for each of the successive Wars of the Roses, it seems to me, lay in the failures of Henry VI, Edward IV (until after 1471), and Richard III to establish any presumption that order, justice, and the rights of property would be maintained. It inevitably took Henry VII some time, as it had both Henry IV and Edward IV, to reassure those who did not possess the advantage of our knowledge. There must have been several occasions before—and even after—1509 when doubts still seemed justified. The loyalty of the propertied classes, that is to say, was engaged more by the hope of effective rule than by attachment to a particular ruler or dynasty. Meanwhile they had, if possible, to exist.

Their prominence made this most difficult for the higher nobility. The best service that the Percy earl of Northumberland could do Edward IV in 1471 was to sit still and persuade his 'fellowship' to do likewise: 'and so it may be resonably judged that this was a notable good service, and politiquely done, by th'Erle'.<sup>1</sup> His gentlemen, we are told, were less politique than he and could not have been trusted to follow him to fight in the Yorkist cause; his wisdom saved them as well as Edward IV. It is impossible to maintain the thesis that the knightly and the gentle were less involved than the nobility towards whose ranks they aspired. Though by the mid-fifteenth century 'lords' formed a recognizable caste—as Gervase Clifton's letter bore witness<sup>2</sup>—

<sup>1</sup> *Arrivall*, pp. 6–7. The whole passage deserves to be carefully pondered. Of another earl—the Oxford who was executed in 1462—it could be said: 'if it kepe faire weder he wold not tarye, and if it reigned he wold not spare' (*Paston Letters*, vol. ii, p. 111).

<sup>2</sup> The distinction between a 'lord' and a 'master' (and therefore between 'good lordship' and 'good mastership') is frequently made in the *Paston Letters*. For 'good mastership' or '-hood' see vol. ii, p. 314 and vol. iii, pp. 4 and 287. There is a particularly good example of it in a letter from Lord Scales to Sir John Fastolf omitted in Gairdner's abstract (vol. ii, p. 82): 'wherfore hertyly j pray you to shewe youre goode maistershippe vnto my seid seruant.' This lord clearly recognized Fastolf's lower status. In 1454 Thomas Dennis is defamed 'of setting up billes agayn lordis' (vol. ii, p. 317). In 1455 Henry Windsor was 'loth to write any thing of any lord' (vol. iii, p. 45) and John Paston was 'not usid to meddel with lordes maters meche forther than me nedith' (ibid., p. 46). Ten years later John Paston asks his

there is no reason for treating the substantial landowners of knightly family who fought in every battle as the deluded tools or faithful liegemen of those who commanded them. Like Sir Henry Vernon they freely chose their part; and as often chose wrongly and paid for it beside their lordly patrons. Though the casualty lists preserved by chroniclers are often inaccurate and, save for the lords, incomplete, they leave us in no doubt that the gentry mourned their full share of the dead. Often we are told no more than 'many knights and esquires.'<sup>1</sup> By contrast few townsmen outside London put themselves in peril of their lives.<sup>2</sup>

Finally, one impression still needs to be corrected: if any generalization about the Wars of the Roses is sure of wide agreement it is that they resulted in the extermination of most of the 'old nobility'; and none is more demonstrably false.<sup>3</sup> As we have noticed, a large number of peers were executed or killed in battle; and so were their sons and brothers. It is again true that during the war period some great houses failed in the direct male line. The danger lies in putting these two statements together as cause and effect. It is also a mistake to assume that either statement is peculiarly applicable to the last half of the fifteenth century. There had been civil wars in England as well as prolonged foreign wars before 1450. Noble families had ended in an heiress or heiresses earlier and were to do so later. If those listed in the *Complete Peerage* are taken as the sample, it will be discovered that failure in the direct male line happened on the average to some quarter of them every twenty-five years throughout the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries; and that the third and fourth quarters of the fifteenth century did not exceed

wife to 'let my Lord of Norwich wete that it is not profitabe ner the comen well of gentilmen that any jentilman shuld be compellid be an entre of a lord to shew his evidens or tytill to his lond, ner I wil not begine that example ne thralldam of gentilmen ner of other; it is god a lord take sad cowncell or he begyne any sech mater' (vol. iv, pp. 165-6). Sir John Paston protests in 1472, 'I was never yitt Lordys sworyn man, yit have I doone goode servyce and nott leffte any at hys most neede ner for feer' (vol. v, p. 163).

<sup>1</sup> e.g. *Wars of the English*, vol. ii, pt. ii, pp. 775, 776, 778, and 780; *Coll. Citizen of London*, pp. 210-12 and 217.

<sup>2</sup> Nicholas Faunt and his fellow citizens of Canterbury and others from the Cinque Ports who had supported the Bastard of Fauconberg in 1471 provide the obvious exceptions (C. L. Scofield, *Edward IV*, vol. ii, pp. 1-2).

<sup>3</sup> Doubts had been voiced nearly a century ago by T. L. Kington Oliphant, 'Was the old English Aristocracy destroyed by the Wars of the Roses?', *Trans. R. Hist. Soc.*, vol. i (1872), pp. 351-6, but they do not seem to have been heeded.

the average.<sup>1</sup> Further it will be found that this high extinction-rate was in every period at least as much the result of natural causes as of premature and violent deaths. Infant mortality, especially in the case of males, and the inter-marriage of infertile stocks each contributed something to the wastage.

In at least four cases where the Wars of the Roses might seem responsible, they merely hastened an inevitable process: the stock was already withered. Thus when Warwick fell at Barnet his countess was forty-six and lived for another twenty-one years. Their children were daughters of marriageable age. War or no war, the earl's chances of surviving male issue were hardly good.<sup>2</sup> Warwick's uncle, William Nevill, Earl of Kent, left a wife aged fifty-seven at his death in 1463. To have outlived her in order to marry again he would have had to survive to over eighty.<sup>3</sup> His only sons were bastards. Lord Wenlock was seventy and more, and childless when he was killed at Tewkesbury.<sup>4</sup> Lord Scales, born in the late 1390's and murdered in 1460, had an only daughter of at least twenty-four. He is believed to have had one legitimate son who had already died unmarried and a child.

If these are added to the total of peers who died in their beds without heirs male, the residue is scarcely impressive. Apart from the royal house, which was utterly destroyed by 1499 in all its branches, Lancaster, Beaufort, and Plantagenet, the only ancient families to be extinguished were those of Courtenay and Lovel. But it needed only one war casualty—a case of 'missing, presumed dead'—to end the main line of the house of Lovel, natural causes doing most of the work of destruction.<sup>5</sup> And collateral heirs male were able to prolong the Courtenay's tenure of the earldom of Devon well into the sixteenth century.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> G. E. C., *Complete Peerage*, 2nd edn., ed. V. Gibbs and others.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. xii, pt. ii, pp. 385–93. No other children are known to have been born. If any had been they must have died in infancy.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. v, pp. 281–7. He left three grown-up daughters.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. xi, pp. 504–7; and see n. 2 on p. 98, above.

<sup>5</sup> Francis viscount Lovel ('our dogge') was never seen again after Stoke (1487). His grandfather William lord Lovel had left 4 sons at his death from illness 13 June 1455 (*ibid.*, vol. viii, pp. 221–5; *Lincoln Diocese Documents*, ed. A. Clark (Early Eng. Text Soc., orig. series, no. 149), pp. 70–87). When William's grandson, Henry Lovel, Lord Morley, died childless in 1489 six Lovel males had died in their beds since 1450 as against one (probably) violent death.

<sup>6</sup> *Complete Peerage*, vol. iv, pp. 327–32. And however absurd the 'revival' in 1831 of the earldom created in 1553 may have been, the modern earls of Devon are at least the heirs male of Hugh Courtenay whom Edward III declared to be earl in 1335 (although Hugh's earldom was of course one in

Otherwise the extinctions for which the wars must be held answerable were of peers of recent creation and minor importance.<sup>1</sup> Infertility and disease were far more potent enemies.<sup>2</sup>

Wars kill; they also demoralize. Civil wars are usually the more lethal and the more demoralizing. It is possible that what has given rise to the belief that the old nobility was no longer there after 1487 is that its members had become more self-effacing, less sure of their mission to coerce incompetent or high-handed rulers, in all but a few misguided instances congenitally wary, convinced of the benefits of passive obedience. On and off for more than a generation there had been much bloodshed, treachery, and abrupt reversals of fortune. The suspected presence of spies everywhere added to the general sense of insecurity;<sup>3</sup> and so had the failure of those traditional bonds fee, the entailing of much of the inheritance on the heirs male during the fourteenth century (G. A. Holmes, *Estates of the Higher Nobility in XIV century England*, pp. 32-35, 44, and 47-48) would almost certainly have secured the descent of the comital dignity, but for the attainders, to the heirs male in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries).

<sup>1</sup> Rutland is excluded from this calculation because of his royal blood. That leaves Bonville, Hoo, Lisle (Talbot), Richmount Grey, and Wiltshire (but not Ormond).

<sup>2</sup> They were exclusively responsible for the failure of the male lines of Norfolk (Mowbray), Grey of Codnor, Greystoke, Strange of Knockin, Sudeley, and Vessy. From 1493 to c. 1510 the heir general of Scrope of Masham kept out the heir male; her succession was not facilitated by deaths caused by war. War may have *assisted* to a greater or lesser degree in the cases of Montagu, Pembroke (Herbert), Rivers, Worcester, and Egremont, all recent creations. The Holland dukedom of Exeter is in a class by itself. The duke was separated (and ultimately divorced) from his wife for political as well as personal reasons, after one child, a girl, had been produced. His death was described as accidental though by drowning, but the existence of a state of war may have prevented him from getting sons before he died.

<sup>3</sup> The use of spies during the later Middle Ages has been little explored. The large households and the indiscriminate hospitality practised in them must have made espionage easy to arrange. Henry V's knowledge of Oldcastle's plot in Jan. 1414 may have been derived in part from voluntary informers, but Thomas Burton 'the king's spy' (*explorator*) afterwards received £5 reward (*Issues*, ed. Devon, p. 333). John Stodeley's newsletter of 19 Jan. 1454 (with its list of those who had 'espied and gadred' his material) may exaggerate but shows the seriousness of the problem and the fears it aroused: 'The Duke of Somerset hathe espies goyng in every Lordes hous of this land; some gone as freres, som as shipmen taken on the sea, and som in other wise; whiche reporte unto hym all that thei kun see or here touchyng the seid Duke. And therefore make gode wacche, and beware of suche espies' (*Paston Letters*, vol. ii, p. 299). It is clear that Warwick had agents in London and Sandwich early in 1460 rallying supporters and watching their opponents. The Duke of Exeter's servant, John Tithesley, was active on the other side

which were meant to give some permanence to the relationship between a man and his lord.<sup>1</sup> The married calm of the medieval polity was rent. Disloyalty could all too often be seen to pay. Astrology flourished as a guide to political decision, and necromancy also since it promised to influence events.<sup>2</sup> Prisoners were trapped into admissions of guilt and even tortured to betray others.<sup>3</sup> Heroism could only be achieved by those who met death stoically beneath the executioner's axe—as John Tiptoft did in 1470 and Edward of Buckingham in 1521.

and brought Roger Nevill and others to summary execution (Scofield, *Edward IV*, vol. i, p. 55; *Wars of the English*, vol. ii, pt. ii, p. 772; *Three 15th-Cen. Chrons.*, p. 73). Other examples come from 1471. In April Edward IV was able to keep the Lancastrian army's movements under observation 'by meane of espies and by them he had knowledge from tyme to tyme of their purposes' (*Arrivall*, p. 24). On 15 Sept. Sir John Paston wrote to his brother John to find out what the Duke of Norfolk was doing in Caister castle 'and have a spye resortyng in and owt, so maye ye know the secretys among them' (*Paston Letters*, vol. v, p. 110). When the chronicle says that 'God sent the kyng hym selfe knowleche' of the Vere conspiracy in 1462 one suspects the existence of a human agent (*Three 15th-Cen. Chrons.*, p. 78).

<sup>1</sup> We learn without surprise that in 1450 'the kyng nor his lordes durst not trust their own housold menys' (*Chron. of London*, p. 159). In 1520-1 Edward duke of Buckingham's 'fumes & displeasurs' were reported to Wolsey by a disgruntled poor relation who thought himself wronged by the duke (Charles Knyvett) and two of the duke's clerical servants (Robert Gilbert his chancellor and Thomas Delacourt his chaplain) who had been fellows of Magdalen College, Oxford, in the cardinal's time there (P.R.O., S.P. 1/22, fol. 57; B.M., Cotton Titus B 1, fols. 179-82; *Letters and Papers, Henry VIII*, vol. iii, pt. i, pp. cviii-cxlvii and pp. 490-51; A. B. Emden, *Biographical Register of Univ. of Oxford to A.D. 1500*, pp. 557-8 and 767).

<sup>2</sup> References in the sources to astrological and other predictions are common, e.g. to Stacy and the death of William first duke of Suffolk (*Paston Letters*, vol. ii, p. 147), to Dr. Grene and 'the grettest bataill that was sith the bataill of Shrewisbury' (*ibid.*, vol. iii, p. 48) and to 'Hogan the prophet' sent to the Tower because 'he wolde fayne speke with the Kyng [Edward IV], but the Kyng seythe he shall not avaunt that evyr he spake with hym' (*ibid.*, vol. v, p. 181); and see C. A. J. Armstrong, 'An Italian Astrologer at the Court of Henry VII', *Italian Renaissance Studies*, ed. E. F. Jacob, pp. 433-54. The Carthusian Nicholas Hopkins of Hinton contributed towards the downfall of Edward duke of Buckingham by prophesying the greatness of his issue (*Letters and Papers, Henry VIII*, vol. iii, pt. i, pp. 491-5). The black arts as political weapons came into prominence with the trials of two royal ladies of the Lancastrian house, Joan of Brittany and Eleanor duchess of Gloucester (A. R. Myers, 'The Captivity of a Royal Witch', *Bull. John Rylands Lib.*, vols. xxiv (1940), pp. 263-84; and vol. xxvi (1941-2), pp. 82-100; K. H. Vickers, *Humphrey Duke of Gloucester*, pp. 270-9).

<sup>3</sup> As in the examinations of Cornelius and Hawkins in 1468 (Scofield, *Edward IV*, vol. i, pp. 454-5).



It is an attractive theory. My main doubt is whether so obvious a lesson had still to be learnt in 1450. The magnates had surely been grounded in all its rudiments between 1386 and 1415. The long prelude to the outbreak of hostilities in 1455 is more intelligible when one bears in mind that York was Cambridge's son, and Thomas of Woodstock the grandfather of Humphrey duke of Buckingham and the Bouchiers. Even so the Wars of the Roses had hammered the lesson well home. To those in any danger of forgetting it under the first two Tudors it was soon recalled by the practical consequences of the least false step. Most of their fellows needed no such warning. In the words attributed to Edward duke of Buckingham, 'it would do well enough if the noblemen durst break their minds together, but some of them mistrusteth and feareth to break their minds to other, and that marreth all'.<sup>1</sup> This was not the spirit of 1297 or 1311. Most men, including the descendants of the great Anglo-Norman families, preferred almost anything to another civil war. So violently had their fathers untuned the string that the discord could still be heard well into the sixteenth century. There is an early echo of it in the testament of John, the third lord Mountjoy, written within six weeks of Bosworth. In it he begs his sons 'to leve rightwisley and never to take the state of baron upon them if they may leye it from them, nor to desire to be grete about princes, for it is daungeros'.<sup>2</sup> Though the letter of the injunction went unheeded, this was the chastened, indeed craven, mood in which those who had served Edward IV and lived through the events of 1483-5 greeted yet another new dynasty.

<sup>1</sup> *Letters and Papers, Henry VIII*, vol. iii, pt. i, p. cxxx.

<sup>2</sup> *Complete Peerage*, vol. ix, p. 338, n. (f).