

The Pastime of People, Or, The Chronicles of Divers Realms, and Most Especially of the Realm of England (1529)

by John Rastell (d.1536)

Published by Thomas Frognall Dibdin (ed), 1811.

Extract on behalf of *The Missing Princes Project* – Section 14, pp.292-293, 297

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Edward V

‘And after that, at the Guildhall, the duke of Buckingham in a long oration there by him made, and extortion, with elegant words, preferred the title of the said protector of the realm. And, during this while, the said protector, by the council of the duke of Buckingham, as it was said, caused this young king and his brother to be conveyed to ward; which were never after seen but there put to death.

But of the manner of the death of this young king, and of his brother, there were divers opinions; but the most common opinion was, that they were smothered between two featherbeds, and that, in the doing, the younger brother escaped from under the featherbeds, and crept under the bedstead, and there lay naked a while, till that they had smothered the young king, so that he was surely dead; and, after this, one of them took his brother from under the bedstead, and held his face down to the ground with his one hand, and with the other hand cut his throat bolle (*throat-ball - Adam’s apple*) a souder (*asunder*) with a dagger. It is a miracle that any man could have so hard a heart to do so cruel a deed, save only that necessity compelled them, for they were so charged by the duke, the protector, that if they showed not to him the bodies of both those children dead, on the morrow after they were so commanded, that then they themselves should be put to death. Wherefore they that were so commanded to do it, were compelled to fulfil the protector’s will.

And after, that the bodies of these two children, as the opinion ran, were both closed in a great heavy chest, and by the means ...

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... of one that was secret with the protector, they were put in a ship going to Flanders; and, when the ship was in the black deeps, this man threw both those dead bodies, so closed in the chest, over the hatches into the sea; and yet none of the mariners, no none in the ship, save only the said man, knew what things it was that was there so enclosed. Which saying divers men conjectured to be true, because that the bones of the said children could never be found buried, neither in the Tower nor in no other place.

Another opinion there is, that they which had the charge to put them to death, caused one to cry suddenly, ‘Treason, treason’. Wherewith the children being afeared, desired to know what

was best for them to do. And then they bad them hide themselves in a great chest, that no man should find them, and if anybody came into the chamber they would say they were not there. And according as they counselled them, they crept both into the chest, which, anon after, they locked. And then anon they buried that chest in a great pit under a stair, which they before had made therefore, and anon cast earth thereon, and so buried them quick. Which chest was after cast into the black deeps, as is before said.

Then, the 20th day of June, the said protector took upon him as king of the realm, proclaiming himself King Richard III.’

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Page 296: stylised sixteenth century drawing of Richard III

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King Richard III

‘Immediately after his coronation, the grudge, as well of the lords as of the commons, greatly increased against him, because the common fame went that he had secretly murdered the two sons of his brother, King Edward IV in the Tower of London. Which grudge the duke of Buckingham perceiving, and to the intent to clear himself, and to win the favour of the people, conspired against King Richard, and allied himself with diverse gentlemen, to bring his purpose about. But yet this King Richard had knowledge of his intent; wherefore King Richard, in all haste, sent for to take him; and the duke, not yet being accompanied able to resist, fled secretly into a servants place of his called Banester. ... the said Banester ... showed the sheriff of the shire where the duke was, which incontinent came and took the duke, and brought him to Salisbury, where the king then lay. But the king would in no wise speak with the duke, but anon caused him to be beheaded.’

Extract ends