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Opening Extract from...

Young Henry

The Rise of Henry VIII

Written by Robert Hutchinson

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IN MY BROTHER'S SHADOW

'At about three of the clock . . . was conveyed through the city [of London] with many lords and gentlemen, the Duke of York, second son of the king, a child of about four years or thereabouts . . . sitting alone on a courser, [he] was had unto Westminster to the king.'

Henry's official entrance into London before being knighted by his father, 29 October 1494.[1]

Henry VIII was born into a very structured and disciplined world. Comprehensive directives had been laid down for his mother's confinement, the fixtures and fittings of his nursery, and the pomp and circumstance of a royal christening. Such minutely drawn strictures were imposed upon almost every aspect of his life until his father died eighteen years later.

In her arcane and pedantic style, his manipulative grandmother Lady Margaret Beaufort had set out detailed ordinances[2] in 1486 governing precisely how the arrival of a Tudor prince into this uncertain and perilous world should be managed. These directions were repeated and amended in a veritable lexicon of regal etiquette called *The Royal Book*.[3]

First, of course, was the ritual of the queen's confinement. Elizabeth of York would have had her own private chapel accessible from adjacent great and small chambers. (With only primitive medical care on hand, childbirth in the Tudor period was always a hazardous experience. She was sensible to seek the divine protection of the Almighty and His saints to see her through the ordeal.) Her bedchamber would be 'hanged with rich cloth of Arras, sides, roof, windows and all, except one window

which must be hanged so she may have light when it pleases her'.

Lady Margaret even listed all the necessary bedclothes and furnishings including 'two pairs of sheets . . . every one of them four yards (3.66 m) broad and five yards (4.57 m) long; and square pillows of fustian[4] stuffed with fine [goose] down; a scarlet counterpane, furred with ermine and embroidered with crimson velvet or rich cloth of gold; a mattress stuffed with wool'. A pallet with a bolster of down was positioned alongside the great bed for the queen's midwife to sleep on.

When all was ready and her time drew nigh, two of the senior nobles of the realm would escort the queen into her darkened room and then depart respectfully, retreating slowly backwards with many an obeisance.

> Then all the ladies and gentlewomen to go in with her and none to come into the great chamber but *women* . . . All manner of officers shall bring them all needful things unto the great chamber door and the women officers shall receive it there of them.[5]

After her flurry of organisation in this very female world, Lady Margaret seems to have been little moved by the birth of her second grandson on St Peter's day during the damp, dank summer of 1491. Her handwritten notes in her personal *Book of Hours* merely record the date, 28 June – and even then, she forgot to include the year and inserted it some time later.[6] Doubtless Arthur, the four-year-old heir to the throne, always remained uppermost in her thoughts and pious prayers, as he did for most of England's population. It is therefore not unexpected that for the first decade of the new prince's life, we only catch the occasional glimpse of him as he fleetingly emerges from the shadow cast by his elder brother's brilliant dynastic star.

A few days after his birth, Henry was baptised in the newly built church of the Order of the Franciscan Observants that adjoined Greenwich Palace immediately to the west.[7] Richard Fox, Bishop of Exeter and the Lord Privy Seal – one of Henry VII's old comrades from his days of tedious exile in Brittany[8] – performed the short ceremony, standing upon a circular tiered platform of wood beneath a glittering canopy of cloth of gold. As he named the child, Fox enthusiastically plunged the

naked red-haired infant three times into the holy water, contained in a silver font specially brought from the great abbey at Canterbury. History does not relate whether the new prince cried out in protest at his triple immersion in the carefully warmed water. The baby was afterwards wrapped up in a mantle of crimson cloth 'with a long train [trimmed] with ermine' fur and carried triumphantly through the echoing church, a lighted candle clutched in his tiny right hand to symbolise his coming journey through this dark world. Payments totalling £6 3s 4d later made to Benjamin Digby, Yeoman of the Queen's Wardrobe of the Beds, suggest that the ceremonies followed Lady Margaret's instructions for the christening of a prince, including provision of the linen used to drape the font.[9]

Immediately after the christening, Mistress Anne Oxenbridge took charge of the baby as his wet nurse on a salary of £10 a year, or nearly £5,000 a year at current values.[10] This first important lady in Henry's life was a Launcelyn, an old gentry family entitled to bear arms,[11] who held the manor of Wood End in Cople, Bedfordshire, four miles (6.44 km) east of Bedford. Anne's husband Geoffrey Oxenbridge was Bailiff of the East Sussex Cinque Port of Winchelsea, but he died a few years after her royal appointment, some time between 1494–6. She married her second husband Walter Luke, a Sussex gentleman (and probably a lawyer) by 1504.

Anne cared for Henry for at least two years and his ever-careful grandmother ordered that her 'meat and drink be assayed [tasted] during the time that she gives suck to the child and that a physician do oversee her at every meal, [who] shall see that she gives the child seasonable meat and drink'[12] after he had progressed to solid foods.

The wet nurse was assisted in her motherly duties by two official 'rockers' of the royal cradle – Frideswide Puttenham[13] and Margaret Draughton, each paid salaries of £3 6s 8d a year. Later, Anne was generously rewarded by a grateful Henry VII for her well-performed services.[14]

The baby had two cradles in his two-room nursery at Greenwich, together with other practical items for the best available infant care, including two 'great' pewter basins for washing the bed linen and the

child's clothes and 'swaddling bands'. These were strips of linen or other material that were wound tightly around the infant from head to foot – restricting movement and popularly thought to promote sleep. It was also widely believed in Tudor times that these bands helped development of a correct posture in later life.[15] A silver basin was also supplied to bathe the child and a 'chafer' used to heat small quantities of water and later food. Anne Oxenbridge was equipped with a large leather cushion on which she sat while suckling her royal charge at her breast, surrounded by eight large carpets on the floor.[16]

The first cradle was the showy 'cradle of estate', five feet (1.52 m) long and three feet (0.9 m) wide, which gently rocked, suspended from a U-shaped wooden frame. It was covered with crimson cloth of gold, with four silver-gilt pommels or knobs decorated with the king and queen's heraldic arms. The cradle had a mattress, two pillows and a scarlet counterpane edged with ermine fur. Safely laid down in this, the infant Henry would receive his admiring and sycophantic visitors, each one bowing low on entering or leaving the royal baby's presence as he lay almost completely hidden in his swaddling bands of blue velvet or cloth of gold. The second, smaller cradle was for Henry to sleep in and was made of painted and gilded wood, forty-four inches (1.12 m) long and twelve inches (0.31 m) wide. Again, it was decorated with silver-gilt pommels and was supplied with two mattresses (in case of accidents . . .).[17]

Henry probably shared the royal nursery with his two-year-old sister Margaret, although they lived in separate accommodation and had their own female attendants. While the queen frequently stayed in the same building as her children, everyday care and love always devolved upon paid staff, as was normal in royal or noble houses. However, Elizabeth of York was probably well educated, and it may be that she taught Henry to read and write when he was about four years of age.

In their very early years, the royal children had a peripatetic existence, shifting from one palace to another as their mother travelled with the seasons, following the set regal diary of events, which was sometimes linked to religious festivals. As befitted the heir to the throne, their elder brother Arthur meanwhile had an entirely separate life, spending his

first two years at Farnham Castle, the imposing seat of the Bishop of Winchester in Surrey, before his nursery was moved to Ashford in Kent around 1488. Five years later the seven-year-old prince was at Ludlow, learning the duties of a king, complete with his own household and council, administering his principality of Wales.

On 2 July 1492 Henry and Margaret were joined by another sister, Elizabeth, born at the Palace of Sheen, near Richmond, on the banks of the River Thames in Surrey.[18] She, of course, had her own wet nurse, Cecily Burbage, but warrants for payment also refer to the 'servants attending upon our right dearly well-beloved children, the Lord Henry and the ladies Margaret and Elizabeth'.[19]

While Henry VII was away briefly campaigning in northern France in October–November 1492, the infant Henry and his two sisters were with their mother at Eltham Palace, Kent (now swallowed up by the conurbation of south-east London), and their nursery remained a fixture there for some time. Four years later, it was placed under the control of a 'lady mistress' and one of the queen's ladies, Elizabeth Denton, was appointed to this post, although she continued as a royal attendant with an annuity of £20 per annum.[20]

Henry's early formative years were thus spent in a very cloistered and cosy feminine world at Eltham, with its impressive great hall built by Edward IV in the 1470s and set inside enclosed hunting parks extending to 1,265 acres (5.1 sq. km). Every day he played with his sisters, but was acknowledged as a first amongst equals by his adoring attendants. As the only boy in this royal nursery, he was thoroughly spoilt and tenderly protected from the hard knocks and bruises of childhood misfortune. The toddler prince was cosseted, his grumpiness and tears sweetly cooed away, and his every whim swiftly fulfilled by the doting matronly ladies who cared for him. Moreover Henry's grandmother, the redoubtable and pious Lady Margaret Beaufort, took a close interest in the children's conduct and education. Years later, when he ascended the throne, Henry did not forget those who cared for him in his early years and ensured they received generous incomes in their dotage.

Did this period in Henry's early life forge a deep psychological flaw within him that later created some of the personal difficulties that arose

in his relationships with his wives? Some psychiatrists have detected in him an unconscious craving for a forbidden incestuous union – even signs of an Oedipus complex.[21] Certainly, that soft, compliant female world may have planted and nurtured the seeds of his terrible temper in adulthood; the breathtaking tantrums that assailed courtier or commoner when he was denied what he desired, or confronted by any kind of opposition, however feeble or insignificant the source.

But the young Henry was no effeminate sissy. He probably learnt to ride a pony before he could walk; on 1 January 1494 Henry VII paid fourteen shillings for horses purchased 'for my lord Harry'.[22] A sketch (Plate 5) of a young boy of two to three years of age wearing an ostrich-plumed cap,[23] which is traditionally believed to be Henry, shows a round-faced, chubby infant with fat forearms and a rather headstrong, if not wilful, look as he glances to the observer's left – as if distracted and diverted by a toy being suddenly waved at him just out of the picture.[24]

But all was not childhood rhymes, playthings and matronly routines in Henry's young life. Fresh fears over the insecurity of his father's crown invaded the peace and ordered existence of the royal nursery when Henry was only six months old. The harsh trumpet-call of insurrection against the Tudors again rang out, piercing even the cloistered, ordered calm of Eltham.

Another claimant to the English throne had surfaced – but this one was more dangerous than poor Lambert Simnel, still sweating away naked[25] as a turnspit in the stifling heat and noise of the royal kitchens. In November 1491, a French-speaking Flemish silk-trader arrived in Cork, on the south-west coast of Ireland. In looks, he bore more than a passing resemblance to Richard, First Duke of York, the younger of the two lost princes in the Tower – or was he yet another of Edward IV's many bastards?[26] He was named Perkin Warbeck, born around 1474 in Tournai (in today's Belgium), the son of a French official, Jehan de Werbecque.[27] He was the right age, the right height, and both literate and very personable.

After falling under the enthralling influence of Yorkist conspirators, he crossed the English Channel, seeking support from the French king

Charles VIII. However, the Treaty of Étaples, which had followed Henry VII's brief war with France in 1492, included a clause preventing Charles from providing shelter to any English rebels, so Warbeck and his followers fled to Malines (or Mechelen) also in present-day Belgium.

This town was within the domain of Margaret of York, the childless widow of the tyrannical Charles the Bold, Duke of Burgundy, who had died in battle in 1477. The canny and politically astute Margaret was sister to the two last Yorkist kings and therefore was understandably eager for a Yorkist to again wear the crown of England.[28]

Whether or not she suspected Warbeck to be a fraud is not known and probably does not matter. He posed a viable and costly threat to Henry VII across the sea in England, and as such was well worth her support. The duchess therefore immediately officially recognised him as her long-lost nephew Richard, miraculously returned from the dead. She set him up accordingly, with all the sad trappings of exiled, penniless royalty: paid-for halberdiers dressed in the Yorkist livery of blue and murrey,[29] an official residence in Malines and a comptroller of his meagre accounts. There was also his brand-new seal, bearing beneath the royal arms this proud inscription: 'Secret seal of Richard IV, King of England and France and Lord of Ireland'.[30] As presentation is half the battle, Margaret also carefully tutored him in the traditions and comportment of the Yorkist court. Did she really believe him to be an unfortunate victim of amnesia?

In August 1493 Warbeck had a chance to display his new-found courtly skills. He attended the funeral of the Holy Roman Emperor Frederick III[31] in the Stefankirche in Vienna, where he was acknowledged as King Richard IV by Maximilian I, the new Archduke of Austria and Imperial King of the Romans, who had married Margaret's stepdaughter.[32]

Back in England a rattled Henry VII railed against Duchess Margaret: 'That stupid brazen woman . . . hates my own family with such bitterness . . . she remains bent on destroying myself and my children.'[33] In a vain attempt to break her spirit, he imposed a trade embargo on Burgundy in retaliation for her support of Warbeck. Their income damaged, two angry English merchants hurled a bucket of night-soil at the pretender's house in Antwerp in protest at his activities. The king must have been

positive in his own mind that Warbeck was an imposter, given his firm belief that the 'Princes in the Tower' were dead; certainly he was aware of Warbeck's antecedents by July 1495.[34] Henry probably reasoned that, imposter or not, the unwelcome reality was Warbeck's warm reception and recognition by the European courts – and news of this was stirring black, treacherous forces in his realm.

His trade sanctions were too little, too late.

Support for 'the king over the sea' was growing at home and ominously, it seemed that the lethal contagion of treason was spreading even within the royal household. In January 1493, Sir John Radcliffe, First Baron Fitzwalter and the First Steward of Henry's household, went over to the pretender. Two months later Henry VII's step-uncle Sir William Stanley, his Lord Chamberlain, also tentatively declared for Warbeck, unwisely pledging that he 'would not bear arms against King Edward's son'.[35] This was a humiliating setback for the king. Almost eight years earlier, Stanley's last-minute decision with his brother Thomas (later First Earl of Derby) to support Henry Tudor was a decisive factor in the defeat of Richard III at Bosworth. It was all too clear that Henry VII had to snatch the initiative in what was becoming an increasingly serious threat to his crown.

His immediate actions to counter the menace of Perkin Warbeck seem slight, if not insignificant. But if the king was habitually cautious, he was also shrewd. Arthur was already Prince of Wales, Duke of Cornwall and Earl of Chester, and in 1492 the six year old was allotted the figurehead role of King's Lieutenant – the 'Keeper of England' – when Henry was away in 'remote parts'. In February the following year, the heir was granted powers to administer justice in Shropshire, Herefordshire, Gloucestershire and Worcestershire and the Welsh borders.[36] The prince could also raise troops to assist the king and to enforce Henry's laws.[37] His commissioners' enthusiasm for enforcing Arthur's feudal rights led to a small but troubling insurrection in Meirionnydd, North Wales, in 1498.[38]

Henry reasoned it was now time to exploit the appeal and status of the second son. On 5 April 1493 the king made the infant Henry Lord Warden of the fourteen Cinque Ports on the south-east coast of England

and Constable of Dover Castle, that mighty fortress atop the white cliffs that guards the gates of England, facing the continent of Europe.[39]

It was a highly symbolic act. Not only was a royal prince now nominally in charge of the realm's defensive front line – a deputy, Sir Edward Poynings (another of Henry VII's loyal cronies from his exile), was the day-to-day operational commander – but the appointment was also deliberately linked with a name of famous memory. This possessed almost magical power in the history of the English monarchy: 'Henry of Monmouth, Prince of Wales', later King Henry V, was Lord Warden in 1409–12.[40]

Further prestigious offices followed: Earl Marshal of England and then, on 12 September 1494, his appointment as Lord Deputy of Ireland, the king's personal representative in that unstable and disorderly island with control of the Irish government executive – although, of course, the faithful Poynings[41] did all the hard work.[42] Prince Arthur was the Tudor figurehead in Wales and its marches; his younger brother fulfilled that role in Ireland. Henry was firmly stamping the Tudor dynasty upon the administration of his kingdom and dominions.

A more signal honour came just over six weeks later. Henry VII created his three-year-old son Duke of York and a knight of the Most Honourable Order of the Bath. His intention was quite transparent. Here was no mere Johnny-come-lately imposter. What price the pretender's claims when there was now a true Duke of York who was also a member of one of the most prestigious orders of chivalry of England? The king was determined to cut the ground from beneath Perkin Warbeck's feet, so gaudily shod by Burgundian money. Ceremony, the glittering and awesome spectacle of a grand state occasion, was his chosen weapon.

The toddler was confronted with a seemingly impossible test of infant nerve and stamina. He was to be at the centre of an unintelligible and interminable series of elaborate rituals, full of strange sounds and vibrant colours, and amid a host of strangers, all in the unfamiliar and intimidating surroundings of Westminster. We can only guess at the problems of coaching the little boy at Eltham in preparation for his ordeal during the twenty-seven days between 2 October 1494, when the

writs for attending the initial ceremony of creating Henry a Knight of the Bath were issued by the royal household at Woodstock, Oxfordshire,[43] and the date Henry was scheduled to make his triumphant entry into the City of London as a curtain-raiser. What tears and tantrums there must have been as hour after hour he was patiently taught his oath of fealty and indeed, the most risky part – how to stand still and silent for long periods without betraying boredom or his pressing need for a pisspot.[44] The fun of trying on his coronet and robes and playing with his tiny sword surely alleviated the tedium of this training, but the ladies of his nursery probably frequently despaired of his performance on the day and must have shown considerable perseverance.

On 27 October, Henry VII travelled downriver from his Palace of Sheen to Westminster, together with the queen and his mother. Two days later he sent messengers to Eltham to summon little Henry to the ceremonies. At three that afternoon, the toddler rode a mighty warhorse through London, surrounded by representatives of the nobility. His horsemanship impressed the mayor, aldermen and members of the livery companies as the cavalcade clattered through the cobbled streets and on to Westminster.

The following day – Thursday 30 October – the child had his first taste of the ceremonial of being invested as a Knight of the Bath. At a small dinner[45] in the king's chamber at Westminster, he took part in the formalities of serving the king the main meal of the day. Happily, his was an easy task. Others tasted the food, brought in the dishes, poured the wine – Henry was involved in the simpler ritual of washing his royal father's hands before and after the meal. Henry, Tenth Baron Clifford, held the heavy silver basin as John Bourchier, Third Lord Fitzwarren, poured in the warmed perfumed water. The king rinsed his fingers and his son bashfully offered him a white damask towel with which to dry his hands. The task done, the smiling father returned the towel to his little son, who respectfully bobbed his head and gingerly backed away, no doubt seeking instant reassurance on his performance and advice about what to do next.[46]

His tribulations were far from over. Henry now had to undergo the rituals of his knighthood, which involved bathing in a wooden tub in

the draughty king's chamber before a long vigil during the dark, silent hours. This barrel was 'royally dressed' with linen and covered with thick mantles and carpets against the cold of the late October evening. Twenty-two other knights were being created that night, all with their own barrels lined up in rows in the Parliament Chamber, with the exception of the Lords Harrington[47] and Fitzwarren who had theirs in the queen's closet. Unlike their young fellow postulant knight, the others would have their 'beards shaved and the heads rounded' – their hair trimmed. All now had to be spiritually cleansed.

After the naked Henry clambered awkwardly into the warm bath, John de Vere, Earl of Oxford and Great Chamberlain of England, stepped forward. Kneeling down, he read out the so-called 'advertisement' to the child – the formal creed or way of life that must be pursued by a new knight:

> Be ye strong in the faith of Holy Church, (steadfast and abiding in word, [a] manly protector unto Holy Church) and widows, and maidens oppressed relieve, as right commands.
>
> Give ye to each one his own, with all thy mind, above all things love and dread God and above all other earthly things love the King the sovereign lord, him, and his right defend unto thy power, and before all worldly things put him in worship ... [48]

This was pure gobbledygook to a child aged just three: only years later would he grasp the full import of these stentorian words concerning a subject's allegiance, loyalty and faithfulness to the wearer of the crown of England.

Then, out of the gloom appeared his father, his lean, fine-featured face lit by the bright golden candlelight. The king dipped his hand into the bathwater and with his finger made the sign of the cross on his son's right shoulder. He then bent down and kissed the mark. After a few reassuring words to the toddler, Henry VII departed to fulfil the same ritual for all the other knights, accompanied by Oxford.

The child was taken out of the bath by his 'governors', put into an adjacent bed and gently dried. But there was no respite or slumber for the little boy. He was dressed in the coarse robes of a pious

anchorite and conducted in procession, the footfalls echoing through the silence of the labyrinthine Palace of Westminster, to St Stephen's Chapel[49] to pray. Like the others, Henry must have been given a gold coin – a noble, worth 6s 8d (33 pence) – to hand over to the Sergeant of the Royal Confectionary in return for a spiced cake to nibble and wine to sip, as tradition dictated. There in the flickering light of the chapel with its colourful wall paintings in gold, vermillion and blue and the central images of the Adoration of the Magi below the east window, the knights kept vigil on their knees. Each one then confessed to one of the thirteen chaplains or canons attached to the chapel, received absolution and finally all heard a short Mass. They were then allowed to return to their cold beds for the few hours left before dawn.

It would have seemed like a dream (or a nightmare) to such a small child. It is beyond belief that Henry stayed awake through those hours of cold, cheerless vigil unless there was an attendant alongside him to ensure that he did so, by means of a gentle, respectful prod at the appropriate moment. In the event, he enjoyed only a short nap before being woken by de Vere, the sixteen-year-old Algernon Percy, Fifth Earl of Northumberland,[50] and Henry Bourchier, Second Earl of Essex, a member of the king's Privy Council. They hurriedly dressed him in his shirt and robes.[51]

Two by two, the new knights rode into Westminster Hall, led by Henry. A contemporary account describes the scene in that ancient raftered building:[52]

> The Lord William Courtenay bore the Lord Henry's sword and spurs, the pommel [of the sword] upward and when he . . . alighted from his horse, Sir William Sandys [carried] him to the king's presence.
>
> There, the Earl of Oxford took the sword and spurs and presented the right spur to the king [who] commanded the Duke of Buckingham to put it at the right heel of Lord Henry and likewise the left spur to the Marquis of Dorset.
>
> And then the king girded his sword about him and after dubbed him knight in manner accustomed, then set him upon the table.[53]

His spontaneous action, born out of natural paternal pride, was Henry's only public acknowledgement of the tender years of his second son. Perhaps it was also tempered by his relief that the ceremony had passed off so successfully.

The next day, Saturday 1 November, was the Feast of All Hallows, one of the great red-letter days in the calendar of the royal court.

It was the day selected for the creation of Henry as Duke of York and the king was up early, attending the religious office of matins in St Stephen's at cockcrow before returning to his chamber to don his robes of royal estate. He then processed to the Parliament Chamber and stood waiting on a dais beneath a great canopy of cloth of gold, surrounded by a throng of prelates, wearing their mitres and pontifical vestments, and the premier nobility of the realm. Ranged down the sides of the chamber were the judges in their coifs and red robes; Richard Chawry, Lord Mayor of London, and his aldermen, and 'a great press of knights and esquires'. Above, from a windowed chamber or closet, the queen and her mother-in-law looked down on the vibrant proceedings, probably in some anxiety lest the child now disgrace himself before all the spiritual and temporal peers and a host of commoners of England.

Amid the shuffling of feet and suppressed coughing, a small procession approached the king. Sir John Writhe, Garter King of Arms and principal herald, stepped forward and, bowing low, presented the letters patent – the document creating the new Duke of York. Three other nobles accompanied him, one carrying a 'rich sword', the hilt uppermost, another the ducal rod or staff of gold and the third an ermine cap of estate with a duke's coronet. Behind came Sir George Talbot, Fourth Earl of Shrewsbury, a veteran of the Battle of Stoke Field, carrying the toddler duke in his arms. He gently set him down, and the Marquis of Dorset and the Earl of Arundel helped the child walk through the chamber, halting him immediately in front of the king.

Oliver King, now Bishop of Exeter and the king's secretary, read out the letters patent, which included a handsome annuity of £1,000 a year (£538,000 in current values) to the holder of the dukedom. The king then solemnly invested his son with all the noble accoutrements of a duke – the sword, the cap and coronet and the rod of gold – and, the

ceremony over, moved back into St Stephen's Chapel for a solemn High Mass. Much, much later, when he ruled England, Henry VIII carefully amended the herald's report of the ceremony, inserting a phrase demonstrating that he had, as a child, carried 'his verge [rod] of gold in his hand' and clarifying the difference in roles of John Lord Dynham, the Lord Treasurer of England, and Sir Thomas Lovell, now Treasurer of the Household.[54] This could not be just mere pedantry. It was a conscious decision to call for the manuscript and check its contents. Perhaps Henry was anxious to demonstrate his royal bearing, even at an early age. Certainly that occasion spawned his later delight in gaudy pageantry and lavish ceremonial.

Back in 1494, his father stood in the dean's pew in the choir stalls and organised the procession into St Stephen's Chapel, but four of his noblemen, cursed with a frightful sense of timing, bickered loudly over their order of precedence, an unseemly argument swiftly resolved by a few short, sharp words from the king. Mass was then celebrated by Cardinal John Morton, Archbishop of Canterbury and Henry's Lord Chancellor, assisted by eight bishops and a whole chant of mitred abbots.

All then processed through Westminster Hall, the Earl of Shrewsbury carrying a desperately tired, if not overexcited, new Duke of York in his arms.[55]

Substantial gratuities must have been provided to the heralds, for after the second course of a bewildering array of choice meat and fish dishes, Garter led his brother officers to thank the king. They also cried 'largess' for the generosity of the newly created duke – which naturally had been supplied by his father. In ringing tones, they then proclaimed young Henry's new style and title for the first time in French – 'the most high, mighty and excellent prince, second son of the king our sovereign lord, Duke of York, Lieutenant-General of Ireland, Earl Marshal, Marshal of England, Lord Warden of the Cinque Ports'.[56]

After the strain and exhaustion of all the official ceremonies, now came the reward of spectacular entertainment for the three year old. Celebratory jousts in his honour were held over three days at Westminster from 9 November – the first witnessed by the little boy.

These had been delayed for two days by Henry VII's decision to take advantage of the presence of most senior members of the English nobility to hold two impromptu council meetings, both attended by Sir William Stanley, even though the king was well aware of his suspect loyalty.

When the jousts were finally staged, little Henry must have wriggled and squirmed with excitement as he sat alongside his mother and father in a grandstand richly hung with blue Arras cloth decorated with gold fleur-de-lis, watching the armoured contestants ride out of Westminster Hall, their horses trapped with the Tudor colours of green and white, tiny bells tied to the coursers' manes. It must have been an especial thrill to see the challengers wearing the Duke of York's new personal livery of blue and tawny brown.

Henry's five-year-old sister Margaret presented the prizes to the winning knights after three days of jousting, which included a diamond-studded gold ring to the leading challenger, Edmund de la Pole, Sixth Earl of Suffolk, younger brother of the rebel Earl of Lincoln who had been killed seven years before at Stoke Field.

The thunder of the steeds' hooves; the jingling of their harness; the splintering crashes as the competitors' lances 'shivered' (broke) against shield, body or helmet; and the screeching clash of sword on armour: all must have thrilled the toddler – and imbued Henry with his future passion for the chivalry and spectacle of the tournament.

The following month he was appointed the figurehead Warden of the Scottish Marches, covering the vulnerable border region with England's sometimes truculent neighbour.

That Christmas was spent at Greenwich, but less than a week after Twelfth Night – 6 January 1495 – Henry VII moved back upriver to the Tower of London. Messengers had brought the startling news that one of Warbeck's supporters, Sir Robert Clifford, had seemingly turned coat and held important information about the extent of the domestic conspiracy against the Tudor crown. In reality, Clifford – who had fought for Henry at Stoke and had been knighted afterwards – was almost certainly one of the king's spies. The historian Polydore Vergil claimed the move to the Tower was to enable Henry VII to 'imprison

in that safe place any members of the plot whom [Clifford] might name'.[57]

Stanley was 'suddenly arrested and put under sure keeping', as were a number of others, including William Worsley, Dean of St Paul's, and William Richford, the Provincial of the Dominican Order of the Black Friars, 'one of the most famous preachers at that time about London'. The last two were pardoned but died shortly afterwards.[58] Stanley was arraigned on treason charges at the Court of King's Bench in Westminster Hall on 6/7 February and was beheaded nine days later.[59] The life of the former Lord Steward, Sir John Radcliffe, Baron Fitzwalter, was spared and he was sentenced to life imprisonment, but was executed in November 1495 in Calais after a failed escape. Clifford received an opportune royal pardon for his evident offences and £500 in cash for information received.[60] He was later rewarded with the appointments of Knight of the Body and Master of Henry VII's Ordnance.[61] This fresh plot against the Tudor crown seemed to have been nipped in the bud, but Warbeck remained in Burgundy, a dormant threat beyond the reach of the king.

He was quick to take advantage of Henry VII's absence on royal progress in Lancashire and the North. After becoming becalmed, the pretender had arrived off Deal in Kent on 3 July 1495, with troops and ships paid for by Burgundian cash. Warbeck mistakenly expected to rally popular support for his cause. The partisan historian Edward Hall was contemptuous of this forlorn hope of an invasion force:

> So gathering a great army of valiant captains of all nations ... some English sanctuary men, some thieves, robbers and vagabonds which [desired] only to live of[f] robbery and rapine, came to be his servants and soldiers.
>
> The Kentish men, hearing that this feigned duke was come and ... that he was but a painted image ... thought it neither expedient or profitable ... to aid and assist him.[62]

Warbeck – wisely, perhaps – decided not to disembark from his ship, as the four hundred troops who came ashore were quickly cut off by the local militia and one hundred and fifty hacked to pieces before the

handful of survivors were driven back in panic to their ships. A further one hundred and sixty were taken prisoner and dragged off to London 'railed in ropes like a team [of] horses drawing . . . a cart'.[63] These riff-raff soldiers of fortune were executed, some in London and others in towns along the coasts of Kent, Sussex and Norfolk, and their corpses were left hanging to rot near the high-water mark as a terrible warning to those who contemplated insurrection.

Warbeck may have been down, but he was not out. He sailed on to Ireland and there, with support from Maurice Fitzgerald, Ninth Earl of Desmond, besieged Waterford that August. His ships, however, were driven off after eleven days' determined resistance by the city and he fled to Scotland and the protection of King James IV, who was always delighted to be a thorn in England's side.[64] He promptly fed and clothed 'Prince Richard of England' and provided him with spending money. Furthermore, Warbeck married the king's cousin, Catherine Gordon, daughter of George Gordon, Second Earl of Huntly – 'a young virgin of excellent beauty and virtue' – on 13 January 1496 and was granted the munificent pension of £112 a month. It was the closest he came to any pretence of royalty.

Warbeck was certainly dogged in his attempts to claim the English crown; some might have considered him almost suicidally so. If he hoped for more than half-hearted Scottish military support, James was too crafty to supply it, even though Warbeck had promised him the handsome prize of the border fortress town of Berwick-upon-Tweed.[65] In September 1496 the pretender led just 1,400 men into England, hoping to rally the population of Northumberland to his standard.[66] It quickly became merely another tiresome border raid. After just three days of pillaging and burning, it was obvious that his cause was as unpopular in the north as it had been in Kent and he quickly retreated to Scotland, his tail between his legs.[67]

Far away from the alarums of the north, family life for the real Duke of York still centred on his nursery at Eltham Palace. He was to see little of his elder brother and lived away from his father for much of his young life.

There are only fleeting glimpses of father and son together during

this period. On 17 May 1495, young Henry received the Garter, the highest order of chivalry in England. He wore a long crimson velvet gown and bonnet of the same material, specially made for the occasion.[68] Later that year the king paid out £7 10s for 'diverse yards of silk bought for my lord of York and [his sister] my lady Margaret'. The royal accounts for 1496–7 also record purchases of a furred gown in black camlet,[69] a black satin coat and a scarlet petticoat for Henry. Thriftily, an old lambskin garment of his was repaired so it could be used as a gown, as good as new. There was an order on 4 December for a crimson velvet gown trimmed with black lamb's wool, possibly intended for little Henry to wear that coming Christmas, as a present from his father.[70]

The child would have noticed the increasing absences from play of his younger sister Elizabeth. Unknown to the royal physicians, she was suffering from atrophy, a wasting disease caused by the breakdown of her body's tissues, and on Saturday 14 September 1495 Henry's sibling and playmate died at Eltham Palace, aged three years and two months.

Her funeral, attended by one hundred poor men in black gowns and hoods, was arranged by Cardinal Morton; the newly appointed Lord Chamberlain, Giles, Lord Daubeney; and the Lord High Treasurer, John, Lord Dynham, at an unusually high cost for a child of £318.[71] She was buried in Westminster Abbey, as close as possible to the sacred shrine of St Edward the Confessor, beneath a Purbeck marble tomb-chest with her effigy in gilded copper placed on the black marble cover-stone. Her Latin epitaph read:

> The royal child lies after death in this sarcophagus,
> A young noble Elizabeth, an illustrious princess,
> The daughter of King Henry VII
> Who holds the flourishing sceptres of two kingdoms.
> Atropos, the severe messenger of death, took her away
> But may there be eternal life for her above in heaven.[72]

The loss of Elizabeth was eased by the birth of another sister, Mary, on 18 March 1496, who joined Margaret and Henry in the nursery at Eltham.

Henry's first public duty came at Windsor on 21 September 1496,

when he was aged five. This was his formal witnessing of a royal grant of a charter to the abbot and convent of Glastonbury to hold two annual fairs in the Somerset town.[73] Paradoxically, forty-three years later as king, he destroyed the abbey during the Dissolution of the Monasteries and had its last abbot brutally hanged for high treason.[74]

Meanwhile in Cornwall, discontent was mounting over the additional taxation levied on the population to pay for a planned retaliatory war against Scotland. Disgruntlement morphed into insurrection in mid-May 1497 and a Cornish host, totalling around 15,000, marched towards London via Salisbury, Winchester and Guildford. This may have been a fearsome sight, but a tactician would have wryly noted their lack of any cavalry or artillery.

Even so, something akin to panic swept the streets of the capital at the approach of the rebel army. Edward Hall recorded that there was 'great fear through the city and cries were made, "every man to harness, to harness" [armour]. Some ran to the gates, others mounted the [city] walls so that no part was undefended.'[75]

Henry had journeyed with his mother from Sheen on 6 June to stay at his grandmother's London home, 'The Coldharbour' in Thames Street, as a discreet precaution. Six days later he and the queen were hustled off to the nearby Tower of London for safety as the rebels passed south of the Thames and concentrated their forces at Blackheath, only a few miles to the south-east and near both Greenwich and Eltham Palaces. It was Henry's first experience of the acrid stench of rebellion and one, as a six year old, that he was never to forget.

Continual watch was kept by the city's magistrates 'lest the rebels, being poor and needy, would descend from their camp and invade the city and spoil, and rob the riches and substance of the merchants'. It was ever thus – the city was seemingly worried more about its wealth than providing patriotic support for the government of the day.

As they nervously awaited battle with the royalist forces, many Cornishmen deserted, fearful of Henry VII's vengeance if they were defeated. When the 25,000-strong royalist army under the king attacked on Saturday 17 June 1497, the Cornish were quickly surrounded by Henry's three 'battles' (or battalions) of archers and armoured men-at-

arms on the battlefield alongside the River Ravensbourne. It was no contest and all over within hours. Hall recounts how

> there were slain of the rebels which fought and resisted, 2,000 men and more and taken prisoners an infinite number and amongst them Michael Joseph, surnamed 'the blacksmith' one of the captains of this dung hill and draught-sacked ruffians.[76]

The royalists lost about three hundred men in the fighting.

The king rode through the streets of the City of London in triumph at two o'clock that afternoon. The leaders of the Cornishmen were executed, but most of the rebels were allowed to return home unmolested.

A few months later, Warbeck decided on his final throw of the dice. He landed on the broad, flat sweep of Whitesand Bay, near Land's End in Cornwall, on 7 September, with the three-hundred-strong remnant of his force, pledging to the restless and still truculent Cornish that he would halt Henry VII's tide of taxation. This time he received an enthusiastic welcome and was proclaimed 'Richard IV' by his new supporters on Bodmin Moor before he tried unsuccessfully to capture the city of Exeter at the head of an army of 8,000. After several costly assaults on the city's walls and gates, Warbeck and his Cornish supporters headed for Taunton in Somerset.

Henry VII now had the measure of the pretender and knew that he could finally quash the threat he posed to the Tudor crown. The king claimed to be 'cured of those privy stitches which ... had long [been] about his heart and had sometimes broken his sleep'[77] and he lost £9 coolly playing cards while he awaited his forces to muster at Taunton.[78] Despite his bravado, Queen Elizabeth, again accompanied by Prince Henry, was quietly packed off on a pilgrimage to the Shrine of Our Lady at Walsingham, five miles (8.1 km) from the north coast of Norfolk, well away from any likely fighting.[79]

But when Warbeck heard that advanced elements of the royal army were sending out scouting parties, he panicked and fled with three companions to the Cistercian monastery of Beaulieu – possibly hoping to escape from England by a small boat from one of the many little

creeks splintering that part of the Hampshire coastline. He had a bounty of 1,000 marks (£666 – or £357,000 at today's values) on his head. There he was found and seized by royalist forces on or about 5 October, either by violating the sanctuary offered by the monks, or by luring Warbeck out of it with tempting yet specious offers of a free pardon.[80]

Warbeck was now safely in Henry's grateful hands – as was his wife, Catherine, captured as she hid in the Church of St Bryan, near Marazion, Cornwall. The king, after admiring 'her beauty and amiable countenance', dispatched her to London to his queen 'as a true and undoubted token of his victory'.[81] The most serious threat to Henry VII and his dynasty had at last been neutralised.

Like his Tudor descendants, the king was not altogether magnanimous in victory. He brought Warbeck back to London and subjected him to the derision and taunts of the mob. He also appointed

> certain keepers to attend on him which should not (the breadth of a nail) go from his person, to the extent that he might not neither convey himself out of the land, nor fly any[where], nor yet ... be able to sow again no new sedition nor seditious tumult within his realm[82]

although he did manage to escape custody. He was eventually thrown into the Tower and kept 'with the greatest care' in a cell 'where he sees neither sun nor moon'.[83] A fellow prisoner was that other claimant to the throne, Edward Plantagenet, Seventeenth Earl of Warwick, who had languished as Henry's prisoner since the king's accession after Bosworth, when the earl was aged just ten. Warwick had grown into a handsome youth, though sadly somewhat mentally impaired.[84] He was held in a room above Warbeck and Warwick knocked a hole through the floor to communicate with his fellow pretender, who was chained securely by the leg to the wall. 'How goes it with you? Be of good cheer!' the earl called merrily through the opening.[85]

In February 1499, another claimant appeared to tax Henry VII's depleted store of patience. Ralph Wilford, the nineteen-year-old son of a shoemaker who traded under the sign of the bull in London's Bishopsgate Street, also declared himself to be the imprisoned Warwick. He was

swiftly arrested, tried and hanged, as was the priest who promoted his cause from the pulpit.

Furthermore, Edmund de la Pole, the Sixth Earl of Suffolk and a surviving nephew of the Yorkist kings through his mother, fled England for France that July after being indicted for murdering Thomas Crue, in the parish of All Hallows next to the Tower, a man involved in litigation against him in the King's Council.[86] Another potential claimant was therefore on the loose in Europe and Henry ordered that he should be persuaded to return, or at worst, be brought back forcibly.

Henry VII was told by a priest that 'his life would be in great danger' throughout that year and the tension created by this prophecy and the strain of putting down seemingly constant rebellions was beginning to tell on him. The Spanish ambassador in London reported: 'Henry has aged so much during the last two weeks that he seems to be twenty years older. The king is growing very devout. He has heard a sermon every day during Lent and has continued his devotions during the rest of the day.'[87]

Wilford may have been the last straw for Henry Tudor, who by now had had more than his fill of impersonators. If the king sought divine guidance, he received it. In August, Warwick and Warbeck were accused of trying to escape from the Tower. It may have been that Henry had shrewdly manufactured the ideal excuse to rid himself finally of these politically sensitive prisoners. On 12 November, a sixty-strong meeting of his council advised the king to impose harsh justice on this unlikely pair of prisoners.

Warbeck was hanged at Tyburn[88] beyond the western walls of London on Saturday 23 November, after reading out a carefully worded confession on the scaffold that duly confirmed that he had impersonated Richard, First Duke of York.

Five days later, Warwick was beheaded on Tower Hill. It was only the second time he had been outside the gates of the Tower – the first being when Henry paraded him to scotch talk of his impersonation by Lambert Simnel in 1487. With that blow of the headsman's axe, the last Plantagenet in the legitimate male line was judicially murdered. Perhaps even the weather gods were affronted by this palpably unjust act on

Henry VII's part. That day there were 'great floods, winds, thunder, lightning which did much harm and hurt in diverse places and countries in England'.[89]

Henry VII could now afford the time to look overseas to seek spouses for his children and alliances to secure England's rightful place in the cockpit of European diplomacy.

Already his heir Arthur had been betrothed to Princess Katherine, the fourteen-year-old daughter of King Ferdinand II of Aragon and Queen Isabella I of Castile, and they were married by proxy on 19 May 1499 at Bewdley in Worcestershire. The Spanish ambassador in London, Don Pedro de Ayala, told the Spanish monarchs: 'There does not remain a drop of doubtful royal blood; the only royal blood being the true blood of the king, the queen and, above all, of the Prince of Wales.'[90]

The Milanese ambassador Raimondo de Soncino presented his letters of credence to Henry and Arthur at Woodstock in September 1497:

> The king was standing and remained so until our departure.
>
> There was also ... [the] Prince of Wales, almost eleven years of age, but taller than his years would warrant, of remarkable beauty and grace and very ready in speaking Latin.
>
> His majesty, in addition to his wonderful presence, was adorned with a most rich collar, full of great pearls and many other jewels, in four rows, and in his bonnet he had a pear-shaped pearl which seemed to be something most rich.[91]

No wonder the king looked relaxed and 'in a most quiet spirit'. For the first time in fourteen years on the English throne, he could sleep easier at night. There remained only the still latent threat posed by the Earl of Suffolk.

Furthermore, Elizabeth of York had given birth to another son, named Edmund after the king's father, on Friday 20 February.[92]

There were now three sons in direct line of succession to the Tudor crown.