



Bisham Abbey.

By Ernest W. Dormer.

(Continued from Vol. II, page 93.)

RICHARD, EARL OF SALISBURY. This romantic warrior was a Lancastrian, and took part in the battle of Wakefield Green in Yorkshire, when the Duke of York, thinking that his courage and experience would make up for the defects in his army, pitted himself against the Queen, but as we know, to lose his head by Lord Clifford "the Butcher." The Earl of Salisbury was taken prisoner in this disastrous battle and despite his wounds conveyed to Pontefract, where he lost his head on the scaffold. It was set up with the head of the Duke of York at the Queen's command. His body, and that of Alice his wife and his son Thomas (slain in the same battle), were buried at Bisham Abbey on the 14th February, 1463.

THE KING-MAKER. Perhaps the greatest of all the illustrious nobility who lie buried here is Warwick the King-maker; Richard Neville, Earl of Salisbury, in his own right, and Warwick in the right of his wife. On that bright Easter morning, the 14th of April, 1471, at Barnet, ten miles from London, a terrible battle was fought, which caused the King-maker his life. Warwick's troops fought desperately, as did also the king's, each man knowing that he would find himself a rebel in case the other side were victorious. As we have learned in history, the day decided for the King, and Warwick, wishing to set an example to his fast fleeing troops, and with all the heroism and stubbornness which won for him so great a name, rushed on foot among the thickest of the enemy, where he quickly fell covered with wounds. The Marquis of Montague, his brother, desirous to rescue him, perished in the attempt some few minutes later. Such was the issue of that day which will ever remain in the annals of the English nation as a calendar event. Such also was the end of the famous King-maker, who since the beginning of the quarrel between the Houses of York and Lancaster, had made in

England a figure which no subject before him had ever equalled. In a few words he had made and unmade kings just as he pleased. This is the most glorious thing that could be said of a private individual if true glory consisted in excess of power. After being exposed three days to all comers, his body was removed with that of his brother Montague to Bisham Abbey, where they were both interred.

EDWARD, EARL OF WARWICK, was the son of the Duke of Clarence, said to have been drowned in a butt of Malmsey. He was beheaded in the year 1499, when only 24 years of age, for attempting to taste the sweets of liberty.

Costly monuments were erected to the memory of these historic characters in the Conventual church, but when the days of the Reformation came all were destroyed, without regard to the social rank or brilliant exploits of those they memorialised, not even excepting the tomb of Salisbury, "the mirror of all martial men," who first trained Henry V. to the wars. In 1536 Bisham was dissolved and surrendered to Henry VIII., who had previously annexed to it the Abbey of Medmenham. William Barlow, the Prior at the first surrender, was made Bishop of St. Asaph that year and was successively translated, to the Bishoprics of St. Davids, Bath and Wells and Chichester. He married after the Reformation and had five daughters, all of whom curious to relate were married to Bishops. In 1537 the King founded a new order and endowed it with lands producing a yearly revenue of £661 14s. 9d. from the dissolved Abbey of Chertsey and the Priories of Cardigan, Bethkeleert, Anderwicke, Little Marlow, etc. The monies were devoted towards the maintenance of an Abbot and thirteen monks of the Benedictine Order, the Abbot to have the privilege of a seat in Parliament. On the 10th June, 1538, this new Order was dissolved, once more showing the inconsistency of the monarch then occupying the English throne. A pension of £66 13s. 4d. at its dissolution was assigned to Abbot Cowdrey who appears to have either voided the same by death or preferment before the year 1553; when only the following pensions remained in charge:—William Walker £7, John Myllest, William Roke, William Byggs, John Rolfe, Edward Stephenson, £5 each beside annuities amounting to £14 13s. 4d. It was the intention of the king at first to make Bisham a mitred Abbey, but as we know his feelings towards these institutions underwent a decided change and Bisham terminated its religious existence before the end of the year 1540.

It is difficult to account for the various dedications of the Abbey previous to the period when it fell into the hands of Henry, who, claiming a right paramount to the Saints, confiscated its privileges to his own benefit. In the first charter it was said to be dedicated to Our Lord Jesus and the Virgin His Mother; in the second to the Virgin only: and yet in the time of Richard II. and in both the deeds of surrender we find it entitled "the Conventual Church of the Holy Trinity."

From this period (1540) Bisham entered on a new phase of existence. In the train of the spoilers was left a scene of destruction and rapine, Bisham sharing no better than other religious houses. In its mutilated condition Henry gave it to the recipient of his fickle affections, Anne of Cleves, his divorced wife. He granted her a pension of £4,000 per annum and the choice to live in England or return to her home. She preferred England; no doubt thinking her remittance would be more secure than if she were abroad. She appears not to have been particularly pleased with Henry's choice of her home since she exchanged it with Sir Philip Hoby for his house in Kent. Sir Philip was a very learned man, a great antiquary, and a zealous protestant. He was the last English Ambassador to the Court of Rome, and had been a Member of the Privy Council of Henry VIII. Queen Elizabeth was a close friend of the Hobys, and while a princess she spent a few years in confinement at Bisham Abbey when her sister Mary sat upon the English throne. She seems to have had a liking for the place, and from accounts which have been preserved and all agree, it appears the princess was treated with much kindness and solicitude whilst living with the Hoby family. That she was not used so sternly as perhaps her sister would have wished is shown by the words in which she addressed her custodian on the first occasion he met her at Court after her accession. She said, "If I had a prisoner whom I wanted to be most carefully watched I should entrust him to your charge; if I had a prisoner whom I wished to be most tenderly treated I should entrust him to your care."

(To be continued.)