

**HISTORIC DOUBTS ON
THE LIFE AND REIGN OF
KING RICHARD THE THIRD**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649033133

Historic Doubts on the Life and Reign of King Richard the Third by Mr. Horace Walpole

Except for use in any review, the reproduction or utilisation of this work in whole or in part in any form by any electronic, mechanical or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including xerography, photocopying and recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system, is forbidden without the permission of the publisher, Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd, PO Box 1576 Collingwood, Victoria 3066 Australia.

All rights reserved.

Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.
Cover @ 2017

This book is sold subject to the condition that it shall not, by way of trade or otherwise, be lent, re-sold, hired out, or otherwise circulated without the publisher's prior consent in any form or binding or cover other than that in which it is published and without a similar condition including this condition being imposed on the subsequent purchaser.

www.triestepublishing.com

MR. HORACE WALPOLE

**HISTORIC DOUBTS ON
THE LIFE AND REIGN OF
KING RICHARD THE THIRD**



HISTORIC DOUBTS
ON THE
LIFE AND REIGN
OF
King RICHARD the Third.

By Mr. HORACE WALPOLE.

L'Histoire n'est fondée que sur le temoignage des Auteurs qui nous l'ont transmise. Il importe donc extremement, pour la sçavoir, de bien connoitre quels estoient ces Auteurs. Rien n'est à negliger en ce point; le tems ou ils ont vecû, leur naissance, leur patrie, la part qu'ils ont eue aux affaires, les moyens par lesquels ils ont été instruits, et l'intérêt qu'ils y pouvoient prendre, sont des circonstances essentielles qu'il n'est pas permis d'ignorer: delà depend le plus ou le moins d'autorité qu'ils doivent avoir: et sans cette connoissance, on courra risque très souvent de prendre pour guide un Historien de mauvaise foi, ou du moins, mal informé.

Hist. de l'Acad. des Inscript. Vol. X.

The SECOND EDITION.

LONDON:
Printed for J. DODSLEY in Pall-Mall.
MDCCLXVIII.

P R E F A C E.

SO incompetent has the generality of historians been for the province they have undertaken, that it is almost a question, whether, if the dead of past ages could revive, they would be able to reconnoitre the events of their own times, as transmitted to us by ignorance and misrepresentation. All very ancient history, except that of the illuminated Jews, is a perfect fable. It was written by priests, or collected from their reports; and calculated solely to raise lofty ideas of the origin of each nation. Gods and demi gods were the principal actors; and truth is seldom to be expected where the personages are supernatural. The Greek historians have no advantage over the Peruvian, but in the beauty of their language, or from that language being more familiar to us. Mango Capac, the son of

the sun, is as authentic a founder of a royal race, as the progenitor of the Heraclidæ. What truth indeed could be expected, when even the identity of person is uncertain? The actions of one were ascribed to many, and of many to one. It is not known whether there was a single Hercules or twenty.

As nations grew polished, History became better authenticated. Greece itself learned to speak a little truth. Rome, at the hour of its fall, had the consolation of seeing the crimes of its usurpers published. The vanquished inflicted eternal wounds on their conquerors—but who knows, if Pompey had succeeded, whether Julius Cæsar would not have been decorated as a martyr to public liberty? At some periods the suffering criminal captivates all hearts; at others, the triumphant tyrant. Augustus, drenched in the blood of his fellow-citizens, and Charles Stuart, falling in his own blood, are held up to admiration. Truth is left out of the discussion; and

and odes and anniversary sermons give the law to history and credulity.

But if the crimes of Rome are authenticated, the case is not the same with its virtues. An able critic has shown that nothing is more problematic than the history of the three or four first ages of that city. As the confusions of the state increased, so do the confusions in its story. The empire had masters, whose names are only known from medals. It is uncertain of what princes several empresses were the wives. If the jealousy of two antiquaries intervenes, the point becomes inexplicable. Oriuna, on the medals of Carausius, used to pass for the moon: of late years it is become a doubt whether she was not his consort. It is of little importance whether she was moon or empress: but how little must we know of those times, when those land-marks to certainty, royal names, do not serve even that purpose! In the cabinet of the king of France are several coins of sovereigns, whose country cannot now be guessed at.

The

The want of records, of letters, of printing, of critics; wars, revolutions, factions, and other causes, occasioned these defects in ancient history. Chronology and astronomy are forced to tinker up and reconcile, as well as they can, those uncertainties. This satisfies the learned—but what should we think of the reign of George the Second, to be calculated two thousand years hence by eclipses, left the conquest of Canada should be ascribed to James the First?

At the very moment that the Roman empire was resettled, nay, when a new metropolis was erected, in an age of science and arts, while letters still held up their heads in Greece; consequently, when the great outlines of truth, I mean events, might be expected to be established; at that very period a new deluge of error burst upon the world. Christian monks and saints laid truth waste; and a mock sun rose at Rome, when the Roman sun sunk at Constantinople. Virtues and vices were rated by the standard of bigotry; and the militia of the church

5

became

became the only historians. The best princes were represented as monsters; the worst, at least the most useless, were deified, according as they depressed or exalted turbulent and enthusiastic prelates and friars. Nay, these men were so destitute of temper and common sense, that they dared to suppose that common sense would never revisit the earth: and accordingly wrote with so little judgment, and committed such palpable forgeries, that if we cannot discover what really happened in those ages, we can at least be very sure what did not. How many general persecutions does the church record, of which there is not the smallest trace? What donations and charters were forged, for which those holy persons would lose their ears, if they were in this age to present them in the most common court of judicature? Yet how long were these impostors the only persons who attempted to write history!

But let us lay aside their interested lies, and consider how far they were qualified in other respects to transmit: