

Queen Elizabeth Woodville's Visit to Norwich

IN 1469,

FROM THE CHAMBERLAINS' ACCOUNTS FOR THE NINTH AND TENTH YEARS OF
KING EDWARD IV.

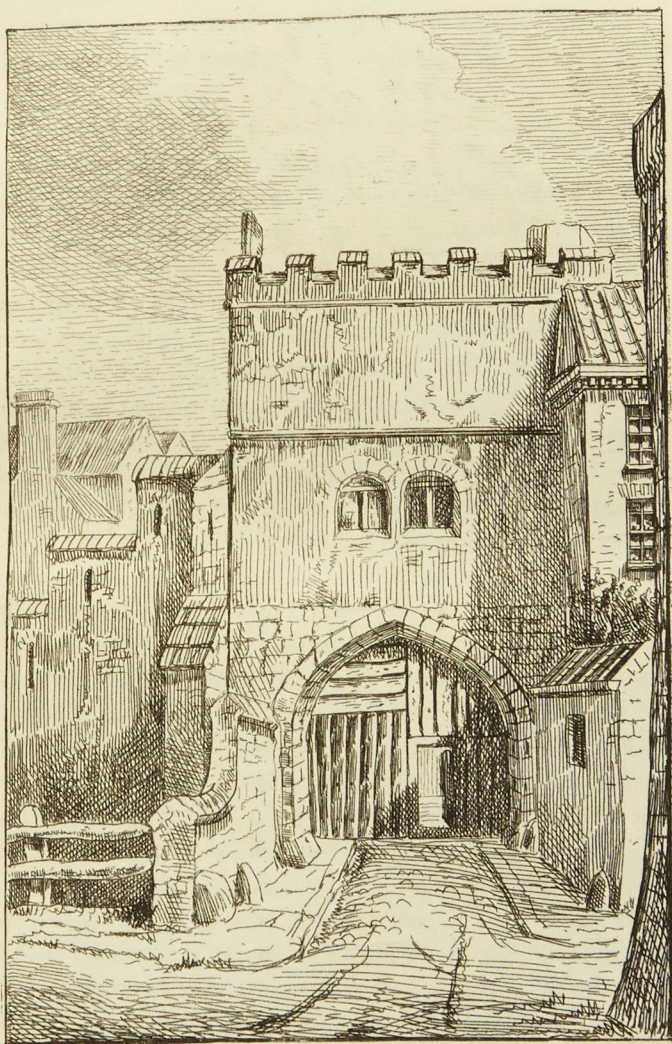
BY

HENRY HARROD, F.S.A., HON. SEC.

IN the Chamberlains' Accounts, from Michaelmas 9th Edward IV. to the following Michaelmas, eight pages are occupied by an account of their expenses "about the coming of Queen Elizabeth, in the ninth year of her most illustrious husband King Edward IV."

I have met with no account of this visit elsewhere. Blomefield records, under the year 1469, that "the King came to Norwich that year, and was grandly received;"* and some of the letters in the second volume of the Paston Collection refer to his stay here. In an undated letter, probably of the end of June or beginning of July in that year, John Paston writes to Sir John: "The King hath been in this country, and worshipfully received into Norwich, and had right good cheer and great gifts in this country, wherewith he holdeth himself so well content that he will hastily be here again, and the Queen also." The course of events precluded his doing so, but the Queen came; and Miss Strickland is therefore in error in saying, "the Queen was preparing to accompany Edward

* Among the apparel taken to pieces and used for the pageantry on the Queen's visit, were the mantles and triple crowns of three empresses who received the King at Needham Gates on the occasion of his entry into the city.



WESTWICK GATE.

into Norfolk when the intelligence of the death of her father and brother reached her."* She heard it at Norwich.

The time of her coming is indicated by another letter in the Paston Collection. John Aubrey, then Mayor of Norwich, addresses a letter to Sir Henry Spelman, the Recorder, on the 6th of July, informing him "the Sheriff of Norfolk had told him the Queen should be at Norwich upon Thursday come sevensnight surely, and he let him weet that she would desire to be received and attended as worshipfully as any Queen afore her." It also appears from the same letter, that it was Elizabeth Woodville's first visit to Norwich.

Unfortunately, the absence of dates to the various items of the account prevent our fixing the precise day to which each relates, and it is only by occasional allusions to passing events that any approximation to accuracy can be obtained. Aubrey's letter shows the Queen's coming could not have been before the middle of July; and a charge in another part of the year's accounts assists us in some measure in fixing the period. The Chamberlains' charge, 10s. 10½*d.*, expended by them in riding over to Yarmouth, where the Duke of Norfolk then was, *at the time the Queen was remaining in the city*, to obtain the Duke's interest with the King to relieve the City of Customs, "at which time (the account adds) the King was proceeding to encounter the rebels by whom Earl Rivers and others had been slain, and to represent to the Duke that the King at his good pleasure should take into his consideration their dutiful attendance on and safe custody of the Queen and her daughters here at that time remaining." The Duke was at Yarmouth in the July, August, and September of that year, engaged in wresting Caister from the Pastons, which he succeeded in doing about the beginning of October. The battle of Edgecote, where Earl Pembroke was defeated, was fought on the 26th July, 1469; but Mr. Halliwell states, that

* *Queens of England*, Vol. III., p. 325.

Earl Rivers and Sir John Woodville were not slain until the 20th of September, at Coventry.* It was probably, therefore, near the end of September when the deputation went to Yarmouth; and if the Queen came to Norwich, as she intended, before the end of July, she must have passed a considerable time in the city; and it may be gathered from the above statement, that at this place she received the sad intelligence of the death of her father and brother.

As soon as the Corporation were informed of the Queen's intention to visit the city, they began their preparations to receive her, and hastened to make themselves acquainted with her movements.

One Lyntok went to Windsor, by order of the Mayor, to bring certain intelligence of the Queen's coming. Subsequently he rode to Bury St. Edmund's on a similar errand; and then another man rode to divers parts of Norfolk to gain intelligence of the Queen's progress. After this, Robert Horgoner went forth to ascertain the road the Queen intended to take; and John Sadler rode to tell the Queen's servants to enter the city by Westwyk Gates.

Meantime all was busy preparation within the town. A Committee of the Council was appointed, who inaugurated their proceedings with a feast at Henry Bradfield's hostelry. One Parnell, of Ipswich, a great man at subtilties, plays, and pageants, was sent for; and he and his servants came over for twelve days to assist in the preparations.† So careful were they that all should be in order throughout her course, that a freemason was paid 6*d.* for mending the crest of the conduit on the North side of St. Andrew's churchyard.

When the Queen at length arrived, with her daughters

* *Archæologia*, Vol. XXIX., p. 138.

† In the 20th year of King Henry VII., *John Parnell* had 3*3s.* 4*d.* from the Guild of Corpus Christi, Ipswich, to find the ornaments for the Corpus Christi Plays there for twelve years.—Notices of the Guild, by W. S. Fitch, *Suffolk Archæology*, Vol. II., p. 154, and *Memorials of Ipswich*, p. 170.

and suite, at the Westwyk Gates,* she was received by the Corporate Body. At these gates, under Parnell's direction, a stage had been constructed covered with red and green worsted, adorned with figures of angels, and with scutcheons and banners of the King's and Queen's arms, and fourteen square scutcheons powdered with crowns, roses, and fleurs-de-lys. Here were also two giants made of wood and hungry (Hungary) leather, their bodies stuffed with hay, and their crests glittering in all the grandeur of gold and silver leaf. There were also two patriarchs, twelve apostles, and sixteen virgins in mantles with hoods. A certain friar played Gabriel. John Mumford's son assisted in this performance; and Gilbert Spirling exhibited a pageant of the Salutation of Mary and Elizabeth, which required a speech from him in explanation. There were many clerks singing finely, accompanied upon the organs. From thence she proceeded to the gates of the Friars Preachers, and here, under Thomas Cambridge's house, another stage had been erected, similarly decorated: † the stairs leading up to it covered with "Tapser work," lent by the Friars Minors, who also contributed a number of their vestments for the pageant; and here had been brought from the Cathedral, for the accommodation of the Queen, the great chair of St. Luke's Guild, which seems, by the money expended in treating the fraternity for lending it, and the care and labour bestowed upon its protection from injury, to have been a fabric of great magnificence. The entertainment offered to the Queen at this point, was limited to a vocal per-

* All the Norwich Gates were taken down in 1792-3, but the late Mr. Stevenson had views of them taken shortly before their destruction, which are about to be published by Mr. Muskett; the late John Carter sketched them in 1786, and from his sketch of the Westwick Gate, kindly lent me by Mr. Britton, I give the view at the commencement of this paper.

† Some of the green worsted used upon this structure was subsequently purchased by the corporation and applied "in covering the seats of the Aldermen at the Green Yard Sermons within the Priory."

formance by one "Fakke" and his boys. More was probably provided, but the shows and pageants terminated abruptly by reason of the great and continuous rain. The Queen and her suite retired to her lodgings at the Friars Preachers, and the corporation and performers rushed to the Guildhall, where divers men carried dry clothes for them. A house was taken close by Westwyk Gates into which the covering and ornaments of the stage were quickly placed; Stephen Skinner and others found coats and hoods for the patriarchs, apostles, virgins and others. Very much damage was done to the decorations by the rain, for every bill paid had extra allowance made for the damage to articles contributed done by it or by the haste with which they had been removed; and thus ominously did this reception, which was to rival that of "any Queen that was afore her," end.

The date of the Queen's arrival, as I before said, is not named, nor how long she staid. She must have remained here for some time; and from the absence of all notice of processions or pageants on her leaving the city, I conclude the death of her relatives caused her to depart without any further displays.

This is briefly the history furnished by the Chamberlains' Accounts of this visit. The accounts themselves extend over many pages, but it would be tiresome to enumerate all the consultations and consequent feasting the providers had, the materials they collected, and the labour they employed. It struck me as a curious episode in the fearful history of the period, and I have endeavoured to divest my narrative as much as possible of the dry details.

In the same year's accounts there is one item of an earlier date, I would mention, referring to an occurrence I have seen noticed nowhere else: 42*s.* 4½*d.* was paid for the expenses of Henry Spelman, the Recorder, with two servants, Richard Farrour, and two servants, John Coke, one of the chamberlains, and one servant, and Hamond Claxton, when

they rode to Yarmouth to speak to the Duke of Norfolk, (who was then engaged in the siege of Caister) touching a riot and grievous affray made by some of his servants on John Berney, Esq., of Wichingham, within the Cathedral Church of Norwich, whereby the church *had been suspended from holy offices* (having been, I presume, polluted by blood.) A deputation also went to Hoxon to see the Bishop on the same subject, as the Mayor's officers had arrested the rioters in the Cathedral. They made their peace with the Duke, for we subsequently find them enlisting his aid with the King to relieve them of their Customs, and in the course of the year they sent him a barrel of beer to Caister.

The Berneys were great supporters of the Pastons, and one of them, Osbern or Osbert Berney, was stated to have been killed during the siege; he however survived it some years, and died at Braydeston, where there is a brass to his memory.

