

Research Notes and Queries

William Winter and Bosworth 100 Years Ago

Two members, Miss Marina Westwood of London and Mr. David Barton of California, have brought to light an interesting item on Bosworth as it was in 1889 and the activities of the American dramatic critic and poet, William Winter.

At Warwick on 29 August 1889 Winter wrote one of his sentimental records of the English countryside entitled 'Bosworth', a short essay which started with an assertion of his long held belief that Richard III was much 'maligned'. He saw Richard rather as a 'superb soldier, a wise statesman, a judicious legislator', with an 'absolutely clear' title to the throne of England. Who inspired this belief Winter does not say. He proceeds to expand on his emotions when he stood on Ambien Hill and describes what he could see and what he knew of the course of the battle.

This essay was first published in the *New York Tribune* and was reissued with others under the title *Gray Days and Gold* by David Douglas of Edinburgh in 1891, dedicated to Augustin Daly. It was to be a companion to Winter's *Shakespeare's England* and to describe his travels in those parts of England that were linked to memories of Shakespeare. It went into several editions: one of 1896 by Macmillan was illustrated with photographs, two of Bosworth, and had an extended text. (An edition is in the Society's Library.)

William Winter was born in 1836 and over a long life, ending in June 1917, he was a prolific writer as a dramatic critic, historian of the theatre and actors, poet and essayist. He was born in Gloucester, Massachusetts, brought up in Boston, and went to Harvard Law School in 1857. He 'declined his first case' for a literary career, the greatest influence on his style and career being the poet Longfellow who encouraged him. He was a journalist in New York and dramatic critic of *The Tribune* from 1865 until 1909 when his vitriolic reviews of the new, realistic plays of Ibsen and Pinero made him unacceptable. He was also widely known for his biographies of actors, many of whom were his friends: *The Jeffersons* (1881), *Henry Irving* (1885), *Edwin Booth* (1893). He adapted Shakespeare for both Booth and Augustin Daly. He was always a staunch upholder of beauty in art and of a sentimental and rigidly moral theatre, combining this with a sound judgement of acting ability and an enthusiastic defence of the theatre from the attacks of clergymen. His recordings of 'traditional' interpretations of roles in *Shakespeare on the Stage* (2 volumes 1911-15) is considered an important contribution to theatrical history.

He was first published as a poet when he was seventeen and although dismissed by Walt Whitman as 'a young Longfellow' continued to publish poetry throughout his life. Irving commissioned an ode from him for recitation on Edward VII's coronation day, and many of his poems were to commemorate theatrical personalities.

He married the novelist Elizabeth Campbell in 1860 and had five children. They lived at Fort Hill, New Brighton, Staten Island, and he frequently spent his summers in California or England.

Winter's many connections with the theatre of the second half of the nineteenth century in the United States and England make his views on Richard III particularly interesting. Many of the forerunners and early members of the Richard III Society were to come from the same background.

(Sources: *Gray Days and Gold*, Edinburgh 1891; Author's edition of *Poems*, New York 1909, with portrait; *Dictionary of American Biography*, vol. 20, 1926.)

Book Reviews

POWER, CULTURE, AND RELIGION IN FRANCE c.1350-c.1550. Edited C. T. Allmand. 1989. The Boydell Press, Woodbridge, £29.50.

This is a collection of eight papers read by younger scholars to a colloquium at Liverpool University in 1987. Every one of the eight is food for thought. Brian Ditcham discusses 'Foreign Soldiers and Native Reactions in Fifteenth-Century France'. He is particularly informative on the Scots. And rightly so: at Bauge they saved France for the French. Most of the Scotch members of the royal Scottish Guard stayed on to become Frenchmen too; they did not make fortunes and return with them to the homeland. That they did not return is more significant than that they did not make fortunes: their adopted country meant more to them than the one in which they were born and bred. Most Frenchmen (and women) accepted them. The outburst of the shoemaker of Dax — 'damned Scots villain, I'm as well-born a man as you are' — came in the heat of a fatal moment; it was not the considered opinion of his compatriots. The many varieties of French culture were easily able to absorb, as no doubt they ultimately captivated, these hard men out of the North. Guy Thompson describes the abbey and town of St. Denis under English occupation. The town epitomises France: it was for Charles VII — just. The abbey was more royalist: the Holy Nail and Crown of Thorns were sent to Bourges. Being within walking distance of Anglo-Burgundian Paris was no good at all; a householder summed up war as well as the fate of his home when he declared that the English, the Armagnacs, and the Picards had each 'knocked down their bit as they went by'.

Painting in Paris and Normandy c.1420-50 is examined by Catherine Reynolds. There seems to have been ample work in repairing and touching-up imagery as well as in the arts of political denigration. This was despite what the French saw as philistinism on the part of the English. The Duke of Bedford was the notable exception; as the 'Bourgeois de Paris' commented: 'his nature was quite un-English'. It seems fitting, therefore, that a master painter should be called after the Duke. Dancing was an art which also had its political aspect: spending on it at the court of Savoy had to be lavish when the Duke of Burgundy was present. Alison Rosie illuminates 'Entertainment at the Court of Savoy in the