

**ENGLISH TOWNS IN THE  
WARS OF THE ROSES; A  
THESIS, PP. 1-81**

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English Towns in the Wars of the Roses; a thesis, pp. 1-81 by James E. Winston

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UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA

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ENGLISH TOWNS IN THE WARS  
OF THE ROSES

BY  
JAMES E. WINSTON

A THESIS

PRESENTED TO THE FACULTY OF THE GRADUATE SCHOOL IN  
PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR  
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possible, the writer has been compelled to rely for the most part upon printed sources and upon those town histories whose authors have had access to manuscript sources. If only the writer shall have succeeded in suggesting a field of inquiry in which future investigators may achieve more marked results, his task will not have been in vain.

JAMES E. WINSTON.

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

It is the purpose of this paper to examine the attitude of some of the more important English boroughs in the civil wars of the fifteenth century. Historians generally have failed to reach any agreement about the part played by the towns in the Wars of the Roses, and in addition have unduly minimized it as a whole.<sup>1</sup> In general it may be said that three opinions have been expressed by writers dealing with this subject. By some historians we are assured that the great merchant towns, including London, were steady for the house of York.<sup>2</sup> On the other hand able writers have questioned whether the towns can be said to have exhibited any preference for one side of the other.<sup>3</sup> Thirdly, we are told that the towns were actuated solely by motives of self-interest; that they played fast and loose with the dominant powers in the state; that they manifested no constant devotion to the Red or the White Rose.<sup>4</sup> Says one writer: "The towns reluctantly sent their soldiers when they were ordered out to the aid of the reigning king, and whatever might be the side on which they fought, as soon as victory was declared, hurried off their messengers with gifts and protestations to the conqueror."<sup>5</sup> The last alleged attitude has been made the basis of a severe indictment of the towns: "If not actively mischievous, they were solidly inert. They refused to entangle themselves in

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Stubbs, *Constitutional History of England*, III, 611; Green, *Town Life in the Fifteenth Century*, I, 164; Vickers, *England in the Later Middle Ages*, p. 439.

<sup>2</sup> Green, *History of the English People*, II, 551; Blomefield, *History of Norfolk*, III, 167. Cf. Green, II, 561. Lucas, *Illustrations of the History of Bristol and its Neighbourhood*, p. 209.

<sup>3</sup> Stubbs, *Const. Hist.*, III, 611.

<sup>4</sup> Gneist, *History of the English Constitution*, pp. 438-439; Rogers, *History of Agriculture and Prices*, IV, 9, 10, says that "not one of them suffered loss from fidelity to any side,"—a statement which can easily be shown to be wide of the truth. Cf. also Alice E. Radice, "English Society during the Wars of the Roses," in the *Antiquary* for August, 1904.

<sup>5</sup> Green, *Town Life*, II, 331.