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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JAMES E. WINSTON

A THESIS

PRESENTED TO THE FACULTY OF THE GRADUATE SCHOOL IN
PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR
THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

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PREFACE

The present study in English municipal history was undertaken at the suggestion of the late Professor Charles Gross of Harvard University, and completed under the direction of Professor Edward P. Cheyney, of the University of Pennsylvania. Association with the former remains a source of inspiration to every student fortunate enough to have come in contact with one whose scholarly attainments never obscured the sympathetic friend, the courteous gentleman; to the latter the writer is happy to be able to make his sincere acknowl-

edgment for helpful counsel and suggestion placed so unreservedly at his disposal. Long ago honest Madox wrote

that "Whoso desireth to discourse in a proper manner concerning corporate towns and communities must take in a great
variety of matter, and should be allowed a great deal of time
and preparation." The results attained in this investigation
are disappointingly meagre compared with the amount of labor
involved. So far as the number of town and county histories
is concerned, their name is legion; from a slender portion
only however of the many volumes consulted has it been possible to obtain any precise information touching the political
history of the boroughs in the period under consideration.
Happily the old-fashioned method of treating local history is
being superseded more and more by the printing of town records, and a number of excellent studies of this character have
been made available; the more important of these have been
noted in the bibliography. It goes without saying that a

thorough-going study of the subject under consideration would necessitate an examination of the archives of the various towns 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.1 In general it may be said that three opinions have been expressed by writers dealing with this subiect. By some historians we are assured that the great merchant towns, including London, were steady for the house of York.2 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.8 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.4 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."5 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

¹Cf. 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.

²Green, 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.

³Stubbs, Const. 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. August, 1904.

⁸ Green, Town Life, II, 331.