

LADY DESMOND

As a corollary to the note on Lady Desmond in *The Ricardian* (No. 53, June 1976, p. 30) Isolde Wigram has reminded me that Walpole, in the Supplement to his *Historic Doubts (Collected Works, Vol. 2, 1798, p. 216)* states that 'the Earl of Shaftesbury was so good as to inform me that his ancestor the Lady Ashley, who lived to a great age, had conversed with Lady Desmond, and gave from her the same account that I have given, with the strong addition that Perkin Warbeck was remarkably like Edward IV'. This provides us with yet another informant of the handsome appearance of Richard of Gloucester. The Lady Ashley referred to is presumably Anne Ashley, daughter of Sir Anthony Ashley, married c. 1615 to Sir John Cooper, father of the first Earl of Shaftesbury. It is just possible for Anne Ashley to have known the Old Countess, who died in 1604, but it must be said that far from strengthening the traditional story of her dancing with Richard it weakens it. Lady Desmond is unlikely to have told her story to so many people, all of whose descendants told it to Walpole, which makes the truth of the legend less, rather than more, likely.

Book Reviews

CROWN AND NOBILITY 1450-1509 by J. R. Lander, Edward Arnold, 1976, p. 340. £9.95.

Between 1956 and 1973, Professor Lander's essays in the *Bulletin of Historical Research*, *History Journal*, *English History Review*, etc., established him as a founding father of modern fifteenth century studies. Lander's knowledge, and his ability to cope with an infusoria of detail without losing a true scholar's penetration, have enabled him to pronounce authoritatively within our field of interest. The publication of some of his major articles in one volume must therefore be thoroughly welcomed by fifteenth century enthusiasts.

Included in *Crown and Nobility* are his well known treatises on the Duke of York's second protectorate, and Yorkist council and administration. The reinterpretation of Clarence's death is of especial interest whilst his short article on Edward IV is worth reading again for comparison with Ross's fairly recent biography.

In a newly written introduction, Professor Lander deals somewhat ruthlessly with Victorian medievalists, and without acquitting the fifteenth century of its guilt of violence and disorder, he shows it to be no worse than preceding or succeeding periods: indeed better if only because strife accelerated the destruction of complacency which barred attempts at reform.

In addition, Lander appends five of his painstakingly compiled tabulations dealing with various details of the peers involved in the dynastic disputes of the later fifteenth century. The section on the councillors of the Yorkist Kings and Henry VII is singularly comprehensive and for those of us who are frequently flummoxed by the maze of attainders and reversals, Professor Lander provides a set of statistics in Appendix C.

In terms of prominence, this volume can be ranked as on a par with McFarlane's *The Nobility of later Medieval England*. It is bound to be quoted as a first class reference work by scholars in years to come.

JAMES PETRE

INSTRUMENTS OF THE MIDDLE AGES AND RENAISSANCE by David Munrow and the Early Music Consort of London. E.M.I. Records and Oxford University Press, 1976. £8.75.

Following the tragic death of David Munrow earlier this year, E.M.I. Records and O.U.P. have combined to produce a set of two records and a 96-page book, which is a suitable memorial to his immense scholarship. More than anyone, David Munrow was responsible for the recent popular revival of Medieval and Renaissance music, and it is due to him that now, in contrast to ten years ago, the listener's ear has become accustomed to the strange sound of a crumhorn, shawm or rauschpfeife.

This set is the result of studies which began more than ten years ago in South America, and is in response to a frequent question: please will you explain the instruments? The result is a fascinating example of the type of book which can be 'dipped into' again and again, revealing fresh information every time.

The book is divided into two main sections; Part One covers the comparatively simple instruments of the Middle Ages, up to c. 1400, and Part Two, entitled 'The Renaissance', continues the story with the development of families of instruments, c. 1400-1600, which are at least partly familiar to most people. Each part is sub-divided into the accepted instrument families of brass, woodwind, etc., and within these divisions are found descriptions and pictures of well over a hundred instruments. The author includes an amazing amount of information on each one—details of references in contemporary manuscripts, discussion of the earliest appearance, pitch and range of each instrument, the technique of playing, and the derivation of names. The information is presented in a clear and witty style, although the use of considerable technical vocabulary could prove daunting to a reader who has little or no previous knowledge of musical instruments. I would suggest that it will be enjoyed more by the reader who dips into it on the 'little and often' principle, than by one who tries to read it straight through, which could lead to musical indigestion round about p. 19. There are simply too many instruments, facts and ideas to be assimilated at one time.

One of the most delightful features of the book is the number of lavish illustrations which enliven the most technical details. It is packed with contemporary paintings and engravings, together with photographs of both surviving and reproduction instruments. There are also many photographs of David Munrow and other members of the Early Music Consort playing the instruments in question, and these are particularly helpful in assessing the size of the instruments and methods of playing.

Although the book alone is entertaining and informative, its interest is greatly enhanced when used in conjunction with the two records. Each record covers one of the two periods as defined in the book, and follows the same

pattern of groups of instruments. The programme was specifically designed to demonstrate the 'function, range and special characteristics of each instrument'. Each item is superbly played and no doubt fulfils its function of demonstrating the instrument, and after serious study the listener would be well informed on the sound and type of music best suited to each instrument. However, so many instruments have been included, in order to show a comprehensive range, and so many of them have been given a solo item, that it has been necessary to cram a large number of short items on to the records at the expense of the more relaxing entertainment value which can be enjoyed from longer items. Each side has at least fifteen items, each lasting on average about one-and-a-half minutes. This does not allow scope for any real musical development, though each piece is a perfect miniature in itself, and the performers are quite outstanding in both technique and style. Some of the players, including Munrow himself, happily tackle a wide variety of instruments, and play each with the same ability and verve.

Throughout the set, the keynote is tremendous enthusiasm, mainly engendered by David Munrow himself. He had an uncanny instinct for knowing how to treat an instrument, which music suited it best and the liveliest way in which to perform on it. He was an intensely practical musician, who backed his experience with scholarly research in a field which few others had previously tackled. The musical world will miss him sadly, both as a musician and a person, and the main consolation is the immense wealth of recorded material which he has left, of which this set is no inconsiderable part.

ANNE SMITH

**THE ARDENT QUEEN: MARGARET OF ANJOU AND THE LANCAS-
TRIAN HERITAGE** by Jock Haswell, Peter Davies, 1976, 224 pp. £4.50.

Looking at the illustrations in this book one suspects the worst on coming across a very Victorian etching of Margaret, supposedly taken from a miniature painted by her father, which the caption refers to in these terms: 'this is believed to be the only authentic portrait in existence'. It does not bode well for the book, but in fact it turns out to be better than this would lead one to suppose. However, despite the main title, it is less a biography of Margaret herself, than yet another book about the earlier part of the Wars of the Roses. Margaret takes the forefront on the scene, but we are told very little about her, outside the context of her life as Henry VI's wife; any detailed consideration of her activities begins with her marriage and ceases with Henry VI's death. A brief epilogue deals with the remaining eleven years of her life. The author advances no new theories: this is simply an account of the English political history of the middle years of the fifteenth century, but it is fluently written and easy to read. It appears to have been composed primarily from secondary sources, although occasional reference is made to manuscript sources.

The author is inclined to prefer a charitable assessment of both Margaret and Henry's actions, giving them the benefit of any doubt, and quite rightly pointing out that Margaret 'was not, in the end, on the winning side and one only has to recall the historical treatment of Richard III by the Tudors, and James II by the Whigs, losers on the same scale, to realise that the general

attitude to Margaret may not be justified'. As far as Ricardians, at any rate are concerned, it will come as nothing new to be told that Tudor chroniclers, and Shakespeare's history plays are not to be relied on as a source of history. Haswell suggests that Margaret genuinely loved Henry VI, and points out that all her activities were devoted to the same end: to maintain her husband on his throne, and to ensure the succession of their son. But in this, he suggests, her aims were much narrower than Henry's: he sought for peace between the warring factions. The tragedy was that he had not the authority to impose it, and the very weakness of his rule increased the anarchy.

Haswell makes out an interesting and believable character for Margaret, full of odd quirks and contradictions. Eager to take action against her enemies she was yet oddly afflicted with hesitancy at the vital moment, as when she delayed coming south after Wakefield, or entering London after beating Warwick at second St Albans, and so lost the initiative and allowed Edward to reach London and be proclaimed King. Her reluctance to leave France with Edward of Lancaster in 1471 was less vital, but her presence in England would have aided her joint enterprise with Warwick and helped his government to establish itself. Similarly she had a curious lack of imagination regarding English views, and seemed unaware that she could not hope for popularity if she treated with England's enemies and offered them pieces of English territory—Berwick to the Scots in 1461, and Calais, which she apparently offered to sell to the French in 1460.

Altogether this book is an adequate explanation of Margaret of Anjou, interesting reading if not highly scholarly.

ELIZABETH M. NOKES

FIGURES OF LIFE AND DEATH IN MEDIEVAL ENGLISH LITERATURE by Philippa Tristram, Elek, 1976, xiv+245 pp., 36 plates. £9.50.

It is easier to busy oneself about the finer tactical points of Barnet or Bosworth than to learn, even broadly, about the thought processes of fifteenth century people. We do not really know what they actually believed about life or death, only what they were supposed to believe (could we read the moral attitudes of a period from the text of the Ten Commandments?). Despite the many records we possess, the fifteenth century offers no intimate diary or interview; the most we can hope for is gleaned from the cagey prosaic language of the Pastons.

Many scholars have, almost as a last resort, tried to use literature as a source for the ideas of a period, even though poets and other writers might appear to be sophisticated and influenced by contemporary and earlier literary traditions. But there is some overlap between literature and popular lore. For example, the poet could muster images and allusions about Death which would be depicted for the peasant to see on the walls of village churches. Works on contemporary poetry like V. J. Scattergood's *Politics and Poetry in the Fifteenth Century* (1971), can be a useful quarry for students of the period. Philippa Tristram's *Figures of Life and Death* is harder going; it is definitely for systematic browsing or occasional reference. Her use of literature—a very wide range of source material, and art—thirty-six plates, some well known, others less so,

offers detailed insights into the obsessive realism with which the late fourteenth and fifteenth centuries viewed and portrayed death.

Her specialised treatment is rather heavy for most members but it is worth making the effort at least to skim, even if just to disprove the tendency of the disciplines of history and Eng. Lit. to work in their own little vacuums. For those who want a shorter introduction to the medieval attitudes to Death, try T. S. R. Boase, *Death in the Middle Ages* (1972), Thames & Hudson paperback. F. C.

A New Novel

THE RED QUEEN by Jane Hammond. Robert Hale, August 1976. £3.10.

Set in 1471, this novel describes the Lancastrians' attempt to regain the throne. It centres on the relationship of a disillusioned former Yorkist and the mysterious unacknowledged daughter of Margaret of Anjou. When all is lost at Tewkesbury the Lancastrians' last hope is to crown the daughter of their Queen as their new leader.

Notices of Books and Articles

THE FOLLOWING list consists of recent books and articles, mainly published within the last twelve months, although a few earlier publications are included. The appearance of an item in this list does not preclude its subsequent review. Unless stated otherwise in the *Bulletin* these items are not held in the Society's Library.

BOOKS

William Caxton, Aesop's Fables, with an introduction by Edward Hodnett, 292 pages, 1976 (facsimile of 1484 edition), Scolar Press, £25.

Aesop's Fables was one of the most popular books of the early years of printing. Caxton's edition, of his own translation from the French, was the first in English.

William Caxton, The Game and Play of Chess, by Jacob de Cessolis, with an introduction by N. F. Blake, 174 pages, 1976 (facsimile of 1482 edition), Scolar Press, £12.50.

An allegorical work 'on human morals and the duties of noblemen' which uses chess pieces to represent the stations and duties of life. Caxton's translation seems to have met with considerable success at the Yorkist Court.

William Caxton, Le Morte d'Arthur, by Sir Thomas Malory, with an introduction by Paul Needham, 864 pages, 1976 (facsimile of 1485 edition), Scolar Press, £75.

Caxton's edition of *Le Morte d'Arthur* was the source for all later editions until the Winchester Manuscript was discovered. *Le Morte d'Arthur* is the most famous version, and the first in English prose of all the legends which have been collected about King Arthur.

William Caxton: an Exhibition to Commemorate the Quincentenary of the Introduction of Printing into England, 94 pages, 1976, British Museum Publications, £2.

The catalogue of the exhibition, well illustrated with facsimiles of books and manuscripts.

Larry D. Benson, *Malory's Morte d'Arthur*, 289 pages, 1975, Harvard University Press, £7.80.

The book is divided into two parts, the first dealing with the *Morte d'Arthur* as a work of literature, finding it more unified than was hitherto thought, and the second with Malory's reflection of contemporary chivalry.

René of Anjou, *Le Livre du Cœur d'Amours Espris*, with an introduction and commentary by F. Unterkircher, 48 pages and 16 coloured plates, 1975, Thames & Hudson, £10.

An allegory of courtly love.

Carolyn Erickson, *Medieval Vision: Essays in History and Perception*, 256 pages, 1976, Oxford University Press (New York), £4.95 (£1.75 paperback).

Describes how medieval men and women perceived their world.

Guy Fourquin, *Lordship and Feudalism in the Middle Ages*, 240 pages, 1976, Allen & Unwin, £6.50.

An analysis based mainly on French experience, although evidence is drawn from the whole of Western Europe.

Rodney Dennys, *The Heraldic Imagination*, 224 pages, 1975, Barrie & Jenkins, £10.

Relates the heralds and their work to the literary and social life of the Middle Ages, describing the place of heralds and armoury in medieval society and literature.

C. T. Allmand (editor), *War, Literature, and Politics in the Late Middle Ages*, 202 pages, 1976, Liverpool University Press, £8.50.

Deals with the theory and practice of war as it developed in England and France in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, and how these developments affected the chivalric ideal and other aspects of war.

A. G. Dickens (editor), *The Courts of Europe, Politics, Patronage and Royalty*, 324 illustrations, 1976, Thames & Hudson, £15.

Describes the pageantry, culture, physical setting, role in government and personalities involved in fourteen of the Courts of Europe (including the Court of Burgundy) from 1400–1800.

Joel T. Rosenthal, *Nobles and Noble Life 1295–1500*, 208 pages, 1976, Allen & Unwin, £5.75.

Presents a picture of aristocratic life in the Middle Ages, including political, personal and economic aspects. Includes many documents.

Edgar B. Graves, *A Bibliography of English History to 1485*, 1103 pages, 1975, Oxford University Press, £20.

The standard bibliography for the period.

Delloyd J. Guth, *Late Medieval England 1377–1485*, 164 pages, 1976, Cambridge University Press, £3.30.

A brief but comprehensive bibliography for the period.

ARTICLES

Patricia Jelland, *The Revolution in Northern Borough Representation in Mid-Fifteenth Century England* (*Northern History*, Vol. 11, 1976, pp. 27-51).

Deals with the type of person who sat for Parliament during this period, reflecting the increased value of a seat in Parliament.

A. J. Pollard, *The Northern Retainers of Richard Nevill, Earl of Salisbury* (*Northern History*, Vol. 11, 1976, pp. 56-69).

Contains much information on the Nevill 'Affinity' in the 1450's.

R. A. Griffiths, *Richard Duke of York and the Royal Household in Wales 1449-1450* (*Welsh History Review*, Vol. 8, June 1976, pp. 14-25).

The circumstances of the Duke of York in North Wales in 1450 reflect the role of the King's Household in the polity of late Lancastrian England, and in the sequence of events that brought England to the threshold of civil war.

Richard Webster, *Comparison and Contrast between Dante and Shakespeare with Particular Reference to Inferno X and Richard III Act I Scene IV* (*Nottingham Medieval Studies*, Vol. 18, 1974, pp. 17-28 and Vol. 19, 1975, pp. 35-47).

Michael Stroud, *Malory and the Chivalric Ethos* (*Medieval Studies*, Vol. 36, 1976, pp. 331-353).

Contains much information on the possible identity of Sir Thomas Malory, and on the chivalric ethos in the fifteenth century.

Esther Cohen, *In Haec Signa: Pilgrim-badge Trade in Southern France* (*Journal of Medieval History*, Vol. 2 Part 3, 1976, pp. 193-214).

A large part of the wealth of medieval shrines came from the sale of badges to the pilgrims who went there. The sale of badges slowly passed from the Church to a 'souvenir' industry developed in the towns surrounding the shrines. Much information on pilgrims and pilgrimages is also contained in the article.

A. F. Johnston, *The Plays of the Religious Guilds of York: The Creed Play and the Pater Noster Play* (*Speculum*, Vol. 50, 1975, pp. 55-90).

The best known play from York is the Corpus Christi Play, but there were two others, described in this article. The conditions in which they were acted, and what is known of them is set out. A special performance of the Creed Play was given before Richard III on his visit to York in 1483.