

Research Notes and Queries

The Earl of Northumberland and the Battle of Bosworth

Mrs. Meredith Whitford puts forward the following suggestion:—

The Earl of Northumberland's wife died in late July 1485 (before 27 July according to *The Complete Peerage*, giving no source). Could her death account for her husband's apparent dilatoriness in responding to Richard's call for support in August? Disregarding any personal grief he may have felt, the obsequies of a lady of rank normally took quite a time in those days. She was buried in Beverley Minster as was her husband in 1489. Some details of his elaborate and expensive funeral, including the embalming of the body, the two day journey from Wressle to Beverley, one day in Beverley for the burial and a one day journey back to Wressle (18 miles) are given in George Oliver's *History and Antiquities of Beverley the Town and Minster of Beverley* (Beverley 1829, pp.173-4). Although her funeral may not have been so sumptuous as his, the ceremonies could have lasted into August.

Richard III and Thomas More

The following note has been sent by Muriel Smith:—

'The right shoulder is a little higher than the left, especially when he walks. This is not a defect of birth, but the result of habit, such as we often contract.'

This is a description of More, in a letter of 1519 from Erasmus to Ulrich von Hutten, as translated by T. E. Bridgett in his *Life and Writings of Blessed Thomas More* (3rd edn. London 1904, p.57). From this, it would seem quite likely that Richard and his biographer were just about equally deformed or undeformed. In Richard's case, a possibility would be a leg injury (say from an early riding accident) which made it a strain for him to stand straight: that he *sometimes* hunched up a shoulder would account for the varying descriptions of the first-hand witnesses.

It may be added of Richard and Thomas More that each has been very much the victim of historians, and chiefly the same historians, the Tudor-addicts, for example A. L. Rowse, who earns dishonourable mention by both R. W. Chambers in *The Place of St. Thomas More in English Literature and History* (London 1937, p.71) and Audrey Williamson in *The Mystery of the Princes* (Gloucester 1978, p.126). The great exception is Lingard, no friend to Tudors, who, in the cause of upholding More against Henry VIII, apparently felt obliged to uphold More as an historian, and was therefore also anti-Richard. More was in fact a good historian by the standards of his day, but they are not our standards nor indeed those of Lingard, who is very modern for a man born in 1771. The older standards, common to medieval and Renaissance writers, are discussed by C. S. Lewis in *The Discarded Image* (Cambridge 1964, pp.180-1), quoting Milton as a late example. What the public wanted, and Milton thought it was entitled to, was to be given what everyone already knew, the established story, retold attractively. The historian accepts no responsibility for the material he finds in his authorities, his job being to pass on what they say and his version being, with minor variations, the same story as everyone else's.

Book Reviews

THE HISTORY OF MARKET BOSWORTH. Peter J. Foss. Sycamore Press, Wymondham, Leicestershire 1983. £24.

This handsomely-produced and well illustrated volume, traces the history of Market Bosworth, Leicestershire, from Roman Times to the middle of the present century. The thirteen chapters cover the major stages and events of the history of this small community that has, throughout the centuries, hovered between the status of a substantial village and a small town. Readers of the *Ricardian* perhaps will be most interested in the second chapter dealing with the Battle of Bosworth in a lucid and balanced way. The author observes on page 28:

'Apart from the recent memorials already mentioned, the battle itself — important as it may seem in retrospect — has left little visible imprint upon the locality; and it is doubtful whether the town of Bosworth was affected by its proximity.'

This latter statement ought to be challenged. Most of the contemporary or