

ITALIAN OPINIONS ABOUT GREAT BRITAIN  
DURING THE PERIOD OF THE ITALIAN RENAISSANCE.

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### Abstract.

## Italian Opinions about Great Britain during the Period of the Italian Renaissance.

The thesis deals with Italian observations on life in Great Britain, especially England, in the period of English history bounded by the reigns of Edward III and Henry VIII. The sources are drawn from Italian literature of the period bounded by the careers of Petrarch and Boccaccio and from Italian works of art of the same period. The purpose of the thesis is to collate, compare and contrast Italian views about Britain within and between the various sections of the island's history and generally to discover what comprehensive picture of Britain Italians could have constructed mentally by the middle of the sixteenth century.

The subjects under discussion are grouped as follows:-

1. Britons in society: The composition of society; its classes and the Italian conception of their functions. Social morality: the contrast between strict public morality and the recurrence of royal marriage irregularities. Manners in public: courtesy, display and the Arts, and their political implications.

2. The geographic and economic facts of British life: The social and political effects of natural riches and of extraordinary income and their relation to royal finances. Towns as insular economic units. The effect of population size and climate, with its correlation to health, on the economic well-being of the country. Insularity and xenophobia resulting from the phenomenal geographic conditions of the island.

3. British intellectual characteristics: British natural cunning; and its manifestation in war and commerce. Humanism in England, patronage of it and its diffusion in society.



4. Religion: Piety and heresy; relations between the Church and the Crown.

5. The Secular State: The Crown: the Italian concept of English kingship. The Governor as the complement and counter-balance of the king. The functions and relative importance of parliament and the legal system.

6. War and Diplomacy: The measure of activity in British politics. External war, its justifications and political involvements. Internal war as the alternative activity under weak kings. Diplomacy: the controlling factor in questions of war and peace; the use of the Garter as an instrument of diplomatic activity.

Conclusion: An analysis of the subject in terms of opposing absolutes. Henry VIII seen as the personification of English society.

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# Abbreviations and References.

In the notes and bibliography as many conventional abbreviations as possible are employed. Foot-notes always refer to material in the bibliography. When only one work of any particular author is used in the thesis, the notes mention only the author's name, his work being listed in the bibliography. When more than one work of any author is used, reference is made to his name and to abbreviated versions of his works.

The following abbreviations are most commonly used:-

Lodovico Bracciolini: Lib.Facet., for Liber Facetiarum.

Giovio: <u>Desc.</u> ,	" <u>Descriptio Britanniae, Scotiae, Hiberniae et Orchadum.</u>
" <u>LCVI</u> ,	" <u>Elogia veris Clarorum Virorum Imaginibus Apposita.</u>
" <u>EVBI</u> ,	" <u>Elogia virorum bellica virtute illustrium.</u>
" <u>Hist.</u> I and II	" <u>Istoria del Suo Tempo, I and II.</u>
" <u>Rag.</u>	" <u>Ragionamento sopra le Imprese.</u>
Pius II: <u>Coms.</u> ,	" <u>Commentaries.</u>
" <u>De gestis</u> ,	" <u>De Gestis Concilii Basiliensis Commentariorum Libri II.</u>
" <u>De viris</u> ,	" <u>De Viris Illustribus.</u>
(Polydore) Vergil: <u>AH</u> (Basle, 1570),	" <u>Anglica Historia</u> , (Basle, 1570).
" <u>AH</u> (Ellis),	" <u>Three Books of P.V.'s English History, comprising the reigns of Henry VI, Edward IV and Richard III</u> , ed. H. Ellis.
" <u>AH</u> (LT),	" <u>P.V.'s English History from an early translation</u> , Vol. I, ..., ed. H. Ellis.

Vergil: AH(Hay), for The 'Anglica Historia' of F.V., A.D.1485-1537, ed. and tr. D.Hay.

" AH(Leyden), for Anglica Historia, (Leyden,1649).

General collections of documents are referred to in the following way:-

AIMA, L.A.Muratori, Antiquitates Italicae Medii Aevi, 6 vols., (Milan,1738-42).

Albèri, E.Albèri, Relazioni Veneti, (Florence,1839-53).

Graevius, J.G.Graevius, Thesaurus Antiquorum et Historiarum Italiae, (Lyon,1722).

Mansi, J.Mansi, Sacrorum conciliorum nova et amplissima collectio, (Paris,1903)

Monaci, E.Monaci(ed.), Crestomazia Italiana dei primi secoli, (Città di Castello,1912).

RB, Sebastiano Giustiniano, 'Four Years at the Court of Henry VIII', a selection of despatches, 1515-19, tr. Rawdon Brown, 2 vols., (London,1854).

RIS, L.A.Muratori, Rerum Italicarum Scriptores, 25 tomes, (Milan,1723-51).

RRISS, (L.A.Muratori), Rerum Italicarum Scriptores, (Città di Castello,1900-17, Bologna,1917 continuing).

San., Marin Sanudo, I Diarii, with vol. references to the MS copy, St. Mark's Library, Venice, <sup>as quoted by R.Brown in SPV;</sup> and cf. Sanudo, p. 486.

SP Hen.VIII, State Papers during the reign of Henry VIII, Vol.VII, Pt.v cont., (London,1849).

SPM, Calendar of State Papers and MSS, existing in the archives and collections of Milan I, ed.A.B.Hinds,(London,1912).

SPV, Calendar of State Papers and MSS, relating to English Affairs, existing in...Venice and...Northern Italy, Vols. I-V, (London,1864-73).

Wilkins, P.Wilkins, Concilia Magnae Britanniae et Hiberniae I-IV, (London,1737ff.).

Preface.

Professor Denys Hay suggested the subject of my research; he guided the progress of my studies; and he has been my gentlest critic and most constructive advisor through thick and thin. For all of this I thank him most sincerely. My thanks, no less sincere, also go to Professor C.I. Brand, my second supervisor: his observations on my work were profound and refreshingly helpful. Mr. Anthony Goodman, Mr. John MacGregor and Mr. Peter Spring also read some of my chapters with patience and afforded me the benefit of their scholarly expertise. Dr. Anthony Luttrell most kindly advised me about and encouraged me with my research while I was working in Rome. To all of these historians I am deeply indebted. Mrs. W. Purdman, who assiduously typed my thesis in Exeter, also deserves high praise. Finally, for their assistance in preparing some of the illustrations for the thesis, I express my gratitude to Dr. Eric Forbes and the Marchese Giuseppe Vairo-Zattera.

H.E.C. de C.

## Introduction.

Background: During the period of the Italian Renaissance, roughly from the mid 14th. to the mid 16th. century, the development of Italian learning, perhaps also the increase in literacy, and certainly the greater awareness of man as an aesthetic object in a world tailored to human proportions, all combined to make Italians more aware of and discerning about the world around them and beyond them. As in no period since the fall of Rome, Italians began to write more critical observations about foreigners and far-off countries. The British Isles fascinated them not only as a strange and distant country, but, for some of them, as a necessary link in the chain of their economic well-being. Their writings on Britain were often quite unsystematically planned and frequently fragmentary: it was not until the Trevisan Relation(1) was written about 1497 that a complete work, comprehensive in its own way, was produced about Britain. Thereafter, others followed until a peak of concentrated observation came in Polydore Vergil's Anglica Historia(2), published in 1534 and in toto in 1550, and in Paolo Giovio's descriptive works published between 1548 and 1552. Yet, still much valuable detailed information about England came in the day-to-day dispatches sent home by Italians abroad and even in contemporary fictional writings. They are in no way over-shadowed by the apparently all-embracing nature of the larger works.

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1. Referred to here and throughout the thesis is the work commonly called the Italian Relation. Since I shall be dealing with a number of relations of England, all of them Italian, I have adopted this method of referring to this relation because it probably was written by a secretary of Andrea Trevisano's after his embassy to England(1491 to 1493). Cf. Sanudo 1/2, in SAV I, 1 June 1498, for reference to the time and duration of the mission.
  2. Vergil's Anglica Historia is comprehensive in its approach; it is a general work. Therefore, I tend to refer to it mainly when Vergil expresses a distinct opinion or comments specifically on historical events.



Therefore, the purpose of this thesis is to collect together and collate the substantial and fragmentary references to Great Britain in Italian Renaissance works and to interpret and compare the sometimes rather inarticulate inferences in them.

In English history the period covered is bounded by the reigns of Edward III and Henry VIII. Edward III's reign coincided with the beginning of the Renaissance in Italy and his activities attracted far more Italian attention than any previous English king's. In the 14th. century <sup>the</sup> chronicles of the Villani family largely helped to activate Italians' interested comment on Britain. Henry VIII's reign, occurring during the final stages of the Italian Renaissance, conveniently brought to an end a period of close connections between England and Italy. After 1547 there ensued a period of partial estrangement largely brought about by religious differences and their economic consequences. During the reigns of Henry VIII's children bias and prejudice in Italian works effectively indicate a turning away from the open-mindedness of the humanists' world. However, although in literary terms the career of Francesco Petrarca provides an obvious starting point, there is no comparably distinct terminal point. Therefore, it is not really feasible to ignore works of essentially Renaissance writers up to the end of Matteo Bandello's literary life-span<sup>(1)</sup>, in as much as they frequently contain valuable retrospective comments on the historical period in question. As a background to this literary period, there are two short studies of the Britain to be seen in the writings of the Ancients and in Italian literature

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1. Matteo Bandello, bishop of Norcera, died in 1561, although some of his novelle were not published until 1572. Some, however, had been written and widely read decades before they were actually printed.

with an Arthurian inspiration.(1) Classical writers on Britain generally came from the area of modern Italy, even Diodorus of Sicily, although he was writing in Greek. The significance of Classical works is that they were being rediscovered or re-explored during the Renaissance period and were hence often at the back of contemporary writers' minds. This can be seen in some Renaissance works.(2) Arthurian romances and chivalric stories were being written before and during the Renaissance period and, though in themselves quite separate from most Renaissance fiction, they could have added a touch of colourful brilliance to the often plain didactic accounts of Britain. Moreover, one must remember that for purely romantically minded Italians chivalric tales might well have provided their only acquaintance with Britain.

But what was Britain? One uses the name Great Britain today in much the same way as one talks about Italy, although in the Renaissance period neither country was a political entity nor often thought about as a geographical whole with a specific name. Roman writers were rather clear about their use of 'Britannia' for the whole mainland of Britain. Roman emperors were proud to use the cognomen Britannicus. For example, Dio Cassius inveighed against Caligula for, having done nothing, still styling himself "Germanicus and Britannicus, as if he had subdued the whole of Germany and Britain."(3) Diodorus Siculus would describe Britons as Hyperboreans but still call their island "Brettanike".(4) The chivalric writers could be remarkably accurate in their descript-

1. Appendices I and II.

2. To mention only two examples, the Trevisan Relation made overt references to Caesar's work (pp.8-9) and Giovio acknowledged a dependence upon Caesar, Strabo, Pliny, Tacitus and Ptolemy. (Desc., 2v-3)

3. Dio Cassius, VII, Bk.59, p.341.

4. Diodorus Siculus, II.ii.47; III.v.21.

ions: the Detto di Gatto Lupesco described England as "lo reame d'Inghilterra"(1), while Boiardo precisely called the whole island "gloriosa Bretagna la grande".(2) But there could also be wide variations. Writers often thought in terms of fragments.

Rustichello da Pisa called Arthur's kingdom "Longres"(3) and the Zorzi Vita di Merlino talked about "il regno di Longres", as well as about Scotia, Gaules and Liones.(4) Among the more factual writers of the Renaissance imprecise use of national names could be just as prevalent. Poggio tended to talk about "the Island" when he meant England(5) and further confused the part with the whole by talking about the inhabitants as "Britons (Britanni), today called English (Angli)".(6) It meant much the same thing as Brunetto Latini's early geographic description of the land as "Bretagne, which is now called England".(7) It was the sort of thing that did much to add to the insular concept of England, the sort of thing that could have encouraged Pius II to talk about Scotland as "an island..., connected with Britain and extending to the north"(8), as though there were virtually two islands barely joined together, the southern one being given the general name of the two. His contemporary Jacopo da Volterra could emphasise this notion by calling Edward IV "king of the British Island".(9) Sixteenth century writers, while showing occasional precision in their descriptions of a mainland consisting of four distinct entities, Scotland, England, Wales and Cornwall(10),

1. Detto del Gatto Lupesco, in E.Monaci, p.449.

2. Boiardo, II, xviii.4

3. Rustichello da Pisa, passim.

4. Zorzi, Ch.165 et passim.

5. Poggio: Epistolae I, Ep.vii, June 1420, et passim.

6. Poggio: De Nobilitate, I. p.69.

7. Latini, I.35, p.43.

8. Pius II: Coms., 18.

9. Jacopo da Volterra, RIS 23, p.185.

10. Quirini, p.18; Vergil: AH(ET), 1.

still could produce quite imprecise geographic expressions. In 1531 Falier talked about Henry VIII's dominion as "the great island of England"; to the north was Scotland cut off by rivers and mountains, "so according to the opinion of most there were not two but only one island of England."<sup>(1)</sup> Even Polydore Vergil, in a curious effort to be precise, at one point spoke of "that Britain which we call England."<sup>(2)</sup> However, despite these variations, Italians really do not seem to have been greatly confused about how the island was politically divided. Lorenzo Bonincontrio in the second half of the 15th. century cared to call Henry V "king of Britain" and say that his Agincourt prisoners were "taken to Britain", but it did not mean that he was unaware that the Scots were a people quite separate and distinct from the English. He could see how a Scottish contingent had been notably ranged against the English and on the French side in the Anglo-French wars.<sup>(3)</sup> Italians were much more concerned with the substance of the northern kingdom than with the niceties of their official names.

Italian writers: Throughout the Renaissance period there always was a fairly high degree of Italian contact with the British Isles, especially with England. In the 14th. century merchants and churchmen came to England and commented on the country. At the end of the century a scholar like Giovanni Contarini would come to study at Oxford, from where he sent home to Venice his views on England<sup>(4)</sup> Yet, the most important source of material for this century undoubtedly comes from the Villanis, who

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1. Falier, 11.

2. Vergil: AH(ET), 19.

3. Bonincontrio, RIS 21, p.98.

4. Cf. A.Luttrell: Giovanni Contarini, etc.

gleaned news from travellers to England and produced chronicles which, though essentially second-hand collations in England's case, stood high above the other annals of the day both in style and quality and in quantity of material. In the early 15th. century perhaps the most memorable visit to England was made by the Florentine humanist Poggio Bracciolini between 1418 and 1423. His description of and complaints about the English way of life were noted and remembered into the following century. Nevertheless, after him, more humanists appeared in England and wrote about it. Tito Livio da Forlì (Frulovisi) worked for Humphrey, duke of Gloucester in the 1430s. Piero del Monte at the same time visited as papal collector and kept his eyes open. Aeneas Sylvius Piccolomini, later Pius II, went as far north as Scotland in 1435 and found time to comment on England as well en passant. Pope Pius usually made valuable observations, but at times it was still possible for him to produce rather second-hand material about Britain. Decades after his visit Pius II would comment on the Wars of the Roses, but by then did not necessarily have information enough to make fully competent judgments on political matters; or Frulovisi could write about events in Henry V's life, which he personally had not observed: his information was probably gleaned from an almost hagiographically minded entourage of Henry's brother, Humphrey. One is, therefore, almost inclined to feel that a general chronicler, such as Giovanni Sercambi of Lucca in the 1420s, could carry as much weight and express Italian opinion as accurately as they could, although Sercambi relied not on any personal contact with Britain but on news sent home by Lucchese merchants working in France and England.

In the second half of the 15th. century and right up to

the end of Henry VIII's reign, the most important type of commentator on English affairs was the Italian diplomat visiting the country or gleaning information that passed through the diplomatic channels at the French, Imperial or Burgundian courts. Such diplomats, mainly from Venice and Milan, though with representatives from Florence and the courts of Rome, Mantua and Urbino, give the appearance of being men of good, often humanistic education and of acute political and economic awareness. Moreover, although many of their comments might seem to have been diffused among material unrelated to England in diplomatic or personal letters sent back to Italy, an increasingly noticeable feature of diplomatic writings was the report or relation. This was a cohesive work purely on English matters that was usually presented to home governments at the end of ambassadorial missions. Another important feature of the period between 1496 and 1532 was the Venetian writer-politician Marin Sanudo's compilation into diaries of many diplomatic papers as they arrived in Venice and other north Italian courts. He thus preserved much material on England that otherwise might have been lost and created for his fellow-citizens an eminently usable and useful work on the foreign affairs of his day.<sup>(1)</sup> Of a different genre altogether was the Anglica Historia of Polidoro Virgilio of Urbino. This combined the virtues of being comprehensive in both its retrospective and contemporary factualness; of relying largely on British source matter; and of being the product of an Italian's first hand contact with England. Vergil was a humanist, a scholar and a churchman mundane enough to

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1. Quotations from Sanudo's diaries throughout the thesis are mainly taken, for convenience, from the extracts used by Rawdon Brown: Calendar of State Papers and MSS, Venetian, I-V. A cross reference is made to the volume numbers of the MS. copy in St. Mark's Library, Venice, as quoted by R. Brown. It is also useful to note that some work has already been done in this field by E.C. Salter in Tudor England through Venetian Eyes (London 1950). This, however, is limited in period and relies almost entirely on diplomatic material. Note also that ambassadorial reports relating to England have recently been collected and reprinted as Relazioni di Ambasciatori Veneti al Senato (Inghilterra), ed. L. Firpo, in Monumenta Politica et Philosophica (Turin 1965), ser. II, no. 6.



be relatively experienced in the ways of court personalities and politics. His contribution to the Italians' knowledge about Great Britain must have been enormous after the publication of his histories. He, with Giovio, although the <sup>latter's</sup> works on Britain are not in the same class as Vergil's, could possibly have done much to instruct the Italian reader who, at the end of the Renaissance, wished to look back over the preceding period and build up a mental image of Britain and the Britons.

The information and opinions about England were to be had in Italy. That is certain. What one cannot tell is how much note was taken of them. Certainly, some works were read less than others. Frulovisi's Vita Henrici Quinti, for example, was written in Latin for an English duke around 1435; it was not until 1463 that Pier Candido Decembrio, by translating it into Italian, really made it available to Italian audiences, and those of limited numbers. Similarly with most diplomatic dispatches, they could have had a very limited readership, especially at the princely courts in Milan, Mantua or Urbino. In Venice, admittedly, foreign news seemed to have been broadcast widely among the ruling caste(1), but even then news is always stale by tomorrow. Undoubtedly much must have been forgotten as dispatches were lost or buried in state archives. In this situation, however, Sanudo's careful recording of news for thirty-seven years perhaps did much to keep a certain amount of information fresh in some otherwise forgetful minds. When the substantial reports of England began to accumulate, it was to become obvious that their contents also stuck rather firmly in men's minds. One can tell this if only from the amount of copying that went on

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1. Cf. R. Brown: SPV I, Preface, p.xix.

one from another: Quirini's Relazione di Borgogna (1506) appears to reflect and condense some of the information in the Trevisan Relation, while Marc Antonio Venier's report of 1529, which Sanudo described as "very unskilful", may well have made use of both of them.(1) Certainly Soranzo's report of 1554 seems to owe a debt both for its substance and form to Daniele Barbaro's one of 1551. Yet, another way in which information about England could have been accumulated was within family circles. The Contarini family, over a period of centuries had contacts with England. Giovanni in 1392, Lorenzo in 1402, Stefano in 1429, Pietro in 1490, they all visited England. Nor were these the only or the last of the Contarini family to come to, and stimulate the writing of literature about England. The Giustinian family had its connections with the country. Sebastiano's mission from 1515 to 1519 was of immense importance because of its documentation; a cousin Antonio showed himself au fait enough with English affairs to pass the occasional comment on them. Moreover, merchant families like the Florentine Bardi and Alberti had strong commercial connections with England and in the 15th. century the Arnolfini and Adorno families in Bruges were not so far removed from the island by a strip of sea that they were not involved in physically or merely aware of what was happening in Britain.

Yet, however well acquainted any Italian might be with the affairs of England, there was no guarantee that he would produce a faithful or complete literary picture of them. No one was necessarily free of prejudices and biases, personal or national. There was a distinct variation and contrast in views expressed by members of different Italian states at different points in time. In the

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1. M.A. Venier (San.50), SPV IV, 2 Apr.1529.



14th. century, the Villani chronicles showed a Florentine bias towards England. Florence and England were commercially interlocked; not even an incident like the bankruptcy that Edward III caused the Bardi and Peruzzi houses in England shifted the balance of Florentine opinion. The Villanis would still make much of how England's enemies, the French, seized companies and goods of Florentines throughout France and caused them great hardship<sup>(1)</sup>, or how it was on the French side at the battle of Poitiers that Walter de Brienne, duke of Athens, a former and much disliked ruler of Florence, met his death at the hands of the English.<sup>(2)</sup> The Genoese, on the other hand, were notably pro-French. Their galleys figured largely on the French side at the battle of Sluys (1340) and at Crécy contingents of Genoese soldiers fell under English arrows. During Henry V's campaigns they again aided France not only, said their annalist Giovanni Stella, because they were paid by the French to supply armed ships but also because they had an interest in preserving harmony on their Mediterranean sea-board. Stella's account of a sea-battle between these allies and the English in 1416 consequently did much to excuse their defeat and play down the English victory.<sup>(3)</sup> But this deliberate imbalance could easily be off-set. For example, in the 1420s Sercambi freely admitted Lucchese interest in England: he felt that he had to recount English political events "because the land of England...was most useful to the citizens of Lucca and its merchants."<sup>(4)</sup> Yet, his judgment of the English in turn felt the counter-balancing effect of the news that the Anglo-Burgundian wars with the dauphin in the 1420s had caused

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1. G. Villani, XI.88.

2. M. Villani, VII.17, 19.

3. Giovanni Stella, RIS 17, p.1268.

4. Sercambi, I.668.

Lucchese merchants in France to lose all.(1)

On a personal level some Italian writers also produced unbalanced views. Pius II, having suffered from the strictness of the established authority in England in 1435, was not inclined to give any support to Edward IV when he gained the throne. Pius looked for the reinstatement of Henry VI, even although it was under him that he had had so much personal trouble. He very harshly condemned Francesco Copino, bishop of Terni, for giving without authorisation the Church's support to Edward IV.(2) On the other hand, a papal messenger, Pietro Aliprando, in 1472 was prepared to vilify as dishonest and evil all Englishmen because a party of them had purposed throwing him into the sea at Gravelines in order to prevent him from coming to England. Therefore, completely on hearsay, he violently condemned Edward IV's whole realm.(3) Similarly, in 1506 Quirini had no kind word for the Cornish because he had been shipwrecked and stranded in Cornwall at a bad time of the year and had found himself among rather uncouth people whom he did not understand.(4) And so it continued. If the young King Henry VIII in 1509 was said to be "the friend of Venice and enemy of France"(5); if the Venetian ambassador was asked to be the first witness at the marriage of Princess Mary and Louis XII in 1514(6); if Mario Savorgnano was received enthusiastically by Henry VIII in 1531(7), it is small wonder that in their writings Venetians commented on the actions of the English and their king and excused those which they otherwise would have condemned.

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1. Ibid., II.355

2. Platina, vide 'Innocent VI'.

3. Aliprando, SPM, 25 Nov. 1472

4. Quirini, SPV I, 25 Feb. 1506.

5. Sanudo 8, SPV I, 8 May 1509.

6. N.di Farvi (San.19), SPV II, 30 Oct.1514.

7. Savorgnano (San.54), SPV IV, 25 Aug.1531.

X

Sometimes one Italian's bias could appear to another Italian so obvious that his opinions could be condemned for this. Giovio, a native of Como, could censure Vergil because he had treated the Scots and French unfairly in his histories and, "knowing that the English were most desirous of glory, to make them friends, he wrote to favour them right down to their least leader." (1)

However, this did not alter the fact that many other Italians would have read Vergil's works without the same discernment as Giovio. The fact always remained that they saw in English doings as much as they wanted to or as interested them. Writing about the Anglo-French meeting in 1520, Castellar would talk about the prospect of peace to come from the 'greatest agreement in the world', but he spent as much time enthusing about the honours paid to an Italian marchese, Michele Antonio, who had emerged as the overall winner in the celebration tournaments. (2)

Indeed, often Italians had plain facts about England at their finger-tips but, when writing about them, used, elaborated or ignored them as they chose. In turn, their writings were subject to the attitudes and interests of the Italian reading-public. For some Britain still remained a remote, unknown land and as such it provided an ideal setting for fictional literature. A skilful writer needed only a few facts to be able to create an entertaining story. Boccaccio told one tale set against the background of an English king's war with his son, but none of the facts accorded exactly with any piece of English history. (3) Or, about 1485, Sabadino would include in a story a version of the deposition of Richard II (or indeed Edward II, as he said). The captured king, he related, was put in a cage where, tantalized by food but given none, he gnawed at his hands until he

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1. Giovio, ECVI, P.73.

2. G.A. Saluzzo di Castellar, p.557.

3. Boccaccio: Dec., II.3.

died of hunger and madness.(1) Italians partially acquainted with English life used what they saw as situations of latent fratricidal violence and adapted them to their own literary requirements. Jacopo di Poggio Bracciolini must have known England mainly through his father and so he was not so personally involved with the country that he hesitated to explain the origin of the Wars of the Roses within a fictional context and in the most imprecise terms. Two sons of the marriage of a French king and an English queen inherited the two kingdoms separately, but disagreed over the new English king's duty to pay homage to France. A French invasion of England precipitated the countries into bloody wars. These only ended when the English turned the momentum of their military power in upon themselves in civil strife.

(2) For years to come this situation was to provide a fine setting to add colour to standard literary plots. In the 1560s Sebastiano Erizzio produced a story based on a Coriolanus-type theme. He found a convenient setting for it in the parricidal situation of England's Wars of the Roses. Images of Englishmen leading French armies against England and besieging London, and patriotic fathers confronting aggrieved and apparently treacherous sons were things that fitted into the general context of English history of a hundred years vintage.(3) Yet, when some Italians became more acquainted with Britain as it was, quite noticeably fictional ideas receded into relatively more obscure areas. Aeneas Sylvius Piccolomini came to Scotland determined to see indigenous trees that were said to drop their ripe fruit into rivers, from which it would emerge again metamorphosed into living birds. He could not find them in Scotland where they were said to be, but, after his

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1. Giovanni Sabadino degli Arienti, Nov.22, pp.111ff.

2. Jacopo Bracciolini, 42-44.

3. S. Erizzio, Day IV, Nov.22.

visit, he remained convinced that they could be found; only now they were in the distant Orkney Isles.(1) Thirty years later he evidently still believed this revised opinion: there had been nothing more discovered to contradict it. This practice continued. The wild unexplored fringes of the Britannic world could still be used as settings for wild deeds. As late as the 1560s Giraldi could write a fictional passage about a king whose violent passion for a young girl would lead him to plan the murder of his own wife, whom he was falsely to accuse of adultery.(2) This barbarous tale Giraldi set in little-known Ireland, of which, even in his day, Giovio, ostensibly factually, told stories of wife-repudiation and general licence.(3) He had greater knowledge of the mainland of Britain and there, he could not deny, such actions were carried out with much more refinement. But those of his contemporaries who did not have even his degree of knowledge felt no compunction about using anything vaguely British to suit their own purposes. Straparola, for example, probably knew that there had been English kings named William and was prompted to use it as the name for the main character in a moral, though undoubtedly fictional tale about one William, King of Britain.(4) Even the urbane Bandello did not hesitate to plunge into a story in which Edward III, striving to take a mistress but gaining a wife, was given a countess of Salisbury as the object of his passion.(5) The tale was largely fictional. What Bandello did was to take the character of perhaps the best known Englishwoman of Edward's reign and fit her into the role of the king's mistress-wife. Although Bandello probably knew

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1. Pius II: Coms., 18; De Europa, Ch.46, p.443

2. G.B. Giraldi Cinthio, 3rd. Dec., Nov.I, pp.267ff.

3. Giovio: Desc., 36.

4. Gainfrancesco Straparolla, Not.13, Fav.12, pp.281ff.

5. Bandello, II.37.

that his story was largely fictional, he seemed fully intent on putting-over his Edward III as the true epitome of English kingship. Presumably most of his readers, unable to be discriminating about precise facts, at least understood the moral of his tale and perhaps shared his views about English monarchs of their day.

Thus, while showing one the extent of some Italians' ability to ignore or be unaware of the real state of affairs in England, Renaissance fiction very often did contain underlying elements of truth. It often shows exactly how Italians reacted to a piece of information about England and how they articulated it on paper. With some, such as Bandello, a piece of fiction could be deliberately designed to express particular feelings about England. His Henry VIII was always a cruel wife-devourer; his Cromwell was an insecure parvenu trying to annihilate the nobility to soothe an inferiority complex; his Edward III epitomised the unruly lustfulness of English kings. With some others creative fiction deliberately misinterpreted fact in order to create for fellow Italians images more acceptable than reality. For example, in Pinturricchio's painting of Aeneas Sylvius at the court of James I of Scots, the visual content in no way is in accord with the facts of Aeneas Sylvius's own written description of the scene. (Plate 1) It seems quite evident that Pinturricchio had read the Commentaries of Pius II but deliberately chose to ignore them at certain points. (1) Therefore, the Italian public could be presented either with a choice between the purely factual impression of Britain and one that was a product of artistic licence, or, depending on the circumstances, with only one of them as the basis for their own conception of this particular subject. Italian fiction is not nearly so important

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1. E.R. Phillipps: Pintoricchio, p.115.





Pinturicchio, 'Aeneas Sylvius at the Court of James I', c.1506.

as didactic prose containing serious opinions, no matter how biased, as expressed in chronicles, diplomatic dispatches and dissertative works dealing with British matters, but it does in its own way betray the extent of popular misconceptions about and attitudes towards the realities of Britain's existence during the Renaissance period.



## CHAPTER I

### Britons in Society.

#### 1. Morals and Royal Marriage Irregularities.

Morals and marriage are two aspects of life that contribute much to any observant outsider's view of man as a social animal in his own environment. Italians were not slow to comment on the moral characteristics of the English. They could be both restrained and unrestrained. As far as love and marriage were concerned there was evidence of English passion, as well as of cool dispassionately calculating social climbing. However, when Italians came to examine the marriage habits of the English royal family, they were confronted with what one could only describe as an apparent tradition of marriage irregularities and a disregard for the moral and conventional standards that Italians obviously expected of them. There were few immoralities and marital complications in which they did not seem capable of indulging.

At a lower point on the social scale Italians themselves saw how unrestrained Englishmen's passions could be. Filippo Villani made special note of how Andrew Belmont, a leader of English mercenary forces in Italy, in the middle of a campaign in the area of Figghine "heard of the fame for beauty and gentleness of habit of Lady Fancia, wife of Guido della Foresta", and, out of knightly love, would stop at nothing to be able to see her.<sup>(1)</sup> It was a curious affair that might have told Italians more about English strength of character than about a man fired with romantic passion. However, there was a worsening of English behaviour. When they were in the employ of the Pisans, the same mercenaries plagued the minds of their pay-masters. The honest citizens became so outraged by the

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1. F. Villani, XI.72.

soldiers' attention to their wives that "many sent them to Genoa and other places where they might sleep honestly." (1) Later, in 1377, the English mercenaries carried out the complete destruction of Cesena in retaliation for its citizens' attack on the pope's Breton troops. However, they did not wreak such total destruction that they could not, as the anonymous Chronicon Reginense said, "take the wives of the citizens in retaliation for the death of the Bretons." (2) The Chronicon Estense was more explicit. It was totally infamous that John Hawkwood could allow his men to take "1000 wives of the citizens and send (them) to Rimini to be shared out." (3) These were unrestrained Englishmen committing rather passionless atrocities of war on a large scale. It was almost expected of them, indeed, of any soldier. What seemed to shock even more a man like Donati, the writer of the Annales Senenses, was an incident which took place during the sack of Faenza. Two of Hawkwood's captains "entered a convent where there was a very beautiful young girl." Both wanted her and so they challenged each other to a duel to the death for her. As she addressed herself to God and the Blessed Virgin Mary to help her not to be shamed, Hawkwood arrived on the scene and, "seeing that it was out of love for her that he was about to lose two captains (and) not able to stop them from fighting, he took a dagger and thrust it into the breast of the said girl." She died; the men stopped fighting. (4) It all proved, to Donati at least, that, once an Englishman had set his amorous sights on some one, he would stop at nothing to possess her. However, this was evidently

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1. Ibid., XI.79.

2. Chronicon Reginense, RIS 18, s.a. 1377.

3. Chronicon Estense, RIS 15, s.a. 1377.

4. Donati: RIS 15, s.a. 1371.

not the end to the tale of English immorality told on Italian soil: for in 1446 one finds the Venetian senate issuing a decree to limit the activities of "certain Frenchmen, Englishmen and others, supporters of the prostitutes of the Rialto...to the very great peril of the inhabitants." Nevertheless, there is a distinct suggestion that the Venetians were much more annoyed about the evasion of tax on the prostitutes' food and wine than about any lowering of the moral tone of the city.(1)

About England itself there were much fewer stories of lack of moral restraint on the part of the ordinary people. In fact, Poggio Bracciolini was alone in repeating an English tale of the type in which a fuller's wife substituted herself for a maid, with whom her husband had arranged an amorous assignation, and in consequence unwittingly received the attentions of two other male members of the household.(2) It certainly tells one no more about English morals than Italian novelle, from Boccaccio's to Bandello's, tell about Italian morals. Husbands and wives in <sup>the literature of</sup> all countries are subject to the same set of emotions. However, even to the far from prudish young Aeneas Sylvius, the future Pope Pius II, the state of moral awareness in the north of England at least was alarmingly primitive. Not only did the women, who had to deal with frequent incursions of Scots soldiers from north of the border, "not count outrage a wrong", but under happier circumstances, showed even less concern. When he was spending the night at a house near Berwick, Aeneas Sylvius became alarmed on discovering that two women of the household were "planning to sleep with him, as was the custom of the country, if they were asked."(3) Apparently in Scotland he found a

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1. Decree of Venetian Senate, SPV IV(App.), p.453, s.a.1446

2. Poggio Bracciolini: Lib. Facet, No.238.

3. Pius II: Coms., p.20.

roughly similar state of affairs. There was almost the humour of a condensed sentence in his statement that "the women (were) fair, charming and easily won." He added that there they "thought less of a kiss than in Italy the touch of a hand." (1) But this is all the evidence one has of adverse Italian comment about the state of this aspect of morality in Britain, all, that is, if one passes over Paolo Giovio's lurid tale of mass wife-repudiation and of uninhibited libidinous behaviour among the rural Irish of the 16th. century. (2) One is inclined to believe that this notion came more from the pages of a Roman writer like Dio Cassius than from reliable contemporary sources. (3)

In contrast, there was perhaps more Italian comment on the English people's rather self-conscious restraint in such matters, although not always so marked as a certain Ertogod's. Niccola della Tuccia noted that in 1433 in the train of Emperor Sigismund at Viterbo, there was "Ertogod, an Englishman, who was aged 120 years and bore arms better than a young man: and he never committed a carnal sin. He was virginal and a very great lord in England." (4) He must have been truly remarkable, and, for della Tuccia and some of his contemporaries, a living advertisement for English continence. Sabellico too was sure that, if the Englishman's comportment and conversation in taverns gave any true indication of the state of affairs, there was no sign of any wantonness in English society. (5) Nicolo di Farvi was inclined to agree with him and took examples from Henry VIII's army of 1513. The soldiers he saw were honourable. "They did not take wenches

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1. *Ibid.*, *Coms.*, p.18.

2. Giovio: *Desc.*, 36.

3. *Cf.*, e.g., Dio Cassius: Vol.IX, (Loeb, 1927), Bk.77, p.263.

4. N. della Tuccia: Pt.II, p.124.

5. Sabellico: X, *Lib.V*, Vol.ii, p.943.

with them and they were not profane swearers like (Italian) soldiers." (1) This and the example of Ertogod, another military man, certainly would have contrasted markedly with the English mercenaries known to Italians of the 14th. century.

The Trevisan Relation was more explicit and much more sceptical. It was sure that Englishmen's "dispositions were somewhat licentious," but he had "never noticed anyone, either at court or among the lower orders, to be in love; whence one must necessarily have concluded, either that the English were the most discreet lovers in the world, or that they were incapable of love." The women were different, rather more like those of Aeneas Sylvius's experience; "very violent in their passions." In consequence "the English kept a very jealous guard over their wives, though anything might be compensated in the end, by the power of money." What a condemnation from an Italian! It was bad enough for a man to be passionless but to make commercial gain from his womenfolk's waywardness scarcely deserved comment. In fact, this affectionless nature not only allowed them to send away their own children at an early age, as apprentices in other people's houses, but also served as an example to the same children. It was not uncommon for any apprentice to make a marriage alliance with the mistress of his new home as soon as his erstwhile master had died and left her his estate. Love did not enter into the matter. Further up the social scale exactly the same thing was happening. The younger brother of the duke of Suffolk, lacking any family inheritance, was content, despite the fact that he was "a very handsome young man of about 18 years of age", to become the husband of a widow of fifty, with a large

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1. N. di Farvi (San.17), SPV II, s.d. 12 Oct.1513

income. If he was patient enough "to waste the flower of his beauty with her", he might some day inherit her wealth and proceed to marry some handsome young lady.(1) Such was the marriage-game in England. Its first rule was that morality equalled restraint, patience and unemotional economic calculation. Royal marriages were quite another matter. Unlike the impression given by ordinary Englishmen and some of the nobles, members of the English royal families often seemed to be ruled by the heart more than by the head or, when only by the head, to indulge in or contemplate grotesque matches for political ends.

It may seem strange that one of the last writers of the Renaissance period, Bandello, should feel himself justified in writing a story about the amorous exploits of Edward III, a king from the beginning of this period. Bandello told of a ruthless monarch who loved a countess of Salisbury and burned to possess her when she was widowed. Theoretically she was in his power. He tried every persuasion and blackmail with her and her family to make her become his mistress. After much heartrending and threats of suicide from the lady, the king compromised and married her.(2) The tale was certainly not factual. Yet from the history of the following two centuries one can see where the elements of it came from. The character Lady Salisbury contains elements of the real countess, who claimed Edward III's attention over the garter incident, but she is more. She is Alice Perrers, Edward's rapacious mistress; she is Elizabeth Wydeville, who was thought to have used the same tactics with Edward IV; she could even be Joan of Kent, Edward III's daughter-in-law. The character

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1. Trevisan, 24-28.

2. Bandello, II, Nov.37.



Edward III could match in some ways the real Edward III, but there are elements of Edward IV in him and certainly he contains all the ruthlessness and passionate fixation of Bandello's contemporary, Henry VIII. It is difficult to know how much Bandello's story owed to the mid 15th. century Jacopo di Poggio Bracciolini's Novella della Pulzella di Francia. From the factual content his "Edward, king of England", might well have been Edward I but quite easily have been Edward III. Since Edward III was a figure better known by Italians, it is more likely that the odium from Bracciolini's fiction reflected upon him. His King Edward, unable to find an exact replica to replace his perfect wife, proposed that his daughter should marry him. He stopped at nothing to accomplish this incestuous end. The princess had to flee the country and change her name before her father's pursuit was arrested.(1) Retrospectively the figure of Edward III presented little evidence of marital unorthodoxy to Italians. The reason why this kind of bad reputation became attached to an English king, any English king, can only be found in the successive irregularities that Italians saw or thought they saw besetting English royal marriages.

Matteo Villani wrote about the marriage of Edward III's eldest son, Edward of Woodstock. "In these days he took as a wife his cousin, the countess of Kent, who had already been married twice to two husbands of the minor baronage and had had more sons (than two). The marvel was that one of such a high position of life and condition should take one such as she."(2) Villani was not, as he said, unaware of how close Joan of Kent was to the

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1. J. di Poggio Bracciolini, pp.9-14.

2. M. Villani, X.70.

royal line: she was Edward I's granddaughter. His objection seemed to be that she was only a countess by marriage. If Bandello's notion that countesses were more suited to be royal mistresses than wives was current in his day, it may well have sprung from Villani's view that Prince Edward's bride was a little unworthy of him. The fact that she had already been married twice and was a mother several times over seemed to strike Villani as rather undesirable, although it may have reflected more on the prince's character and taste than on Joan's. When Italians had been able to forget the need that there had been to iron out irregularities of consanguinity and of the existence of a still living former partner, they might have seen in this curious match something of a love affair that said more for the prince's romantic than his pecuniary or political motives.

In the 15th. century the incidence of marriage irregularities seemed to increase. There was little with which the unctuous Frulovisi could reproach Henry V. Even although he "liked the feasts of Mars and Venus as youthful pastimes", he had undergone a remarkable personal reformation at his accession; and even although at his first meeting with his future wife "the flame of love set alight the martial king as the sight of the virgin Catherine", a princess of France offered him a match of inestimable political importance to his French policy.(1) If Catherine de Valois's first marriage sprang from a happy combination of heart and head, her second one appeared to be inspired purely by the heart. Her choice of Owen Tudor was the object of disapproval in their own life-times: for during the Wars of the Roses was not Owen arrested by the Yorkists and beheaded for being "so presump-

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1. Frulovisi, 4-5, 69.



tuous as by marriage with the young queen to intermingle his blood with the noble race of kings"? It certainly posed a problem for a Tudor apologist like Polydore Vergil and no amount of his explanations about Owen's "deriving his pedigree from Cadwallider, the last king of the Britons", could counteract the Yorkist views on his presumptuousness.(1) The fact remained that an Italian like Sforza de Bettini, writing in 1471, at a time when the children of this irregular union were still active, could comment on the fact that "the earl of Pembroke, the brother of the late King Henry (VI) by the mother's side", presented a power problem in England. His political and landed influence could be used by Louis XI of France to keep alive the dying Lancastrian cause, with which he had an association by birth.(2)

In the same period as the Valois-Tudor mésalliance, England's royalty produced another irregular, even illegal, union. Jacqueline, princess of Holland and Zeeland, according to Pius II, found herself married to the impotent John, duke of Brabant, and so felt herself free to fall in love with Humphrey, duke of Gloucester. He, "unmarried and very handsome,...offered himself as a husband, if she did not scorn...a king's brother, a man in the prime of life and of such attractions as she could see for herself." However, there was more to the match than love: immediately afterwards Philip of Burgundy, who stood to lose the expected legacy of Jacqueline's lands, expressed his annoyance; Gloucester claimed to be lawfully wedded and claimed his wife's possessions, with the result that English and Burgundian allies were turned into opponents in a bitter personal feud that lasted

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1. Vergil: AH(Ellis), p.62.

2. Sforza de Bettini, SKV I, 16 July 1471.

for seven years and caused both parties enormous losses in money and man-power.(1) Jacqueline's first marriage may well have been null but Gloucester's approach to the problem was rather unsubtle. Pius II was at least one Italian who thought his irregular match smacked as much of personal ambition as of love.

The next generation also brought its royal scandals. In 1460, when the deposition of Henry VI was being contemplated, current speculation said that "they would make a son of the duke of York king and that they would pass over the king's son, as they were beginning already to say that he was not the king's son." (2) This could only have been interpreted as a slur on the queen's reputation. One imagines that, since the writer here insisted that this was a sample of rumours current in England, it might have been given some credence in Italy. Moreover, it was a story that was repeated. Prospero di Camulio, Milanese ambassador to France, reported in 1461 that "the king of England had resigned his crown in favour of his son, although they said that his Majesty remarked at another time that he must be the son of the Holy Spirit." In words less poetic, he disclaimed any responsibility for the paternity of his wife's son. Di Camulio was on the French side of the Channel, in rather pro-Lancastrian territory, so, while not disdaining to repeat these words, he tempered them by adding that "these might only be the words of common fanatics." (3). It was left to the Italians to think what they liked.

The Yorkist dynasty also showed some weaknesses in marital matters. When Edward IV's sister, Margaret, was about to be married to the duke of Burgundy in 1468, so many people asserted

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1. Pius II: Coms., 585f.

2. News letters from Bruges and London, SPM I, s.m. July 1460.

3. P. di Camulio, SPM, 27 Mar. 1461.

to the duke "that his future consort in the past had been somewhat devoted to love affairs; indeed, in the opinion of many she even had a son", that he had to issue an edict saying that anyone repeating this would be thrown into the river. It did not prevent the Milanese ambassador in France, Panicharolla, from writing about it to the duke of Milan.(1) By 1472 the whole matter was much more in the open. One finds Pietro Aliprando writing to Milan that all was not well between Burgundy and the king of England "on account of the duchess, who did not go to her husband a virgin." To the Burgundians this was yet another trick played on them by Edward IV.(2) Aliprando certainly seemed to think that this was a tale with enough substance to warrant its repetition, if only because it denigrated the character of those Englishmen whom he disliked so much.

Nor did the marital affairs of Edward IV himself escape the glare of public attention. Italians did not consider his exactly the most typical of royal unions. The first news of his marriage to Elizabeth Wydeville seeped through to Italy in 1464 when "the espousals and benediction were already over." Edward had apparently "determined to take the daughter of my Lord de Rivers, a widow with two children, having long loved her." But the matter was not as simple as that: for "the greater part of the lords and the people in general seemed very much dissatisfied at this" and they sought to "find means to annul it."(3) It would appear that at least some Italians shared this feeling of disapproval. In 1469 Lucchino Dallaghiesia, Milanese ambassador in London, observing with

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1. G.P. Panicharola, SPM, 2 July 1468.

2. P. Aliprando, at Abbeville, SPM, 6 Dec.1472.

3. News letters from Bruges, SPM, 5 Oct.1464.

disquiet the rise of the new queen's relations, called her "a widow of this island of quite low birth."<sup>(1)</sup> Again English royalty seemed to fall below the standard that some Italians expected of them in their choice of consorts. Yet not all shared this view. Only two years later in 1472 Antonio Cornazzano published a romantic version of the Wydeville marriage in his De Mulieribus Admirandis. This wove the story of how Edward IV, falling in love with some fair lady, tried every ruse and persuasion to make her yield to him. Eventually, threatened with complete disgrace and the ruin of her family, the lady appeared to give in, but, in reality, prepared to stab herself at the king's approach. Edward was shaken and at once took her honourably as his wife, although for a time the marriage was kept secret. Only later was she acknowledged before the courtiers and crowned. This story bears a remarkable resemblance to Bandello's tale about Edward III but, whereas Bandello was concerned to decry the cruelty of English kings and thereby hit at Henry VIII, Cornazzano was more interested in extolling chaste women. Indeed, he ended his poem with the apostrophe: "Goddess of Chastity, this is surely the fruit of justice." In other words, it was only because Elizabeth was chaste that she was queen.<sup>(2)</sup> However, even he could not cover up the fact that Edward IV was just a little concerned about having her as his wife. Had he not been afraid to acknowledge her as such in the beginning? It was not until some time later that Italians seemed aware of other objections that might validly have been levelled against this marriage, other than the mistaken assumption that Elizabeth was of low birth, or the traditional prejudice

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1. L. Dallaghiesia, SPM, 16 Aug. 1469.

2. A. Cornazzano, pp. 660-672.

against the choice of widows as future mothers of heirs to the English throne.

When Domenico Mancini came to write his denunciation of Richard III in 1483, he turned to the subject of Edward IV's marriage and repeated Cornazzano's picturesque version of it. Yet, he did also add that the duke of Clarence "denounced Elizabeth's obscure family and said that Edward should be married to a virgin." It was even said that, in her annoyance, Edward's mother had asserted that he was "conceived in adultery and therefore in no wise worthy of the honour of kingship."<sup>(1)</sup> It must have seemed to Italians that the dowager duchess of York was prepared to condemn one royal mésalliance by telling the story of another, even more irregular, that reflected rather badly on herself. Moreover, according to Mancini, Edward IV's brother, Gloucester, was not prepared to forget this story, because about the time of his usurpation he caused preachers to proclaim that, since Edward IV had not been a legitimate king, neither could his progeny be. He was conceived in adultery, a fact borne out by his not resembling the late duke of York in the least. Then came the novel assertion that might have gone part of the way towards explaining some of the disapproval of Edward's marriage. Apparently, when he married Elizabeth, "by law he was contracted to another wife, whom the duke (sic) of Warwick had given him." This was a reference to a bride from "across the sea", whom he had betrothed by proxy. Richard III's final invective asserted that Elizabeth "had been ravished rather than espoused by Edward, with the result that their entire off-spring was unworthy of the kingship."<sup>(2)</sup>

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1. Mancini, p. 75.

2. Ibid., pp.117-119.

These were strong words and, true or not, they could scarcely have clarified the confused picture of English kings' social habits. It was not until the 1530s that Vergil's version of the affair attempted to repudiate this implication of bastardy by the old duchess, Cecily Neville. She complained about the "great injury her son Richard had done her" by repeating these stories.(1) But for many Italians Vergil closed the stable-door long after the horse had bolted. Perhaps Vergil also added to the confusion over the question of the invalidity of Edward IV's marriage by his explanations about the system of precontract. This he saw as taking place at a distinctive ceremony for declaration of intent before any religious ceremony of marriage had taken place.(2) However, Italians already knew that, as in many things, the character of Edward IV in love was paradoxical and not calculated to eliminate confusion. Mancini had stressed how his marriage was primarily a love-match, but this did not prevent Edward from gaining the reputation of being "licentious in the extreme" and extremely cavalier in his treatment of the women whom he chose, married or unmarried, of high or low degree, and then discarded.(3)

There was no suggestion of licence about Edward's much maligned brother Richard. However, the Milanese ambassador in France, Christoforo di Bollati, in 1474 did report that he "by force had taken to wife the daughter of the late earl of Warwick, who had been married to the prince of Wales." Since he was incessantly preparing for war with Clarence over the Warwick estate, the distinct implication was that he had done this with

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1. Vergil: *AH*(Ellis), 184-5.

2. Vergil: *De rerum Inventoribus*, Bk.V, Ch.v, p.304.

3. Mancini, p.83.



pecuniary motives. Italians most likely interpreted the marriage in this way, but how much credence was given to the assertion that force was used was another matter. Certainly Bollati's facts were not reliable: in the same dispatch he managed to call Gloucester the duke of Lancaster.(1) According to Mancini, Richard enjoyed the highest esteem for both his public and private life.(2) This comment on his apparently impeccable morality de sexu was a subject for attention as the exception rather than the rule in his day. Vergil was less sympathetic. Not only did he produce a story inferring that Richard III virtually disposed of his wife by upsetting her with accusations of unfruitfulness and false rumours about her dying, but also implied that Richard might even have poisoned her.(3) Once she was dead the replacement, said Vergil, that Richard had in mind was his niece, Elizabeth of York. He "kept her unharmed with a view to marriage. To such a marriage the girl had a singular aversion." To Italians this could have meant several things, all of them unflattering. Either English kings were not above contracting incestuous marriages for political ends, or Richard III was so convinced that his brother Edward was illegitimate that a marriage with his daughter was less than normally consanguineous and would have the advantage of eliminating the figure-head of a potential rival faction. Henry of Richmond had apparently already offered his hand to her, presumably in order to strengthen his claims to the throne.(4) Even if Italians believed that Vergil was just intent on blackening a dead English king's character in order to bolster the position of the Tudor dynasty, a libel like this could have done little for the image of English

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1. C. di Bollato, SPM, 7 Feb.1474.

2. Mancini, p.77

3. Vergil: AH(Ellis), 211.

4. Vergil: AH(Hay), 3-5.

kingship, already rather tarnished by marital irregularities.

The first generation of Tudors showed eminent discretion in its marriage careers, but it left a legacy of marital turmoil for the second generation. For, had Henry VII's daughter married Charles of Castile, the future emperor, as had been planned, her career might not have been so chequered. However, Italians could not have been surprised that after 1513 the English seemed eager to break this contract of marriage, if only because Charles himself in a fit of boyish petulance was supposed to have said that "he wanted a wife and not a mother."<sup>(1)</sup> However, when it came to putting forward Princess Mary as a bride for the French king, Louis XII, although, conveniently enough for the politicians, they were both without partners at the time, there was much comment on the extreme youth of the bride and the advanced age of the groom. As far as Mary was concerned, she "did not care that the French king was an old man, whereas she was a young maiden; so pleased was she to be the queen of France."<sup>(2)</sup> With a shrug of the shoulders she could accept a husband who was "fifty-six years old and very gouty."<sup>(3)</sup> Moreover, since such lop-sided marriages could not have been unknown in Italy, where this very combination was and would remain one of the stock plots in comic literature, there could have been little real disquiet about the marriage.

Even less surprise was shown about three months later when the French king, though "out of practice, attending to the service of his girl-wife, became ill of the fever and died"<sup>(4)</sup>, leaving her "sorrowful, lamenting much the death of her husband."<sup>(5)</sup>

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1. V. Lippomano (San.17), SPV II, 9 Sept.1513.

2. A. Badoer, (San.19), SPV II, 2 Sept.1514.

3. N. di Farvi, (San.19), SPV II, 30 Oct.1514.

4. Giovio: Hist.I, Bk.14, p.388.

5. Venetian ambassador in Rome, (San.19), SPV II, 28 Jan.1515.



The unusual nature of this marriage was as nothing beside that of Mary's second match. In March 1515 there was news of her union with the duke of Suffolk, "the same who, less than two years ago, was a familiar in another person's service." He had been sent on an embassy to France but, as Andrea Badoer put it, "he was now seen to have negotiated for himself", although it was supposed that he had acted "with the secret consent of the king." Since "the whole kingdom was clamouring and France likewise", Badoer had good enough reason to think that the newly-weds would be "ill-received in England". He himself, hoping that the marriage would not be ill-omened, did not attempt to fathom the intricacies of the matter.(1) Although as the months passed Badoer was still convinced that the bride and groom had arranged the marriage themselves and the king had only later given his consent (2), his fellow citizen, Sebastiano Giustinian, saw some contrivance behind it all. At least the "alliance was desirable for France, as it was better for her to wed in England than abroad." (3) Years later Paolo Giovio was to assert that Henry VIII gave his widowed sister as a wife to Charles Brandon "for his signal valour." (4) Polydore Vergil was much more subtle and more informative. Even before the marriage, the rise of Brandon had provoked some conjecture. When he had been made duke of Suffolk, "many people considered it very surprising that Charles should be so honoured: the dignity was intended, as was apparent afterwards, to enable him more properly to be related to the king in marriage, this future development being already decided upon by Henry." (5) Vergil asserted that, at

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1. A. Badoer, SPV III(App.), 31 Mar.1515.
  2. Ibid., SPV II, 15 May 1515.
  3. S. Giustinian, SPV II, 9 Mar.1515.
  4. Giovio: Desc., 17.
  5. Vergil: AN(Hay), 223.

Louis XII's death, it had been Henry who had ordered Brandon to marry Mary and to bring her and her dowry back home in order to prevent them both from falling into the hands of Charles of Castile or from being kept in France by François I.(1) Carlo Capello, the Venetian ambassador at the time of Mary's death in 1533, retrospectively did much to explain the matter by calculating that by her death "the duke of Suffolk lost 30,000 ducats p.a. derived from her French dower lands."(2) In 1515 this must certainly have given a considerable incentive to England to keep the money in English coffers and to the French to keep it out of Spanish ones. But none of this explained why the newly married couple were received back in England, if not in an atmosphere of open hostility, at least without any demonstrations of public joy "because the kingdom did not approve of the marriage."(3) Italian observers were certainly aware of Brandon's comparatively humble birth, although they did not stress this over much. Yet one thing that might well have accounted for some of the popular disapproval they did not mention. Charles had been married twice already; at the time of his third marriage at least his first wife was still living.

If one of Henry VIII's sisters could have appeared to be rather self-willed in her choice of a second husband, his other sister, Queen Margaret of Scots, was comparably unorthodox in Italian eyes. The battle of Flodden in 1513 had left her a widow, but in the following year, of her own accord she had "married a Scottish baron, who was to rule the kingdom for her son."(4) Since she was not then in England, there was very little comment

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1. Ibid., 229.

2. C. Capello (San.48), SPV IV, 28 June 1533.

3. A. Badoer and S. Giustinian. SPV II, 15 May 1515.

4. Badoer (San.19), SPV II, 30 Oct. 1514.

on the subject. Besides, at the time, most eyes were on Princess Mary's French marriage and little Italian thought was spared for internal Scottish politics. However, in more troublesome times, when Albany's faction in Scotland had driven out Queen Margaret, Giustinian would write that she had "married a Scottish earl, an extremely handsome youth of the best blood of the kingdom, by whom she had a daughter." It would have appeared that Margaret had made a second match acceptable both emotionally and socially. But the flaw in it that subsequently appeared in 1516 was that, since Scotland had been under the ban of excommunication at the time of the marriage, it was not a properly contracted union. Since it was null, there were rumours, false as it happened, that Margaret was to marry the old emperor.<sup>(1)</sup> However, if religious disapproval did not dissolve the match, incompatibility apparently did. In 1522 not only was it obvious that the marriage had broken down but evidently Margaret had chosen another partner: it was believed in England that the old enemy "Albany had had the earl of Angus taken to France and imprisoned and that he cohabited with Angus's wife."<sup>(2)</sup> But the trouble was not so easily settled: for in 1526 it was reported that "in Scotland there was a great disturbance between the earl of Angus and the queen his wife...for the wardship and governance of the king, who was in the earl's power."<sup>(3)</sup> Indeed, the power struggle continued until 1531 when "the earl of Angus was expelled by his wife the queen of Scotland". Paradoxically he was received in England and made welcome by Margaret's brother, King Henry.<sup>(4)</sup> It was left to Bandello, decades

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1. S. Giustinian, in RB, 1 May 1516.

2. Sanudo 33, SPV III, 21 Aug. 1522

3. A. Scarpinello, SPM, 30 Sept. 1526.

4. C. Capello (San.<sup>45</sup>), SPV IV, 16 Nov. 1531.

later, to rationalise these domestic turmoils. As far as he could see, Margaret had in the first place been able "to take to her a second husband, a private gentleman, for such was the usance in those parts, that women, after their first marriage, marrying again, take whomso most pleased them." Exactly the same had been the case with her sister Mary when she married a man who, although greatly favoured by the king, was still of "mean lineage." The conclusion was that women in Britain had much more control over their lives than Italians were used to.

Even Queen Margaret's daughter by Angus, according to Bandello, formed such an attachment for a certain Lord Thomas, the nephew of the duke of Norfolk, that it led them to overstep the bounds of convention and form a secret alliance. They were discovered, arrested and appeared to be in danger of execution for defiance of the king, until the duke of Norfolk, in very liberal vein, addressed the king in the following words: "Do you not know, sire, that marriages ought to be free and voluntary and that each woman should take for her husband the man who pleases her, and that likewise men should have the same freedom, and the father himself should not forbid from taking as a husband the man whom she wishes?" The suggestion was that, if the king did not already know this, he should look to the examples of his sisters. In this situation Thomas Cromwell was seen as being the real villain since he was using this slight excuse to further his policy of eliminating the nobility of England.(1) The sentiments that Bandello put into Norfolk's mouth and the whole history of English royal marriages from the time of the Black Prince, if not Edward III himself, were things that Cinquecento Italians may have borne

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1. Bandello, III, Nov.60.

in mind when they examined coolly the attitudes that Henry VIII had to marriage. He was very evidently not the first, rather

the last, in a line of English royal persons, who became involved in matrimonial complications, which Italians at least thought unorthodox beside the conventionally received standards of the princes of that age. It is, therefore, not too surprising that at first they showed no great moral indignation when Henry also developed matrimonial problems, which initially seemed to be rather more political than moral in origin.

It was no secret to Italians that in 1509 Henry VIII had "taken to wife his sister-in-law, daughter of the king of Spain, and widow of his elder brother, with whom she lived for six months. She never quitted England after the death of her first husband." (1) There were two points of importance about this contemporary comment of Andrea Badoer's. By keeping the widowed Catherine in England, Henry VII initially had seemed eager to preserve some form of marriage alliance with Spain. In the 1530s Vergil's view was that this was just one point in Henry VII's overall plan for preserving England's peace and thereby for strengthening his throne against rival claimants. A Scottish marriage alliance was being arranged and, since "Ferdinand and his wife Isabella entertained the most friendly feelings for King Henry, desired his happiness and sought a marriage alliance with him", Prince Arthur's death could not be allowed to squander valuable foreign support for a parvenu dynasty. (2) Badoer's second point was that Arthur and Catherine lived together for six months. He did not seem to doubt that the marriage was real enough. Even the special papal dispensation designed to

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1. A. Badoer (San.8), SPV II, 27 July 1509.

2. Vergil: AH(Hay), 101.

remove obstacles standing in the way of Catherine and Henry's marriage, in Vergil's words, only dealt with matters concerning the "question of consanguinity" and smoothed over "another matter, which the lawyers call the justice of public honesty." (1) However, when it came to the question of the annulment, Italians found that this was precisely the issue upon which everything hinged. By 1529 Henry VIII had decided that his marriage was morally wrong. He proclaimed that he "could no longer remain in mortal sin, as he had done during the last 20 years." On the other hand, the queen "declared herself for 20 years his Majesty's lawful wife." She at least had kept faith; she "did not deserve to be repudiated and thus put to shame without cause." (2) According to Gasparo Contarini, she quite explicitly asserted "that no other husband than the present king had consummated marriage with her." (3) Once this was the official Italian view, there was no lack of apologists for it. Ludovico Nogarola of Verona took up the whole question of marriage to a sister-in-law. He found no clear directive in the Bible: for had not Moses and John the Baptist upheld differing points of view, and Onan and Herod suffered from the confusion? Nogarola concluded that, since a man is not really fit to be married until he is at least 14 years old, what kind of marriage could Arthur, at no more than 13 years, have contracted? (4) As late as 1554, when Catherine's daughter was on the throne, Giacomo Soranzo also tried to deal with the question scientifically. Was it not plausible that "long before the death of Prince Arthur he was known to be consumptive and of so bad a constitution that,

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1. *Ibid.*, 135.

2. L. Falier (San.51), *SPV* IV, 29 June 1529.

3. G. Contarini, *SPV* IV, 12 July 1529.

4. L. Nogarola, Ch.15.



although they lived five months together, he had been unable to consummate marriage with her"? Circumstantial excuses continued to wrap <sup>themselves</sup> round the case. There survives no Italian document that offers conclusive proof of the nullity of Catherine's first marriage. By Soranzo's time, Italians had seen how even Henry VIII changed his mind several times about his marriage with Catherine. Their daughter Mary was queen now and everyone knew that a bastard could not succeed to the throne.(1)

But, returning to the question of how surprising Italians found Henry VIII's institution of divorce proceedings, one can only say that for some the idea was not new. As early as 1514, Vettor Lippomano, a Venetian listening to Roman gossip, repeated that in the current Anglo-French negotiations it was "even said that the king of England wished to leave his wife whom he had, the daughter of the king of Spain, who was his brother's wife, because she was not able to have an heir, and he wanted to take as wife a daughter of the duke of Bourbon, a Frenchman."(2) This piece of news had an arresting, assertive quality about it. Lippomano not only assumed that the marriage was able to be dissolved and that the English king wanted this, but also gave two reasons why it should be dissolved: England needed a male heir and a means of cementing a French alliance. In light of this, the surprising thing is that no further steps were taken then, or in succeeding years as countless royal pregnancies and miscarriages produced only one surviving child, a girl. It was, in fact, not until 1525 that a murmured hint of a possible rupture again came to Italian ears. Diplomatic dispatches were full of Henry VIII's giving his seven

1. Giacomo Soranzo: 'Report', SPV V, pp.534-5, 18 Aug.1554.

2. V. Lippomano in M. Sanudo: I Diarii (Ven.1879), Vol.19, 1 Sept.1514.



year old natural son, Henry Fitzroy, the duchy of Richmond and the right to count himself as "next in rank to his Majesty." This could have been interpreted as Henry VIII's statement that he at least was able to produce healthy male children. Catherine of Aragon certainly seemed to take the point: Lorenzo Orio wrote home to Venice that "the queen resented...the dukedom conferred on the king's natural son and remained dissatisfied." Apparently three of her Spanish ladies, her chief counsellors, encouraged her in this attitude. The king had little sympathy and dismissed them from court. It was, as Orio said, "a strong measure, but the queen was obliged to submit and have patience."<sup>(1)</sup> All this could have suggested a feeling of bitterness in royal relations. Nor in 1529, when the divorce case opened, could it have been thought particularly elevating to hear the queen being "proclaimed contumacious for having absented herself" from some court proceedings. It was an unusual sight to see a queen having to defend her marriage and her low fecundity in public, as well as having to make accusations of corruption against the eminent judges of the case. Yet, an observer like Lodovico Falier, Venetian ambassador in London, could see all and express not the slightest opinion on this nor show the least hint of emotion.<sup>(2)</sup> There was a serene calm about the whole process. Although it was recorded how in October 1529 the king had, "of his own authority, divorced the queen from his bed"<sup>(3)</sup>, even in 1530 Augustino Scarpinello would note that the king and queen still "paid each other reciprocally the greatest possible attention...with the utmost tranquility of spirit, as though there had never been any dispute between them..., although the affair had not

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1. L. Orio (San.29), SPV III, 29 June 1525.

2. L. Falier (San.51), SPV IV, 8 June 1529.

3. S. Giustinian (San.52), SPV IV, 4 Oct.1529.

slackened." Catherine, though obviously taking an intransigent stand, still found it in herself to excuse her husband's attitude towards her. She maintained that "all her king and lord did was done by him for pure conscience's sake and not for any wanton appetite."(1)

Eventually Henry's patience wore thin and Italians were inundated with reports of how he had ignored the pope and made his parliament grant him a divorce. The queen was "deprived of everything pertaining to that rank" and sent to live in "a house situated on a marsh, so that the bad air might speedily end her life."(2) Henry and Catherine's association seemingly had ended in acrimony. Certainly Henry was showing Italians a face much severer than any before, but, when Catherine, at her death in 1536, sent a letter to Henry forgiving him and expressing her continuing love in the words, "My eyes long for you above all else," Henry was so moved that "he burst into affectionate tears." He was "not so hard and unbending" that he could not "be stirred by being the object of such pure and earnest benevolence."(3) Vergil, writing here, almost implied that in reality the idea of divorcing Catherine in the first place had been foreign to the nature of a man as sensitive as Henry.

Italians had much sympathy for Catherine. Moreover, they imagined that in England "the queen might be styled king of this island by reason of the love the people bore her, for her goodness and wisdom."(4) Yet, this did not prevent those in power from having a practical disregard for her feelings. Even her nephew,

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1. Scarpinello, SPM, 28 June 1530.
  2. Zorzo Andreasio, SPM, 1 July 1533; 6 Feb.1534.
  3. Vergil: AH(Hay), 337.
  4. C. Capello (San.46), SPV IV, 23 Apr.1532.

Charles V, whose intimidation of the pope had done so much to inhibit the passage of the divorce, seemed willing to compromise by 1533. He agreed that, should Henry "make a suitable marriage and not a love match, he would contrive with the pope and the queen to annul the one contracted by her Majesty." (1) The Venetians, following suit, accepted the divorce as a fait accompli: in official documents they did not hesitate to describe Catherine as "the Emperor's aunt." (2) It is quite evident that what most Italians objected to was not so much the divorce of Catherine as Henry VIII's choice of Anne Boleyn as a substitute wife. The Italian opinion of Anne was at no time very high; it progressively worsened. In 1528 it was reported of Henry that "the queen was of such an age that he could no longer hope for offspring from her, so that, for the maintenance and welfare of his realm, he purposed marrying Sir Thomas Boleyn's daughter, who was very beautiful." The pope at that time seemed willing to give his consent. (3) In 1529 it was obvious that Anne was a schemer: Cardinal Wolsey had fallen and been "deprived of the Seal, which was a great dignity and very profitable and (Henry) had given it to the father of the favourite." (4) In 1531 Mario Savorgnano cared to report that, while Henry VIII was a paragon of all virtues and accomplishments, one thing detracted from his fine image: "there was now living with him a young woman of noble birth, though many said of bad character, whose will was law to him." (5) Indeed, there was no evidence that anyone but the king liked her. On one occasion thousands of London women set out "to seize Boleyn's daughter, the

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1. Ibid., (San.47), SPV IV, 15 Mar.1533

2. Chiefs of the Council of Ten: Letter to Alvise Gritti, SPV IV, 24 Oct.1533.

3. News letter sent by Coresara (San.47), SPV IV, 10 Feb.1528.

4. S. Giustinian (San.52), SPV IV, 4 Oct.1529.

5. Savorgnano (San.54) SPV IV, 25 Aug.1531.

sweet-heart of the king..., who was supping at a villa on the river." But she escaped, luckily for her because "the women had intended to kill her." (1) Such was the degree of her unpopularity. At court too she seemed to be much disliked, if one can interpret anything from the uproar caused over "approbrious language uttered against Madam Anne by his Majesty's sister, the duchess of Suffolk." (2) A favourite has no friends. The slightest worsening of relations between Henry and Catherine was seen to be the result of Henry being "controlled by the caprice of a mistress and her father." (3)

Italian writers held their fire when it became known that the king had married Anne and that she was pregnant. The magnificent celebration of her coronation as queen was generally recognised as a triumph for her. But as soon as she gave birth to a daughter in September 1533, their attitude was that this indicated that "God disapproved of (Henry's) unholy designs and appetites." (4) It was conveniently forgotten how many times Catherine had failed to produce live children and only had one daughter to her credit after 20 years of marriage. However, this did not stop the Milanese ambassador in Rome from referring to the new queen of England as a concubine (5) nor the emperor from calling her "a harlot". (6) But this was in some ways matched in its lack of dignity as Henry VIII's need to threaten with penalties under the Statutes of Provisions and Praemunire anyone who denied the legitimacy of the queen's position. (7)

1. Venetian ambassador in France (San.45), SPV IV, 24 Nov.1531.
2. Capello (San.46), SPV IV, 23 Apr.1532.
3. Camillo Gilino, Milanese ambassador with the emperor, SPM, 16 Aug.1531.
4. Z. Andreasio, SPM, 1 Oct.1533.
5. Ibid., 6 Feb.1534.
6. F. Contarini, SPV V, 3 Feb.1536.
7. Sanudo 48, SPV IV, 5 July 1533.

It is hard to tell how many Italians thought Anne herself hit the nail on the head when she said that "she knew that God had inspired his Majesty to marry her and that he could have found a greater personage than herself." (1) Certainly some agreed with the later part. By then observers tended to be rather more forthright in their descriptions of her. She was now "not the most handsome woman in the world; she was of middling stature, swarthy complexion, long neck, wide mouth, bosom not much raised, and in fact had nothing but the English king's great appetite, and her eyes, which were black and beautiful, and took effect on those who served the queen when she was on the throne." (2) The Italian fiction writers of a later generation were inclined to be charitable about her appearance. To Bandello, Anne was "a damsel very fair of her person"; her fatal flaw was that she had "a mean and plebeian mind." (3) By that time it was possible to say anything about her because, "after the king of England's having discovered that the most serene queen had committed adultery, he by legal process caused her to be beheaded, as also her brother and four of his Majesty's confidential servants." (4) Bandello added many details to the story. Apart from her three lovers, the queen had committed incest with her brother and even trifled with her lute-player, the son of a carpenter, apparently in order to produce the son that the king so greatly desired. It was easy for any Italian to brand Queen Anne as "little chaste of her person", because she was now nobody's favourite. (5) Even her downfall could not have come as a great surprise. Before 1536 it had been evident that Henry was recovering from his "insane

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1. Capello (San.48), SPV IV, 24 June 1533.
  2. Sanudo 47, SPV IV, 31 Oct.1532.
  3. Bandello III, Nov.62.
  4. L. Bragadino, SPV V, 26 May 1536.
  5. Bandello III, Nov.62.

love" for her and forgetting those early days when she had "tortured his mind with licence, as Giovio put it(1), and was "tired to satiety of this new queen."(2) A year later Anne died on the block and those days, even before any marriage, when Henry had publicly acknowledged her as his "beloved wife", were conveniently forgotten. (3) Henry had, so to speak, repented of his part in the whole divorce action at the price of another's blood and redeemed himself by his tears at Catherine's death.

However, no sooner had Henry rid himself of his second wife than Italians learned that he had "taken to wife and proclaimed queen a gentlewoman, by name Madam Jane, daughter of a knight, a private Englishman."(4) This action was so precipitate that it must have savoured of premeditation to Italians. The fact that Jane was of fairly low station in life might have suggested rashness. Giovio made no bones about saying how socially inferior Jane was to the king, but, since she was "most virtuous and very beautiful" and had the good fortune to give birth to a son, she was eminently acceptable to Henry and not as objectionable as Anne to Italians.(5) Bernardo Segni, writing in the 1550s, maintained that Jane Seymour had one additional attribute, at least in Henry VIII's eyes: as soon as she gave birth to her precious son, she died, thus "making room for that king to multiply more marriages."(6) It was a callous view that ignored the fact that Henry waited eighteen months before remarrying, but it does tell one how, in retrospect, Henry was by this time gaining a reputation as an insatiable Blue-Beard.

1. Giovio: Desc., 21.

2. C. Capello: Report, SPV V, 3 June 1535.

3. Giovanni Stefano Robio, SPM, 2 Oct. 1532.

4. Announcement of Venetian Doge and Senate, SPV V, 21 July 1536.

5. Giovio: Hist. II, Bk. 35, p. 201.

6. B. Segni; Vol. II, Bk. vii, p. 118.



Nevertheless, even contemporary commentators were quickly becoming convinced that the legality and reality of the king's marriages depended wholly upon his will. Had he not in 1536 "promised the Princess of England, born of the old queen,... to have her declared legitimate by the Parliament"? (1) Did not this imply that his first marriage had been legal and his second a sham? In 1540 he no sooner married Anne of Cleves than he "purposed repudiating even this last wife...because he had promised marriage to another woman, maid of honour to the deceased queen." (2) The official excuse was soon given. It conveniently appeared that Anne of Cleves had "promised her hand previously to a German prince." The repudiation was carried out and three days later the king "married the niece of one of the English dukes, she being already pregnant by him." (3) The implication in this comment surely must have been that Henry was still desperately trying to beget male heirs to secure his dynasty. Later writers liked to be imaginative about the Cleves union. At one point, Giovio added to the excuse of precontract Anne's unacceptable interest in "the Lutheran superstition" (4) and, at another, suggested that Henry rejected her because "she was not accustomed to the taste of his inordinate lusts." (5) It was not a pretty picture. With Bandello's notion that even during his subsequent marriages Henry VIII still kept up his relationship with Anne, "visiting her every fortnight for two or three days" (6), it is hard to tell what Italians took out of the whole confusion, apart from a growing feeling of certainty that

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1. L. Bragadino, SPV V, 6 Dec. 1536.
  2. F. Contarini, SPV V, 17 July 1540.
  3. Ibid., 29 July 1540.
  4. Giovio: Desc., 24.
  5. Giovio: EV.B.1., p. 505.
  6. Bandello III, Nov. 62.



nothing orthodox could now be expected of the English king's marital affairs.

Indeed, the career of Katherine Howard only seemed to confirm that Henry VIII's patience with his wives was growing thinner. It was soon decided that she had been continuing illicit loves of her youth with two men, Culpepper and Durant, apparently "in the hope of children": for nothing had come of the first rumour of pregnancy.(1) Italians seemed to be so concerned with this propensity of Henry VIII's wives to commit adultery in order to give him the children he wanted that one wonders if they ever thought something might be deficient on Henry's side. Bandello was less directly salacious at this point. He claimed that Queen Katherine and Culpepper were beheaded after being observed "stealing wanton kisses of each other." (2) Whatever Italians thought about Katherine Howard their opinion of Henry VIII could scarcely have improved.

However, with Bandello's account of Henry's marriage to Catherine Parr the worst days seemed over. Bandello thought that, despite her relatively low social position as a daughter and the widow of a knight, she seemed to have Henry under her thumb from the beginning. When she came before him to gain a settlement over a dowry dispute, she made a point of seeming to be more interested in the settlement than in the proposition of marriage that he managed to insert into the proceedings. Henry was entrapped again and, despite his extraneous dealings, remained with her until his death.(3)

By the end of his reign, Henry VIII had reached the highest point in this succession of marriage irregularities, which Italians

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1. Giovio: Desc., 24.

2. Bandello III, Nov.62.

3. Ibid.

had come, if not to expect of the members of the English royal family, at least to show little surprise at. Not only did there seem to be a total disregard of the lesser partners' feelings but English self-will seemed to delight in matches that were based more on uncontrolled desire than upon social discrimination. The trouble was that Italians clearly expected of English kings and their immediate families the standards later laid down by princely houses, whose family rules refused to acknowledge the existence of what was to be termed the morganatic marriage. Although English popular feeling and practice agreed with this Italian desire for restraint, it was quite evident that the only rule that could exist in this matter was the strength of royal will-power. To return to the prologue to Bandello's novella about Edward III, one finds that now all English kings were being seen in the light of Henry VIII's unfortunate matrimonial difficulties. Although two centuries of irregularities led up to Henry's marital career, because it was so much more extensive and complicated, it reflected back onto earlier figures. It now could be said of all English kings that "among the many other shameful and abominable vices with which they were sullied and defiled, cruelty and lust still held the chief place."<sup>(1)</sup> Thus, broadly speaking, there were two standards in English moral and marital practices, two extremes modulating between uncontrolled passion and unemotional calculation. Their only common ground was self interest.

## 2. Gentility and Display.

Despite what many Italians thought about the brutality and apparent lack of concern for appearances displayed by marriage irregularities in the highest reaches of society, to them a more

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1. Bandello II, prologue to Nov.37.

noticeable element in that society was its external façade of gentility and courtesy. By means of pure display and artistry English society presented to Italians an image of culture and considerate urbanity. By its very accessible visual quality, this was largely responsible for some reduction of the gossip about moral foibles and unconventional unions. In other words, the bystander's eye is more impressed by public courtliness and the display of magnificence than by the thought that the distant figure of a queen or some royal consort came to that position by unorthodox means or from some socially inferior background. The sort of question that did tend to linger in the foreigner's mind was whether or not this gentility and ostentation were heart-felt and more than surface deep, or if there was some social savoir faire and real artistic appreciation innate in the Englishman's soul.

In the beginning it must be said that, apart from a few, often misguided, authorities like Sabellico, the image that Italians had of Britons' civility was very seldom tarnished by observations on barbarity or on uncouth behaviour, except in the fringes of the Britannic world. Even if Il Burchiello, a Florentine people's poet, suggested that rumour had it that one could make a great quantity of material out of the beards of Englishmen, so voluminous were they, in the middle of the 15th. century this need only have suggested, if anything at all, that Englishmen were out of date rather than actually barbaric in appearance.(1) Otherwise, only Matteo Bandello hinted at barbarous behaviour when he wrote his all-out attack on English kings who were "more athirst for human blood and more desirous of it than a bee is for thyme." The kings whom Bandello imagined could "behead this prince and strangle

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1. Domenico di Giovanni (Burchiello), p.28, Verde Antico.

that and daily put some nobleman or other to a cruel death", or even slay their own kinsfolk and those of their own blood and cast their bodies for food to crows, wolves and vultures", were not seen by more level-headed commentators to exist at all. Even those kings who, in practice, were sufficiently "barbarous and inhumanly cruel to exterminate the good", did so with a degree of finesse not perhaps perfect, but entering the professional sphere. (1) The point was that in their cruelty, as in their kindness, the English ruling caste could preserve a kind of reserve that largely covered up and only betrayed hints of underlying emotion.

After the battle of Poitiers in 1356 the victorious prince of Wales found himself in possession of the French king, John, and one of his sons. In his attitude towards them there was no suggestion of the triumphant elation that one might have expected. Instead, Matteo Villani was sure, he "gave fine lodgings to the king, and his son;...held them generously and served him at his own table."(2) Edward III's gentility was perhaps not quite so unaffected. In Villani's view he awaited the coming of the royal captives to England with relish and, on their arrival, made a great feast in their honour. He paid the French king much reverence; called him "dear cousin" and invited him to hunt in the royal forest. In London he conducted him to the royal apartments; gave him many rich things and served him at the royal table. He omitted none of the formal respect due to a king, but Villani maintained that if "truth be told, in these events grew the misery of one king and exalted the pomp of the other."(3) Edward III was, in effect, being accused of monstrous unsubtlety, or of a deliberate attempt to glorify himself under the

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1. *Bandello*, Pt.II, prologue to Nov.37.

2. *M. Villani*, VII.20.

3. *Ibid.*, VII.66.

pretence of honouring a prisoner, powerless to resist or reject such fawning. Much the same could be said about the great St. George's day banquet that Edward arranged in the following year to celebrate the expected Anglo-French peace. The captured kings of France and Scotland were prominently displayed amid sumptuous entertainments, but the impression that Villani gathered was that, although the festivities were conducted "under the title of peace", they were nothing but "disordered arrogance and vanity."<sup>(1)</sup> It was not until John II of France died in captivity in 1364 that there was a suggestion of Edward III's unaffected gentility towards him. He did not hesitate to give royal funeral honours to the king and to transport his body back to France. A dead hostage is no hostage; by John's death Edward III had lost a useful diplomatic lever, but he did not allow this set-back to keep him from acting with royal magnanimity.<sup>(2)</sup> Acutely aware of superficiality in others, the Villanis seem to have expected from princely rulers an invariable standard of altruism, such as they could not have looked for in their fellow Italians. Much the same picture of ultra-kindness emerges from Frulovisi's description of Henry V's behaviour after Agincourt. He had in his power many noble prisoners, among them the dukes of Alençon, Berry and Brabant (sic), but, in the victor's position, he was content to play the considerate host: "at dinner he served his noble captives."<sup>(3)</sup> However, this courtesy could scarcely have been called English respect for the weak when it was performed against the background of the slaughter of the non-noble French captives. Frulovisi only mentioned Henry V's pre-battle threat not to have mercy; other writers with much greater influence, Pius II

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1. *Ibid.*, VIII.47.

2. F. Villani, XI.76.

3. Frulovisi, 21.



among them, gave the full story of the carnage.

In civil matters there seemed to be just as much concern with the appearance of politeness. Poggio Bracciolini, writing of his visit to England in the 1420s, noted how "the English, if they met anyone at whose table they had dined, even though the encounter should have taken place ten days after the feast, thanked him for his good entertainment; and they never omitted this ceremony lest they should be thought insensible of his kindness." (1) Again an Italian was noting an ultra-politeness, exaggerated perhaps for the purpose of being noticeable. However, with spontaneity gone, gentility becomes forced, sometimes hypocritical. Certainly in this example there was probably the underlying ulterior motive of flattering the host in the hope of further kindnesses. But the most interesting thing about it is that Poggio was not citing only one particular incident: he seemed to feel justified in regarding it as a general English characteristic to behave like this. Late in the 15th. century, Sabellico too seemed to notice in the Englishman's public salutations a formalisation of courtesy: "with uncovered heads, they (the English) would salute guests by bending their knees. Also their wives were given a kiss"; and in the entertainment that followed, in a tavern, as in the kiss, "all wantonness was absent." (2) He could have been suggesting that the social kiss had become so formalised that it had little significance and no emotional force behind it. The Trevisan Relation was inclined to give the benefit of the doubt to the motivation behind some of these actions. The writer was immensely impressed by what he called "the incredible courtesy of remaining with their heads uncovered, with an admirable

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1. Poggio: Historia Discriptiva Convivialis, in Omnia Opera I, p.36.

2. M.A. Sabellico, Vol.II, p.943.



grace, while they talked with each other." To him it appeared to have become a habit as to be done with spontaneous ease. In addition their mode of speaking their language seemed to blend harmoniously with the gentility of their actions because, despite its Teutonic origins, it "had lost its natural harshness and was pleasing enough as they pronounced (it)." However, a distinctly sceptical note can be detected when the writer, rather like Poggio, asserts that "they think that no greater honour can be conferred, or received, than to invite others to eat with them, or to be invited themselves; and they would sooner give five or six ducats to provide an entertainment for a person, than a groat to assist one in any distress."(1) Since the entertainment was presumably more prestigious and could pay social dividends, the suggestion here is that quite definitely the appearance of social courtesy was more important and to be desired than any altruistic basis to it.

Still in 1513 Nicolo di Farvi was able to note the formal "kiss on the mouth" and the just as formal hand-shake for greetings in public: There was still the same drift towards the tavern to entertain acquaintances encountered.(2) By 1531 Mario Savorgnano, while narrowing the scope, had paid the Englishman's restraint a great compliment by saying that a woman and a man acquaintance, with the blessing of the lady's husband, might entertain each other in taverns and that ladies, when presented with flowers, had by custom to wear them for three months. It was a form of public acknowledgement of a gentleman's courtesy, a habit so prevalent, according to Savorgnano, that "constantly one saw women with flowers of every sort."(3)

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1. Trevisan, 21-2.

2. N. di Farvi (San.15), SPV II, s.m.Feb.1513.

3. M. Savorgnano (San.54), SPV IV, 25 Aug.1531.



If anything, courtliness was even more formal than ordinary courtesy. The Pavese chronicler, Antonio Grumello, took careful note of how formally the Emperor Charles V was received when he landed in Dover in 1520. As he stepped on shore he was "presented with the keys of the place by a commission from the English king." Charles captured the mood of their courtesies and out-did them by saying that "they did him such an obligation that they should take the keys of all his lands and properties as theirs."<sup>(1)</sup> No one could have doubted the hollowness of these words, nor yet have expected anything else on such an occasion. Yet, at times, this type of verbal façade could have its advantages. During those troubled days of their divorce case, Henry VIII and Catherine of Aragon still appeared together in public and, although one could say that Henry's conduct was in this respect genuinely considerate, an Italian observer like Scarpinello was completely impressed when he saw "so much reciprocal courtesy being expressed (between them) in public that anyone acquainted with the controversy could not but consider their conduct more than human."<sup>(2)</sup> In reality the king and queen were following the guide-lines of an arbitrary modus vivendi that admirably smoothed over or ignored surface irregularities, created by deeper points of difference and awkwardness.

Polydore Vergil, after his long period of residence in England, might have been expected to gauge the genuineness of English civilities. Generally he gave a favourable picture. His view of the ladies' formal kiss was that it was done, although, "from the beginning on the lips,...decently and virtuously", but evidently not indiscriminately: "it did not please them to kiss

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1. A. Grumello: Bk.6, Ch.19, p.241.

2. Scarpinello. SPM, 16 Dec.1530.

those who were by blood inferior, but they stretched out their hand", just as the men were accustomed to do among themselves, "joining (as they did) right hand with right hand." (1) In fact, he admitted that the class-system played a great part in this kind of social intercourse. The English were "prone of their own nature to all duties of humanity; yea even towards strangers." They would bed their friends at their houses and be no less merry and liberal with the sumptuous dinners they gave, "accounting it a great point of gentility." But he did add that, in his experience, it was the nobility that was "exceedingly courteous" and that "perhaps with the baser sort of men it was not so, especially with the commoner sort of citizen." (2) If Vergil could say this about his own experience of England, no other Italian commentator surely could have claimed to have examined better the manners of the upper échelons of society. On the other hand, it might have implied that the English upper classes' courtesy was not extended to those less well born. Certainly, Paolo Giovio would have agreed: as he saw it, the English nobility had no time for work because their days were spent on "pleasure and in the service of women." Without considering questions of motive, he immediately thought this gave them the air of being "amazingly courteous." (3) He was dealing essentially with a leisured class. He apparently saw no need to look beyond it.

Gentility of manner was a personal façade for the Englishman; elements of pure display formed a more artificial, but just as vital part of the English way of life, especially in its higher reaches. For anyone observing, the indigenous as well as the foreigner, it had to be shown that England was great and rich; the symbols of her

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1. Vergil: De rerum inventoribus, Bk.4, Ch.13, p.272.

2. Vergil: AH(ET), p.24.

3. Giovio: Desc., 15.

authority had to be seen and the caparisons of power had to exist to remind all of the reality of the underlying authority.

When in 1357 Edward III held his "solemn and proud feast of the knights errant" in London to celebrate the feast of St. George, the money that was spent on entertainments, foods and chivalric trappings, calculated to revive images of Arthurian glory, was laid out in order to proclaim to all who could see, and all who would hear, how the king of England earnestly desired peace with France. The bloody fighting of the battlefield had turned into the rough sport of the tourney. "The solemnity of the feast was covered under the title of peace", but, despite the mass participation of Englishmen, Matteo Villani at least refused to be deceived by the king's display, which, like his personal courtesy to the captured kings, he labelled as "disordered arrogance and vanity." (1)

As the semi-official biographer of Henry V, Frulovisi was concerned to build up a façade to celebrate the excellence of the heir to the English throne when he enumerated the personal attributes of Prince Hal. Everything was perfect, or at least above average: beyond medium stature, handsome of face, long necked, graceful of body, subtle limbed, wonderfully manly, most swift in the race, faster than an animal, the crown-prince was everything in all things. (2)

The writer could afford to make the prince a human being. As king, as personification of England's fight against France, Henry V could be a more abstract figure. On the battle-field at Agincourt, he was quite faceless as a man, but completely the king. His image was his trappings: he was "armed with sure and beauteous

1. M. Villani, VIII.47.

2. Frulovisi, 4.

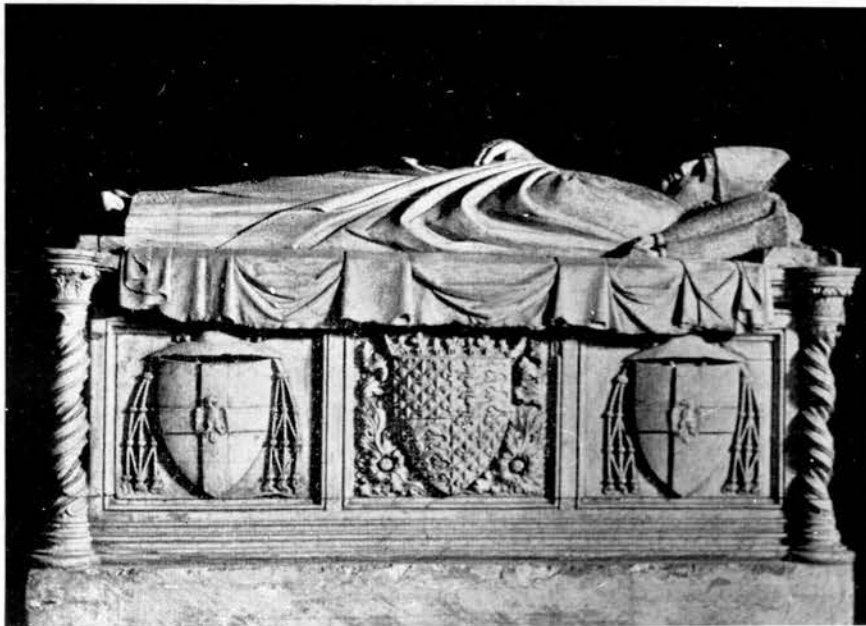
shining armour, and upon his head was a bright helmet, whereupon was set a crown of gold, repleat with a variety of precious stones, marvellously rich: and on his shield he bore the arms of England and France."(1) Or when Henry was surveying the embarkation of his troops for his second invasion of France, there he was for all to see "gorgeously arrayed in a silk habit, displaying the arms of England and France", the living image of his pretentions.(2)

Perhaps with much greater psychological effect, in 1419 at the English meeting with Burgundy and the queen of France at Meulan, Henry employed no tact that would appear to mute the strength of these pretentions. It was very noticeable that, when the English pitched their tents and pavilions, they were "marvellously embroidered with devices and figures of very beautiful gold lilies and leopards."(3) What could have struck the French, the Italian observers too, more keenly than the sight of the gold lilies of France ornamenting their opponent's tents? The truth of the matter was that, ever since Edward III had quartered his coat of arms with those of the kings of France in the pretention that he was de jure the king of France, there had been a conscious effort to impress this claim upon observers, even during times when it was far from realisation. In Italy the quartered coat of arms could be seen carved in stone over the entrance to St. Edmund's Hospice in Rome; the tomb that Paolo Romano built for Cardinal Adam Easton displayed the same arms very prominently; and, in Cardinal Bainbridge's castle at Vetralla, the royal arms were to be seen alongside those of the cardinal and the della Rovere device of Pope Julius II. (Plates 2, 3 & 4) These three examples appeared before Italian eyes

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1. Ibid., 16.
  2. Ibid., 32.
  3. Ibid., 73.



2. English Royal Coat-of-Arms from St. Edmund's Hospice, Rome, c.1412.



3. Paolo Romano, Tomb of Adam Cardinal Easton, 1450s.

Plates 4 and 5.



4. Coats-of-Arms from Cardinal Bainbridge's Castle at Vetralla, 1512.



5. Vittore Carpaccio, 'The English Ambassadors before the Father of St. Ursula', (detail), c.1496.



in 1412., the 1450s and the 1510s respectively, at times when the English confrontation of France was at a low ebb or non-existent; although in peace time money could be spent on such things, that was also the time when claims against France had to be kept in the forefront of men's minds. This was just the sort of thing that such lapidary displays could do. The leopards must still appear to be inseparable from the lilies.

In 1473 much the same visual symbolism could be seen when Edward IV "took his son to Wales and styled him prince, as was customary with the first born, and left him in the country." Edward was by no means sure of England, even less sure of Wales, at that time: the earl of Oxford for one was stirring up mischief.(1) The personal touch of presenting his son to the people of Wales was not only calculated to bind them to him with a bond of sentiment, but also designed to emphasise the dynastic security of his house. The fact that he left the prince in residence in his principality when he was not yet three years of age, could only have emphasised the symbolic nature of his princeship and shown how much need was felt to make a posture of the reality of power.

In the Tudor epoch, there was perhaps an even more conscious effort made to display the greatness of the new dynasty. In 1497 Andrea Trevisan recorded how Henry VII dressed magnificently to receive the Spanish ambassadors, who were arranging a much sought after marriage-alliance between their countries. In a chamber, strikingly "hung with very handsome tapestry", the king met them, wearing "a violet coloured gown lined with cloth of gold, and a collar of many jewels, and on his cap was a large diamond and a most beautiful pearl."(2) In 1503 it was Pietro Carmelliano who

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1. Christoforo di Bollati, SPM, 6 July 1473.  
 2. A. Trevisan (San.1), SPV I, 11 Oct. 1497.



would quite deliberately set out to immortalise the transient display, arranged to impress the ambassador who had come to arrange a marriage between Charles of Castile and Mary of England. The citizens of London hung out rich canopies and tapestries to welcome them; they were swept up river to Greenwich in "a sumptuously decorated and recently constructed royal barge"; they were received in the royal bed-chamber by the king, "surrounded by Knights of the royal Body Guard sumptuously attired...in cloth woven of gold and silver." And so it continued. As Carmelliano himself said, one could write long letters about the decorative display in the king's houses. At Richmond the Hall shimmered with hangings of gold and silver silk; great ornamental silver vases stood from the ground almost up to the ceiling; the King's Chapel was very rich in gold, with the enormous images of saints especially noticeable on the altar.(1)

In the reign of Henry VIII there was a more visibly active part played by England in foreign affairs. Proportionally, the element of visual display and ostentation was increased. Why, anyone might have asked, did Henry VIII need to have "fourteen well conditioned horses, with housings of the richest cloth of gold and crimson velvet, with silver bells of great value" to take with him on campaign to France?(2) These were the trappings of victory, absolutely essential for a man "who intended to go to Rheims to be crowned king of France."(3) It was the same king who, in his after dinner conversation, could dissertate on rings and jewels. "The king showed some very fine ones to the emperor and in the end gave his Imperial Majesty an eagle to wear at his neck." Studded, as it was,

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1. P. Carmelliano: pp.7, 8, 17.

2. Antonio Bavarin, factor to the Pesari firm, (San.16), SPV II, 30 Apr.1513.

3. Venetian ambassador in Rome (San.17), SPV II, 12 Sept.1513.

with a large carbuncle, a great cluster of diamonds and a big pearl, it was apparently worth 30,000 gold florins.(1) It was a costly gift, but, although this jewel was given to the one man who could be of greatest assistance to him against the power of France, the whole of Henry's show and talk of jewels, these were intended to do more than bribe, rather to impress foreigners with the evident truth that England was great and financially solvent to the point of excess.

In fact, on any occasion on which there was an official meeting of the Tudor court with foreign heads of state or their envoys, there was invariably an enormous amount of material display. In 1514 when Henry VIII was honoured by the pope with the gift of a precious sword and ceremonial cap, the entire court was fitted out in the most sumptuous clothes, which bore the suggestion of a unity of organisation; the nobles, in addition, "all bore such massive gold chains that some might have served for fetters on a felon's ankles, so heavy were they and of such immense value."(2) English gold chains always caused Italian comment. There was seldom much said about their artistic worth, but their plain solidity impressed Italians by their massiveness and apparently great value. It was a thing that Italian painters like Carpaccio and Titian did not ignore or were thought to have appreciated. (Plates 5, 6 & 7.) (3) The purpose of these gold chains, though in very good taste, must surely have been to display the wearers' wealth and position. The English dynasty evidently did need this psychological prop; the French noticeably did not indulge in such pure display.(4)

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1. Paolo da Laude, SPM, 4 Sept. 1513.

2. N. di Farvi (San.18), SPV II, 12 July 1514.

3. Cf. Ch.II,i, pp.135-6 for further discussion.

4. Sanudo 28, SPV III, 23 June 1520.



6. Carpaccio, 'The Return of the Ambassadors to the King of England' (detail).



7. Titian, the so-called 'Young Englishman', 1540s.

The truth was that Italians did not look for good taste and elegance in English ostentation. Quite exceptional was the occasion in 1517 when Henry VIII was entertaining the foreign missions in London. His appearing "in stiff brocade in the Hungarian fashion, with a collar of inestimable value round his neck", was described, as was his change into "white damask in the Turkish fashion...with robes of brocade lined with ermine...all embroidered with rubies and diamonds, in accordance with his emblems; his simar was all embroidered with pearls and precious stones." This time the writer, Francesco Chierogato, put on no price tags, probably because he was describing the scene to that arbiter of elegance Isabella d'Este, marchesa di Mantova. He restricted himself in his mentioning of objects like the "silver-gilt vases and vases of pure gold on the dinner table", to saying that they were worth simply "a vast treasure." In fact, he ended unprecedentedly by paying a great compliment to the culture of the English court. He maintained that "the wealth and civilisation of the world were there, and those who called the English barbarians appeared to him to render themselves such." He could perceive their very elegant manners, extreme decorum and very great politeness; the king himself "excelled all who ever wore a crown."(1)

Although he may have ended up by commenting on the English gentility of manner, it is clear from his letter that what impressed him was not so much the personal attention that he received from the English courtiers as the effect of the much evident display at the court itself. Everything there was consciously superlative, from the royal bodyguard, 300 strong and "all as big as giants so that the display was very grand", to the king himself, with his "round

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1. F. Chierogato, SPV II, 10 July 1517.

face so very beautiful that it would become a pretty woman."(1)  
 Italians noticed how Henry VIII's beauty was delicately complemented from all sides by fine things. If Italians were conscious of it, one might suppose that it was initially contrived for that purpose.

At the Field of the Cloth of Gold in 1520, it seemed quite impossible for Italians to see the wood for the trees. Commentators like Antonio Grumello, Marin Sanudo, even Polydore Vergil, among a host of others, wrote descriptive reams about the magnificence displayed by the English king in his temporary palaces, his costumes, his entertainments and his gifts. There was very little talk about the diplomatic implications of the meeting; only a general feeling that France and England were friends again. The display and cordiality had been too great for the friendship not to be everlasting. That they were "anxious for the peace of Christendom" was taken for granted.(2) What was more interesting was that the "two kings each wore a treasure of pearls, diamonds, rubies and other stones." Some Italians were eager to decide which side appeared to be finer than the other. The French were, if any one was, simply because their "women were better arrayed and handsomer than the English."(3)

But this was not the last word. From the time of the 1520 French entente England and France had fought each other diplomatically and physically, but, when it came to their signing of a marriage agreement in 1527, there was another opportunity for indulgence in further pure display. Henry's entertainments were too impressive for words. When the eyes could leave his "four repositories full of gold vessels", it was possible for someone like Augustino Scarpinello to reflect that the arrangements for all

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1. Piero Pasqualigo in RB I, pp.85, 86.

2. Sanudo 29, SPV III, 7-24 June 1520.

3. Triulizi, Venetian governor at the French court, (San.29), SPV III, 11 June 1520.

these festivities "surpassed the magnificence of all ancient and modern princes in like matters." (1) This, in some ways, seemed to represent the high water-mark of the English king's apparent use of display to impress foreign and domestic observers. After 1527 Henry VIII was a much more isolated figure, whose money seemed to be better spent on buying moral support on the continent to counteract the general disapproval of his defiance of the pope and the emperor. It was very noticeable how, at the 1532 meeting with the French king, he displayed himself and his entourage much less flamboyantly. The "gold chains and decent clothes" of the English courtiers may have contrasted sharply with the richly embroidered clothes of the French; and the Milanese, Giovanni Stefano Robio, could point out comparisons by saying that "the display did not come up to that of the other conference" (2), so lastingly impressive must have 1520 been, but part of the reason for this could have been Henry VIII's desire to show that he, with Anne Boleyn at his side, as though his wife, was not just indulging in frivolities, but was sober and responsible. Display, nevertheless, could still be used, when it served a positive purpose. In 1533, when the time came for the public acknowledgement of Anne Boleyn as his wife by her coronation, Henry spared no expense. The whole occasion was said to have cost 300,000 gold ducats, a lavish sum that had to pay not only for a new crown, since Catherine of Aragon refused to surrender hers, but also for the royal costumes, the religious ceremonies and "the very grand and most sumptuous banquet in the Great Hall" afterwards. Moreover, in order to pay for this one blaze of glory to reflect warmly on what he hoped would be the ultimate in faits accomplis,

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1. A. Scarpinello, SPM, 10 May 1527.

2. G.S. Robio, Milanese ambassador in France, SPM, 2 Oct. 1532.



Henry did not hesitate to extract money from any available source. It was particularly noted how he fined all those gentry who, though financially qualified, refused to be knighted. On this occasion, the people of England, as well as foreign observers, had to be impressed. Apparently they were: for great crowds of them stood in the streets, so awed that everything passed with the "utmost order and tranquility."<sup>(1)</sup>

One might briefly add that, despite their charges of gluttony, Italians did recognise that in the formal dinner the English saw a show-case for a display of opulence and social importance. The Trevisan Relation told of how the Venetian envoys had been invited to the inaugural banquet of the Lord Mayor of London. It impressed by the amount of guests invited, "1,000 or more at the table", a feat of catering by any standards. It impressed by its length of four hours. It was striking as an artistic contrivance: for within the space of those four hours there were interspersed between the courses long pauses during which the company conversed. This emphasis on social intercourse distinctly takes away from the brutal idea of hours of eating, unrelieved by time for cogitation. It would appear too that, as one descended the social scale, it was still considered the done thing to hold such feasts. Even the two sheriffs appointed to the city of London had to hold one and it was "no less magnificent a banquet" than the mayor's. At it there was an "infinite profusion of victuals and of plate, which was for the most part gilt". Yet this was evidently a more self-conscious affair and too imitative of the top rank in society to give the feeling of natural ease. All the guests noticeably "sat... punctiliously in their order" and they were also extraordinarily

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1. Advices from London to Milan, SPM, 3 June 1533; Carlo Capello (San.48), SPV IV, 9 May 1533, 7 June 1533.

silent that it was like a Spartan feast.(1) The city worthies evidently recognised that banquet-giving was a way to gain social prestige, but some of them had not yet captured enough of an atmosphere of relaxed elegance to make this wholly successful. It was striking how an Italian writer on England had come to expect the entertainment of conversation within the framework of the meal and to miss it when the right atmosphere was lacking. The contrast with a court dinner, such as the one given by Henry VIII to celebrate the signing of an agreement with the pope and the emperor in 1517, is very marked. During the space of "seven hours by the clock" an artistic creation was presented. There was a great concentration on display. "All the viands placed before the king were borne by an elephant, or by lions and panthers or other animals, marvellously designed. The removal and replacing of the dishes the whole time was incessant, the hall in every direction being full of fresh viands on their way to table." The whole scene, with the constant sound of music, was full of the colour of plate, foods or artificial animals; there was constant movement; the smell of food must have been in the air; there were arabesques of lines to be seen in the form of jellies "in the shape of castles and animals of various descriptions, as beautiful and admirable as can be imagined." The

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1. Trevisan, 44. On the question of gluttony, commentators were always amazed by the time spent on solid eating, from the time of Poggio, who could not live among "a people...fain to spend all their time eating and drinking"(Vespas.,351-2), to Arlotto's in the 1480s, when he remarked that there was not an Englishman who did not eat for three Italians as he daily spent three hours and more at table (Arlotto, No.5); or from that of de Soncino, who, in 1497, complained of his three hour stretch twice a day, when he had to consume ten to twelve courses (R. de Soncino, SPM, pp.338, 340-1), to Chiericato's in 1517, when he attended a dinner, at which "guests remained at the table for seven hours by the clock."(Chiericato, SPV II, 10 July 1517.

food itself was not just a visual object: it was of excellent texture and very varied, from "every imaginable sort of meat known in the kingdom...down to prawn pasties." (1) The seven hour sitting was contrived as one large artistic whole, calculated to stimulate every human sense.

The arts, in a more rigid sense, present a greater problem of classification. How far they were contrived for their qualities of pure show and impressiveness and how far they were indulged in by the English for the sake of enjoyment and out of a sense of real appreciation is hard to tell. Italians themselves were not too decisive about this. Substantially the problem existed simply because in England the one art-form which made the most impression on Italians was music. Now music is an immediate art, which depends upon the instance of performance to put over its message. Unlike the art of architecture, which was perhaps English music's only rival in Italian eyes, it did not sit around for centuries and wait for people like Aeneas Sylvius to pass by its manifestations in the famous church of St. Paul and the royal tombs in London, or the cathedral in York, to meditate quietly on their wondrous construction or renowned size and architecture. The cathedral's "very brilliant...glass walls,...held together by very slender columns", may have given the feeling of fragility, but they were tangible and less transient than music. (2) Music could not depend upon human cogitation but upon forcing itself upon human consciousness at the appropriate moment and in the appropriate place. At the court of Henry VIII music came thrusting forward into the receptive minds of Italian observers as a well developed and established English

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1. Chiericato to the M. sa di Mantova, SPV II, 10 July 1517.

2. Pius II: Coms, 16, 21.

art. Previous generations had not ignored it. Frulovisi mentioned that Henry V "delighted in song and musical instruments"(1); Galeazzo Maria Sforza, duke of Milan, was so impressed by the reputation of English musicians and singers that in 1471 he sent to England to procure some for his ducal chapel; in 1508 Pietro Carmeliano let slip matter-of-fact comments on the use of music for a Te Deum, fanfares and popular celebrations at the time of Princess Mary's betrothal to Charles of Castile.(2) However, with Henry VIII on the throne, the English court seemed to be more thoroughly involved in this art.

King Henry himself enjoyed a great reputation among Italians as a practicing musician and as a connoisseur. When he visited the Lady Margaret of the Netherlands at Lille in 1513 "in the presence of the lady he sang and played on the gitteron-pipe and the lute-pipe and on the cornet, and he danced."(3) Similarly in 1517, at the time of the papal-imperial negotiations, he gave a private party for the ambassadors. "After dinner he took to singing and playing on every instrument and exhibiting a part of his excellent endowments."(4) One could accuse him of vaunting his talents before a captive audience, in whose ranks there were sure to be some who would relate everything to their home governments. But one wonders if Henry was, in fact, only aiming at the satisfaction that any artist derives from performing. His musical proclivities, whether he gave impromptu concerts or not, most likely would have been commented on. Piero Pasqualigo in 1515 could relate that the king "played well on the lute and harpsichord, and sang from the book

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1. Frulovisi, 4.

2. P. Carmeliano: pp.23, 24, 28.

3. Duca di Ferrara (San.17), SPV II, 7 Oct.1513.

4. Chierigato, SPV II, 10 July 1517.

at sight"(1), or Sebastiano Giustinian add that he was "a good musician and composed well"(2): these opinions could be formed by any observer, but their fellow Italians were just as aware of and interested in Henry VIII's private music-making, about which there could be no direct suspicion of deliberate display. The discerning Venetian secretary, Nicolo Sagudino, soon learned that not only did the king keep "certain chambers containing a number of organs and clavicimbani (spinets) and flutes and other instruments" but he "practiced on these instruments day and night."(3) It would also appear that he encouraged his daughter Princess Mary to do the same, because, at the age of nine, she was described as being "singularly accomplished,...most particularly in music, playing on every instrument, especially on the lute and harpsichord."(4)

Moreover, although it is possible to be a musical executant and be remarkably inaesthetic about music, Italians were quite decided that this was not one of Henry's faults. He was just as capable of sitting back to listen to music as he was of performing it. He was delighted with Dionisio Memo, the lame Venetian friar, who was so brilliant an organist that he made him his master of music. He would listen to his organ playing for long periods of time. On one occasion, a recital by Memo "lasted during four consecutive hours to the so great admiration of all the audience, and with such marks of delight from his Majesty as to defy exaggeration."(5) Again it would be unfair to describe the king's attitude as self-consciously contrived for the public: when Henry withdrew from London to Windsor in 1517 at the height of a sweating sickness epidemic, for fear of the disease he only took with him his

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1. Piero Pasqualigo, in RB I, 30 Apr. 1515.

2. S. Giustinian: Report, in RB II, P.312.

3. N. Sagudino, in RB I, P.80.

4. Lorenzo Orio (San.39), SPV III, 14 Aug. 1525.

5. S. Giustinian in RB, 10 July 1517.

physician, three favourite gentlemen and Memo, who, though concerned with Henry's spiritual needs as his chaplain, was likely to have been just as necessary for his musical requirements.(1) Moreover, Italian observers were sure that Henry was interested in the quality of music and musicianship and not just in quantitative aspects. He had a fine lute-player from Brescia, Zuan Piero Carmeliano, but, when in 1517 there appeared at court "a lad who played upon the lute, better than was ever heard, to the amazement of his Majesty, who never wearied of him," Henry neglected Zuan Piero because he was not of the same standard.(2) If this episode seemed to display a fickle side to Henry's taste, his treatment of Zuan de Leze in 1525 proved the contrary. De Leze was a fairly well-born Venetian who, attracted by Henry's musical reputation, had a special clavicimbalum made and brought it all the way to England to play before the king. He had hoped that the "king, who delighted in music, would give him a salary", but, when Henry, "not much pleased with his playing,...made him a present of 20 nobles" and nothing more, he committed suicide in despair.(3) In other words, Henry respected his feelings of musical discernment more than persons themselves and their opinions about his magnanimity. However, this did not mean that his court was swamped with professional musicians of the highest calibre. There were some, Sagudino remarked, whose technique of organ playing was rather bad, but they were still heard with tolerance.(4) There were others like the gifted humanist and diplomat, Richard Pace, who, Vergil said, delighted the king not only because "his manners were most polished; he was well educated

1. *Ibid.*, 27 Aug. 1517.

2. N. Sagudino, in RB II, p.75.

3. Sanudo, quoting L. Orio, Vol.40, *SPV* III, 24 Dec.1525.

4. Sagudino (San.20), *SPV* II, 6 June 1515.



and witty', but also because he was musically inclined, although at the most he could have been no more than a gifted amateur.(1)

In Renaissance writings one can discern a tendency to accept the existence of music at the Tudor court as so much a part of the surroundings that Italians took it for granted as something characteristically English. Chiericato's description of the famous seven hour feast in 1517 put music in the category of a constant background, diversified only by changes of instruments.(2) Paolo Giovio put musicians at the court on the level of jugglers, as they in turn broke into the long meals and gave the guests time to recover their appetites.(3) Bandello was not above reducing music in England to a snigger when he expatiated on Anne Boleyn's lute-playing lover, Mark Smeton. Such was the queen's interest in the subject that she determined to discover if he could "play as well with his flute as he could with his other instruments."(4) Yet, his salaciousness pales beside, for example, Antonio Grumello's account of the enthusiasm with which Henry VIII "made music for the king of the Romans on the clavichord, flutes and other instruments in which his Majesty delighted."(5) One is left with the feeling that here was Henry personally entertaining a fellow sovereign and a friend in the way in which he himself thought most worthwhile.

Taken as a whole, Italian views about English courtesy, social ostentation and artistic consciousness and their place in English society, or more particularly at the English court, present refreshing contrasts. Observers could see human failings behind the

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1. Vergil: AH(Hay), p.293.
  2. F. Chiericato, SPV II, 10 July 1517.
  3. Giovio: Hist.I, p.238.
  4. Bandello, Pt.III, Nov.62.
  5. A. Grumello, Bk.6, Ch.19, p.242.

English masks of civility; they were expert at estimating the cost of court displays and at discerning the political reasons behind them. Even a glittering institution like the Order of the Garter they had no difficulty in defining in terms of its international diplomatic importance; but the arts, as represented chiefly by music, were another matter. It was not easy to speak of music in terms of cost and value. A musician's salary or reward was one thing, but Italians did not attempt to put a price on sound. It was this, with King Henry VIII's raising of the social standing of the musician by his own participation in music making, that left Italians with the feeling that, after all, English appreciation of the art and their spontaneous delight in it did soften slightly the ulterior motivation behind other forms of their social comportment.

### 3. Classes in Society.

Whatever Britons did in society, however they acted, their natural characteristics, their morals, their social façades and predilections depended greatly upon their social positions. Italians were very aware of the stratification of society and of the conflicting interests of and contrasting attitudes of its classes, just as the British themselves seemed to be class-conscious. As already mentioned, attitudes towards and openness about morality varied considerably according to class: the higher up in society the more erratic the behaviour seemed to be. Courtesy notably varied according to social position, if only with, for example, Vergil's ladies who refused "to kiss those who were by blood inferior." An outstretched hand was considered sufficient in such a case.<sup>(1)</sup> Display, from clothes to entertainment, was peculiar to upper burgher society and courtiers: they had more to gain from spreading the

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1. Vergil: De rerum inventoribus, Bk.IV, Ch.13, p.272.

peacock's tail. England's art varied according to class. One can tell that even from the differences in the musical instruments used: in contrast with a typical group of court instruments, like "the flute, rebeck and clavichord", or the regal organ, viols and ubiquitous lutes, all of them technically demanding (1), a typical set of instruments used in popular junketings would be "the drums, lutes and small harps and rattles", mentioned by Pietro Carmeliano. They show a much greater emphasis upon percussive or rhythmically plucked instruments, less demanding of skill and less productive of complex and subtle sound.(2) But none of this caused the kind of friction that accentuated comparative class differences; they really sprang from differences in social upbringing and education. There was an unquestioning recognition of the fundamental divisions of society, exemplified, if at all, by the deceptively simple parliamentary division into lords and people. They were approached as different bodies. Edward IV in 1473, for example, would extract promises of war funds from them separately, 13,000 crowns from the people, 7,000 from the lords. Yet, even this division did not really correspond to the division of society into nobles, burghers, and the labouring and peasant classes simply because the Commons of parliament contained knightly elements, which Italians tended to consider as essentially noble.

Despite the fragmented nature of British society and the obvious self-interest of individual classes, the elements of conflict between classes as such were seldom seen by Italians, except during periods of political instability or social change. Indeed, Italians sometimes saw cases of class antagonism brought about by

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1. Sagudino in RB II, p.102 et passim.

2. P. Carmeliano, p.28.

the disjointing effects of social movements, when this did not really exist as such. For example, Bandello maintained that Thomas Cromwell rose from being the son of a poor cloth-dresser or in reality the son of an odd-job man from Putney, both occupations meaning much the same socially, to become the Lord Chamberlain of England and virtually the king's alter ego. As such, he was seen in Italy as the self-appointed agent of the destruction of many noble houses. Consequently he gained the reputation of being the "bitter and insatiable enemy of all the nobility of the island" and of trying to exterminate them, "so that he might abide without anyone who would dare reproach him with the meanness of his beggarly blood." (1) Therefore, it is not impossible that Italians imagined that strong under-currents of class-conflict were at work in England: new men from the lowest ranks struggled to the top and attempted to establish themselves by destroying the force of the entrenched traditional ruling class.

However, Cromwell provided one of the very rare examples of persons of lower class origins rising noticeably to positions of great power outside the ambit of the church. It is not surprising that an Italian story-writer should try to explain the novelties of the age in which he lived in terms of the exceptional nature of his elevation. The situation was even more confused because basically Italians knew very little about the lowest rungs of English society. Italian writers on England were virtually all townsmen, whose prime concern in Italy was not with the peasantry or the controllable town-labourers; English peasants were of even less interest to them. Consequently, in the 14th. century events connected with the upheavals in the peasant world made no impression at all on any

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1. Bandello II, Nov.34; III, Nov.60.

Italian writer. In the 15th. century the interest in the lower classes, compared with that in the nobility and the bourgeoisie, went in inverse proportion to their sizes. In fact, it was not really until 1474 that the bottom end of society received even the merest mention. Until then it must have been taken for granted that the English army, which had been assembled for French campaigns, or which had supplied that basis for Sir John Hawkwood's unruly troops, drew its man-power from the peasantry or the poorer townsfolk. In 1474 a Milanese, Lionetto di Rossi, described those English soldiers, idling in France under Edward IV, as "sturdy mechanics, who did not really obey their lords." (1) Certainly this suggests that not even the peasantry was very strikingly in evidence. The cannon-fodder consisted of independent minded artisans, as strong in will as in body. Later, it was about the Scots that the Trevisan Relation spoke when it declared that the nation was "divided into two classes, one of which inhabited the towns, and the other the country." The country people corresponded to the lower classes. They were "called the wild or savage Scots, not however from the rudeness of their manners, which were extremely courteous." This recommendation stemmed partly from their habitual mixing with the Scottish nobility, who tended to reside in the country; partly because of the sense of duty attached to their "privilege of guarding the king's royal person." As an incidental result, they made good soldiers. (2) Yet, this gives one no idea of what Italians knew about their daily lives, and it scarcely acts as a comparison with the English "sturdy mechanics", although the suggestion is that these towns-folk "of low degree" originally came

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1. L. de Rossi, SPM, 9 Aug. 1474.

2. Trevisan, 15.

"from all parts of the island" to make their way as artificers in big towns like London.(1) Those who remained on the land evidently did not enjoy a particularly prosperous life, because the slightest financial pressure on them from above seemed to produce trouble. In 1497, at the time of Henry VII's involvements with the Scots and Warbeck's invasions, "the commons of Cornwall rose because of the money which they had to pay to the king for the war." In fact, the rebels, according to Antonio Spinula, a Milanese envoy in London, consisted of "about 20,000 persons who would not pay the subsidies." (2) At least one of their leaders was a common man, a smith by trade. Apparently they were soon defeated and any further suggestion of the common people as a cohesive political force in English society disappeared. The king did not have "to render account of his money" and the people did not get his "treasure in their hands for their common good." (3) Paradoxically, an over anxiety about money taken in taxes often implies that not only is the money available to be taken, but also that those objecting are used to enjoying better than the lowest standard of living. In much the same way could the opinion of Vincenzo Quirini have been misleading. At the beginning of the 16th. century, he said that the wealth lay in the hands of the king, the nobles and the church, and "the rest of the riches was with the merchants." He ignored the existence of those lower than the merchants, but this does not necessarily suggest that in England there was great lower class poverty: for between riches, which were Quirini's concern, and cold poverty there can exist many shades of adequate living standards. No Italian actually saw any large number of Englishmen living in

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1. *Ibid.*, 43.

2. A. Spinula, *SPM*, s.m. June 1497.

3. Letters from Milan to the Imperial court, *SPM*, 10 July 1497.



the extremes of penury, although Quirini himself did remark that in Cornwall they were poorer than in other parts.(1) The royal financial squeeze would arguably have been felt first in an area of comparative want.

However, near the end of the Renaissance period, one is left with Polydore Vergil's comment on the lower orders. What Trevisan said about the rural Scots he said about their English counterparts. The violent English weather caused them to live together in villages with the result that "the rurals and common people, by intercourse and daily conference which they have with the nobility confusedly dwelling among them, were made very civil."(2) But once one pushes up the social scale again into the ranks of lower class town-dwellers, there is less amity to be found. Granted one comes across figures like Wolsey, the son of a butcher, Cromwell, in Bandello's opinion a poor cloth-dresser's son, or even Mark Smeton, fathered by a carpenter; they all rose to positions of trust and influence at Henry VIII's court, but there they adopted the way of life of the people with whom they associated. Wolsey became of princely rank by virtue of his cardinalate; Cromwell rose through lordly offices to become for a short time earl of Essex; and Smeton attained the less easily defined position of favourite of the king and confidant and intimate of the queen. They were far removed from the sturdy mechanics, from whose ranks they sprang, although they still retained their characteristic drive. Basically these were the types of people who made up the mobs which in May 1517 threatened to kill all foreigners dwelling in London. These apprentices, the "articled servants of English merchants and citizens", had such a clear idea

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1. Quirini, p.21.

2. Vergil: AH(ET), 4.

of what their way of life and work should be that any foreigner who attempted "to deprive them of their industry, and of the emoluments derivable thence (or who) disgraced their houses, taking their wives and daughters", was liable to receive brusque treatment similar to that experienced by the nobles in Edward IV's army in 1474.(1) They were the same people whom the Trevisan Relation maintained had been sent away from home at the age of seven or nine to learn how to make their way in the world of commerce; the same who would not scruple to marry their masters' widows for business advantage, or who could develop the attitude of mind that "no injury...could be committed against (them), the lower orders of the English, that might not be atoned for by money."(2) It was from their ranks that a man, if he prospered, might easily become a member of the burgher mercantile and commercial class in English society.

This prominent section of the community to Italian eyes showed, perhaps more rationality, but certainly just as much self-interest as the apprentices of the labouring artisans in the towns. As with the apprentices, nothing showed up this attitude more clearly than social or political stress, at times when the middle-class felt its prosperity threatened. It would do anything to maintain an even keel. In 1461, when the earl of Warwick was defeated by Margaret of Anjou at St.Albans, the citizens of London might have been in a political quandary, but their commercial interests dictated policy. They sent the mayor "to the king and queen,... it was supposed to offer obedience, provided they were assured that they would not be plundered or suffer violence." Until such a time

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1. S. Giustinian in RB, 5 May 1517.

2. Trevisan, 25-7.

not only the city gates but the shops and businesses would be kept closed. It was harmful commercially, but better than losing their means of livelihood altogether. The king and queen replied that they "had no mind to pillage the chief city and chamber of their realm."

(1) Yet, within a month, "owing to some not over legitimate actions of the king and his party, London inclined to my lord of March"

(Edward IV) and the Lancastrian leaders fled to the north.(2)

Meanwhile, "the people of London, the leaders of the people of the island, together with some other lords, full of indignation had created a new king, Edward, son of the duke of York." Their attitude was negative. "Full of indignation" implies that they took positive steps in one direction in order to curb a threat to themselves from another. Italians recognised well enough that, with Warwick, it was the city of London that was "entirely inclined to the side with the new king and, as it was very rich and the most wealthy city in Christendom, this enormously increased the chances of the side that it favoured." But the matter was not so settled because, as the Milanese, Prospero di Camulio recognised, the queen would not let the matter rest and, when the people "perceiving that they were not on the road to peace,...would easily be induced to change sides, such being the very nature of the people." They were free agents, so they would "never...let things go so far that they could not turn."(3) As far as these commercially minded people were concerned, appeasement meant peace and peace meant prosperity. On the other hand, if there had to be factious strife, their attitude was: let "the storm fall just as much on the heads of princes as their own. The less nobles there were the better they were pleased and...the

1. C. Gigli; 'Letter to Bruges', SPM, 19 & 22 Feb. 1461.

2. P. di Camulio, Milanese ambassador to France, SPM, 9 Mar. 1461.

3. Ibid., 27 Mar. 1461.

nearer a chance for liberty." Camulio was convinced that "the people of London had great aspirations." (1) Their greatest aspiration, however, was freedom. Foreign observers were convinced that, if only to achieve this, the people were quite capable of rising up against oppressors and disturbers of their peace and, incidentally, their prosperity. (2) But, as it was, in 1461 their compromise solution, they admitted, was to support Edward, "whereby they put themselves straight and at the present moment, he was much desired there." (3) In other words, the attitude of those city-dwellers with influence was: give support to the lesser of two evils or appease the winning party.

When by 1469 it was evident that Warwick was becoming overbearingly powerful and increasingly antagonistic towards Edward IV, it was reported that "the king was much beloved by the men of... (London), while the earl was hated." (4) However, no sooner had Warwick landed in England in 1470, and King Edward had fled defeated, than "the earl of Warwick went to London, where he was received in a most friendly fashion...and, set at liberty..., King Henry...was crowned and proclaimed through all the town of London with the greatest festivities and pomps as the true king." (5) Yet, within six months, Italians were writing home about how Edward IV was again London's reigning sovereign. They were naturally confused; even amazed. Sforza de Bettini uttered the frank wish that "the country and people should be plunged deep in the sea, because of their lack of stability;...no one ever heard twice alike about English affairs." (6) Italians were not confused about the cause of all this chopping

1. Ibid., 18 Apr. 1461.
2. Letters from Ghent, SPM, 4 Apr. 1461.
3. P. di Camulio, SPM, 9 May 1461.
4. Sforza de Bettini, Milanese ambassador to France, SPM, 20 Nov. 1469.
5. Emanuel di Jacopo and Sforza de Bettini, SPM, 20 Oct. 1470.
6. Sf. de Bettini, SPM, 5 May 1471.

and changing. The people, especially the Londoners, bent with the prevailing wind to suit their own purposes. Even in 1472, although some believed that a successor to Warwick would arise against Edward, whom they did not particularly love, the king could keep them moderately subdued by "giving them all the pleasure he could in order to reign."<sup>(1)</sup> The king was evidently just as aware as the Italians of the fickleness of the town-dwellers and not ignorant of how material benefits counted most in their definition of loyalty.

Even the strong minded Richard, <sup>of Gloucester,</sup> duke did not ignore this. He subtly used it for his own benefit. After he brought his nephew Edward V to London, rumours were circulated about his being held in captivity. The first thing that Gloucester did was to make sure of the feelings of the burghers of London by writing "to the council and to the head of the city, whom they call mayor." It was enough to inform them that the young king was being protected from opposing factions until his coronation. When Richard decided to take over the throne, his approach to the matter, according to Mancini, was to ingratiate himself by entertaining large numbers of men to dinner and to try to sway their opinion by "corrupting preachers to say that neither had Edward IV been a legitimate king nor could his progeny be." However, although Mancini was sure that the verbal approach did not work because "the people cursed him in the street", presumably their leaders were too committed to the power that already seemed strongly enough entrenched to let them continue to pursue their lives in peace. Richard III was well armed, so no amount of sentiment about Edward V would stop "the people of London and the heads of the clergy" from following the nobles in swearing allegiance to Richard.<sup>(2)</sup>

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1. P. Aliprando, SPM, 25 Nov. 1472.

2. Mancini, 99-101.

Nevertheless, it was easy for Milanese ambassadors, papal envoys or international letterati, mainly attached to princely governments, to condemn the weather-vane antics of English burghers; the more mercantile-minded Venetians were less critical. The Trevisan Relation recognised that, as in England, the Scottish example of the two class division into the warlike and the "other... composed of citizens and burgesses, who were devoted to mercantile pursuits, and to the other useful and mechanical arts", pointed out that the utilitarian approach to life of the latter class left little room for the inconveniences of strife and internal instability.<sup>(1)</sup> It is noteworthy that in times of general peace, as in Henry VII's reign, when the Trevisan Relation and Quirini's description of England were written, the English burgher class evidently experienced little that hindered their business activities and, just as much as their apprentices, they found time to prosper. It is interesting that Quirini should say that, after the king, nobles and the church, the great number of English merchants possessed the residue of the wealth of England.<sup>(2)</sup> They had their money; all that they could do was to make more and encourage their children to do so: for, according to Trevisan, it was not only the lower ranks of urban society that sent their children away to make their own fortunes. "Few were born who were exempted from this fate, for everyone, however rich he might be, sent away his children into the houses of others."<sup>(3)</sup> One cannot, however, avoid feeling that the Relation's writer was a little cynical about this burgher way of life. The highest political, and therefore social, position to which a successful burgher could aspire was to a much esteemed post

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1. Trevisan, 15.
  2. Quirini, 21.
  3. Trevisan, 24-25.



as an alderman or as mayor of the city. But, in such a position, how awkwardly they attempted to ape the nobility. Certainly, when the writer was invited to the inaugural banquet of the Lord Mayor of London, the food was lavish and well presented; the conversation at the table was also well organised, but, when the two sheriffs of the city gave an equally rich banquet, served off a treasure of gilt plate, the overall atmosphere was one of self-conscious cultivation of dignity and of embarrassed silences that were not even filled in by a more courtly interest in music or any other kind of entertainment.(1)

Just as English burghers appeared to be fumbling in their attempts to imitate the nobles' way of life, Italian commentators on the English concept of nobility were just as tentative. They themselves were generally not over familiar with the concept of titled nobility. The town-orientated nobility that they knew in Venice, Florence or the small courts of northern Italy had limited points of similarity to the land-owning magnates, great and small, who appeared to form such a cohesive caste in England. However, the point was that, towards the end of the Renaissance period, it was obvious to some Italians, certainly more so than in earlier years, that the composition of this class was changing, sometimes shrinking, sometimes expanding, in the end always likely to be diluted.

The definitive concept of that constituted nobility in early 15th. century England was vague in Italian minds. Poggio Bracciolini could talk about "a noble bishop from Great Britain", but gave no clue as to whether he considered him noble by birth or noble by virtue of his office.(2) His notion of nobility, when he left aside

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1. *Ibid.*, 44.

2. Poggio Bracciolini: *Lib. Facet.*, No.27.

noble ecclesiastics, was clearer. It was defined in terms of attitude. Nobles were those who "thought it ignominious...to stay in a place among townsfolk; they inhabited the country, secluded with woods and meadows." They were judged on the amount of their property and themselves cared only for country matters. They preferred to make what money they could by selling country-produce rather than by engaging in commercial enterprises. Indeed, successful business-men in the cities liked to retire to the country so that they could become the ancestors of noble sons, who would make their way in life by military service and with emoluments derived from the king's bounty.(1)

Poggio's picture is interesting in as much as he saw the English nobility, with its French counterparts very much in mind, in non-titled terms. It was essentially a land-owning class and therefore must have comprised everyone from the gentry upwards. It was also, apparently a class much affected by social mobility because, if there was a constant dribble of over-prosperous burghers into its ranks, either the distribution of available lands was becoming more fragmentary or existing noble families were either dying out or dropping out of the land-owning caste. But this was not to be put in quite such explicit terms by Poggio.

However, later in the 15th. century, it became quite apparent that social mobility into or within the upper classes did not pass without heart-searching. The established noble families resented others being given honours comparable with their own. Admittedly Giovanni Sercambi, early in the century, had told how the nobles, led by the future Henry IV, had seen to the destruction of many noble favourites around Richard II's throne, but, rightly or wrongly, there was no feeling that they were antagonised against them as

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1. Ibid., De Nobilitate, in Omnia Opera I, p.69.

unworthy upstarts.(1) Italian observers were much more articulate by 1467. The estrangement between Edward IV and the earl of Warwick seemed to have come about mainly because of the "king's conferring too many honours on his brother-in-law the Rivers<sup>(sic)</sup>." Not only was the king exalting this person to a rank virtually equal to the much better established family of Warwick, but also the earl felt that he was not being rewarded enough with comparable honours.(2) There was, however, now nothing sacred about noble status. The late troubles had shown that "neither age, rank nor lordship could save anyone from the sword"(3), with the result that a serious power problem had developed. The kingdom seemed to be "deprived of so many of its natural princes and left only two who had name and reputation as princes."(4) Italians with this view could scarcely have been surprised that there was an upward movement of men suitable for filling the gaps.

Nevertheless, nothing seemed to make the new nobility and the remnants of the old lie happily together. Mancini was sure that the murder of Edward IV's brother, Clarence, had been contrived because the parvenu queen, Elizabeth Wydeville, was afraid of him. She feared that "he would prevent her sons coming to the throne, especially since he was handsome and regal and had the gift of public eloquence."(5) Perhaps he reminded her too much that her blood was meaner than his. Nor did the trouble end there because, as soon as Edward IV died, the duke of Gloucester appeared as the representative of the established well-born families of England and "the queen's relatives, afraid of his autocratic power", banded

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1. Sercambi: I.671.

2. Letter from Bruges to Venice, SPV VI, Pt.III(App.), 12-31 Dec.1467.

3. P. di Camulio, SPM, 27 Mar. 1461.

4. Ibid., 18 Apr.1461.

5. Mancini, 77.

themselves into a party to oppose him. Yet, Gloucester was not without allies: for as Protector he was the natural rallying point for ancient families resentful of the social infiltration of the Greys and Wydevilles. The duke of Buckingham was their foremost opponent because, though "of the highest nobility", he had been forced to marry the queen's sister.(1) Time had not weakened his detestation of the queen's kin, as presumably Edward IV had hoped. On the contrary, it seems as though his deliberate attempt to weave the new nobility into the fabric of the old only made the split more obvious.

When the Trevisan Relation described English nobility in Henry VII's reign, there seemed to be a much greater logic behind the definition of its status. All England, it was seen, was divided up into knights' fees, some owned by the church, the rest by the king, but, "if any knight should have acquired a sufficient number of these fees to be able to keep up a great establishment, he might have himself created an earl by the king, although the present King Henry was making very few."(2) It was a time of peace and therefore the shift of land-ownership would be less; there would be less reason for the king to advance men in the nobility to gain their military support. But then this also could have been seen as a direct result of the king's suspicion of the nobles' power.

For the moment, the Italians still looked for a form of definition of nobility or just for a means of recognising it. In the early 16th. century, the convenient way to recognise English nobility involved much the same process as for the Scottish nobility. "The nobility resided on their estates where they generally had

1. Ibid., 87, 91.

2. Trevisan, 38-9.

great forests for hunting game." They had excellent and strong houses elegantly built.(1) They were quite conspicuous in their dwellings, as in their pursuits, or lack of serious ones. Vergil maintained that the Scottish nobility, although endowed with natural intelligence, scorned work and preferred to live in ease and penury than "make a living by art and craft." They preferred to spend their days in hunting.(2) A little later, Giovio said that the English nobility had the same attitude. "Almost all of them loathed the cities and rejoiced in their castles and the open air." They preferred hunting and would indulge in no work but the service of women.(3) It was a view which was only slightly more extreme, in its description of the almost total absence of useful work, than the one which Poggio had given a century before. But, despite many generalisations about a rural orientation of the English nobility, there were signs of change during the reigns of the early Tudors.

For one thing they were becoming almost recognisable in urban society. Parliament brought the peers of the realm to London; it claimed the attention of many of the gentry for the Commons. When parliament was in session, Nicolo di Farvi particularly noted how the Venetian ambassador was inundated with visitors because he "lived in the area of the nobles."(4) They were perforce becoming partially urbanised, or at least drawn to the court, which was generally based at Westminster near London. In 1533 an action that was not only to attempt to define a bottom limit to the noble class and at the same time make it more accessible for royal purposes

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1. Ibid., 15.

2. Vergil: AH(ET), 11.

3. Giovio: Desc., 15.

4. N. di Farvi, (San.15), SPV II, s.m. Feb. 1513.

was Henry VIII's determination "to confer knighthood on all Englishmen whose annual rental exceeded 40 pounds sterling; and those who would not accept this dignity were to pay a certain sum according to their revenues." Admittedly the king hoped to increase his own revenues by this, in order, if nothing else, to pay for Anne Boleyn's coronation, but Carlo Capello, commenting on it, was sure that he wanted his "court to be increased by a large number of gentry." (1) How this order presented itself to Italian readers was another matter. They had seen how Henry could use his parliament; was this just another move to make larger numbers of newly established gentle-folk likely to become interested in the parliamentary life and hence even more manageable? Certainly it was quite obvious that some were reluctant to accept this change. One is left with the feeling that this reluctance stemmed not so much from a repulsion against the military aspects of knighthood, because Capello at least did not bring this into the question, but because of a lingering feeling that a court-orientated gentry was no longer intimately connected with the land that bestowed one's gentility. Whatever the truth of the matter was, it must have interested Italian readers to hear how a money standard was being used to define who should or who should not be of nobiliary standing. It was a rather more blatant extension of the principle involved in possession of a number of knights' fees as a qualification for an earldom.

However, the petite noblesse arrested Italian attention less than the great magnates of the realm. The mass knighthood of gentry interested them less than the creation of one peerage under unusual circumstances. Of the three dukes that remained alive during the

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1. C. Capello (San.58), SPV IV, 9 May 1533.



1530s, the duke of Suffolk was noted by Lodovico Falier as being, despite his high rank, "not of very noble lineage." Nevertheless, because he was the husband of the king's sister Mary, a widowed queen, "much honour and respect was paid to him."<sup>(1)</sup> He presented an interesting case because, unlike the upstart Greys and Rivers of Edward IV's reign, he was himself initially in the position of the favoured one; there were no hangers-on who could antagonize the other nobles. He was secure as long as the king lived and smiled on him, although it was apparent that even he could fall from favour if the king's minister frowned, as Wolsey seemed to have done in 1517.<sup>(2)</sup> In Sebastiano Giustinian's estimation, this did not prevent Suffolk from entertaining "hopes of the crown through his wife."<sup>(3)</sup> This was an extraordinary statement based mostly on the speculative logic of a Venetian mind, which was perhaps more used to the idea of the best man within a ruling clique rising to the top position in the state because of his natural talents. Giustinian may have been thinking of the parvenu nature of the Tudor dynasty itself but, if, on considering the question more deeply, he had thought back to 1515, when he himself had written about the extreme unpopularity of the match that had advanced Suffolk, one of such comparatively low birth, he might have been more careful in his speculations. Writing much later in 1554, but with a retrospective eye open, Giacomo Soranzo rather contradicted Giustinian's view. Parvenu peers, far from overstepping their new stations, had to be maintained in them by the sovereign. Soranzo's idea was that, "when the title of duke was conferred on anyone, they also provided him with the revenues for the maintenance of his grade;...doing like by marquises, earls and all others according to their station."<sup>(4)</sup> This was a new light on

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1. Falier, 14.

2. F. Chiericato, SPV II, 18 Apr. 1517.

3. S. Giustinian in RB II, p.316, 10 Oct.1519.

4. G. Soranzo, SPV V, p.554, 18 Aug. 1554.

nobility. Now noble status seemed removed from the idea of one's procuring a certain number of knights' fees and then applying to the king for an earldom. Soranzo's idea was based on the notion that the noble title was given purely honorifically: he was quite decided about the title's bestowing no particular jurisdictional powers; and the financial stability of the peerage came from the Crown; presumably the Crown could eliminate it at will. It was the logical corollary of the case of the demotion of Edmund de la Pole from the dukedom to the earldom of Suffolk in 1493, on the grounds that he had not enough revenue to support the state of a dukedom. One cannot tell if Soranzo had this in mind, but this notion of the peer supported by royal funds certainly added weight to the idea that Tudor monarchs kept a regulating hand on the shoulders of their lords. Moreover, the fact remained quite obvious in Italian writings that, although some could rise from the lowest échelons to the noble ranks of society, some even to become the consorts of royal persons, the unique nature of the royal descent was never affected by them or their aspirations. They might drag their families up to positions of power behind them, as did Anne Boleyn, but the Wiltshires and the Rochfords of the Tudor world had the same political life-span as their protectresses. Anne Boleyn herself was degraded of her titles before she stepped on to the scaffold and those presumably included the peerage based on the marquissate of Pembroke, which Henry VIII had given her in 1532 in an effort to give her some standing at court.(1) The unfortunate thing about Cromwell, the most extreme example of the parvenu peer in Henry VIII's England, was that his complete destruction followed so closely upon his elevation to the earldom of Essex that Italians

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1. The Doge and Senate of Venice, SPV V, 14 June 1536; Capello (Sanh7), SPV IV, 7 Sept. 1532.

had no time to meditate upon his rise within the ranks of the nobility. As it was, readers of Bandello could have had no concept of Cromwell as an ennobled figure. He essentially represented the royal official whose similarity to the nobility lay only in the fact that he now occupied a position which normally might have been held by an established noble. It was for this very reason, according to Bandello an acute awareness of the meanness of his blood, that Cromwell was seen as the virulent enemy of the class which he had, in fact, joined.(1)

In reality, Italians were far too willing to think of the English nobility in purely logical terms that had little relation to reality. Brandon was made a duke and became the king's brother-in-law: therefore he was thought of as a possible heir to the throne. Cromwell sprang from the lower classes to do a nobleman's job: therefore he must be anti-noble. There was even the idea that the king compelled the gentry to accept knighthood: therefore he increased the numbers at his court. None of these things was necessarily true. But the most confounding thing they themselves did come to recognise. After long puzzling, they worked out the illogicalities of the system of titular names. The royal house of York used that titular name because its head, Edward IV, had inherited the title of duke of York from his father, Richard. Yet, the irony of the situation in England, for example in 1461, was that Edward could "go towards Yorkshire, a province opposed to that king and very friendly to King Henry", in order to subdue it.(2) It would have appeared that Henry VI, in his own right duke of Lancaster, was well aware of how he was favoured in his rival's titular province:

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1. Bandello II, Nov.34; III, Nov.60.

2. Giovanni Pietro Cagnolla of Lodi, SPV I, 28 Aug, 1461.

earlier in the year, when he had "resigned the crown...out of his good nature", he and his party "withdrew to York, a strong place in the island towards the north." (1) Prospero di Camulio was not ignorant of Edward's title as a peer of the realm and yet he realised that the duke of York appeared to draw support for his case from every corner of England except York. Looking at the year 1471, the Historia Miscella Bononiensis recorded how Edward IV returned from exile and landed near the city of York to take it by force of arms. Granted, there may have been a Lancastrian garrison there, but it was not the soldiers but the people of York who rose up and threatened to kill Edward. The only way that he could escape their wrath was by saying that he had come to obey Henry VI as his lord and that, since his father had been the duke of York, they should be content to let him move on in peace, presumably as the present duke of York. (2) It was a paradoxical situation that for contemporary Italians could not easily be explained. If a man's father derived his title from a place, could he not be expected to have some prestige there? Certainly, by making his landing in Yorkshire, Edward might have appeared to be intent on exploiting any emotional connection between the title and the people, but, from his reception and York's previous leanings towards Henry VI, it was evident that he was persona non grata in the place of his and his father's title. One must say that at this point Italians did not attempt to rationalise the situation. They were still inclined to imagine that a man like Henry VI's half-brother, Jasper Tudor, Welsh by birth and with Pembroke as his title, would have success in rousing the Welsh to join Henry's cause in 1467, whereas in fact, the Welsh could have been merely willing to stand against

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1. P. di Camulio, SPM, 9 Mar. 1461.

2. Historia Miscella Bononiensis, RIS 18, p.784.

the established English government, just as the Scots did.(1)

The Trevisan Relation did much to throw light on the situation. This said that it was important to realise that great magnates like the dukes of Lancaster, York or Suffolk were "nothing more than rich gentlemen in possession of a great quantity of land belonging to the crown; and any king who had several sons, or kinsmen, or persons of merit, not only gave them great estates to enjoy, but also conferred upon them titles of duke, marquis or earl, assigning to each of them some small influence over the revenues of the place from which their title was derived; and the jurisdiction, both civil and criminal, and the fortresses remained in the hands of the crown."(2) This would have accounted for the situation in which the people and garrison of York were more attached to the king, Henry VI, than to their titular lord. Vergil discerned an even greater irrationality, but perhaps did more to explain the confusion in Italian minds. He had observed enough of the system to state that "by reason of an ancient custom in England, dukes and earls had their titles of dignity of the counties in which they often had no possessions or patrimony; but their revenue consisted of lands and possessions which they had elsewhere; whereof it made little matter who succeeded in those titles, which the king's Majesty at his pleasure bestowed as he wished upon those whom he made dukes or earls.(3).

Nevertheless, there was no willingness to let the matter rest there. Paolo Giovio was convinced that the victor of Flodden, Thomas Howard, earl of Surrey, "was called by the English 'duke of Norfolk'

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1. G.P. Panicharolla, SPM, 12 Sept. 1467.

2. Trevisan, 37.

3. Vergil: AH(Ellis), 13.

because that county was subject to him."(1) Therefore, some seemed to have been convinced that there was a strong link between a nobleman's title and his legal jurisdiction and physical ownership of the place. Bandello did add confusion when he wrote that Henry VIII's sister Mary had married a private gentleman "whom her brother wished well, although he was of mean lineage, and to whom he gave the Duchy of Suffolk, from which he ousted the true lord, a prince of the blood royal."(2) The idea of the former duke being ousted from his duchy suggests an action much more physical than the withdrawal of the right to use a titular name and the giving of it to another. It was as though Brandon entered into the actual possessions and jurisdiction of the dispossessed Suffolk. On the other hand, Bandello's statement does convey the idea that there was nothing sacred about moving a titular name, possessions apart, from one family over to quite a different one. The suggestion is that the honorific standing of the title, rather than the titular name, was in the long run more significant.

Italians north of Rome were familiar in their own states with a patrician class, usually untitled, often not even regarded as noble, and quite different in its orientation from the English nobility's. Commerce and politics absorbed them and attracted them into the towns or kept them there where they could play a rôle at the very nerve centre of civic life. This was one reason why they initially looked on the land-orientated English nobiliary class with such amazed, almost contemptuous eyes. Therefore, they perhaps made a more conscious effort to explore its political connections. They did not doubt that the nobility's political power varied in

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1. Giovio: EVBI, pp.557-8.

2. Bandello III, Nov.60.



inverse proportion to the king's. After Henry VI's defeat in 1460 he was captured and taken to London where, according to Pius II, "the prelates and nobles of the realm (parliament they call it) convened to discuss matters of state." What they in fact did do was to consider the claim of Richard, duke of York, to the throne and decide on who should succeed Henry VI, if he should be allowed to keep his throne. They took the latter decision and promised York, or his son, the succession.(1) In this situation there were two candidates for the throne, both weak, both dependent upon the support of subjects or potential subjects; the noble element in society held the really decisive power in politics, and it was to do so at all times when English kings were weak or their thrones contested.

York's son, Edward IV, may have managed to oust Henry VI from the throne, but, as long as there were forces ready to oppose him in France and Wales, he was in a psychologically weak position and a great noble like the earl of Warwick could constantly argue with him and intimidate him. Such was the case in 1467, according to Giovanni Pietro Panicharolla of Milan, When the king saw Warwick "retiring to his estates to raise troops", he could do very little. He was in a quandary: he had less means of supporting troops than Warwick himself and, when in 1468 he "laid another tax on the lords, barons and towns of the kingdom for the maintenance of forces now being raised against France, which could not otherwise be kept on foot", the Milanese did well to pity him because the slightest tactlessness, no matter how necessary, could lose him the support of his nobles and that could lose him his throne.(2) Edward's

1. Pius II: Coms., 268f.

2. G.P. Panicharolla, SPV I, 12 Sept. 1467; 16 June 1468.

position could have been considered to be even worse because it was quite obvious to Italians that, far from requiring a mass of nobles to rock his throne, he had enough to fear from that epitome of the over-mighty subject, Warwick. What a sight for observers to see the earl in 1470 negotiating to marry his daughter to the prince of Wales, the son of his old enemy, Margaret of Anjou, so that he might "raise once more the party of the king (Henry VI)".(1) In other words, what either side had to do, if it wanted to secure the throne for its candidate, was to curry the favour of one noble. Even after Warwick's death the aristocratic menace remained. In 1471 it was being reported that "the earl of Pembroke with some lords and the help of the Scots was keeping matters unsettled in England."(2) The syndrome was repeating itself in the old pattern: if the king's seat on his throne was the slightest bit insecure, there must be an element of noble opposition.

In days when Edward IV's position was less doubtful, the energy of noble opposition seemed to be directed against the noble clique that represented the ruler rather than against the ruler himself. The Wydeville-Grey faction in Edward IV's reign was considered parvenu, but it did have the king's backing. Mancini said that it was "hated by the people and envied by the nobles, especially after Clarence's death", when its influence was unrestrained.(3) On Edward IV's death, the queen's relatives became the noble opposition to the ruler, this time in the guise of the protector, the duke of Gloucester. Since they were openly "afraid of his autocratic power", they "agreed not to let Richard have sole power but that he should preside over a board of officials in government."

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1. Sforza de Bettini, SPM, 2 June 1470.

2. Ibid., 6 Aug. 1471.

3. Mancini, 83.

It was hoped that the council would be "so powerful that it could override the king's uncle, if necessary." Mancini's account of how Gloucester gained the throne for himself dwelt much on his having secured the persons of his royal nephews and on his attempts to propagandise for popular support, but it in no way ignored how he first systematically destroyed opposition from the nobles, represented by the queen's faction.(1) It was the nobles, Mancini said, who, realising that Richard had out-maneuvred his opposition and put himself in such a strong position, first "went to...(him) at his mother's house to swear allegiance to him."(2)

Although Italians did not specifically say so, it was the measure of Richard III's eventual failure that he was not able to control the political activities of the nobles at a time of crisis. What Italians did see was how Henry VII learned the lesson of his rival's downfall. By 1497 the Milanese ambassador in London, Raimondo de Soncino, was able to say about Henry: "The nobles either fear him or bear him an extraordinary affection and not a man of any consideration joins the duke of York (Perkin Warbeck) and the state of the realm is in the hands of the nobles and not the people."(3) This last general statement certainly had a ring of truth about it: Perkin had made very little headway in England; he had received minimal noble support. The Cornish uprising had achieved nothing with a mere blacksmith as a leader.(4) The support of Lord Audley was deemed insignificant beside the nobles' overwhelming support for Henry VII. One has to turn again to the Trevisan Relation to find some reason. "In former times the titled

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1. Mancini, 87, 91, 103-113.

2. Ibid., 119.

3. Raimondo de Soncino, SPM, 16 Sept. 1497.

4. Ibid., SPV I, 8 Sept. 1497.

nobility...kept a very great retinue in their houses; and in this manner they made themselves a multitude of retainers and followers with whom they afterwards molested the court and their own countries, and in the end themselves, for at last they were all beheaded. Of these lords, who are called knights, there were very few left, and those diminished daily." In other words, the noble caste had become weak through its own activities. Yet, it was evident that King Henry had not been inactive because, instead of depending upon noble support, he had now "appointed certain military services to be performed by some of his own dependents and familiars, whom he knew could be trusted on any urgent occasion." Besides being cheaper, this method of supporting the throne eliminated absolute dependence upon nobility which Henry VII was clearly refusing to replenish. The Relation leaves one with the impression of a depressed, demoralised caste that had behind it enormous, but unproductive possessions: "all the lands of the nobility...were not in cultivation, for a great portion lay barren and waste." (1) The essence of Trevisan's view was that the nobility thrived on political activity and war and, when this was denied them, an overall lethargy set in among the remnants. Remnants indeed, because, according to the Relation's account, the revenues of many great peerages now came into the Crown's coffers, the duchies of Lancaster, York, Clarence, Somerset, Gloucester and Bedford, with "several marquisesates and earldoms, and the fees of many gentlemen had fallen to the Crown", by right of office or forfeiture. (2) Moreover, it was well enough known that Henry VII took care not to let any of these incomes out of his hands by creating more leading peers outside the royal family. Vincenzo

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1. Trevisan, 39.

2. Ibid., 49.

Quirini soon afterwards commented on the state of the nobles under Henry VII and, with his genius for adding up other people's figures, calculated that there were only 19 secular lords in the land and only two worth mentioning by name, the dukes of Norfolk and Northumberland.(1)

Yet, thirteen years later in 1519, when Giustinian glanced at the Lords Temporal of England in his report to the Venetian senate, the picture with three dukes, one marquis and twelve earls showed no numerical improvement. However, there was much more of an atmosphere of political tension: the three dukes, Buckingham, Norfolk and Suffolk, were all represented as having eventual designs on the throne.(2) In 1531 when Lodovico Falier made his report on England, he took a retrospective look at the nobility and decided that the only reason why Henry VII had been able to reign quietly was because he had executed many lords. It was a sweeping statement, but it did explain the depleted state of the nobility's ranks. Of the three dukes, whom he now saw, Richmond, Norfolk and Suffolk, a new name had replaced Buckingham's: he had been executed allegedly for dreaming about the throne; his replacement, Richmond, was very young and debarred from dreaming by the bar sinister; Suffolk was the parvenu, who reassuringly seemed more interested in amusing himself than in taking his seat on the Privy Council; Norfolk alone was of considerable mental presence, but, since Wolsey's downfall, the king had apparently been compromising his personal ambition by letting the burdens of state fall on his shoulders.(3) The only other significant nobles, creations of Henry VIII's hand, were two earls and a marquis, whom Henry had elevated in 1525 because they

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1. Quirini, p.20.

2. S. Giustinian in RB II, p.316.

3. Falier, 8, 13-14.

were his kinsmen.(1) In 1531 Falier made a point of mentioning the the marquis of Exeter because at the time doubts were being cast on the Princess Mary's legitimacy, so that he, "being descended from the sister of his Majesty's mother,...was next in succession to the Crown."(2)

However, the king's divorce, the very thing that gave Exeter this unique position, led on to such upheavals in the English way of life and, within the noble caste, caused movements that were considerably more erratic than in times past. By repudiating Catherine of Aragon, Henry VIII logically deprived himself of the one heir that he had, Mary. The Boleyn marriage had virtually recreated the pre-divorce status quo by producing Princess Elizabeth. The Seymour marriage brought the longed for son, but, by this time, Henry VIII was middle aged. The vicissitudes of life and kingship might have borne him off at any moment and left a situation potentially as dangerous as the one the child king Edward V had encountered or, more recently, one such as his nephew James V of Scots had grown up in. The nobility was the chief hazard. In 1516, had it not been the nobles in general and the duke of Albany in particular, who had seized the infant James and kept him virtually under constraint while they took over the government of the realm from the appointed regent?(3) That was Giustinian's picture. Was a minority not the time most "liable to civil discord, by reason of the power and private feuds of the nobility? That was the view Daniele Barbaro expressed in 1551, as he looked back to the troubles during the early part of the minority of Mary, queen of Scots.(4) Henry VIII

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1. Lorenzo Orio (San.39), SPV III, 29 June 1525.
  2. Falier, 15.
  3. S. Giustinian, in RB, 6 Feb.1516.
  4. D. Barbaro, SPV V, p.359, s.m. May 1551.



had witnessed both periods; indeed, he was seen to have been active in fomenting some of the discords in Scotland. Consequently, his problem between Prince Edward's birth in 1537 and his own death in 1547 seemed to have been to avoid a comparable situation in his son's reign, perhaps a minority at first. A bevy of nobles could be seen with strong blood links with the king. They were all outwardly compromised by the break with Rome, but Henry apparently was well enough aware that the spirit and political ambition were equally capable of producing the right excuse for rebellion.

Looking back to Henry's reign, Giacomo Soranzo saw clearly how "the marquis of Exeter had been beheaded on a charge of having had an understanding with Cardinal Pole" and indeed how his son had been "put in the Tower, where he remained for 15 years."<sup>(1)</sup> Exeter was not the last noble to fall for being near the throne and too near the Roman faith. A list of their deaths reached Italy, right down to that of the aged countess of Salisbury, executed in 1541.<sup>(2)</sup> Barbaro, again in 1551, reflected in retrospect on what could happen on the succession of a king, even when he had the apparently unanimous backing of parliament and the blessing of the Church. The king might well "have to quell an insurrection on the part of the nobility, should they consider themselves in any way wronged, as they considered themselves no less noble than their Sovereign."<sup>(3)</sup> What Barbaro must have been turning over in his mind were the early examples of disputed English kingship. Henry VI, Edward IV, even Edward V, Richard III and Henry VII all had noble opposition, but since then, the lesson learned and potential noble rebels taken care of, Henry VIII had only had to deal with whispers. His son was

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1. G. Soranzo, SPV V, p.539, 18 Aug. 1554.

2. F. Contarini, Venetian ambassador to the emperor, SPV V, 22 June 1541.

3. D. Barbaro, SPV V, p.338.

being dominated by noble factions, but not opposed by them. Barbaro's opinion could be interpreted as, at the one time, defining the political potential of the nobility and also explaining Henry VIII's determination to curb it in his declining years.

Such was the factual side of the coin: Henry VIII was trying to remove the source of noble sedition during his dynasty's weak or transitional periods. Unfortunately, Bandello, with a novelist's platform, insisted more than once upon describing what he saw as Thomas Cromwell's bid to exterminate the nobility of the island by "daily putting some nobleman or other to a cruel death", because of personal jealousy, and only lightly touched upon the consequences of Henry VIII's anger over a widespread refusal "to consent to his pleasure" regarding religion, with the result that "many gentlemen and barons were put to death."<sup>(1)</sup> When Cromwell died, logically according to Bandello, the nobility of England must have felt reprieved, but evidently their persecution continued: new waves of executions of nobles followed Cromwell's. The blame had to be ascribed to Henry VIII, but no really cogent reason could be discerned. It was "without compassion and without cause (that Henry) wasted the most part of the nobility of the island." Therefore, at the end of the day, the picture that many an Italian had of the English nobility could have been that of an impotent caste at its nadir because of the harryings and assaults of a senselessly tyrannous king. The break with Rome had only had a catalytic effect upon the innately violent nature of Henry VIII, the typical English king.<sup>(2)</sup>

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On the other hand, if Bandello saw the destruction of those

1. Bandello II, Nov.34.

2. Ibid., II, prologue to Nov.37.

too well-born, too near the throne, or too attached to the faith of their fathers, Bernardo Segni, admittedly perhaps a less influential writer, saw the Reformation process in England, the dissolution of the monasteries in particular, as giving an infusion of life blood to some of the noble caste, because, when Henry VIII dissolved the religious orders, "which had in the island in great plenty very rich abbeys, and took all of their incomes, he then distributed them to private persons among the leading gentlemen of the place." (1) This did imply that the upper class of England was receiving an even greater share of England's landed wealth, which might have appeared to retain its peculiar characteristic of being the substance of power. With the church much reduced as a land-owning rival, the noble class, still perhaps few in number, was being put even further beyond the reach of the other, less well-born classes in England, while at the same time being politically compromised by their complicity in the actions of the Crown. Modulations in the power and capabilities of the monarch alone affected them and did so despite their wealth and potential power. Italians took a one-sided look at the situation in English society. The actions of the royal clique alone seemed to be able to cause repercussions through that society's received ranks.

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1. B. Segni: II, vi, 22.

## CHAPTER II.

### Geographic and Economic Factors.

#### 1. Natural Riches.

Italy from Rome northwards, where most Renaissance writers were to be found, was very largely urban-minded. Life was centred on commerce and industry, perhaps at the expense of agrarian life in the contadi of the city-states. Hence one finds in the views of Italian writers on the economic and geographic facets of Britain a certain amount of subjective interest in their financial aspects and a deal of comparative objectivity about the decidedly agrarian fundamental basis of the economy. It was in the long run the natural richness or poverty of the various parts of the British country-side that told Italians much about the political, social and mercantile life of the island's nations. The riches that flowed from the land made Britain, England in particular, what it was, an apparently strong country.

On the other hand, it was just as evident to Italians that the British individual made of the richness of nature just as much as his own natural characteristics allowed. Land was seen as being absolutely essential as a prerequisite for nobility. Could it not have been expected that people would buy up large tracts of land or otherwise accumulate it under one family simply in order to achieve social status, without much regard for the land as an exploitable commercial asset? The nobility, according to Polydore Vergil, could let their passion for hunting over-rule economic considerations. The fact was that England was, in any case, often more inclined to use land for live-stock, not always of a very profitable kind: "for almost everywhere a man might see closures and parks pale and enclosed, fraught with such venery, which, as they pay much attention to hunting, so the nobility delighted much in it and practiced it."

The idea of large natural tracts of land or simple fields being reserved as game-preserves for the upper section of society was not new to Italians and certainly not to English people, but a man like Vergil was in a much better position to exclaim about a whole third of England's "marvellously fruitful" terrain being left unmanured and fallow for pasture.(1) This was interpreted as a sign of indolence on the part of the nobles, but it was realised that enterprising English land-owners saw in sheep-farming a more profitable way of using farm-land. Nevertheless, Vergil could see no excuse for the laziness that led to great undercultivation in the peripheral regions of the British world. In Wales "the fields of the country were far the most barren, yet so much the less fruitful in that they lacked husbanding and tilling". The natives made do with what came easily to hand. Animal products and by-products were enough to keep them alive. Theirs was a subsistence economy; there was no suggestion that the Welsh ever thought to exploit their natural resources more fully in order to give them surplus wealth. (2). In Paolo Giovio's estimation, the Irish character went even worse with commercial application. In "fertility of fields and fruitfulness of sheep" Ireland apparently out-did England. "The weather was clement and the air serene" but "the people were uncultivated and lax" to such an extent that they "fled all sweated work and were content with sheep, milk, cheese, honey" and the like. Giovio was not understating the matter when he concluded that "they did not envy Ceres." (3) It is this sort of evidence that one must take into account before examining Italian observations on areas where much greater exploitation of British land took place, although

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1. P. Vergil: AH(ET) paraphrase p.5.

2. Ibid., p.13.

3. Giovio: Descr., 34.

usually only the richest parts of the country claimed Italian attention. Alone these gained for England in particular a reputation in Italy for being an extremely rich country. The important thing in Italian eyes was how these natural riches were exploited and, even more so, what effect they had upon the social and political life of England, and upon her commercial contacts overseas. This, however, did not prevent many Italian writers from being intensely interested simply in the natural appearance of the country. The Trevisan Relation and Giovio's Descriptio Britanniae, Scotiae, Hiberniae et Orchadum were largely concerned with simple descriptions of the land; the ambassadorial reports of Vincenzo Quirini (1506), Lodovico Falier (1531), Daniele Barbaro (1551) and Giacomo Soranzo (1554) found space to include descriptions of the terrain and natural products of the land; and a host of chroniclers and travellers from Pius II to Mario Savorgnano thought it appropriate to write down their observations or reproduce the notions of other writers from Classical to near contemporary times.

Fourteenth century Italy did not produce any elaborate description of the British islands as such; one has to wait until the beginning of the fifteenth century for even the scantiest and vaguest images of England. Andrea de Reduzzi, about 1428, looked back and saw Henry IV's realm as "great and wide, powerful and divine."<sup>(1)</sup> This says nothing to the scientifically minded but the feeling impressionistically conveyed is one of great natural potency and profound majesty. The same atmosphere was reproduced in the mid fifteenth century by Jacopo di Poggio Bracciolini when he talked of England as "the richest of the islands, which is reputed to be the greatest."<sup>(2)</sup> Again it is vague but it does add to the

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1. A. de Reduzzi: RIS 19, p.792.

2. J. di F. Bracciolini: p.9.



feeling of magnitude and natural richness. In some ways it was taken for granted that England was rich: the fruits of it could be seen in Italians' trade dealings; what engaged the descriptive eye much more were those sterile corners of the British Isles that produced little for the trader. Wales was described in 1461 by Conte Ludovico Dallugo, a Milanese diplomat, as "a country...on the borders of England towards Scotland, a sterile place and but little productive."<sup>(1)</sup> Or, according to Pius II, the Scotland that he had seen was not abounding in obvious natural fertility: "it was a cold country where few things would grow and for the most part had no trees." Although Pius did agree that there were "two Scotlands, one cultivated, the other wooded with open land", the initial image of bare, cold uncultivated expanses was one which he himself must have built up from his observations in the lowlands of Scotland in the coastal area between Edinburgh and Berwick. However, one must remember three things. Pius, Aeneas Sylvius as he was then, visited Scotland during the winter solstice when the land would have been lying uncultivated. The weather at the solstice is usually stormy; hence an obscuring of light could have given the landscape an appearance of grey deadness such that it would have suggested unproductiveness. The trees in lowland Scotland are, probably were then, mainly deciduous so that at the time they would have been practically bare of leaves, thus presenting an appearance of openness, such as one seldom would have found in Italy, where evergreen tree-vegetation presents the eye with the same effect of solidity and colour throughout the year. By contrast, leafless Scotland could have appeared treeless. That was certainly the impression that Pius II was to give to Italians; they were

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1. L. Dallugo, SPM, 30 Aug. 1461.

unlikely rationally to have worked out a contradictory picture for the summer period. But as far as Aeneas Sylvius was concerned, the few signs of natural riches in Scotland confirmed his opinions; none of it came from agriculture: "the common people...stuffed themselves with meat and fish, but ate bread as a luxury." The goods that Scotland exported, "leather, wool, fish and pearls", seemed to bear out his argument. Even when he moved down into the very north of England the picture appeared to be little different. At a farm-house dinner "many relishes and chickens and geese were served, but there was no bread or wine", again this curious non-vegetable diet. However, he himself could not deny that this seemed to be lacking only in the common people's diet because, although when he produced "several loaves of bread and a jug of wine...", they excited the liveliest wonder among the barbarians, who had never seen wine or white bread", what made Aeneas Sylvius's picture less black was his explanation that he had procured the bread and wine from a monastery, undoubtedly one of the border abbeys of Scotland, because he had just left the country.<sup>(1)</sup> The wine more than likely had been imported, but did that not suggest a certain degree of riches in some quarters of society? Was the cereal base of the bread imported or just scarcer than in Italy? Probably the grain was home-grown but scarce. Certainly Italian readers could not have been sure but, if they cared to take a second glance, they might have not gone away with quite such a bleak picture of Scotland and the extreme north of England as Pius painted on the surface.

One can tell just how much Italians absorbed of Pius II's observations by the amount of use they made of them. The rather

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1. Pius II: Coms., pp.18-19.

plagiaristic Marc Antonio Sabellico about 1504 took from him the idea that the Scots burned a certain stone which "was of sulphurous material or certainly fatty" because, he concluded, "wood was dear in that region." (1) Just as eclectic was his picture of England with its peaceful fields in which abundant herds and flocks of sheep wandered about unharmed without a watchman and unmolested by wolves; England with its deposits of gold and silver, lead and copper, its pearls and agate stones, and its beer, a notable substitute for wine (2): for by this time the Trevisan Relation, written about 1497, had made its impression upon Venetians and probably upon other Italians. It contained easily the most comprehensive account of Britain and its natural products since the fall of the Roman Empire and indeed, as the writer acknowledged, he did not hesitate to make use of or quote for the sake of comparisons the writings of Strabo, Caesar, Tacitus and even Bede. Nevertheless, his own observations were original enough and very picturesque. The Trevisan account of England bears a basic resemblance to Pius II's Scotland: "agriculture was not practiced in this island beyond what was required for the consumption of the people; because were they to have ploughed and sown all the land that was capable of cultivation, they might have sold a quantity of grain to the surrounding countries." However, as the writer put it, "this negligence was...atoned for by an immense profusion of every comestible animal, such as stags, goats, fallow deer, hares, rabbits, pigs and an infinity of oxen...but above all...an enormous number of sheep which yielded...quantities of wool of the best quality." A lack of wolves let flocks graze in comparative safety. Common fowls and hosts of wild ones abounded and were eaten by the inhabitants. Even swans

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1. Sabellico X, Lib.v, p.943; and Pius II: De Europa Ch.46, p.443.

2. Sabellico X, Lib.v, p.943.

were food. The writer enthused that it was "truly a beautiful thing to behold one or two thousand tame swans upon the river Thames", but, like every other animal, they were regarded by the English as the fruits of nature and therefore there to be eaten "like ducks and geese". Everything that was a produce of nature itself was held in high estimation. "A quantity of iron and silver and an infinity of tin and lead...of the purest quality" were as much prized as the "many small pearls" that were to be picked out of English mussels. Yet this picture is so unbalanced that one receives the impression that the English preferred to live on the natural pickings of the land rather than concentrate upon the fruits of land-cultivation.(1)

In 1531 Lodovico Falier delivered his report on England. His England was a pleasant place: "the island was not mountainous, rather flat and only girded by many hills which yielded not fruit but lead, tin, silver, gold and other metals in quantity: and were they to have smelted the minerals more carefully the produce would have been greater." The soil was "sufficently cultivated for their maintenance with wheat, barley and spelt; the rest was laid out in very beautiful meadows and most profitable pastures for cattle and innumerable flocks of sheep which remained the whole year in the open air; so that the English were extremely well supplied with the best wool, which they converted into every sort of superfine cloth; and the amount of their hides was incredible."(2) Falier's picture shows just one logical stage beyond the Trevisan one: it moves into the realm of commercial production. The hides, the development of the cloth industry and his description of the English, lacking the vine and olive but producing a "malt liquor, made with crab-apples

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1. Trevisan, 10-11.

2. Falier, 12.

and hops...a drink as intoxicating as the strongest wine," they all suggest a more contrived economic set-up, but there still remains the feeling that the English only did these things because they came easily to hand. If the wool-bearing sheep could be left outside by themselves, without even requiring to be brought indoors for the winter, the cattle, producing hides, must have been even less trouble to keep; hops and crab-apples are sturdy enough fruits of the land. The minerals seemed to fall out of the hills into the clumsy hands of English smelters. Falier's whole idea of England's natural resources suggests that the realm was rich enough in spite of its lack-a-daisical attitude towards their commercial exploitation. Only the cloth industry seemed to flourish under unusually intensive care. The rest of English needs appeared to have been met by a spilling over of the natural products of the earth.

As far as Vergil's concept of England was concerned, it only existed for him south of the Humber: "on the other side it somewhat too abounded with mountains." The south had the right balance: "for, notwithstanding to the beholder afar off it appeared very flat and plane, nevertheless it had many hills, and such as for the most part were devoid of trees, with most delectable valleys." He went on to describe the great rivers of the land. Water was abundant; so were the fruits of the land. "The ground was marvellously fruitful and abundantly replenished with cattle, whereby it came to pass that of Englishmen more were graziers and masters of cattle than husbandmen or labourers in tilling of the field."<sup>(1)</sup> Thus the landscape that greeted the eyes of Vergil's public in 1534 was again rather idyllic. He gave the perfect excuse why Englishmen should not be inclined towards intensive agriculture: the weather. They

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1. Vergil: AH(ET), 4-5.

did not plant vines "for the grape seldom came to ripeness except a hot summer ensued." The cereals that they planted "shot up soon, but nothing so soon ripened; the abundance of moisture both in the earth and weather was cause of them both." There were natural compensations: "the pleasant woods were well replenished with apples and acorns or mast; they had plenty of delicious rivers, pleasantly watering their fields...There were many hills clean void of trees and springs, bringing forth thin short grass, yet such as exceeding well fed their sheep, about which in white flocks they wandered day and night." Vergil was not sure why these sheep should "bear the most soft and finest fleeces": it could have been the "mildness of the air or the goodness of the ground."<sup>(1)</sup> Either reflected well upon England's natural endowments and amply compensated for agricultural difficulties. However, Vergil's view of the English sheep's life was quite novel, because it was probably based on circumstantial observations. Unlike Falier's flocks, wandering about unattended, those that Vergil saw were well guarded by shepherds lest they should drink water because it was harmful for their fleeces. In fact, "these sheep received no drink beside the dew of the air." It was this that caused them to produce that "golden fleece wherein the chief riches of the people consisted." (2) Also, in much the same way as Trevisan, Vergil dwelt upon the abundance of birds and fishes to be found and eaten in England, but taking an equal place with English sheep in his estimation were "the oxen and wethers..., beastes as it were of nature, ordained for feasting, whose flesh almost in no place was of more pleasant taste." Such was its remarkable quality, despite the oxen's long working

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1. Ibid., 20.

2. Ibid., 21.



lives and a consequent tendency towards toughness, that "the chief food of the Englishman consisted in flesh." (1) Vergil's description of England was fair; there were a few inaccuracies: for example, north of the Humber was not wholly mountainous but had some of England's richest land; and his ideas on sheep-rearing scarcely accord with nature. However, when one looks at the observations of one of his contemporaries, Mario Savorgnano, the Venetian traveller, one realises just how superficially the Italian eye could glance at England even in 1531. He took a quick tour around the London area and felt justified in announcing that "this country was very beautiful and most fertile of everything except wine. The greater part of the island was not much peopled, but laid out in parks, from which the king and nobility derived great pleasure." (2) Such was England in his eyes, substanceless or unbalanced in its detail. Yet the impression that it could have made upon Italian minds might have been out of all proportion to its worth.

However, if Savorgnano can be accused of having been shallow, Paolo Giovio must be called the incomparable eclectic, because his descriptions of Britain, a place not visited by him, acknowledged a dependence upon the histories of Hector Boece and plainly show possible roots in the Trevisan Relation and even Polydore Vergil. For England he recreated visions of liberal rivers, flowing valleys, forests, trees crowned with green, gentle hills, mountains without any harshness, meadows perpetually green, innumerable flocks grazing in the hills even by night in the greatest security. (3) This was the England of the end of Henry VIII's reign; Giovio was unfashionably bent on pleasing the king, but there is no reason to suppose

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1. Ibid., 22-3.

2. M. Savorgnano, SPV IV, 25 Aug. 1531.

3. Giovio: Descr., 14-15.

that he thought England was any different from the idealised, gilded image that he put together. His description of the natural assets of Scotland was more realistic: it was after all largely based on Boece. He saw the area between Haddington and Stirling as containing "the most rich and cultivated land in Scotland", although England was much richer. There was no oil or wine produced but a natural supply of minerals, silver, copper, white lead and iron to compensate. Giovio even looked closely enough to notice Scotland's famous agates. Pearls of an extraordinary size were to be found and the ocean gratuitously threw up amber on the shore, an erroneous idea which could have been derived from Diodorus Siculus in the first century B.C.(1) Further north there was the great Caledonian forest, full of birds, wild horses and "bulls with manes like lions", an idea similar to one of Vergil's.(2) However, here he made very little reference to the fruits of agrarian cultivation without giving reasons for this, as he did in the case of Ireland. There the people were lazy and preferred to depend upon the "seas abounding in salmon" and the breeding of horses called hobbies as exportable "gifts for noble women or for use in pontifical ceremonies."(3) If Ireland was uncultivated because of an Irish love of ease, the Hebridean islands were uncultivated because the weather was ill-favoured and the terrain was rocky. Likewise the Orkneys, abundant enough in sheep, rabbits, cranes and even swans, and well supplied with fish from the surrounding seas, were "not too abundant in grain or fruit-bearing trees." The Shetlands for Giovio were in a twilight-zone, half bare and almost wholly uncultivated and unfruitful, at once the victim of the ocean that hemmed them in and at the same time

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1. Diodorus Siculus, 5.23.

2. Giovio: Desc., 32; Vergil: AH(ET), 8.

3. Giovio: Desc., 36-7.

saved by its enormous quantity of fish, especially the herring, which was "turned into a golden yellow colour by smoke and conveyed to our European markets."(1) Giovio did not think of a name for the end-product.

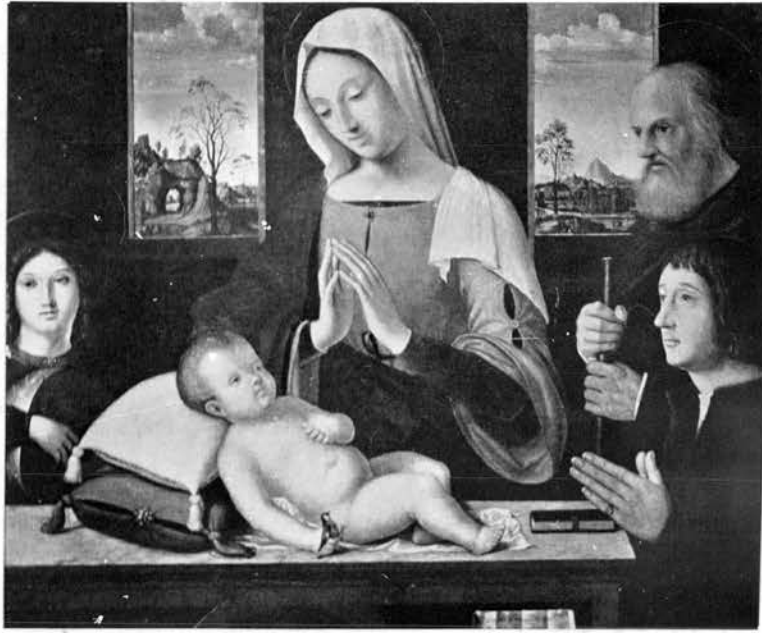
Such was Giovio's idea of Great Britain in the 1540s. What he did was to give perhaps the fullest description of the country, every corner of it, since the time of the Roman occupation, but he added nothing substantially new to existing contemporary writings on the subject. He agreed with his colleagues that, although many parts of Britain abounded in rich natural resources and in the prolific by-products of animal life, there was a feeling that agrarian life was depressed and, certainly in part, unexploited. This was, as it happened, partly the result of the sixteenth century social set-up. However, before one passes from the exposition of Britain's geography one must look at two examples of the British country-side depicted in Italian art. In Siena in the 1500s, Pinturicchio painted his cycle on the life of Aeneas Sylvius Piccolomini and included in it a scene depicting Aeneas at the court of King James I of Scots (Plate 1). The landscape that unfolds itself outside the windows of the palace is broad and rolling. There is no sign of agricultural activity, but on the other hand it is extremely verdant and there is no lack of trees, some of them most elegantly proportioned. It is very unlike Pius II's practically treeless Scottish lowlands. Without the sea-estuary it might well have depicted a Tuscan landscape in late spring, as indeed it probably did. The suggestion is that Pinturicchio, although apparently familiar with Pius II's Commentaries, did not care to follow completely the pictorial outline penned by the pope. Yet, for the

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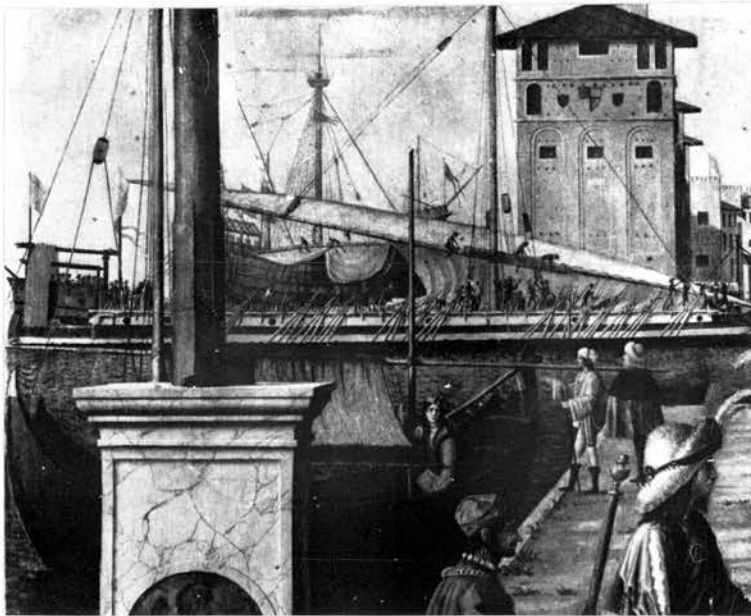
1. Ibid., 39-41.

casual Italian observer Pinturicchio's creation of a 'Scottish' landscape might well have had more impact than Pius II's Latin description. If anything, Pinturicchio anticipated Giovio's glance at an English landscape with its "trees crowned with green." The second picture, the Madonna and Child from the Withypool Triptych, painted by Antonio da Solario in 1514, (Plate 8), shows again through windows two vignette landscapes which, because the picture was commissioned in England, might be supposed to represent English scenes. Both show expansive country-side, punctuated by the occasional soaring, but far from alarming mountains. Gentle rivers water the green landscape, which is sprinkled, admittedly not thickly, with posturing trees, strongly reminiscent of the school of Raphael. This painting too is almost certain to have been idealised by Solario but, on the assumption that painters did use models, animate and inanimate, as they came to hand, one could possibly claim that he was here depicting his concept of the English country-side. The possibilities are that any other Italian seeing it might well have taken it as a piece of semi-factual pictorial geography.

For the well ordered economic state of any country natural riches by themselves, however, are often not enough. Britain was obviously underdeveloped, undevelopable in some respects, and so perhaps more than most was dependent upon economic dealings with other countries to complement with imports the products of the land, part of which were systematically exported to pay for the imports. The striking thing about Italian references to this two way commercial process, in which they themselves were so greatly involved, was that during the early Renaissance period there was a lot of attention paid to British exports and in the first half of the sixteenth century much more paid to the imports that seemed to be



8. Antonio da Solario, 'Madonna, Child and St. Joseph with the Donor',  
from the Withypool Triptych, 1514.



9. Carpaccio, 'The Return of the English Ambassadors', (detail).

required of British, mainly English, society.

In the fourteenth century it was not a subject for much comment but one does come across gobbets of information in, for example, a posthumously published tale by Boccaccio. In this he spoke of a Florentine merchant who had "a fine big shop for cloth near the Piazza di Mercato Nuovo; this company imported into Florence a very great quantity of cloth from Provence, France and England... and the greatest quantity of wool from England." This compelled him to keep factors in various parts of Europe, particularly one in England.(1) Immediately this high-lighted the dual aspect of British exports: manufactured products, especially cloth, were indeed exported but a much greater emphasis was laid upon the export of the raw material, wool. In fact this was well confirmed by Buonaccorso Pitti when he wrote his Cronaca about 1422. Looking back to 1390 he recalled how he had gone to England during a lull in the French wars in order to commission two of his fellow Italians "to buy wool and have it sent to him in Florence." Apparently he was sent his 500 francs worth, a cargo which brought him great profit. (2) But if he profited, it went without saying that his money contributed to a flow of gold into England. However, it is rather notable how the Italian initiative seemed to be largely instrumental in this process. It was as though the gold just fell into England's lap. Certainly in 1430 when Maso degli Albizzi wrote his account of the voyage of the Florentine galleys to England that year, the Florentines were the active traders. They were interested solely in English wool and, briefly mentioning their own export commodities as merchandise, they proceeded to buy and load large quantities of wool onto their

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1. Boccaccio: 'Due Novelle', in the codex of Decameron in 1437 Decameron edition, No.2.
  2. B. Pitti: Diario p.45.



galleys at Southampton. There was mention of other commodities like tin and lead, but on the whole attention was fixed on wool.(1) Wool was high up also on the list of Scotland's exports, as defined by Pius II. The country might have had a barren appearance but still an export business in "leather, wool, fish and pearls", again mainly raw commodities, was carried out, mostly with the Low Countries. On the other hand, what their country did not produce the Scots did without and hence, for example, "the common people... would eat bread as a luxury", or they would import. Wine in fact was the only import that Pius mentioned and he himself was able to tell just how unfamiliar it was to some of the inhabitants in the northern section of Britain.(2)

But the British import did not long engage the Italian eye. There was much less note made of Italian exports to England, such non-enduring commodities as,

"All spicerye and other grocers ware

"Wyth swete wyne, all manere of chaffare,

"Apes and japes and marmusettes taylede,"

and the like that the Libelle of Englyshe Polycye complained about from the other side of the fence.(3) Italians, when they wanted, could send to England for luxury wares, though scarcely classified as exports would have been the musicians and singers for whom the duke of Milan in 1471 sent to England with great promises of reward if they would come to adorn his ducal chapel (4), but his instructions to a counsellor on the point of setting out for England certainly dealt with that. He was also "to obtain some fine English

1. Maso degli Albizzi: 'Diary' pp. 256, 267, 278-9.

2. Pius II: Coms. p.19.

3. The Libelle of Englyshe Polycye 11. 344-51.

4. Galeazzo Maria Sforza of Milan to Edward IV, SPM, 15 Oct.1471.

hackneys of those called hobbies for the use of himself and the duchess, as well as some greyhounds for his hunting." The duke understood that in England, in rivalry with Ireland, "each of these things was plentiful and of great excellence." (1) As it happened, by 1476 one of the dogs sent to Milan had died and the duke, much grieved, did not think twice about asking Edward IV to send him "another dog of the same race." (2) This, however, did not imply that the Milanese were interested only in England's luxury livestock. When about 1471 a dispute arose concerning the non-payment of Lucia Visconti's dowry to the heirs of her husband, Edmund Holland, earl of Kent, who had died in 1408, the trade of Milanese merchants in London was inhibited. It was a temporary matter but it did bring to the surface accepted facts about Anglo-Milanese trade. The Milanese and their duke were badly hit by this, they admitted, but it also "hurt the English themselves, as when (the Milanese) traded with them...the English reaped great advantages, because the principal export from England was wool, which in large part was consumed at Milan, and their principal import was woad", grown in Lombardy. (3) Again the one English export overwhelmingly obvious to Italians was raw wool. But if one considers the whole passage, especially alongside a morsel of news from Pietro Aliprando in 1472 to the effect that Danish ships with Babylonian retribution had "taken among others a ship with English cloth worth 20,000 nobles" (4), it becomes obvious that Italians could see well enough that the English were also a cloth-manufacturing nation and not just basic producers of wool: they were hardly likely to have

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1. Ducal instructions to F. Galvatico, SPM, 5 Jan. 1471.

2. G.M. Sforza, SPM, 21 Dec. 1476.

3. Petition of Milanese merchants to G.M. Sforza, SPM, c. 5 Jan. 1471.

4. Pietro Aliprando, SPM, 25 Nov. 1472, p.166-7.

imported woad from Milan if they had not been active in cloth making. Poggio Bracciolini's tale about an English fuller, prosperous enough to have a whole household of servants and assistants, had already borne this out.(1) However, if one assumes that the amount of English cloth imported by Boccaccio's cloth-merchant was outweighed by that from other countries, the implication of this could have been that cloth was indeed being exported from England but mainly to nations on the fringes of the North Sea, within reach of Danish ships. Such is the balance of opinion to be gleaned from Italian sources, although it was apparently true that English cloth for a long time was a commodity which claimed a certain amount of Italian interest.(2)

Nevertheless, as the fifteenth century waned there was no hint in Italian literature that much interest was shown in any English export other than wool. At the end of Edward IV's reign, Piovano Arlotto came to London with the Florentine galleys. He thought it important enough "to stay for some months for the purchase of wool and galleys (sic)."(3) It was the sort of thing that made Guicciardini look back from the beginning of the sixteenth century and recall how in 1426 the Florentines, negotiating peace with Milan, were anxious more than anything else to see the end of restrictions on their trade with England and Flanders.(4) Both of these states had vital contributions to make to the Florentine's successful manufacturing of fine cloth; there could have been little doubt about Florentine interest in them.

What the Trevisan Relation did was to confirm the Italian

1. Poggio Bracciolini: Lib. Facet, No. 238.

2. Cf. E. Lipson: The Economic History of England I, p.541.

3. Piovanno Arlotto; No.5.

4. Guicciardini: Le Cose Fiorentine, Bk.III, p.197.

fixed notion that the English were not on their toes as far as the export business was concerned. They could have concentrated on more than wool marketing. The Relation dwelt again on agricultural undercultivation. If the English were "to plough and sow all the land that was capable of cultivation, they might sell a quantity of grain to the surrounding countries." (1) However, according to Trevisan, the English authorities were well aware of a tendency on the part of the people not to exploit the resources of nature to the full. At the first glance at the extraction of a "duty on wools, which were carried into Europe by sea, and (thereby) paid the third of their value to the king", it might have seemed that there was a move afoot to inhibit wool exporting. Indeed, it was designed "to prevent the raw material from being carried out of the country", apparently in order "to encourage the home manufacturers of cloth." (2) This was the Italian view about the beginning of the sixteenth century. But how accurate was it? Undoubtedly there was an official English policy of encouraging cloth-making at home rather than letting the raw material filter away for other nations to process and profit from. Yet, the Italian view was rather lopsided. There was a flourishing cloth business in England but, in as much as it apparently did not compete with the Italians, expert cloth-makers themselves, it did not always impress itself upon their attention. They had to wait for more than half a century until Sebastiano Erizzio published a fictional tale about a Fleming "who used to pursue his cloth business in England." He would buy cloth in London and carefully take it back to sell in Flanders (3) There it was, rather late in the day, written evidence of the

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1. Trevisan, 10.

2. Ibid., 50.

3. S. Erizzo, Day II, Tale 9.

exportation of English cloth to the Low Countries, but again, it must be noted, there was no doubt about who was the active agent in the process, a non-English entrepreneur.

However, the sixteenth century was much more of a time for imports into England. The English themselves were aware of this. One of the reasons why Sebastiano Giustinian was sent to England in 1515 as Venetian ambassador was to iron out difficulties arising from the Venetian importation of wines from Candia into England. An English import duty had remained on them for about thirty years but the Venetian doge seemed eager to facilitate a greater flow of wine into England by reducing its price, in the hope that the English government would modify its tariff duties. The matter engaged both Giustinian's and Wolsey's attention for some time.(1) In 1517 when news of the coming of a fleet of Venetian merchant galleys reached Henry VIII's ears, the attitude was quite different. The king, it was reported, "longed for their coming...and said he should purchase many articles of luxury, usually brought by the said galleys."(2) However, when they arrived there was some considerable disappointment: the cargo was neither voluminous enough to satisfy the English nor worth enough to pay for the homeward voyage. One apparent reason was the wars that had prevented the Venetian galleys from making the trip for the past nine years. In the meantime, increased Portuguese competition in the spice trade had spoiled at least one market, "because the spices were not saleable here at the same price as formerly."(3) The point about this was not that England provided no market for spices but that she was so well known as an importer of spices that the traders of Europe were

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1. S. Giustinian in RB, 15 June 1515, Vol.I, p.98 et passim.

2. Ibid., 10 Dec. 1517.

3. Ibid., 21 June 1518.

competing for her custom. The ironical thing about international trading in Henry VIII's time was the king's attitude. He would willingly lend money to Florentine merchants "in order that they might extend their trade." It gained him interest and benefited the English.(1) Undoubtedly this would have facilitated the flow of English exports but it was a move scarcely calculated to encourage Englishmen to be any more active on this process. This in some ways was better than nothing: for, as Vergil explained, although the wool trade brought "a great plenty of gold and silver into the realm", it remained there permanently "because all men were forbidden to carry it into any other land." In the sixteenth century this would not have been counted as a sign of national economic distress. Indeed, Vergil could see the money circulating in internal trade movements and doing much to enrich the individual Englishman.(2)

However, England's was a precarious prosperity simply because of the undercultivation of the land and the concentration upon wool, traditionally so eagerly sought by foreign merchants. In November 1520 Antonio Surian wrote that "in England there was so great a scarcity of grain" that prices had increased five-fold.(3) In January 1522 he was telling how there was "a very great scarcity of bread and wine, which cost double the usual price, where any could be obtained."(4) In October 1527 there was an even worse situation. Wheat was scarce in England and prices were extremely inflated, an occurrence which, according to Marc Antonio Venier, was "rare...compared with the usual plenty." Heavy rains in May had apparently been the cause and before long "half the flour being eaten was bean flour", something

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1. Ibid., 'Report', in RB II, p.317, 10 Oct.1519.

2. Vergil: AH(ET), 21.

3. Antonio Surian, Venetian ambassador in England, SPV III, 28 Nov.1520.

3. Surian, SPV III, 27 Jan.1522.



that did not appeal to the people. By the end of November there was reported to be "a great scarcity of everything in England, most especially of bread" and nothing could be done to alleviate this because the seas were frozen. It was in fact not until February 1528 that many ships with wheat arrived from Flanders and none too soon because "the people would otherwise have died of hunger." (1) In that winter any Italian might have asked what had become of Trevisan's England where some additional attention to agriculture could have made it one of Europe's grain exporters. Now it took but one meteorological quirk in May for there to be a grain shortage from October through the whole winter, a shortage which caused the people much financial and physical hardship. Henry VIII's England was beginning to present the picture of a nation incapable of a balanced cultivation of its natural resources and heavily dependent in time of stress upon the import of even the most basic commodities necessary for life. What Italians imagined would have been the consequences of the papal bull which in 1535 put trade with England under interdict one cannot tell but, once the Venetian merchants had been given time to wind up their affairs in the country (2), they might have visualised perhaps a little more stagnation in relations with the rest of Europe, perhaps a greater attention to the agrarian potential that seemed to be much more obvious to Italian observers than to the English themselves.

Italians were well able to comment on this side of English economics: they were well enough involved in it. What concerned them somewhat less were the political and social consequences of this economic structure, so evidently based on the bounty of the land.

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1. M.A. Venier, Venetian ambassador in England, (San.46),  
SPV III & IV, 20 Oct., 27 Nov. 1527; 9 Feb. 1528.

2. Lorenzo Bragadino, Venetian ambassador in Rome, SPV V, 7 Nov. 1535.

In the fourteenth century the wool trade very noticeably gave immense support to England's political standing in Europe. To Giovanni Villani the only reason why Edward III, starting from 1337, could muster such sure support from the princes of the Low Countries and the Empire was his ambassador's ability "to promise for the king both pledges and money to the Germans and other allies." When these arrived as promised, the pledges were 12,000 sacks of wool, along with the money amounting to "about 600,000 gold florins or more." (1) It is small wonder that in October 1338 the Germans were able to go off "all rich from the pledges received from the king of England and their robbery of the French." (2) And that for the time being saw the end of Italians' high regard for the political influence of English riches: they easily became over-strained.

The first to feel the back-lash were the Italians themselves. They made much of the bankruptcy brought on the London branches of the Florentine banking houses of Bardi and Peruzzi "through whose hands had come all the income, wool and affairs of the king of England", they in return having furnished him with money for expenses and pledges to such an extent that Edward III had far overstepped his income. Villani saw this as a result of his fellow Florentines' "great folly and greed for profit". Moreover, since their creditors throughout Europe also stood to lose much, they were not the only ones who were abruptly taught the lesson of how little English money was available to be spent on political activities. (3) The episode reverberated in Florentine minds for some time afterwards. It could not have failed to have provided the inspiration for one of Boccaccio's tales set in England. This concerned a nameless king of

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1. G. Villani, XI.72.

2. G. Villani, XI.87.

3. *Ibid.*, XI.88. It must, however be pointed out that, contrary to Villani's opinion, Edward III was not primarily responsible for causing the financial crisis experienced by these banking houses in the fourteenth century. Cf. L. Saporì, *La Crisi delle compagnie mercantili dei Bardi e dei Peruzzi* (Florence 1926), pp.vii. et passim.

England's war with his nameless son and with the amount of money that a Florentine family lost because it had "lent out money on harsh terms of interest" for the conducting of the war; but neither the capital nor the interest was repaid to them.(1) Moreover, even in the next century the impression that the Bardi and Peruzzi bankruptcy made on the mind of a man like Leonardo Bruni was such that he gave it a permanent place in the annals of Florence by describing it in detail in his History of the Florentine People(2)

Yet, Boccaccio's and Bruni's references to the incident are so brief that they obscure the real nature of Edward III's misplaced dependence upon his realm's natural riches. In his usual black and white fashion Villani produced a picture much more accurate, simply because it was better balanced. By 1340 Edward III's war funds had apparently run out and his allies were beginning to disappear. The cause of this was explained when Edward returned to England and "immediately imprisoned his treasurers and officials who had not at all well furnished him with money and stole from him much money." (3) It was a comprehensible enough excuse: the dishonest officials caused the trouble; the king's finances were not really insecure. It may well have reassured some of Villani's readers. However, thereafter Edward's ability to purchase support was usually seen to be less than the French kings'. The duke of Brabant had been bought away from Edward's and onto the French side in 1340 (4) and the count of Flanders was soon seen to be in the pocket of Philip VI.(5) Moreover, the situation did not improve in later years. Edward III's 1359 campaign was indecisive and protracted and, as winter approached, Villani recorded how "difficult it was and

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1. G. Boccaccio: Decameron, II, 3.

2. L. Bruni: hist. Flor. Pop., RNLISS 19/3, p.171.

3. G. Villani, XI. 112.

4. Ibid., XI. 112.

5. Ibid., XII. 87.

damaging to the realm to keep such a large army together."(1)

In the following year it must have been with little surprise that the Italians learned how Edward III had agreed to quit Burgundian lands and to concentrate on reducing the Île de France in return for a large money payment from the duke of Burgundy.(2) It was only in later years that the Italian concept of undercultivation of land and overdependence upon the wool trade in England could have rationalised this Italian doubt about the ability of English resources to resist great stress.

The curious thing is that after Edward III's time the question of the dependence of English politics on natural riches was not given much attention by Italian writers. For example, Frulovisi's otherwise full life of Henry V scarcely touched upon the finances necessary for the king's French campaigns. In fact he apparently had not had much difficulty in tapping the resources of his realm; no financial stress had shown itself until his son's reign(3), but it was not a thing that caused any kind of Italian comment. However, the war efforts in France and at home, Italians might well have imagined, must have taken their toll upon the financial strength of the country. One might well ask: when in 1464 the English council met to "discuss the affair of the new coinage, which the king was having made, one fourth lighter than the old, and wished it to be the same currency as the other", could they and the people who "murmured and were dissatisfied"(4) or indeed any other Italian observer have been honestly surprised? Certainly at this time and in the following decade Italians seemed to have been acutely aware

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1. M. Villani, IX. 67.

2. *Ibid.*, IX. 84.

3. Cf. discussion of this in E.F.Jacob: *The Fifteenth Century*, p.202-10.

4. News letter from Bruges, *SPV* I, 5 Oct.1464.

of an English feeling that the extraction of money for political purposes was painful and had to justify itself with results. In 1475 when Edward IV wheedled money out of his subjects to conduct a French campaign, which in the event quickly ended with a diplomatic instead of a military triumph, Gian Pietro, a Milanese envoy in France, remarked that "the opinion of intelligent persons was that there would be disturbances in England, the king having exacted great treasure and done nothing." (1) The implication was that the extraction of the money in the first place had been torture enough to make the English people want their military pound of flesh in return.

If in England there was irritation at the spending of money on political ends, in Scotland there was apparently very little money for spending in that way. Hence, one comes across Pius II's statement that the Scots king's daughter was married to the dauphin, the son of Charles VII, without a dowry: "for the Scots were always on his side." (2) Seeing this from one angle, an Italian reader may have deduced that the Scots had no money to spare for political activities and that they knew just how convenient it was to continue in close accord with France. How well this would have fitted into Pius II's picture of a people too poor to support an army for any period of time and poor enough not to think it much of a loss if they abandoned their personal effects and disappeared into the mountains and woods as a form of strategic defence against invading English armies. The unruly terrain of Scotland may not have often afforded them the surplus wealth necessary for aggressive politics but it always provided a natural protection that covered up weaknesses in the official defence system. (3) The impenetrable Scots country-side,

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1. Gian Pietro, SPV I, 22 Oct. 1475.

2. Pius II: De Viris, No. 25.

3. Ibid., No. 32.



as Villani had put it a century before, was the only stop to English arms.(1) When after the battle of Flodden in 1513 there were Italian and English exclamations of surprise because "never within living memory...had the Scots so much wealth in their camp, for they took with them all their vessels of silver and gold"(2), it appears to have been obvious that the Scots had been making such a tremendous effort against the English that wealth in the form of plate had to be brought along to bolster the king's financial position. Nor can this be dismissed as mere deduction because even before the battle the Venetian ambassador in France, Marco Dandolo, had spoken of how James IV himself "to raise an army had disposed of all the plate and gold chains so that he ate off pewter."(3) This might account for the exceptional circumstances of it being amassed together as bullion in his camp.

If at most times the Scots were too poor even to have arms(4), the English in the person of their king, Henry VIII, seemed to have money to spare for political diversions. Henry had apparently been becoming something of an international pawnbroker. When in 1510 Margaret of the Netherlands "came to obtain a loan on her jewels from his Majesty...he refused as he had previously lent her a considerable sum on the armour of the late King Charles."(5) On the principle that money means power, Italians might have imagined that Henry VIII already had Margaret well enough in his political pocket not to have to expend more money. But this was a mere detail as far as the influence that the fruits of England's natural riches had on politics was concerned. A much more direct example was soon to be

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1. G. Villani, XI.38.

2. Sanudo 17, in SPV II, 22 Oct.1513.

3. M. Dandolo, SPV II, 10 Sept.1513.

4. N. di Farvi (San.17) SPV II, 12 Oct.1513.

5. A. Badoer (San.10), SPV II, 1 Apr.1510.



afforded to observers when in 1512, during his preparations for a descent upon France, Henry VIII had salted down 25,000 oxen to provision his army.(1) Although admittedly this did push up the ordinary price of meat, under such special circumstances England was obviously not put completely out of joint by this extraordinary tapping of her live-stock resources. It was after all the one thing in which the country abounded. By 1523 when Henry VIII had largely exhausted the fortune left to him by his avaricious father, he himself turned his thoughts to the lesson taught by his father and, after a census "to find out...what tax each individual should pay", he discovered that "his people were by no means poor." The main reason for his interest in his country's wealth was political: "he anticipated that the Scots and the French would not long remain quiet, (so) he decided to make trial of the generosity and goodwill of his people towards him".(2) Whether this operation worked smoothly or not was immaterial; Polydore Vergil's account left no doubt about the English nation's financial ability to indulge in vigorous political activities.

As in most countries, politics in England were geared to the amount of available riches that came from the land. Yet, to Italians it seemed unusually striking how politics in their turn did so much to hit back at and hamper the source of those riches. From Edward III's taxes on wool no advantage could have come to the wool trade; kings who debased the coinage only earned the people's displeasure; Henry VIII's killing off of thousands of oxen only made meat prices dearer for everyone because supplies were short. The final blow was to be the dissolution of the monasteries. This filled

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1. Sanudo 14, in SPV II, 25 May 1512.

2. Vergil: AH(Hay), p.301.

the king and nobles' pockets and effectively snubbed the pope; there was nothing in Italian writings to suggest that it was anything other than a purely political move. But it did rebound drastically on the productivity of the English land: for "it was not supposed that the plentiful supply of good food could again prevail, owing to the destruction of the monasteries, which from many causes produced this abundance, above all by cultivating much more land than was now under the plough"; there was now no channel for public alms; and, moreover, "the proprietors of the land, finding it more profitable to leave it for pasture, instead of cultivating it, had deprived many of the means of subsistence."<sup>(1)</sup> That was Soranzo's view in 1554, an acute observation of a problem which he had no political reason to obscure or play down. By hitting at the monasteries, Henry VIII had eliminated the country's greatest land cultivator. One wonders if any Italian, glancing from Soranzo's sad picture back to the famines of the 1520s, tried to imagine how the country would survive during severe winters in the future.

Alongside the interaction of politics and England's natural riches lay the precise social consequences of the amount of available riches at any one time. Much evidence of it could be seen in the element of display at court because in extrovert societies people tend to wear their riches, like their hearts, on their sleeves. But to Italians general English prosperity was quite evident in even the most uncontrived ways much further down the social scale. Poggio's fuller had a household of maids and young men working for him, so many in fact that on occasions identities could easily be confused.<sup>(2)</sup> A large household was one sign; manner of living was even more

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1. Soranzo: SPV V, p.552, 18 Aug.1554.

2. Poggio Bracciolini: Lib. Facet., No.238.

indicative of riches accruing from the land. When in 1470 the bishop of Teramo landed in Flanders and was banqueted "so sumptuously that not even in England could more have been possible", such was the plenty(1), this really said much more about the general prosperity of England, even during a time of civil war, than about one Fleming's hospitality. This was the product of the general riches of the people. These Aeneas Sylvius saw in "the golden mausoleum of Thomas of Canterbury, covered with diamonds, pearls and carbuncles, where it was considered sacriligious to offer any mineral less precious than silver."(2) Also great wealth could be seen in the hands of an individual like Cardinal Beaufort, who had become very rich because he had countless sheep from which he sold the wool in such a way that he avoided the expense of using merchants and middle-men.(3) Beaufort was the kind of man who, according to Vespasiano, had such riches that even all his kitchen utensils were of silver.(4)

Naturally fifteenth century Scotland, the land that was too poor to provide a princess's dowry, contrasted markedly with England in the social world. Pius II recalled how "poor and rude" the common people were and how he had seen "the poor, almost naked, begging at the churches" and accepting what seemed to him a strange gift, pieces of coal. Sabellico was impressed enough to think of repeating the story and to stress the nakedness of the beggars.(5) They both thereby emphasised the extremes to which poverty in Scotland could go. However, from the Trevisan Relation it is possible to deduce that there was a certain degree of want also in England. The severest measures were taken against criminals but "there was no country in the world where

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1. Bishop of Teramo, Papal envoy in England, SPV I, 20 Feb. 1461.

2. Pius II: Coms., 17.

3. Pius II: De Viris, No. 32.

4. Vespasiano, 351-2.

5. Pius II: Coms., p. 18; De Europa, CH. 46, p. 443; Sabellico, p. 943.

there were so many thieves and robbers as in England." (1) This may suggest perhaps an element of laziness but certainly also some degree of social dislocation, personal need or an uneven distribution of available money and goods. Certainly the social system was such that riches tended to be channelled into the hands of those with social advantages. Trevisan looked askance at the English system of hereditary primogeniture applied in the inheritance of estates. This obliged monasteries "to assist the Crown...to keep many poor gentlemen, who were left beggars in consequence of the inheritance devolving to the eldest son." (2) That was an Italian view at the beginning of the sixteenth century. When, after the dissolution of the monasteries, Soranzo noted the abrupt cutting off of "the amount of alms distributed by them", the situation naturally was aggravated because "at present (1554) no alms were given." (3) It is not easy to imagine that contemporary Italians agreed with Professor Mackie's view that "from the point of view of...social...history the destruction of the monasteries was no stupendous crime." (4)

However, the dissolution seems to have little concerned the ordinary mass of the people. The writer of the Trevisan Relation saw before his eyes the cramped city of London with its timber or brick houses in which the citizens nevertheless lived comfortably. They appeared to have masses of wealth, if one could judge from the shops which "abounded with every article of luxury, as well as the necessities of life." There was a most remarkable amount of silver plate to be seen in them and, if the Milanese ambassador's landlord was typical, a house might contain "plate to the amount of 100 crowns." (5) Yet, if one can tell from what his contemporary, Raimondo de Soncino,

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1. Trevisan, 34.

2. Ibid., 41.

3. Soranzo: SPV V, p.552.

4. Cf. J.D.Mackie: The Earlier Tudors, p.401.

5. Trevisan, 42; see too Mancini's description of London's luxury goods c.1483, Ch.8.

said in 1497, the corollary of the English people's "requiring every comfort, even in war" and their normal luxurious surroundings was that "everything cost incomparably more in that kingdom than in any other place and one could not spend even for the smallest thing less than a penny."(1) What Raimondo did not say, presumably because there was no need, was that the English were often quite well able to buy the luxuries of life no matter how expensive: when one depends on something, one is already used to having it enough for it to have become an essential. This struck the Venetian ambassador no more forcibly than when a steady stream of English parliamentarians each morning came to visit him and, oblivious of expense, expected to be served with rather costly refreshments.(2)

Certainly, at even the numerically large lower end of society, there was some evidence of comfortable prosperity. Vergil's account of Henry VIII's census in 1524 could have left his readers in no doubt that in England "the people were by no means poor." Indeed they had riches enough for Henry to decide that "what belonged to a people belonged also to their prince when there was need to use their wealth for the benefit of the realm as a whole."(3) It is only in a situation where there is surplus wealth that a fair prince can decide to act on that assumption. Henry may well have been considered fair by Vergil because he was honest enough to carry out a census on wealth before he plunged into taxation. In 1527 there could have been no doubt about how set the English people were in their comfortable ways. When grain was extremely scarce and already half the flour eaten was bean flour, merchants, failing to obtain wheat, proposed at least to try to obtain beans, "but perceiving the state of the public mind,

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1. Raimondo de Soncino, SPM, 18 Dec. 1497.

2. N.di Farvi, SPV II, s.m. Feb. 1513.

3. Vergil: AN(hay), p. 301.

they dared not make the demand, lest it exasperate the populace."(1) These were not hungry people, glad to have any kind of food; the irritated masses were people unable to buy their accustomed fine fare.

The riches of England that kept these men in comparative comfort evidently kept the king and his nobility in a fair degree of luxury. As has been said, the element of display in English court life was calculated to show this quite plainly. The reputation for wealth that adhered to Henry VII and his son did much to advertise the extent of England's resources. On Henry VII's death Sanudo recorded the widely held opinion that the late king "had accumulated so much gold that he was supposed to have more than well nigh all the other kings in Christendom."(2) In 1513 the Italian opinion of Henry VIII was much the same: "for gold, silver and soldiers not another king in Christendom could be found to compare with him."(3) At that date this may have been true, although the French king, who could launch a series of invasions and campaigns against Italy and bribe England to be neutral, surely could not have been considered less solvent financially. The point about Henry VIII was that he used his money ostentatiously. Everything was done with high style even down to the amount of money that he threw away on gambling. In 1519 a crisis arose over the king's favourites who "had been the cause of his Majesty's incessant gambling, which had made him lose of late a treasure of gold."(4) Even he, Nicolo di Farvi's wealthiest of Christian princes, had to call a halt to such profligate spending. The question that could have worried Italians was: if there was any truth in Francesco Chiericato's opinion that in 1517 "the wealth and

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1. M.A. Venier (San.46), SPV IV, 11 Nov.1527.

2. Sanudo 8, SPV I, 8 May 1509.

3. N. di Farvi (San.17), SPV II, 12 Oct.1513.

4. S. Giustinian in RB, 18 May 1519.



civilisation of the world were here (in England)"(1), was Henry VIII's restraint absolutely necessary?

Indeed soon, in 1520, Henry was able to indulge in the most extravagant display at his meeting with François I in France, although even then the effect of a comparison between the general wealth of the English and French courts, as seen in their differences of dress, showed up England in a poorer light, if only because "the French were better arrayed than the English."(2) Admittedly earlier, in 1512, Andrea Badoer had already complained of difficulty in obtaining presentable apparel in England: "here they manufactured no cloths of silk, receiving all such from Genoa, Florence and Lucca." If it horrified Badoer so much that he was resigned to "taking what he could get and shutting his eyes"(3), this may in part explain the unfavourable comparisons between English and French clothes in 1520. This might have done much to explain the English courtly habit of decking the person with heavy gold chains of simple design: it was a very uncomplicated way of displaying one's wealth. If all the English nobles in 1514 could be seen "bearing such massive gold chains that some might have served for fetters on a felon's ankles... so heavy were they and of so immense value"(4), the crest of the wave was reached at the 1520 meeting. It had become almost a standard part of the courtier's uniform. Henry VIII's sixty gentlemen in waiting were dressed in the same way and "all with thick gold chains." (5) That this was a distinctively English way of proclaiming riches was confirmed by Sanudo when he wrote that "the English had many gold chains which were not usual in France."(6) One has only to look

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1. Chierigato, SPV II, 10 July 1517.

2. Letter from the French court (San.29), SPV III, 11 June 1520.

3. A. Badoer in RB I, p.67, 24 July 1512.

4. N. di Farvi (San.18), SPV II, 12 July 1514.

5. A. Grumello, Bk.6, Ch.20, p.242.

6. Sanudo 28, in SPV III, 23 June 1520.

at the scenes depicting English courtiers and ambassadors in Carpaccio's cycle of paintings on the life of St. Ursula to realise how much, even by the 1490s, the heavy gold chain was regarded as the hall-mark of English riches. (Plates 5 & 6) Or indeed how in the 1530s when Titian painted a portrait, thought to be of the duke of Norfolk or at least some English nobleman, the main reason for this subject attribution was the fact that the sitter was wearing a simple but solid gold chain. (Plate 7) But again, Giovanni Stefano Robio's remark to the effect that at the Anglo-French meeting in 1532 "the display did not come up to that of the other conference", coupled with the fact that the English nobles there wore "gold chains and decent clothes"(1), does suggest that there was a general decline in the richness of living standards at the English court and that the courtiers as much as the Italians were aware of how useful gold chains were for giving the impression of substantial wealth.

If the English only wore "decent clothes" the fact that their French counterparts could afford "superbly embroidered garments must have implied, gold chains or not, that the English were not deriving as much from the natural riches of their country as before. The reason for this decline, if one may interpret Vergil, could be seen as the rebound resulting from the enclosure movement. The landowners' requisitioning of common land for their sheep grazing had depopulated the country-side; reduced available man-power for armies and caused the prices of wool, cloth and meat to rise. For decades this process had gone unchecked but it was only about 1521 that Henry VIII had tried to eliminate these bad side-effects by attempting to reverse the process. Although "Mistress Money", as

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1. G.S. Robio, SPM, 2 Oct. 1532.

Vergil put it, did do much to help nobles to bribe Wolsey to let them keep some of the lands, in many places the peasantry anticipated their actions by destroying the enclosures and repossessing the common land. The nobles had been "grievously afflicted by the reversion to the old arrangements"(1), so it is not unfair to assume that this might well have told in the style and richness of their dress by 1532. This process, coupled with the social consequences of the dissolution of the monasteries and followed by Henry VIII's debasement of the coinage, that "well nigh ruined the country" and made prices rise alarmingly(2), led Italian writers at the end of the period in question to give a picture of England as a country not sitting socially quite so comfortably on its golden fleeces as it had a few decades earlier. It is a picture that, without the prejudiced gloating of a Soranzo, bears a remarkable, if simplified, relation to the English view of the time.

## 2. Incidental National Income.

As far as the financial position of England was concerned, alongside the riches that accrued from the natural productiveness of the land there lay an important amount of incidental 'unearned income'. This supplemented, sometimes quite gratuitously, the value of the English economy. The profits of war, booty and ransoms; the fruits of peace, treaty indemnities, dowries and pensions; the perquisites of diplomacy, bribes and gifts, they all flowed into England from abroad and helped to bolster the monarch's financial position, compensate the Exchequer for military expenditure or maintain private individuals as king-pins in the structure of international good relations. However, incidental income was undoubtedly much less stable quantitatively than the real earnings

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1. Vergil: AN(Ray), pp.277-9.

2. Soranzo: SPV V, p.551.

of the land, despite occasional difficulties because of the <sup>weather</sup>, so that from the time of Edward III to that of Henry VIII the variations in the amount of money that was coming into the country from period to period were considerable. Sometimes the flow died completely; at other times, though not too often, it was reversed; sometimes it only trickled haltingly.

In the fourteenth century, Italians had a fairly clear picture of England's war-time finances. The Villani kept their ears open and took an understandable interest in the amount of money that changed hands between France and England. However, since they were primarily concerned with chronicling the Anglo-French war itself, they did not tend to regard the amount of English income from booty as greater than that from ransoms, whereas, in fact, it is now considered that "ransoms were the most valuable form of plunder".<sup>(1)</sup> In the initial stages of the war it was evident that Edward III had to pay out much money and wool to maintain his own armies and to bind those of his continental allies closer to him, but about 1346 his fortunes seemed to change. His armies moved through the north of France despoiling and robbing Caen and the surrounding area. Edward met with little resistance and was soon able to "send prisoners to England along with the booty"<sup>(2)</sup> This booty, the result of their robberies, was the immediately tangible thing; the prisoners were presumably ransomed later but by that time Villani had lost sight of them. It was not always possible to lay hands on ransomable prisoners. Instead, a scene more familiar to the Villani was one in which the English king let his army ravage through the French countryside after Crécy. A place like Guisnes, unwallled and undefended, he

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1. Cf. M. McKisack; The Fourteenth Century, pp.247-8.

2. G. Villani, XII.63.

could rifle immediately and then destroy.(1) In 1347 there took place the incident in which Edward III's men were attacked by the king of France's protégé as claimant of Brittany, Charles de Blois. He was defeated and captured, along with many other French lords. Edward III's reaction was to have "Charles de Blois with many other barons and gentlemen taken and sent prisoner to London." (2) Ransom money was not immediately forthcoming; the prisoners had to be kept for use in some future negotiations. In the same year Edward was much more intent on taking Calais. He knew well that the town was the refuge of pirates and that, apart from their spoils, it contained money collected for the king of France. When the place fell to the English and some of the inhabitants "came out semi-clad..., they tormented them to make them tell where the hidden money was which they had underground." Their reticence could not have done much to improve Edward's frame of mind because he was firmly resolved to hang them. Villani gave his version of the familiar story of how they were spared. He concluded by saying that the victory at Calais "was a great honour and acquisition for the king of England." (3) His in the long run was the honour. Moreover, there was no doubt about the practical worth of the acquisition because Edward, as well as recognising the usefulness of the place as a garrison, seemed to have made no bones about his interest in the booty to be picked up in the town.

In the following years, although there had been little doubt about it before, Edward noticeably appeared to have scant respect for the people whose king he claimed to be: he plundered their land for as much as it was worth. Even after taking Calais, before

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1. Ibid., XII.68.

2. Ibid., XII.93.

3. Ibid., XII.96.

sailing for England, he "let his army scour the land to St.-Maure and the other Artois territories with great despoilation and damage to the land." (1) About 1353, there was a renewed burst of English activity in France. Evidently Edward III's aim was to take Paris and in fact he made his way towards the city. Up to Amiens he devastated the country-side: booty he took in plenty; the rest he burned. At that point, realising the magnitude of the opposing forces, he "returned with his booty to Calais". (2) It was as though the English king, having gained some spoils, was reluctant to lose them by fighting a pitched battle. But could this compare with his son's activities? The Black Prince's campaign which in 1355 threatened Avignon and ruined Carcassonne might have appeared to have borne few territorial fruits and done little to advance the English dynastic cause, but 1,000 cart-loads of booty and 5,000 prisoners probably contributed much to the English economy. Moreover, the French were foolhardy enough to seek revenge by attacking the prince, only to be defeated, thereby adding more rich booty to his already large store. (3) This hit-and-run technique of war-fare was not neglected by other English armies. In the summer of 1356, Matteo Villani recorded, the duke of Lancaster and the two brothers of the king of Navarre to affront the French king "made their way to the area round Paris" and did much damage but, when the king sent out a huge force in opposition "they turned about and, robbing the land, made their way to Normandy." (4) It is very evident from Giovanni and Matteo Villani's accounts that the focal point of many English campaigns was purely this quest for booty and spoils, the compensation for an

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1. Ibid..

2. M. Villani, V.35.

3. Ibid., V.86.

4. Ibid., VI.58.



inability to carry out any other conclusive action. When the prince of Wales was trapped at Poitiers late in 1356, Villani wrote about how he had "stopped between two rivers with his great booty." It was quite obvious that the English were more intent on transporting this around France than upon carrying ordinary supplies with them because "in a few days they were in great distress about food."<sup>(1)</sup> Nor was Villani in any doubt about the quantity of this cumbersome booty because, as one of his diversionary tactics in the ensuing battle, the prince was reported to have made three great mounds of the booty and protected them with stakes "so that greed for booty would not hinder the minds of his own men and he hoped that the adversary would desire to acquire it."<sup>(2)</sup> How revealing this was of the motivation behind this war: for not only was the prince making the effort to carry about three mounds of booty in his train, but also he was well aware that this had become one of the prime objectives, after life itself, in the minds of his own men and was as much of an attraction to the French.

After this battle the prisoners taken by the English were seen to number among them the French king and one of his sons. They and their illustrious fellows were taken to England. Four years later in 1360 Edward III had still not arranged a peace treaty and, although some of the French prisoners might have brought in large ransoms by that time, Villani made no specific mention of them but he was certainly aware that the captured king and his son were still unransomed. Edward III began to conduct another campaign, so ineffective had King John proved as a diplomatic lever. In the meantime, Edward's presence in Burgundian lands was proving to be useful: the

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1. Ibid., VII.6; VII.9.

2. Ibid., VII.16.

duke thought it advisable to make peace with the king on condition that he should leave his lands. A payment of 120,000 moutons d'or each year for three years was considered by Edward to be an honourable enough inducement to do so.(1) Villani did not record that Edward had any qualms about agreeing to this, a fact that might have suggested to Italian readers that gold was his sole objective in campaigning. At the peace of Brétigny that followed in the same year it must have been very revealing how Edward was apparently willing to accept a parcel of French territories, mainly with traditional connections with his own house, and in return he renounced those claims to the French throne for which he had been fighting for a quarter of a century. However, the more immediate inducement for him to do this seemed to have been the promise of the three million gold écus to be paid as John II's ransom.(2) Yet, as the Villani noted eagerly, the portion of the ransom paid only amounted to 600,000 scudi, after which, with the escape of the royal hostage and King John's honourable <sup>return</sup> to England only to die there, the English king received nothing more.(3)

Therefore, according to the Villani accounts, during the reign of Edward III England enriched herself mainly through the booty taken from France. They gave no clear picture of how profitable ransoming was. Certainly with the two most important captives in English hands, John II and David II of Scots, they made no specific mention of any gains that came up to expectations. Even that traditional source of incidental income, the dowry, was not reliable. Lionel of Clarence's marriage into the ruling house of Milan had brought him an extensive "dowry of land and 100,000 florins", but

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1. Ibid., IX.84.

2. Ibid., IX.98.

3. Ibid., IX.105; Filippo Villani, XI.76.

his sudden death had soon put this in jeopardy: the late duke's soldiers regarded the dowry-lands as an English inheritance and, led by Despenser, they "took care to guard them in the name of the English...and refused to restore territories to the lord Galeazzo (Visconti)." Moreover, when the Milanese attacked the entrenched Englishmen, they soon found that they were having to pay ransoms for two of their leaders, who had fallen into the foreigners' hands. (1) Although the English soldiers later had to compromise and despite the fact that very little of the money extracted from the Italians could ever have found its way back to England, they were still only proving to the Italians how expert they had become at milking money and valuables out of friend and foe alike. Much the same would be said for the antics of Sir John Hawkwood and his men. The 40,000 ducats that Carlo di Durazzo in 1380 paid him for his military aid was in some ways money spent on depriving potential rivals of his services; it certainly was money that went into English pockets.(2)

Buonaccorso Pitti, writing about 1422, looked back to Richard II's reign and indirectly commented upon English activities calculated to bring in invisible earnings. About 1380, he travelled to England where he "stayed for about a month, discussing the terms of the ransom to be paid for John of Brittany", who was in the hands of the duke of Lancaster.(3) This did again emphasise the Italian view that the process of ransoming was an unhurried and complicated business. Much more immediately productive were the light foraging campaigns undertaken by the English. In 1383, Pitti recalled, he had been involved in an engagement with the English at Mons. To avoid further conflict the French agreed to let the English "take whatever

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1. Petrus Azarius: Chronicon in RIS 16 and quoted in Benevento di San Giorgio, p.201.
  2. Pandolffo Collenuccio, Bk.V, p.210.
  3. Buonaccorso Pitti, p.37.

they could carry and go back to England." By the next day the English had gone, having made sure to take their baggage with them.(1) In other words, they were unconcerned about loss of honour and were only too glad to escape with their spoils. These all added to the unearned income entering England, if not to assist the economy of the monarch more than by paying for part of the war expenses, at least to make it worth the while of some of the participants.

According to Pius II, the Agincourt campaign brought the worst out in the English and displayed just how callous they were about the perquisites of war. After the great battle they "found that their prisoners far outnumbered their captors and, fearing danger in the night, they ordered all the common soldiers and unknown persons to be killed, sparing only the noblest."(2) The masses could be done away with: they would bring in little money; in any case the process of ransoming would be too complicated to be worth while; but no one suggested the slaughter of the nobles: men like the dukes of Orléans, Bourbon and Alençon were potentially too valuable to die. They were the big fish in the massive shoals. With them carefully netted alive, the others, the small fry, who obviously had been initially captured for some commercial gain, could be dispensed with.

On the other hand, Frulovisi saw Henry V himself as the epitome of equity. If there was booty, it was shared out. The spoils of Harfleur went to all concerned with its capture.(3) This was scarcely calculated to enrich the Crown. Nor was the king's discrimination at Falaise where he "ordered only the property of those who had resisted him to be despoiled", nor after Alençon, which surrendered after making the condition that it would escape despoilation, nor

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1. Ibid., pp.41-3.

2. Pius II: Coms., p.431; and De viris, No.27.

3. Frulovisi, p.9.

even after the extensive campaign that saw the fall of Harcourt to the duke of Bedford, who was "given the riches and precious stones of Harcourt by the king for his labours"(1), none of these actions could have done much for the royal treasury, although they did signify that this form of extraordinary riches was being spread throughout wider circles in England. Even when in 1420 at the treaty of Troyes Henry theoretically achieved his dynastic ambitions as heir to the throne of France, there was every sign that he would enter into a depleted inheritance. His ally Burgundy had to be paid 20,000 livres de Paris from the French Crown and his wife Catherine of France was to receive yearly 20,000 écus from his French estates. The new queen's allowance must eventually have been regarded as income that gratuitously flowed into England, though it did take away from the sovereign's resources(2) Burgundy's could only have been regarded as a direct loss for the English Crown.

In all, the first half of the fifteenth century presented a picture of missed financial opportunities. Giovanni Sercambi was in no doubt about the English invaders' desire for spoils. In 1422, he noted, Henry VI's generals had insisted that when Meaux was on the point of surrender, "all movable moneys, jewellery, merchandise, goods, books, scripts were not to be touched but sent into the castle." As long as these valuables were safe for the victors all the prisoners could go free without ransom. This did ensure some flow of bullion goods into England but the invaders did not seem interested enough to exploit that other marketable commodity, prisoners.(3) Indeed, this does fit in with the overall Italian picture that the English were in the habit of taking more prisoners than they knew

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1. Ibid., pp.40, 44 ff.

2. Ibid., pp.84, 87.

3. G. Sercambi, II.339.

what to do with. Even before Agincourt in 1415, Pius II said, the English army had been aiming to return to England with their booty and captives.(1) It is small wonder that they were embarrassed by the top-heavy addition to the number of their prisoners after the battle itself. However, about 1458 Lorenzo Bonincontrio could look back and see just how inept the English were about ransoming even those few noble captives whom they did preserve alive. The two captive royal dukes, Orléans and Bourbon, "were taken to Britain. Of these one died in captivity; the other was ransomed after twenty-five years."(2) No Italian could have been deluded into thinking that this was anything other than a highly undependable source of income for England. If ransoms were so long in coming, the cost of keeping prisoners, especially those who died unredeemed, generally must have reduced considerably the pure profit margin. Although Bonincontrio did capture some idea of the extreme length of the business of some ransomings, there was no suggestion that he comprehended the intricacies of "this long labour and dreadful charge" of dealing with ransomable prisoners.(3) Rewards in this field came only as the fruits of patience, especially at this time when English fortunes were declining in France.

It was England's same weakness that made marriage negotiations for René d'Anjou's daughter necessary. René was poor and only had a weak influence in the south of France, but so feeble was the king of England's bargaining position in 1445 that he "took her without a dowry and he even restored lands, which he held, to her father."(4) Peace was preferred to dowries. But this happened only after England

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1. Pius II: De viris, No.27.

2. L. Bonincontrio, RIS 21, p.98.

3. Cf. E.F. Jacob: The Fifteenth Century, pp.222-3.

4. Raffaello de Negra to the dssa.di Milano, SPM, 24 Oct. 1458.



had lost a much more useful ally, Burgundy, the same Burgundy who, in his quarrel with the duke of Gloucester, seized all his territories up to Zevenberghe, in which "the rich treasures of the English were found and a great amount of booty was taken." (1) It was small wonder that by the time of the Anjou marriage, Italians thought that England was in a bad bargaining position. It is therefore all the more surprising to find the same Margaret of Anjou in exile addressing her French allies, according to Pius II, with the words, "I lead you to plunder, not to battle. The spoils of France which have for so many years enriched England, you shall bring back." (2) If she was thinking of the spoils taken in her husband's reign, Italians looking at their literature could have only had a very poor opinion of its quantity. If she was thinking of the accumulations from previous reigns then the sum might have conjured up something of considerable substance, if indeed it had not already been dissipated. In reality what Pius II was probably doing was putting into Margaret's mouth words which voiced his opinion about the moneys drained out of France by England during a century of wars. It might have been almost inconceivable that the rich state of the England that he had seen could not have owed some of its prosperity to its ravaging of France. However, if Margaret consented to reverse for a while the general trend of money's flowing from France into England, she was mistaken. Pius II's description of the year 1461, when Margaret's forces were completely routed by York, told how among the captives from her forces "the French...were allowed to ransom themselves" (3), an action which, as far as England's financial position was concerned, spoke for itself.

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1. Pius II: Coms., p.585.

2. Ibid., p.580.

3. Ibid., p.701.

After this the flow of money into Britain gave every sign of increasing. In 1469 a small fleet of English sailors made raiding parties along the coast of the Bordelais and Bayonne and "taking some prisoners for ransom, among others they took near Noion the barber of the Grand Constable of France." (1) How much they extracted for him was not mentioned but one imagines that the Grand Constable would not have been induced to part with much for his return. Moreover, English sailors were not invulnerable themselves. In 1472 Pietro Aliprando took particular note of some news that "the Easterlings and the French had taken prisoners from the English to the tune of 4,000 ducats" and that was only after raiding parties in which Easterlings took, for example, the "ship with English cloth worth 20,000 nobles." (2) The interesting thing is that the captured goods, even men, were spoken of with their price-tags on. This does seem to indicate how war again seemed to be becoming a commercial enterprise. However, though seen as English reverses, these were minor set-backs that subdued neither English sailors nor their king. In 1475 the abstractions of England's dynastic claims were exposed to the realities of Louis XI's gold and, whatever the price Italians finally imagined England was paid by France for her not to be molested, Pietro Aliprando's top guess of 75,000 crowns down and 50,000 per annum for life was remarkably near the truth of the Picquigny agreement and obviously was extremely lucrative for England, even although in the long run a royal marriage alliance did not develop and bring one of Edward's daughters an estate of 60,000 crowns p.a. (3) Even Margaret of Anjou proved valuable to Edward IV because in 1476 news reached Italy that the "king of France had bought for 24 to 30,000 crowns

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1. Sforza de Bettini, SPM, 30 May 1469.

2. Pietro Aliprando, SPM, 25 Nov. 1472, pp.170 & 166.

3. Ibid., 27 Aug. 1475; see too the opinions of Francesco Rovere, SPM, 20 Aug. 1475 and Lionelo de' Rossi, SPM, 12 Sept. 1475.

Queen Margaret of England..., prisoner of King Edward, and had fetched her to France." The speculation was that Louis XI wanted to persuade her "to give up her claims to Provence as the daughter of King René"(1), but this was quite unimportant to Edward IV. He was well rid of an opponent who was unlikely to persuade Louis to throw away his dearly bought peace; he greatly replenished his purse in the process. Indeed, Louis XI was so eager for peace that he thought it worth while later in the same year to "send 700,000 butts of wine to the king of England...in order to ingratiate himself with the people of England."(2) About 1520 Foresti was to produce some story about the duke of Burgundy, "for the benefit and aid given to him, being freed by Edward (IV) from the tax which each year he had been obliged to pay the king of England."(3) Whatever the truth of the matter Foresti, belatedly, could only have added to the notion that England was a magnet for continental money; even the stopping of a Burgundian subsidy did not mean an ebbing of the financial tide. It was this sort of thing, coupled with the strong suggestions in 1473, that the Scots would receive, as their predecessors had, an annual pension of 60,000 crowns from France(4), that could not have failed to have given Italians the impression that money quite one-sidedly was flowing from French territories into the various parts of Britain and bolstering their economic state.

Henry VII noticeably continued the trend set in his father-in-law's reign, not without some personal exertion. In 1490 Lionel Chieregato reported that Henry was insisting on the French tribute

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1. G.P. Panicharola, Milanese ambassador to Burgundy, SPM, 19 Apr. 1476.

2. Francesco Petrasancta, Milanese ambassador to France, SPM, 4 Nov. 1476.

3. Foresti, Bk. 14, p. 553, s.a. 1469.

4. Cristoforo di Bollato, SPM, 12 May 1473.

and "did not choose to be inferior to Edward IV, who received 50,000 crowns annually, whereas the king of France would not give more than 200,000 francs in three years." (1) According to Sanudo's estimation of the treaty of Étapes (1492), Henry VII only received the promise of a pension of 1,000 crowns p.a. and in the process earned his subjects' displeasure for having taxed them for war and, like Edward IV, "made peace in order to keep the money for himself." (2) In fact, although what Henry VII did extort from France, for the pension itself roughly 10,000 crowns p.a., was considerably higher than Sanudo's estimation, the Italian picture still showed Henry VII as the all round profit-maker. The Trevisan Relation soon contrived to set the truth before the Italians: Henry received 10,000 ducats annually from the king of France, just as Edward IV had. (3) Offset against this was the money that left England in 1502 to pay for the jubilee and crusade. Of the 40,000 ducats collected from England, "the king..had freely given 15,000" (4), rather more than the French pension but not an annual occurrence. Much more in Henry's line was the pose he adopted in 1506 over Catherine of Aragon's dowry. He wanted it paid in full and "protested that, unless this residue was remitted, the king of England would send the princess home." (5) Such was his apparent desire to lay hands on every piece of foreign money to which he was entitled. Over and above this kind of income based on marriage alliances, there could be the kind of bullion gained from abroad in the form of wedding gifts. In 1508 at the betrothal of Princess Mary and Prince Charles of Castile three rich pieces of jewellery were given to the princess by her prospective

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1. L. Chiericato, SPV IV (App.), 7 Apr. 1490.

2. Sanudo: Vite dei Dogi, quoted SPV VI/III, 16 Jan. 1493.

3. Trevisan, 52. (n.b., Crowns and ducats were computed at the same rate.)

4. A. Giustinian, I.48-9, s.d. 4 July 1502.

5. V. Quirini, SPV I, 11 July 1506.

father-in-law, aunt and husband. The English king reciprocated with plate, horses and hawks, some of which are conspicuously less lastingly valuable than the enduring capital quality of jewellery.

It is difficult to tell exactly what Italians thought about the way in which Henry VIII attempted to continue his father's policy. He undertook an expensive war against France; captured a handful of small towns and in 1514, according to Sanudo, seemed to be willing to accept a treaty with France that granted him 100,000 crowns for his expenses and then off-set this by the dowry for his sister Mary.(1) Even a revised opinion about this to the effect that France was to pay one million ducats to England, at 10,000 p.s., on condition that Tournai was returned to France(2) could scarcely have sounded like more than just a return to the status quo, although apparently this agreement was supposed to have doubled the award at Étapes.(3) The picture in Italian minds might have been improved by news of Louis XII's gift to Princess Mary of jewelled diamond "as large and as broad as a full-sized finger, with a pear-shaped pearl underneath it, the size of a pigeon's egg", worth 60,000 crowns.(4) Indeed a treasure in itself, but at what expense? Besides the question soon arose as to how long the French would pay the pension. It was all very well for Machiavelli to sneer contemptuously at the king of France, "who with so great a kingdom lived as the tributary...of the king of England"(5) but there was a suggestion of tardiness conveyed in Giustinian's report about the arrival of an instalment in December 1516.(6) Moreover, it was a thing that was always under

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1. Sanudo 18, in SPV II, 21 Aug. 1514.

2. Bartolomeo Alviano (San.19) SPV II, 4 Sept. 1514.

3. Cf. Mackie: Earlier Tudors, p.284; see also Rotta de Scocesi, p.3, compensation fixed at 150,000 écus.

4. Lorenzo Pasqualigo (San.19) SPV II, 25 Oct. 1514.

5. Machiavelli: Discorso II.30, in Opera, p.301.

6. S. Giustinian in RB, 13 Dec. 1516.



review. In 1527 Henry VIII was claiming, according to the Milanese Francesco Taberna, an annual pension of 50,000 ducats "in lieu of the renunciation of his French claims." Even although François I hoped to gain the hand of Princess Mary, he still thought, despite Marc Antonio Venier's opinion to the contrary, the demand excessive and Wolsey was forced to reduce his terms.(1) Certainly, according to Falier in 1530, Henry VIII was having difficulties in making the French king pay him the agreed sums of money. He angrily demanded a payment of one and a half millions of gold and wanted the duke of Orléans to be sent over to England until the marriage of his daughter Mary to the French king took place. This was, Falier suggested, an attempt "to detain him there for a hostage until he received his money."(2) In all the English king was apparently having a lot of trouble in collecting even the moneys that were legally owed to him. Scarpinello seemed well enough aware that the intricate negotiations which were going on between the French and English concerned the fact that "the English king was the creditor of his Most Christian<sup>Majesty</sup> without any other security than mere paper."(3) The debt in question arose during François I's captivity after Pavia. But some years after his release England still lacked the return of the capital and interest alike. Henry VIII was belatedly looking around for some security or hostage that could be used to stimulate the French into making some sort of settlement. In 1531 the situation seemed no better. Falier, considering the royal income, reported that "from his most Christian Majesty there was due to King Henry 800,000 ducats for arrears on account of the annual pension of 50,000 ducats for Brittany; and 400,000 for money lent."(4) In theory England's

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1. F. Taberna, SPM, 24 Mar. 1527; M.A. Venier (San.44), SPV IV, 9, 11 Mar. 1527.

2. Falier (San.54) SPV IV, 17 Sept. 1530.

3. Augustino Scarpinello, Milanese ambassador in England, SPM, 20 Sept. 1530.

4. Falier, 23.



capital repayments and unearned income in the form of pensions at this time should have been considerable but the consistent Italian suggestion was that far from enough of it, if any, was being paid. The situation was obviously not improved by the death of the duchess of Suffolk in 1533: because of this "her husband lost 30,000 ducats annual rental, derived from property in France on account of her dower." (1) Rightly this would have been accounted a loss only to the Suffolk estate but it did represent a discontinuation of a stream of unearned income from France into the general financial pool of England.

With the English Reformation Italians knew how their own relations with England became rather strained. France's position was much the same, so it could not be supposed that the French moneys for England increased in volume. Certainly in the last years of Henry VIII's life he was at war again with France. But this time, although he attacked the French at Boulogne "with as much ordnance and as many artillery apparatuses such as not even Suliman the Great Turk had in the Hungarian enterprise", he achieved little more than in the days of his golden youth. Boulogne was taken in 1544 but, so that the nations "were able to rejoice in peace", it was handed back to the French and recompense was made to Henry for the great expense involved in the capture. (2) That was Segni's summing-up of the situation. Paolo Giovio added that the French purchase price of the city was "to be paid in a yearly pension on condition that peace was kept." (3) This was a reference to the treaty of Camp in 1546. With this Henry VIII virtually saw the reinstatement of the French pension and exacted a promise of some compensation for his military

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1. C. Capello (San.48) SPV IV, 28 June 1533.

2. Bernardo Segni, Vol.II, Bk.ii, pp.326, 334, 345.

3. P. Giovio: Hist.II, Bk.45, p.398.

efforts and for the arrears in the pension. The Italian accounts almost regarded the payments and pensions as newly instituted arrangements and certainly they made no suggestion that annual pensions were being paid up to the time of the war. Indeed they seemed to imply that the English intention was to force the French into paying them pensions and into agreeing to perpetual peace, if only because there was no construction of dynastic aims put on Henry VIII's belligerence against France.

Thus Renaissance Italians considered that the English very largely subsidised their already rich state by tapping the resources of France. This is not surprising. France after all was almost invariably the side under attack. Yet, except on specific occasions, notably under Edward IV, Henry VII and Henry VIII, when direct compensation was paid by the French for the English war-effort made against them, Italian observers had little idea about how this incidental income was balanced by military expenditure. Perhaps more interesting was their notion of how the source of this peculiar income changed perceptibly over a period of two centuries from the rather sordid booty sought in the reigns of Edward III and Henry V, with an apparently wide enough open eye on ransoms, to the pensions that Edward IV and Henry VII depended upon and the dowries that distinctly interested the latter. Henry VIII manifestly attempted to continue both of his father's policies but with such a haphazard disregard for the cost of the pursuit that at times he gave the appearance of losing more than he personally gained from his enterprises: in 1531 Falier mentioned that he had spent on foreign wars the six millions left to him by his father.<sup>(1)</sup> Yet this did not detract from the fact that, if he lost, the incidental income that

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1. Falier, 23.

he and his predecessors had attracted in great measure at least seemed to add to England's reputation for richness.

### 3. Royal Finance.

The financial situation of English sovereigns was inextricably bound up with both the realm's natural riches and its incidental earnings from abroad but, paradoxically, there was no correlation seen between them. If an English king's subjects were wealthy, there was no reason why he should be; if they were poor, he was not necessarily so. If the country earned much from war, he did not automatically benefit. His income and expenditure differed qualitatively from those of his subjects. Often his financial standing depended upon his own personal competence and drive as much as upon the political situation.

At the outset of his French campaigns Edward III had been seen as virtually the pay-master of Europe with his pledges and money for his German allies. His use of sacks of wool almost as money gives the initial impression that the king was rich and that his income was based largely upon the wool trade.<sup>(1)</sup> But, as the Bardi and Peruzzi were soon to find out, when at war he soon had to borrow from them more than his realm was worth in annual income.<sup>(2)</sup> This was as much a reflection upon Edward III's financial irresponsibility as upon their willingness to take risks because of greed. Similarly in 1340 Edward's impeachment and imprisonment of treasurers and officials for financial malpractice during his absence was by implication as much an indictment of himself for having chosen poor or dishonest servants as a direct statement that his own income,

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1. G. Villani, XI.72.

2. Ibid., XI.88.

despite the officials' dishonesty, was not at that point capable of supporting war on the scale in which he would have liked.(1)

In Edward IV's reign another aspect of the problem engaged Italians' attention. Edward was a king dependent for his throne upon the support of his subjects, particularly his over-mighty ones. As early as 1464, although no Italian had explained why in detail, there began the process of issuing "a new coinage, which the king was having made, one fourth lighter than the old, and willed it to be the same currency as the other." The implication was obviously that he did not have enough income to support his rôle as monarch. But the people and lords of England, potentially very wealthy themselves, showed no appreciation of the situation: they "murmured and were dissatisfied."(2) Even before Gian Pietro Panicharolla said so in 1468 Italians need not have been unaware that "the king was a poor man; nor could he, save with difficulty and time, raise any large sum", a situation made worse by the fact that at that time he had lately "laid another tax on the lords, barons and towns of the kingdom for the maintenance of the forces now being raised against the French, which could not be kept on foot otherwise."(3) Such was the process through which the king's financial situation forced him to go; it contrasted markedly with how directly and easily the earl of Warwick and his own brother Clarence could go about raising troops in opposition to him without having to squeeze representative bodies for even their basic financial requirements.(4)

However, Edward IV was engendering a reputation for having a shrewd nose for possible sources of income. Before 1469 a plot

1. Ibid., XI.112.

2. News letter from Bruges, SPM, 5 Oct.1464.

3. G.P. Panicharolla (at Paris), SPV I, 16 June 1468.

4. Sforza de' Bettini (at Tours), SPV I, 20 Nov. 1469.

against the king was discovered and there were retaliatory executions. The king "pardoned others their life but not their purse", as Luchino Dallaghiexia put it. "It cost two knights who were in the conspiracy 50,000 crowns."<sup>(1)</sup> This may have been a poetically just way of administering retribution and beneficial enough to the treasury, but rather an incidental form of royal income. That Edward IV found it necessary to do this indicates well enough the unstable state of his economy. The more usual channel of royal income appeared to be just as highly irregular: he had to go to his parliament with a specific demand for a specific purpose. In 1473 he was in the process of mustering forces for an expedition on the strength of the promise of funds and, when the figure of 300,000 crowns was approved for the war, the king's contribution was only to amount to 6,000.<sup>(2)</sup> Even when parliament seemed willing to allow the king this large sum he was still left with the problem of collecting it, no easy task when "the northern district, which comprised half the island, had refused to pay any money."<sup>(3)</sup> Cristoforo<sup>di</sup> Bollato saw this as a self-perpetuating problem for the Crown. By September 1474 Edward IV was still keeping in mind the French campaign but "the money which had been demanded and obtained on previous occasions for similar undertakings had always been spent in other ways and never had been forthcoming at the time it was wanted...It was even said that the money would never be paid until the force was seen upon the water and all preparations made for a start."<sup>(4)</sup> If this was the country's attitude towards its sovereign's finances, it must have been thought unlikely that a king who could only think of

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1. L. Dallaghiexia (in London), SPM, 12 Apr. 1469.

2. Cristofforo di Bollati (at Tours), SPM, 12 May 1473.

3. Ibid., 9 Dec. 1473.

4. Ibid., (at Megli), 12 Sept. 1474.

contributing one fifth of the war funds himself in 1473 would be able to put in readiness an army and navy before the granting of funds in 1474. The English people's attitude was to be: no payment without results. Eventually, Italians took note, Edward IV had to resort to tactics of forced charm and subtlety. He would call before him individually all with an income of forty pounds sterling and above and ask them for a loan. "He spoke to them so benignly that they did not regret the money they paid": their self-respect had been exploited by his "saying that poorer men than they had contributed." Thus, as Battesta Oldovini de Brugnato put it, "he had plucked out the feathers of his magpies without making them cry out."<sup>(1)</sup> Indeed, no one, and surely not Edward IV, could have imagined that this was anything but an extraordinary method of raising royal funds: it was virtually trickery. The next time the magpies would cry out. Although the same commentator did suggest that most of the money was immediately spent on armaments, a not uncommon Italian opinion was that, after the treaty of Étampes with Louis XI, Edward IV profited by the amounts of money handed over by the French king and also made a handsome profit from his subjects because he "had exacted great treasure and done nothing."<sup>(2)</sup> The Milanese writer obviously had more of an eye for royal income than expenditure; in Italy Edward IV was developing a reputation for an extreme love of money.

In 1479, at a time when a marriage was being suggested between England and Milan, Giovanni Andrea Cagnola, the Milanese ambassador in France, thought fit to warn the duke of Milan that such a marriage would be difficult because of "the great quantity of money which the king of England would want from (his) Excellency for the dowry and

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1. Battesta Oldovini de Brugnato, SPM, 17 Mar. 1475.

2. Gian Pietro Panicharolla, to the duke of Milan, SPV I, 22 Oct. 1475.



for presents, as they said he knew that (he) had a great treasure, and he proposed in this way to obtain a good share of it, as being one who in any case tended to accumulate treasure...The king of England did not desire to make this marriage alliance for any other purpose than to obtain a great quantity of money."(1) The interesting thing was not how much success Edward met with in these designs but that he, as an English king, felt it necessary to secure an income by such means, dangerous means, if Cagnola read Louis XI's mind aright. Certainly Edward was noticeably not succeeding to secure a regular source of adequate income. The extraction of money out of private individuals on the pretext of defence, according to Mancini, became increasingly difficult. Even the money that he received from Louis XI came only on condition that he did not assist the Flemings.(2) In other words, his hands were now completely tied as far as foreign policy was concerned; in the past it had been his manoeuvrings in this field that had given him his income. Nevertheless, after Edward's death when his partisan wife took charge of as much of his estate as possible, Mancini saw how she made sure to keep the royal treasure, which was said to be immense, in the Tower.(3) This might well have suggested to Italians that, despite early penury and faltering sources of income, Edward IV's sheer interest in giving his throne a sound financial basis had paid off by the end of his reign.

By the time of Henry VII Italians thought that they could interpret English kings' money-making tactics. Indeed, when in 1493 Henry VII abruptly ended a campaign in France with a diplomatic agreement and a pension, it was not surprising that Sanudo should have asserted that "King Henry was ill looked on in the kingdom and

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1. G.A. Cagnola, SPM, 16 Apr. 1479.

2. Mancini, Ch.2, p.81.

3. Ibid., Ch.3, p.87.

all the English were dissatisfied, because to wage war on France he had taken much money from the people, which was not expended, and he made peace in order to keep the money for himself."(1) Nothing could be more explicit than that. Paradoxically it was soon seen that Henry VII regarded money as a form of security in a political situation made unstable by his tenuous dynastic position. In 1497 Andrea Trevisan wrote about how Henry had provoked disturbances because he had "laid a tax of a tenth on the priests, contrary to the custom." Then under the pretence of wanting to attack the king of Scots, "he amassed much money." Trevisan's implicit suggestion was that this was a form of security to compensate for a possible deposition, because "it was said that the king had placed all his property in a tower nearest the coast that he might escape if necessary."(2) Once the dynastic threats had subsided, a Milanese observer like Raimondo de Soncino was sure that a rich king had political stability. Not even the proposed Spanish marriage could add anything to the perfect stability that existed in the kingdom because of the king's wisdom and "on account of (his) wealth, for... he had upwards of six millions of gold, and it was said that he put by annually 500,000 ducats, which was of easy accomplishment, for his revenue was great and real, not a written schedule, nor did he spend anything."(3) Raimondo had a vision of changed days. There was now a much greater awareness that there was a substantial source of real income available for English kings, although no details were given, but much depended upon the king's financial acumen, if not upon his ability to economise and avoid expensive undertakings.

Until the Trevisan Relation became known to its Venetian public,

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1. Sanudo: Vite, in SPV VI Pt.III (App.), 16 Jan.1493.
  2. A. Trevisan (San.1), SPV I, 14-15 July 1497.
  3. Raimondo de' Soncino, SPV I, 8 Sept. 1497.

precise details of the king's income remained obscure. It was not impossible to calculate how much was spent upon the maintenance of the royal household. Henry VII managed to spend 290,000 crowns because, "though frugal to excess in his own person, he did not change any of the ancient usages of England at his court (but) kept a sumptuous table." Income was not so easy to gauge. The Trevisan Relation calculated that from the lands in the hands of the Crown, along with the tribute that English kings traditionally exacted for the defence of the country against the Danes, Henry VII derived an income of 290,000 crowns. Added to this was an income coming from the estates of intestate princes of the realm. These, automatically reverting to the Crown, included the duchy of Lancaster, which was worth 80,000 crowns per annum. The duchies of York, Clarence, Somerset, Gloucester, Exeter and Bedford were also in the king's hands at that time and so added altogether some 257,000 crowns per annum to its ordinary income. By comparison Trevisan thought the additional incomes of "several marquises and earldoms, and the fees of many gentlemen,...also fallen to the Crown,...of small importance." Ordinary customs duties brought in 100,000 crowns, although much of this was spent in combating piracy; the export tax on wool amounted to 200,000 crowns. The Staple at Calais levied another wool tax for defence. A less bespoke source of royal revenue was the exploitation of the royal right to govern the estates of widows and wards. It brought him another 50,000 crowns. From vacant church benefices the king derived a considerable income, made less unstable by a royal reluctance to be speedy about filling vacancies. On top of these and other perquisites, the king had his annual pension of 10,000 ducats from France, as originally paid by Louis XI. Moreover, "if the king should go to war, he did not content himself with his

ordinary income but he immediately compelled the clergy to pay him one, two or three fifteenths, or tenths,...and more, if the urgency of the war should require it."(1) Trevisan's picture was very rosy, if only fairly accurate; moreover, it shed its rosy glow over the financial affairs of previous kings because here for the first time was a proper explanation of the royal ordinary income, whereas before, when English kings were seen to have been having so much difficulty in raising money, the Italian concentration had been mainly upon the need to raise special funds or stretch the ordinary income to cover them. However, from the Trevisan account, no Italian could have been deceived into thinking that English kings normally derived so much money from unoccupied peerages. Within memory many of them had been in other hands and after Henry VII some would be bestowed on others. This would consequently reduce Crown revenues.

The Trevisan Relation set the pattern. Vincenzo Quirini, as soon as 1506, produced a simplified account of the king's balance-sheet. It seems almost certain to have been based on the earlier relation. Yet, it does give one a perspective in which one may gauge Henry VII's income. Quirini decided that, computing all extraordinary expenditure, Henry VII's out-lay was only two-thirds of his income. It was small wonder that, "with all this ordinary money and extraordinary income added..., he was the richest king in Christendom"(2), a superlative statement that no Italian had previously thought of making about an English king. Sanudo's obituary for Henry VII recorded his opinion that he "had accumulated so much gold that he was supposed to have more than well nigh all the other kings of Christendom." This was even greater praise than Quirini's but more

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1. Trevisan, 46-52.

2. V. Quirini, 19-20.

than amply explained by the reminder that Henry, in addition to being a "man of vast ability, was a very great miser." As if foretelling a change that was to come over royal finances, Sanudo added that the new king was liberal and likely to be belligerently offensive against France.<sup>(1)</sup><sup>(1a)</sup> These were two expensive characteristics that his father had not possessed.

The young Henry VIII's qualities had such a popular appeal that in 1513, when in preparation for his French campaign he levied a tax of a tenth throughout his kingdom, the upper class paying according to property, tradesmen, servants and the like contributing one penny per head, there was no noticeable suggestion of popular dissent and the king was able temporarily to swell his treasure with a million of gold for the war.<sup>(2)</sup> However, despite this subsidy, the English monarchy of itself presented a picture of unprecedented affluence. In January 1514 Antonio Bavarin related how, "since the beginning of the war the king had spent upward of four million crowns, and still had funds sufficient for more than five years without touching his annual revenues."<sup>(3)</sup> This notion of a king spending beyond the scope of his ordinary income but still very solvent persisted for some time. There was no secret about where the surplus money came from. Of the "ten millions of ready money in gold" reported to have been left him by his father, Henry VIII, according to Sebastiano Giustinian, had only spent half on the three armies that he had needed to maintain during his French campaign. Over and above capital, Henry seemed to make a huge profit on his ordinary annual revenues: 350,000 ducats came from Crown estates, sequestered properties, export and wool duties, legal fees, annates, wardships and the exchange of new

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1. Sanudo 8, SPV I, 8 May 1509.

2. N. di Farvi, SPV II, s.m. Feb. 1513.

3. A. Bavarin (San.17), SPV II, 5 Jan. 1514.

1a. For further discussion on Henry VII's imputed meanness, vide the Elton-Cooper controversy in the Historical Journal: G.R.Elton, 'Henry VII: Rapacity and Remorse', I.i(1958), pp.21-39; J.P.Cooper, 'Henry VII's Last Years Reconsidered', II.ii(1959), pp.103-129; G.R.Elton, 'Henry VII: a Restatement', IV.i(1961), pp.1-28.



year gifts; the king's ordinary expenses for the maintenance of his household, salaries and his wardrobe as "the best dressed sovereign in the world" amounted to only 100,000 ducats in 1519 so that one might have inferred that his profit margin amounted to about 250,000 ducats per annum.<sup>(1)</sup>

In 1521 the picture painted by Francesco Cornaro was even better. Granted, Henry had "spent 3,000,000 of gold in the war against France" but he was supposed to have an "annual surplus revenue...exceeding 500,000 ducats so that (he) was supposed to be very rich and to have increased what was left him by his father." Even the sum that he had spent on his interview with King François did not diminish his funds so much that he was not still regarded as having "more ready money than any other sovereign in Christendom." This was a reinforcement of Quirini and Sanudo's earlier view of rich English kings, although it did overtop the careful observations of his contemporary, Giustinian. However, there were two points that could be put forward against Cornaro's reliability: he displayed an implicit reliance on Quirini's figures of fifteen years vintage, and freely admitted that his own conclusions were drawn "during the few days of his stay there."<sup>(2)</sup> How much reliance Cornaro's fellow Venetians placed on his views must have depended largely on the extent of their own prior knowledge of English affairs.

However, in the following years Italians did become increasingly aware that Henry VIII's financial situation was slowly deteriorating. In June 1525 Lorenzo Orio described how "there had been great disturbances in England, the people having risen on account of a certain tribute imposed by the king, who demanded a universal property tax of one-third for the war." The disturbances had been

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1. S. Giustinian: Report in RB II, p.313, 10 Oct. 1519.

2. F. Cornaro (San.30), SPV III, 6 June 1521; see also notes, p.131.



quietened and the tax repealed.(1) What a difference could be seen between the attitude of the people now and their acquiescence to the war tax in 1514. Again the element of the popular mood was becoming important to the Crown as it apparently became more dependent upon general subsidies and yet did nothing to ingratiate itself by trusting unpopular ministers. Polydore Vergil much later was to refer to the earlier incident in 1522, when a tax-assessment was carried out and a proposal for taxes put<sup>forward</sup>. He stressed that, despite the king's evident need for each individual to pay a tax "for the general advantage of the State", it could be readily seen "that his people were by no means poor."(2) The suggestion is that an English king's financial position was again becoming disjointed in relation to his people's. Even Castiglione mentioned that when in 1526 Henry VIII lent money to King François for the release of his sons this somewhat stretched his resources.(3) What greater proof could there have been of this than Marc Antonio Venier's assertion that the proposed interview between the French and English kings in 1527 should "be effected with fewer persons than on the last occasion, for the avoidance of expense"?(4) At the next French meeting, when one did take place in 1532, the noticeably reduced amount of display might well have logically reflected a straightening of the royal financial circumstances.(5) It was all the more surprising for a news-leach like Sanudo to hear Venier in 1529 making a very unskilful report on England that supposed that the English king had a revenue of 600,000 ducats and expenses of only 200,000.(6) Nevertheless, although

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1. L. Orio (San.39), SPV III, 3 June 1525.

2. Vergil: AH(Hay), p.301.

3. B. Castiglione: Lettere. Vol.II, Bk.v, Let.10, s.d. 8 Sept. 1526.

4. M.A. Venier (San.45), SPV IV, 11, 16 Apr. 1527.

5. G.S. Robio, SPM, 2 Oct. 1532.

6. Sanudo 50, reporting M.A. Venier, SPV IV, 2 Apr. 1529.

one might suggest that Venier was relying partly on Cornaro's report of 1521, the comparison of the two does suggest, despite the maintenance of a handsome surplus, that it had declined by 20% in eight years.

When in 1531 Falier came to make his report, despite his poor arithmetic, he produced convincing lists of income and expenditure that do suggest that the king's surplus income was certainly no more than 100,000 ducats per annum. Moreover, while confessing that it was "difficult to know what ready money the king had", Falier had heard that it was "about a million of gold; he having already spent the six millions left him by his father in the wars." However, the same report did explain that the king was discovering new ways of gaining money. Already he had declared that the prelates had infringed the statute of Praemunire and "the delinquents had been exempted from the penalties incurred by them on the payment of 500,000 ducats." But this was merely a single grant and what Falier saw in the air was a situation in which the king, becoming completely estranged from the Church of Rome, would annex the ecclesiastical revenues to the Crown. This "would enrich him to the amount of six million ducats annually." In other words the precise sum that Falier imagined Henry VIII had inherited from his father, but this time an annual 'legacy'.(1) Why then, the question might be asked, did Henry feel it necessary to compel property owners in 1533 to accept knight-hood or be fined so that he could thereby "realise a great sum"?(2) As Carlo Capello reported in 1535 Cromwell's new exactions had already increased the income from wardships to give the king an ordinary income of 700,000 ducats, added to which was a sum from confiscated

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1. Falier, 23-4, 21, 25.

2. C. Capello, (San.48), SPV IV, 9 May 1533.

annates and church benefices that more than doubled the total.(1) One and a half million ducats were not of the order of Falier's six millions but certainly it was very substantial as an annual income. As Henry passed into the last decade of his reign, Italian observers remarked how no church property seemed safe from him: "he had confiscated the riches and torn away the patrimony of the church,... even subverting the ornaments of the churches to his own wicked rapacity."(2) In 1540 he even "appropriated to himself all the English revenues of the knights of Rhodes" on the convenient excuse that "they did not hazard their lives against the infidel."(3) Even if Bernardo Segni, writing in the mid 1550s, looked back and decided that Henry VIII by his ecclesiastical exactions filled out an income of one million in gold to 1,800,000 per annum(4), what, any Italian might have asked, gave rise to Henry's financial predicament in 1544? Any French campaign was naturally expensive but this time the Venetian senate was passing on news that Henry had "taken 80,000 golden ducats on loan from the city of London, giving landed security to that amount at the rate of five per cent interest." This was a relatively small sum; it seems strange that the English king should have been compelled to put up landed securities for this amount. What was even stranger was that Henry VIII's attempt to arrange a 200,000 crown loan from Antwerp through Florentine, Genoese and Lucchese merchants, even on the "promise to repay with interest and costs within six months", met with a refusal.(5) Admittedly dealings with an excommunicate might not have been considered good business practice for an Italian but, if their businesses were concerned with

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1. Capello: Report, SPV V, 3 June 1535.

2. Giovio: Desc., 18.

3. Francesco Contarini (at Brussels), SPV V, 14 Nov. 1540.

4. B. Segni, Vol.II, Bk.vi, p.23.

5. News letter from England to the Doge and Senate, SPV V, 7 July 1544.

the northern Europe of that time, this might well have been unavoidable in some form or other. One can only imagine that they really considered Henry VIII's credit to have been bad; they could only see the man constantly seeking for money, no longer the king with the huge annual surplus income.

In 1551 Daniele Barbaro summed up the financial orgy of Henry VIII's reign. He suggested that from incidental sources the king in all must have seen twenty one millions of gold <sup>ducats</sup> flow into his treasury but added that "it could not be supposed that any more remained of all the money which passed into the hands of Henry VIII. This certainly seemed monstrous but, considering how very many persons who had the management of the war had become immensely wealthy and how recklessly the money was spent, and how many appetites his late Majesty had to gratify, this so vast expenditure could not be doubted." Apparently as a late remedy to counteract this Henry VIII had debased the coinage and, by using base money, kept the gold for himself. This caused incredible loss to the nobility and the entire population." This infamous money had "fallen into such disrepute...(that) the ruin of the country was anticipated."(1)

Although this climax to Henry VIII's financial career did appear to have much wider national repercussions than royal difficulties usually had, Barbaro did make the point that an impecunious English king did not necessarily mean a poor population. Not only were there always those who benefited greatly from excessive royal spending, especially in time of war, but also a rich population was the only thing that could encourage a king to go to war and that in turn was the one sure thing that depleted royal treasuries. That was the lesson of Edward III, Edward IV and Henry VIII's reigns; it was the

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1. Daniele Barbaro: Report, SPV V, p.359, s.m. May 1551; see also Soranzo: Report, SPV V, p.551.

lesson learned and taken to heart by Edward IV and Henry VII. Hence, Italians saw these last two as the only English kings of the Renaissance period that died as rich kings in a rich country. Their more belligerent counterparts died debt-ridden amongst England's natural riches.

#### 4. Towns.

As if to emphasise the unique financial position of their kings, English towns existed in a contrasting state of almost perpetual economic prosperity, like islands scattered in an inland sea. Strikingly they were controlled by non-noble elements and appeared to owe very little credit for their existence to the patronage of magnates or kings. Towns were seen by Italians as self-governing bodies, as virtually independent of the king as they were physically removed from him. They were the entrepôts which saw to the distribution of the fruits of the land, especially in the form of wool, and fostered the activities of tradesmen and craftsmen. Towns were at once the shops and shop-windows of England. Above all they were seen by urban-orientated Italian writers as reflections of their own distinctive milieu.

The first thing that struck the more authoritative writers was the fewness of towns in Britain. They were sparsely scattered over the land and only given some sort of cohesion by a well organised system of communications. Savorgnano in 1531 was impressed when on his journey between Dover and London via Canterbury he was "supplied with horses of marvellous speed, riding post as it were, according to the custom of travellers." (1) One dares to assume that this need for speed resulted from the main English towns being spaced far apart. Savorgnano's comment may have finally convinced Italians

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1. M. Savorgnano (San.54), SPV IV, 25 Aug. 1531.

of this: for until then there had been a difference of opinion. The Trevisan Relation had very firmly said that there were "scarcely any towns of importance in the kingdom, except two: Bristol, a seaport to the west, and York, which was on the borders of Scotland; besides London to the south." (1) What then induced Sabellico a few years later to say that "there were many quarters, villages and towns", although he named only London as their chief? (2) In 1506 Vincenzo Quirini had precisely maintained that in England and Wales there were twenty-two cities; <sup>(città)</sup> fifty walled towns, <sup>(terre murate)</sup> great and small, and about 1,300 villages. (3) Falier in 1531 was content to generalise in Quirini's fashion but, in as much as the twenty-two cities that he mentioned were cathedral cities, this does suggest that the presence of a cathedral in an English town defined it as a città. (4) If one thinks back to Trevisan's enumeration of the dioceses in the provinces of Canterbury and York: "in that of the former there were thirteen English and four Welsh bishoprics; in that of the latter only two" (5) and if one counts in the two archdioceses, with the addition of Sodor and Man, the number does indeed come up to the pre-1540 total of twenty-two. But to call all cathedral towns cities as Quirini and Falier did was pure chop-logic. It is not surprising that other observers of the English scene tended to think of England as having only three main cities. Towns like Hull and Southampton, which might have more readily engaged their attention, were not by definition on a par with the twenty-two cathedral cities.

One thing that did interest Italians was the reasons for the origins of English towns and for their continued existence. The first

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1. Trevisan, 41.
  2. Sabellico, Vol.II, p.943.
  3. Quirini, 18-19.
  4. Falier, 15.
  5. Trevisan, 40.



suggestion was naturally that many had spiritual origins. This was the sort of thing that impressed itself upon someone like Aeneas Sylvius. London was as important for its "famous church of St. Paul and the wonderful tombs of the kings" as for anything else. The town of Canterbury owed its growth to the foundation of the archdiocese; nothing emphasised this more than the fame of one of its primates, Becket, whose "golden mausoleum...covered with diamonds, pearls and carbuncles" contained the whole of Canterbury for visiting Italians.(1) Durham existed because it was the place where "men went to see the tomb of the holy abbot, the Venerable Bede, which was piously revered by the inhabitants of the region." York impressed most because it had a "cathedral notable in the whole world for its size and architecture and for a very brilliant chapel whose glass walls were held together by very slender columns."(2) But York, according to Trevisan, owed its initial foundation to Roman initiative. It had been "the principal city of the island and was adorned with many buildings by the Romans, in their elegant style."(3) Those days had passed; it was no longer a defensive position as it must have been under the Roman invaders. Defence was the only raison d'être for some English towns. With regard to Calais, Trevisan said that he did "not believe that the castle of St. Peter at Rhodes was more strictly guarded against the Turks than Calais was against the French. It was the same case with Berwick in Scotland." The Tower of London was always beside the city to remind one of its defensive purpose and, especially in the reign of Henry VII, it was known to contain a huge arsenal of weapons.(4) Yet, even earlier than this Mancini

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1. Pius II: Coms., pp.16-17

2. Ibid., pp.20-21.

3. Trevisan, 41.

4. Ibid., 45.

described the Tower as "an impregnable citadel beside the town."<sup>(1)</sup> London, as it stood then, was not of itself well fortified; to one side, the Tower served this purpose. By 1531 Falier was of the opinion that "the Tower, although washed by the Thames and surrounded by walls, was not a strong fortress", but this did not seem to worry the English: "they prided themselves...that the castle was built by Julius Caesar."<sup>(2)</sup> In other words, defensive may have been its origins but that function in Henry VIII's relatively tranquil reign had been considerably reduced, even neglected. If truth be told, the roots of many English towns were so obscure that it was not thought odd to ascribe an early Roman planting to any of them. Hence, Pius II repeated that Newcastle was "said to have been built by Caesar."<sup>(3)</sup> Julius or not, the effect was the same; the purpose invariably defensive. Even in Solario's Withypool Triptych (Plate 8) the right-hand landscape vignette clearly shows a town, walled and massively towered, with the additional protection of a river washing its perimeter. The English town certainly gave the appearance of a fortress prepared to meet the attack of any assailant, even although at this time, about 1514, there was little or no threat of this. Until Falier's time towns could have been seen as links in a defence system prepared for attacks that did not materialise.

In Scotland the atmosphere was rather different. Despite Pinturicchio's view from James I's palace (Plate 1), from which one can see a certain amount of rather extravagantly turretted and walled townscape, Pius II himself maintained that "the cities had no walls."<sup>(4)</sup> Vergil made exceptions. At the king's palace at

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1. Mancini, p.87.

2. Falier, 19.

3. Pius II: Coms., p.20.

4. Ibid., p.18.

Edinburgh there was "a tower of no small strength called the castle of the Maidens" and other fortified spots but, "besides St. John's town, there was not one enclosed with walls, which man might ascribe to their valliance of mind." (1) True it was that many Scottish cities were unwallled although, for example, in Edinburgh by this time more than just the castle had defensive walls. On the whole the Italian picture of Scottish towns must have presented a remarkable contrast beside that of English and certainly Italian towns.

There was virtually a consensus of Italian opinion that English cities did not exist as seats of royal palaces or out-growths of royal residences. Mancini described London as "the royal city and capital of the whole kingdom", but, as he later made clear, both the Tower and Westminster, which were used as royal residences, did not form anything more than peripheral parts of the city of London. Nicolo di Farvi described the latter as the king's palace of Westminster, less than two miles from London. It decidedly did not form part of London itself. (2) Even then, it was not until 1531 that Henry VIII seemed interested in creating a very large residence even at Westminster and that, from the fact that the design of the buildings and park adjoining York house was "on so large a scale that many hundreds of houses would have to be levelled" (3), Italians might have gathered that there was virtually no room for or any previous conception of having a royal house built there on any grand scale on the fringes of the city. A much more likely place for a royal residence was, for example, at Woodstock. Woodstock itself was "a sorry village" several miles away. (4) Even that extrovert monarch,

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1. Vergil: AH(ET), 6.

2. Mancini, p.127; N.di Farvi, SPV II, s.m. Feb. 1513.

3. Augustino Scarpinello, SPM, 20 Apr. 1531.

4. A. Trevisan (San.1), SPV I, 11 Oct. 1497.

Henry VIII, did not have any important residence in London. Giovio looked at the city and down-river he saw the king's house at Greenwich; up-river was Richmond; Westminster, in the middle and much nearer, was mainly a seat of justice. More impressive was "the king's walled seat of Windsor...some distance from London", a compact entity in itself far from any city.(1)

In the period of the Renaissance the main reason for the existence of the English town was geographic convenience for the country's commercial well being. Hull, for example in Vergil's words, was "well known by reason of the assembly at market of buyers and sellers" simply because it lay on the Humber, to which safe and convenient passage might be made from France, Germany and Denmark.(2) Southampton was most convenient as a port because, with the rise of a tide from either side of the Isle of Wight, it had twice the accessibility of an ordinary harbour.(3) London was famed in Italy as an inland town with easy access to the open sea. Mancini remarked that the Thames was "navigable not only for rowing boats but for larger vessels": it had a "tide twice a day from the ocean".(4) The Trevisan Relation was more precise. "London.., although sixty miles from the sea, possessed all the advantages to be desired in a maritime town": the tide even went miles further up the Thames than London so that it was small wonder that "vessels of 100 tons burden could come up to the city and ships of any size within five miles of it."(5) The danger that enemy ships could sail up the Thames to London and set fire to the bridges, as the anonymous Bolognese chronicler recorded when the Bastard of Fauconberg did this in 1471(6),

1. Giovio: Desc., 12v.

2. Vergil: AH(ET), 5.

3. Cf. Bede, p.681.

4. Mancini, p.125.

5. Trevisan, 42.

6. Continuatio Chronici Bononiensis, anon., RIS.18, p.784.

seems a possibility but this incident was isolated and could not have been regarded as showing up an indefensible weakness. The only thought in Vergil's experienced mind, when he considered the Thames, was its tremendous ebb and flow for sixty miles: this was a "great means of merchandise for the city." Certainly the English made the best of any disadvantage that it might present. The famous bridge that was needed at London was enormous in construction; with "houses on both sides, (it) rather represented a street of great length than a bridge."(1) According to Mancini it represented more than a street because on it there were work-shops and above them craftsmen's houses so that even it represented a hive of commercial activity.(2)

But what did London mean to Italians, this London that Mancini saw abounding in enough sophisticated commercial activity to make her famous throughout the world, yet set in isolation amid open fields? To Pius II London was a "rich and populous city"; the bridge itself was "like a city."(3) In 1461 Prospero di Camulio described it as "very rich and the most wealthy city in Christendom."(4) Piovano Arlotto called it a "noble and rich city", a place through which streams of international moneys flowed, that is, a place where one had to go if one wanted to buy wool.(5) Thus, even before Mancini gave his extended description of the town, the fame of London as a unit of commercial richness in a land of agrarian prosperity was international. Mancini's picture dulled the others. London's "enormous warehouses for imported goods; also numerous cranes of remarkable size to unload merchandise from ships", in addition to three very busy paved streets of shops selling every sort of merchandise, were very impressive. One street with "liquid and weighty commodities," the second with "hardly anything for sale but

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1. Vergil: AH(ET), 3.

2. Mancini, p.125.

3. Pius II: Coms., p.16.

4. P. di Camulio, SPM, 27 Mar. 1461.

5. P. Arlotto, Nos. 5, 3.

cloths"; the third "trafficking in more precious wares such as gold and silver cups, dyed stuffs, various silk carpets, tapestry, and much other exotic merchandise" obviously were intended to cater for a variety of rich customers from home and abroad. Quantitatively too there was a touch of the excellent. Craftsmen and merchants' "houses were not, as was the case with most, encumbered with merchandise only at the entrance": inside there were large depositories with goods "heaped up, stowed and packed away as honey may be seen in cells." It was logical enough that the city's men of commerce were renowned for their refinements, "the magnificence of their banquets, the ecclesiastical ceremonial (and) the adornment and opulence of their churches." (1) The Trevisan Relation, by saying that all the beauty in the island was confined to London, could surely not have implied that London itself was an attractive city: "the houses of timber or brick like the French" were noticeably unlike Italian ones. Yet the Londoners lived comfortably. What made it sparkle in Italian eyes was that it abounded with every article of luxury, as well as the necessities of life. In this the Relation agreed with Mancini but it did go much further in its praise of London's riches: the Strand's "fifty-two goldsmiths' shops (were) so rich and full of silver vessels, great and small, that in all the shops in Milan, Rome, Venice and Florence put together" not as much magnificence could be found. (2) If the only really great city in England was London, it certainly appeared to match the combined competition of the great Italian towns.

The notable thing about London's great riches, Trevisan continued, was that they were "not occasioned by its inhabitants

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1. Mancini, p.127.

2. Trevisan, 42-3; see too N. di Farvi (San.15), SPV II, Feb. 1513, on houses.



being noblemen or gentlemen; being all, on the contrary, persons of low degree, and artificers who had congregated there from all parts of the island, and from Flanders, and from every other place."

(1) London was taking on the appearance of a melting pot for the ambitious of all England and even the Continent; it was a necessity for the commercially active, a place where specialisation was so highly developed that, as Nicolo di Farvi noted, no one made bread at home but went every morning to bakeries which made it their business to supply it.(2) It was, of course, these same specialists who were never satisfied and burned with a desire to widen the scope of their commercial activity by carrying it out beyond the city. The same people inculcated their ambition into their children as apprentices so that "often, imitating their fathers in their labours... (they) gained equal faculties and honours."(3) Vergil here was merely emphasising a harsh note that had begun to creep in with Trevisan. About the same time as Vergil published his Anglica Historia, Mario Savorgnano looked at London and admired the great merchants and nobles' houses with their "very delightful gardens." Yet his glance rested on the common artificers' houses massed together, all very ugly with their half wooden construction and constricted into narrow streets. Rich, prosperous and mercantile the city might be but it was not beautiful. Savorgnano's view of the city presents an enormous contrast with his idea of the English country-side, so "very beautiful and most fertile." One wonders if there is any correlation between this shadow that the artificers cast over London as a city and the bad character of Anne Boleyn that Savorgnano imagined was clouding the sun-like personality of Henry VIII and "detracting from

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1. Trevisan, 43.

2. N. di Farvi, SPV II, Feb. 1513.

3. Vergil: AH(Basle, 1570), Bk.14, p.243.

his merits."(1) Yet, the rank ambition that could be seen amid and partly causing London's economic prosperity had its effects. It did have a civilizing influence upon those members of the rural population who were drawn into the city by the hope of advancement(2) and it must have had the effect of balancing out the sluggishness of the Englishman's attitude to the cultivation of the soil. Falier in 1531 particularly noted that the balance between England's exports and foreign imports was virtually even in value.(3) London preserved the equilibrium.

Moreover, in Vergil's opinion, this was in spite of the existence of craft guilds that flourished in the English city. No urban Italian could have been wholly ignorant of their functions. But in London it would have appeared that the kings had sold privileges to merchants so that they could form themselves into societies which could pass their own laws or rules and set up monopolies. In this way they fixed prices and forbade anyone else from dealing in their particular merchandise. Since the entire working population seemed to be divided up into these guilds according to their occupations, from the age of seventeen years, these restrictive practices, said Vergil, quoting Giustinian, "always brought detriment."(4) Did Italians, one wonders, ever associate this with the generally acknowledged height of prices in London? Vergil's was a retrospective view tempered by knowledge of contemporary conditions. When Barbaro wrote about the guilds or "companies" in 1551, he was more subjective. They were like the Venetian "schools or fraternities of artificers" and therefore were perhaps more familiar to him than to the Urbino-bred

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1. Savorgnano (San.54), SPV IV, 25 Aug. 1531.

2. Vergil: AH(Basle,1570), Bk.14, p.243.

3. Falier, 22.

4. Vergil: AH(Basle,1570), Bk.14, p.243.

Vergil. The prime function of the guilds, as Barbaro saw it, was not so much to put up prices but to regulate them and to see that everything was conducted methodically. If anyone appeared to suffer under their autocratic rule, it was the apprentices, their future members, who had to serve their trade six or seven years before joining. During this time their lot could be compared to servants' and their masters could "exercise jurisdiction over them as if they were slaves."(1)

The government of commercial bodies was one thing; civic government in England claimed much more Italian attention, virtually all of which was concentrated on London. Only Trevisan said that "in imitation of London...every town, however small, elected its mayor." London set the pattern; therefore one only needed to look there. Yet, when he added that the same form of government was used in Jersey, the Channel Isles and one of the Menanian isles(2), this reflected back upon the insular image of London's civic jurisdiction and upon its unique self-sufficiency and independence of royal control. Frulovisi, one of the first Italians to focus on the subject, told of how Henry V, returning to London after his Agincourt campaign, was "met by the Mayor of the city with his senators, whom they call aldermen, and all the people." The picture is that of the representatives of one form of government going out to meet the head of another.(3) Indeed, the concept of London as a powerful corporate entity was additionally emphasised by the opinion expressed by Prospero di Camulio in 1461 to the effect that in times of civil strife London's political weight was such that it could "enormously increase the chances of the side that it favoured."(4)

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1. Barbaro: Report, SPV V, s.m. May 1551, p.344.

2. Trevisan, 45.

3. Frulovisi, 22.

4. P. di Camulio, SPM, 27 Mar. 1461.

By the time of Trevisan there was evidence that the city government considered itself almost internationally important. Trevisan and his secretary were not only very formally invited to attend the mayor's installation banquet but also to "a no less magnificent banquet given when two other (lower) officers named sheriffs were appointed." The Venetians were slightly embarrassed.(1) By 1515 there was a change of tone. Piero Pasqualigo repeated how Henry VIII had caused him and his countrymen "to be invited by the Lord Mayor of London, who gave (them) a very sumptuous dinner." This, Pasqualigo thought, only added to the honour and appreciation of the Venetian embassy.(2) But how did this reflect on London government? It was Henry VIII himself who had arranged this, presumably as an honour, and that is how the Italians took it. Even since Trevisan's time the Lord Mayor's reputation as a host to the highest born had increased. There is a curious paradox about the situation. Italians were well aware that the governing citizens and merchants were "persons of low degree", but nonetheless they were "thought quite as highly of there, as the Venetian gentlemen were at Venice" and the annually elected mayor was held "in no less estimation with the Londoners than the person of...(the Doge)..or than the Gonfaloniero at Florence." The one marked difference, it might have been said, was that in those cities, especially Venice, the chief elected magistrate was chosen from an entrenched ruling caste, whereas in London the twenty-four men who were drawn from the several wards into which the city was divided were elected as aldermen, a description "in their language signifying old or experienced men." That implied that the one qualification necessary for a civic governor was

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1. Trevisan, 44.

2. Piero Pasqualigo in RB I, p.92, s.d. 3 May 1515.

maturity, both physical and mental.(1) It was only in the commercial world that these men could have become matured by experience of life. One wonders if Carmeliano's description of this corporation as "the consul of the city, whom they call the mayor, and likewise the tribunes of the people whom the masses call sheriffs" did anything but confuse Italian minds.(2) The dignities of consul and tribunus plebis had and have such connotations with the offices held by patricians in ancient Rome that, especially in the tribune's case, implied governmental representation of the people rather than representation chosen out from the people, as Trevisan was indirectly suggesting.

With the delivery of the Falier Report in 1531, a new insight was given into civic rule. Government was indeed still carried out by the twenty-four aldermen with their mayor, all of whom had proved their worth in industry and, growing rich, had been made freemen of the city and finally magistrates. Yet the office of mayor, which now carried with it the prize of automatic knighthood, was seen as a "dignity apparent rather than real, and very expensive."(3) In saying this he reinforced the possible notion that civic governors were becoming more interested in the outward forms of their political ascendancy rather than being attracted by its executive powers. Sanudo in 1520 had already described how even such a small corporation as the one at Canterbury had turned out to receive officially the Emperor Charles V. There they were "in scarlet gowns, with hoods half black and half red, according to the custom of the country.(4) It made a colourful tableau but it implied little more than an honorific

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1. Trevisan, 43-44.

2. Carmeliano, p.7.

3. Falier, 19.

4. Sanudo 29, SPV III, 21 May-14 July 1520.

distinctiveness. Indeed, high civic office did bear some weighty social implications. The mayor of London was known as Lord Mayor, said Barbaro in 1551, and after his year of office, when he lost this style, he was knighted. His wife was, however, to the end of her life still styled 'Lady', a confusion of her style of lady as a mayoress and lady as the wife of a knight, only bolstered by her "dressing differently from the other women." (1)

However, if the figure of the mayor by Barbaro's time was being over-shadowed by the "pomp and magnificence" of an office which, as Vergil reminded Italians, had lasted formally since the time of Richard I (2), and if the office was only now seen to be circumscribed by the mayor's "taking an oath before the Chief Baron of the Exchequer to observe the laws faithfully", it would have seemed that the sheriffs, elected "for the purpose of administering justice to the people", were in that respect rather more functional, perhaps even more powerful. (3) Nevertheless, the distinct feeling remains that city officials were rather more absorbed by the status bestowed by their offices than by the nature of its function. The need for riches before the assumption of the offices; the need for them when in power and the nobiliary touch that they could bestow suggest a veering away from the grosser forms of commercial activity and perhaps too the enervation that can come with strict formality. If so, this might not have been out of step with the Italian notion of the par-balanced state of the English city's commercial force by Henry VIII's death.

##### 5. Population.

The sharp contrast between urban commercialisation and rural

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1. Barbaro, SPV V, p.344, May 1551.
  2. Vergil: AH (Basle, 1570), Bk. 14. p.243.
  3. Barbaro, SPV V, p.344.



inactivity, indeed, the very essence of the variable economic drive in England, depended largely upon the size and distribution of population. Yet, in their observations Italians showed that they had only the vaguest notion about the most general suggestions of demographic statistics. Therefore any Italian who was interested in the subject would have had to have rooted about rather thoroughly in literature which on the surface might have given little hint of containing population statistics. However, generally there was a distinct suggestion that England, especially in the fifteenth century, was comparatively underpopulated, in particular short of man-power, in contrast to Scotland where human heads at times seemed to be the chief national asset. Yet, when one speaks of population in terms of man-power, the military importance is usually uppermost and only secondly do economic considerations come into the picture.

What significance could be interpreted from Pius II's estimation of the sizes of the opposing forces at Agincourt? The English had scarcely 10,000 soldiers; the French 40,000. Despite the fact that the English were nearing the end of their campaign and that not only were the French on their own territory but also France covered a larger area than England, the quarter sized English force could have given the impression that the English population was not as dense as it could have been. Certainly this created problems, if only because after Agincourt there were found to be "twice as many captors as there were victors." The consequences were memorable and tragic.<sup>(1)</sup> The situation was no different in 1430. Luca di Maso degli Albizzi encountered serious difficulties when recruiting crews in England and was led to conclude that "this land was poor in men." They would not "come

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1. Pius II: De viris, No.27.

without the promise of having money payment": the implication is that they knew that they had scarcity value and could dictate their own terms of service. Granted, at that time the situation was worse than usual because "the king was prepared to pass over to France (and) it was not possible to have them without a licence." (1) Therefore, the implication would seem to be that if the youthful Henry VI required an impressive entourage for his coronation, England could be expected to have scarcely a man left over for the Florentines' use.

During the Wars of the Roses some Italians produced a few figures of Englishmen involved in the fighting. In 1461 Richard duke of York fell fighting before the city of York, amid 12,000 to 16,000 dead partisans. Thousands more, Prospero de' Camulio concluded, were slain in subsequent battles. Even the figure of 12,000 seems very high; it was roughly equivalent to the population size of, for example, York itself. However, de' Camulio's words, taken literally in Milan, might have implied that England was capable of mustering larger fighting forces. His estimation that the earl of Warwick alone could command 60,000 combatants (2), certainly is an advance on Pius II and Albizzi's suggestions for earlier years and is considerably at odds with, for example, E.F. Jacob's estimation that about this time the Lancastrian force, "far greater than the Yorkists, was more than 22,000." (3) When in 1472 Edward IV was on the throne again, this time theoretically with the resources of English man-power united behind him, Pietro Aliprando mentioned that he could only raise 20,000 men for his campaign against France. (4) When the force did finally set out in 1475, Cristoforo de' Bollato stated that in all 36,000 persons were in the English armies. (5) De' Bollato was in Paris at the time: the suggestion

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1. L. di Maso degli Albizzi, p.263, S.M. Feb. 1430.

2. P. di Camulio, in Ghent, SPM, 1 Feb. 1461.

3. Cf. E.F. Jacob: The Fifteenth Century, p.526.

4. Pietro Aliprando, SPM, 25 Nov. 1472.

5. C. di Bollato, in Paris, SPM, 11 Feb. 1475.

is that he was exaggerating the force confronting the French. Whatever figure was thought correct in Italy, although 36,000 might well have been thought large for England, no one could have been misled enough to think that England had great reserves of man-power, if only because Tommaso de' Portinari was to comment that Edward IV's army was "the finest, largest and best appointed force that had ever left England." (1) Even the most generous estimate did not equal the size of the French force that Pius II said was gathered at Agincourt as far back as 1415. Now if one takes together Lionetto de' Rossi's opinion that in 1474 the English army "consisted of sturdy mechanics" (2) and Pius II's assertion that London was "a populous city" (3), one could say that Italians implied that, since the over all numbers were small, so was the population and that, if the army drew its forces from urban population, it would have had to depend largely on London, the one city with the reputation for being populous.

From what Pius II thought about the man-power of Scotland about this time, the picture seemed little different from England. He recorded how Margaret of Anjou had said that "the Scots were not strong enough to restore her to her throne" and this she said at the same time as she claimed that "all the fighting men in England had fallen: in one year more than 10,000 had died in battle." (4) The Scots could evidently muster forces so small that they would have achieved nothing even against the decimated English armies. By the end of the fifteenth century in the Trevisan Relation not only was exactly the opposite directly stated but also there was a correlation pointed out between numbers of national armed forces and over all

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1. Tommaso de' Portinari to Lorenzo de' Medici, SPM, 28 June 1475.
  2. Lionetto de' Rossi, SPM, 9 Aug. 1474.
  3. Pius II: Coma, p.16.
  4. Ibid., pp.578-9.

population. The Scottish king could easily "raise, without any trouble to the country, 50 to 60,000 men." Moreover, after serving for thirty days, they could be dismissed and be "replaced by another force of equal magnitude." In fact, the population was so great that, should a larger army have been required, it could at any time have been obtained."(1) Once Trevisan had said this and found his confirmation in Giovanni de' Bebelcho's opinion that, "though the king of Scots was poor as regards money.., he had an abundance of men"(2), then the notion was fixed in Italian minds. At the time of the Flodden campaign there were conflicting opinions about the Scottish numbers but, while Henry VIII went off to France with a host of 60,000 men, the Scots king was reported to have invaded England with an army of either 40,000 men or "upwards of 80,000 picked men."(3) Even after the Scots had been thoroughly defeated, Nicolo di Farvi saw no reason to question the view that, although they were poor and ill-armed, "the Scots were very numerous."(4)

The general Italian opinion of England at this time was quite the opposite. As Trevisan very succinctly put it, it did not appear that "the population of the island...bore any proportion to her fertility and riches." He had ridden from Dover to London and found the area "very thinly inhabited." Neither did reports from travellers to the north, west or south-west produce any different story. Apparently the same thing could have been said in Richard II's reign, when it was computed that "the numbers of men capable of bearing arms was... found to be 200,000 archers."(5) Had anyone looked back at this point to Niccola della Tuccia's example of Ertogod, the English soldier who

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1. Trevisan, 15-16.

2. G. de' Bebulcho, SPM, 3 July 1496.

3. Antonio Bavarin (San.16), SPV II, 4 July 1513; the Venetian ambassador at Rome (San.16), SPV II, 12 July 1513; Marco Dandolo, Venetian ambassador to France, (San.17), SPV II, 8 Sept. 1513.

4. N. di Farvi, (San.17), SPV II, 12 Oct. 1513.

5. Trevisan, 31.

had reached the age of 120 years and was still active(1), and deduced that extreme longevity was an English characteristic, the slow turn-over of numbers might have made England's population seem even smaller in numbers born. What Trevisan could have concluded, since he saw a thinly populated countryside and only three main towns, was that the towns' populations were very large. However, virtually ignoring York and Bristol, he estimated that in London "there were not fewer inhabitants than at Florence or Rome."(2) There is nothing to suggest that he did not think this a fairly good number, especially when compared with the thinly spread country population. In 1531 Falier boldly hazarded a guess that London had a "population of 70,000 souls", a fairly accurate though slightly conservative estimate, if modern calculations can be given credence.(3) It also implies a fair degree of population growth in London, if one takes up Trevisan's comparison with Rome's population, which about 1500 might well have been in the region of 40,000 people.(4) In the space of little more than thirty years Italians therefore could have seen a considerable increase in London's population. There was indeed no basic reason why this should not have taken place naturally because the wars in which England had participated during that period were relatively minor affairs. Yet, there was still a distinct suggestion that the increase might well have been caused rather by population movement. Trevisan had said that England was "very thinly peopled"; Savorgnano in 1531 had even more expansively asserted that "the greater part of the island was not much peopled" and gave as the reason the fact that it was laid out in parks for the pleasure of the ruling caste.(5) This

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1. N. della Tuccia, Pt.II, p.124, s.a. 1433.

2. Trevisan, 41-2.

3. Falier, 19; and cf. J. Mackie, pp.40-1, for population estimates.

4. Cf. discussion of Rome's population in Enciclopedia Italiana, Vol.29, p.789.

5. M. Savorgnano, SPV IV, p.288, 25 Aug. 1531.



coupled with Vergil's scientific account of how the gentry's enclosure of common land had reduced the number of peasants and stripped many villages and towns of their inhabitants(1), might well have suggested that, if London's population was rising, elsewhere in England, in small town and country-side, the general numbers of people were at least proportionally falling. It was a movement which, if it was not seen to boost English commercial life very much, could not have implied anything other than a reduction of agriculture and an even more disproportionate relation between natural riches and population numbers than Trevisan had remarked on some decades earlier.

#### 6. Climate: health.

In Britain economic conditions often depended upon meteorological peculiarities. Both, directly and indirectly, affected the population's state of health. Some Italian observers saw a direct connection between British weather and British health; others were perhaps less explicit. Yet, it was undisputably held that Britain's economic position and social behaviour were very markedly affected by conditions of weather and health respectively and at times consecutively. There seemed to be a constant interaction between them.

A picture of English weather had been drawn by Classical writers long before the Italian Renaissance. Therefore much about its peculiar nature may have been taken for granted. The very fact that the island was much further north than Italy might have suggested less clement weather conditions. Starting at a northerly point, Pius II had remarked that he had visited Scotland "at a misty time when the sun illuminated the earth little more than three hours."(2) This may not have contradicted the received Italian opinion of the day. In Pinturicchio's

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1. Vergil: AH(Hay), p.277.

2. Pius II: De Europa, Ch.46, p.443.



fresco commemorating Pius II's visit, despite the paradox of a wind-strained boat sail and an untroubled sea, glassily calm and fringed by trees with limply elegant foliage, the sky is very cloudy, rather over-cast and grey if not exactly misty. (Plate 1) Nonetheless, it does not reproduce the sombre darkness of Pius's image but rather a balanced temperateness, such as Trevisan saw in the weather of England. "The cold in winter was much less severe than in Italy, and the heat proportionally less in summer." Apparently this was caused by "the rain which fell almost every day during the months of June, July and August." (1) It was enough to eliminate any suggestion of spring from the year's programme. Quite simply "the kingdom of Scotland was very rainy." (2) The overall effect of these dabs of description is to paint a mellow aquarelle, born in water and still imbued with dampness.

Niccolo di Farvi, agreeing on the point that "the summers were never very hot neither was it ever very cold", added an invigorating element by saying that "in England it was always windy." (3) When, a year later in 1514, Antonio de Solario painted the Withypool Triptych, the rain-bearing cumulus clouds that he put over the landscape give a distinct feeling of their coursing on a fresh wind and of being light enough not to dull the countryside completely. (Plate 8) In 1531 Falier might have been describing Solario's visual impression of the weather when he said, "The air is neither cold nor hot, but wet and cloudy." (4) The weather that Vergil experienced was more active: the natives were to be seen huddling together to avoid "the tempestuous blasts of boisterous winds

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1. Trevisan, 8-9.

2. Ibid., 14.

3. N. di Farvi, (San.15), SPV II, s.m., Feb. 1513.

4. Falier, 12.

because the island itself was naturally subject to great winds." But even this description he did much to mute by adding that the "weather, commonly cloudy, (was) intermixed with showers and so much the less cold."(1) If Giovio at the end of the day added anything to the general picture of the mainland with its "benignly temperate air", it was to remind his readers that in the extremities of the land the weather could be more savage. The Orkney and Shetland islands were "rasped by wind and cold"(2) and in the mountains of Wales there were occasional "horrid glaciers." But in summing up he was content to generalise by saying that "in the whole of Britain the heavens were marvellously clement,...generally temperate and like much of France and Italy...gentle and benign." Only in winter was there frequent rain and some thunder but any dullness soon would disappear.(3) Giovio really echoed his fellow Italians' opinion that, despite that hint of similarity with his own country, the British weather presented a scene full of constant movement, change and contrast but only within a moderate range.

To generalise on the theme of ill-health and disease in England, one could say that Italians did not make note of a great variety of them: they only mentioned plague, sweating sickness, a touch of lumbago, leprosy, dysentery and eye-trouble, while Vergil on one occasion mentioned that William Courtenay, earl of Devon, died of "an illness, which they called pleurisy, which with the English was rare."(4) Quantitatively within this scope, the English were manifestly not below average in being troubled by the commoner diseases. The plague was a constantly recurring and very particular

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1. Vergil: AH(ET), 4, 19.

2. Giovio: Hist.I, p.238.

3. Giovio: Desc., p.14.

4. Vergil: AH(Hay), p.126 text in notes.

feature of English life.

In 1420 Poggio in London found himself in the middle of "a great plague." Not even his inevitable familiarity with the disease in Italy calmed him: he freely admitted, "Much fear possessed me; I went to a country house with the bishop, and there remained for two months." (1) It should be noted that only London seemed to have been the dangerous place. In 1464 again the tale was that in London "the plague was at work...at the rate of 200 per diem." (2) In August 1511 Badoer was to write back to Venice that Henry VIII was upset because "the Queen-widow, mother of the late King Edward (sic) had died of plague." (3) If the mighty could fall, the humbler were even more vulnerable. In October 1513 di Farvi wrote that "in London deaths from the plague were occurring constantly." In fact in August two of the Venetian ambassador's servants had been very suddenly cut down by it. (4) And so it continued summer after summer. Five embassy servants died of plague in 1515; (5); in 1516 Sebastiano Giustinian would "betake himself...to Putney owing to the plague that occurred in (his) house." (6) In November 1517 Henry VIII "kept moving from one place to another on account of plague": some of his pages had died, so to avoid contact with the infection he had dismissed the whole court. (7) It was not until the Christmas season that the plague abated somewhat. (8) Dread of it still persisted and next summer, when Henry VIII visited the Venetian galleys at Southampton, they were "devoid of crew as Henry feared the plague." (9) In July 1525 Lorenzo Orio noted a recurrence. "The plague was raging

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1. Poggio, in Omnia Opera III, Epis. ix, s.m. Oct. 1420

2. News letter from Bruges, SPM, 5 Oct. 1464.

3. A. Badoer (San.12), SPV II, 19 Aug. 1511.

4. N. di Farvi (San.17), SPV II, 12 Oct. 1513.

5. A. Badoer, SPV II, 15 June 1515.

6. S. Giustinian in RB, 31 May 1516.

7. Ibid., 11 Nov. 1517.

8. Ibid., 22 Dec. 1517.

9. Ibid., 16 June 1518.

violently in London, the deaths amounting to fifty per diem."(1) Still in the cold of January 1526 "on account of the plague the king was moving about the island with a few attendants as two of them died of plague in his dwelling."(2) It was even suspected that Orio himself died of plague, to the great alarm of his successor, Gasparo Spinelli, who determined to avoid the same fate by "wandering about the island; (he was) obliged to go a distance of sixty miles to find lodging such was the panic caused by his death."(3) Such was the Italian estimation of the plague risk in England, or more strictly in London because it seemed to be there that the plague most occurred. From the time of Poggio to Spinelli the way to avoid plague in England was to adopt the Decameron-technique of abandoning the disease-ridden city.

Although plague in itself ran away with thousands of English lives, an incident which might well have explained to Italians part of the reason for low population figures, it was not the only lethal epidemic. The sweating sickness could, according to Francesco Chiericato, attack people of any position. It could provide a swift death within twenty-four hours if one neglected to carry out a prescribed muffling of the patient in bed-covers and to keep him from drinking cold water. "To neglect these precautions insured immediate death"; to over-do them might suffocate the patient. Chiericato not only proffered this medical advice to the Mantuan court but also recorded the effects of the disease on England. It had first appeared in 1486 and returned in 1504. At the time when it was reported to be in Oxford in 1517 it was said that "upward of 400 students had died in less than a week." Evidently this disease

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1. L. Orio (San 39), SPV III, 21 July 1525.

2. Ibid., (San.40), SPV III, 3 Jan. 1526.

3. Gasparo Spinelli (San.41), SPV III, 27 May 1526.

was not confined to London. It "was increasing and already circulating throughout the kingdom, the dead being borne to their graves in every direction." Such was the universal dread of the disease that very few...did not fear for their lives, while some were so terrified by it that they suffered more from fear than others did from the sweat itself."(1) Giustinian agreed about the virulence of the attack in 1517. "Very few strangers had died, but an immense number of the natives." Along with a great part of the court, Wolsey had been ill, though the perspiration had not carried off his ambition before he had recovered. The thought of that "profuse sweat, which dissolved the frame"(2), was too much for Henry VIII. He soon withdrew to Windsor with a handful of favourites nor for some weeks hence would he "admit anyone, for fear of the disease which was now making very great progress in the land."(3) In 1528 a certain Hieronimo Terrufino mentioned a recurrence of the sickness and suggested the same cure as before. To lie immovable for twenty-four hours was the only way for the English to survive, "provided that they had the true sweating sickness, for many perspired from fear and imagination."(4) Hypochondria apart, there was no doubt in Italian minds that the sweating sickness was real and lethal enough. Long before Giovio defined it as "a singularly English pestilence"(5), the Sudor Britannicus was in Italian eyes a dreadful complaint only to be found in the northern island. It was something that the English feared when it struck probably because it represented as much of a mortality risk as the plague itself.

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Something that Piovano Arlotto liked to imagine as a

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1. F. Chierigato, SPV II, 6 Aug. 1517.

2. S. Giustinian in RB, 6 Aug. 1517.

3. Ibid., 27 Aug. 1517.

4. H. Terrufino to Alfonso I of Ferrara, SPV VI, Pt.III(App), 30 June 1528.

5. Giovio: Desc., p.15; cf. also Vergil: AH(Hay), pp.7-9, for Vergil's history of the Sudor Britannicus. This account appeared in print in 1534 and, like Giovio's reference, was in effect a retrospective glance at an old problem.

common complaint in England was some form of eye trouble. According to him the English "ate so much and so well that in the island few were healthy and among other infirmities there were there an infinite number of persons who as they expanded at the age of forty years were ashamed and their eyes bulged." This led to serious eye trouble and subsequently to devotional exercises <sup>calculated</sup> to cure the affliction without having to eliminate the cause of it.(1) It is interesting to note that Paul Withypool, the donor figure in Antonio da Solario's triptych, has a distinctly swollen look about the eyes and the shape of his eyebrows suggest an effort being made to counteract a touch of short-sightedness(Plate 8). One wonders if he could have been afflicted by one of the eye complaints described by Arlotto. Certainly the eyes of the Solario figure hint that the sitter might easily have suffered from some kind of kidney trouble. As for the pleurisy from which Vergil said William Courtenay died in 1511, this was considered a very uncommon ailment in England and, in light of the fact that Vergil did say that Henry VII had kept the earl in prison from 1502 until 1509, it seems obvious that this rather than normal English conditions had caused this rare case.(2)

But what correlation did Italians see between disease and the British climate? Certainly, one of the first impressions formed was that an Englishman outside his environment was peculiarly susceptible to illnesses. It was striking how in the fourteenth century Lionel of Clarence had no sooner married his second wife, Violante Visconti, at Milan and withdrawn to Albi than he fell ill and died.(3) Admittedly Italian authors were more concerned with the political consequences than the medical causes but the

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1. Piovano Arlotto, No.5.

2. Vergil: AH(Hay), pp.125-6.

3. Annales Mediolanenses anonymi auctoris, RIS.16, Ch.130, s.a. 1368.



fact remained that Lionel probably died because he was not resistant to some disease contracted in Italy. Much the same could be said for his nephew Henry IV. Andrea de' Reduzzi concentrated upon his visits to the Holy Land and Italy during his period of exile. This was ended by his assumption of the Crown and, said his biographer, "not long after (he) was struck by leprosy." Now, although leprosy did exist in England at that time, no other Italian author mentioned its incidence. Therefore one might justifiably interpret Andrea de Reduzzi's account to suggest that Henry could have contracted this affliction while he wandered in warmer climes. Indeed, de Reduzzi made Henry say that the leprosy was the Lord's punishment for his having visited Jerusalem only out of motives of pride; it almost came to the same thing.(1) Although modern authorities suggest that his complaint was probably a disease of the congenital venereal kind, the fact remains that for contemporary Italians he was an example of the way-faring English traveller who fell victim to a rather Mediterranean disease.

The English themselves seemed to have been aware of the dangers of climatic changes. Both Frulovisi and Pius II noted how careful Henry V was to protect his soldiers' health while in France. He issued a set of rules. Englishmen were not used to and therefore should not drink the strong wine that was so much a product of France. He also forbade his men from using feather beds because that was bad for the health. They were to sleep in nothing but material made from wool, to which they were presumably more used. "Nothing, he thought, weakened men so much as feathers and wine."(2) Although the two authors did not go on to interpret Henry V's concern as such, it

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1. A. de Reduzzi, RIS, 19, p.792.

2. Frulovisi, 82; Pius II: Coms, p.435; De viris, No.27.

may well have been quite implicitly obvious to Italians that wool next to the skin could have been healthier than feather beds for soldiers not used to a warmer climate; wool would have ensured freer perspiration and less likelihood of respiratory troubles. As for the vins du pays of France, beer-nurtured Britons unused to this stronger drink, the product of different geographic and climatic circumstances, could easily have had their health impaired and minds dulled through drinking it. The ironic thing was that Henry V, after showing so much concern for his soldiers' health, while on campaign died of dysentery, a common enough ailment but particularly for soldiers in the middle of summer.(1) In 1476 it appeared that even the dogs bred in England could not resist the effect of a climatic change. Edward IV had sent the duke of Milan a dog, Berbur, but, "whether from change of air or some accident, he fell sick...and died."(2) No one was quite sure why but the idea that the Italian climate did not agree with its constitution was certainly the first thing that sprang to mind.

And what happened at Cardinal Bainbridge's death in 1514? It was certainly to be used as an excuse for accusations of poisoning and a confession was even extracted from a possible murderer, but, according to the Milanese protonotary, Caracciolo, his death was not too sudden. The cardinal was very ill but he was not expected to die for another two days after this report.(3) It was only a month later that the suspect, Rinaldo da Modena, tortured into a confession, stabbed himself to death to escape execution and thereby confirmed his guilt in Italian minds.(4) One might suggest that the initial

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1. Pius II: Coms, p.435.

2. Galeazzo Maria Sforza, duke of Milan, SPM, 21 Dec. 1476.

3. Protonotary Caracciolo, SPM, 12 July 1514; vide D.Chambers: Cardinal Bainbridge, for discussion of the death, pp.131 ff.

4. Caracciolo, SPM, 29 Aug. 1514.

Italian attitude to the death was not so alarmist; it could easily have been considered as a case of an Englishman finally being unable to cope with the stress that a Roman summer can place upon the stomach.

In England weather conditions were seldom similar to summers in Rome. To put the cart before the horse, one could go to Gianfrancesco Straparola, who in the 1550s wrote a tale about how a certain King William of Britain was advised that, if he wanted to preserve his health, he should keep his head completely dry; have warm feet and let his food be of meat.(1) This did sum up the Englishman's attitude towards health in English weather conditions. They did dress for the weather. Di Farvi particularly noted that "in England it was always windy and however warm the weather, the natives invariably wore furs." "However warm" in his opinion was "never very hot." This had to be guarded against as much as cold in its season.(2) In 1525 Lorenzo Orio remarked how even at the end of June it was so cold in London that he and others had to "wear gowns lined with lynx's fur." (3) It was accepted that the weather might be cold and the remedy was to hand. One cannot help feeling that, had Aeneas Sylvius had the benefit of Straparola's advice about warm feet, he might have thought twice about undertaking his walk of ten miles on barefoot to Whitekirk and so have avoided finding afterwards that "he could not stir a step: his feet were so weak and so numb with cold." (4) It was probably that injudicious exercise in the middle of a Scottish winter that accounted for his lameness in later years. Certainly, if Pinturicchio's imagination was correct, his Scottish king and court would have shown enough of a wrapped-up

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1. G. Straparola da Caravaggio, Night.13, Fav.12, pp.281f.

2. N. di Farvi (San.15), SPV II, s.m. Feb. 1513.

3. L. Orio (San.39), SPV III, 29 June 1525.

4. Pius II: Coms., p.17.

appearance to give Aeneas Sylvius another object lesson, if he had not already learned it. (Plate 1) Another Italian, Cardinal Campeggio, showed as much difficulty in learning how to cope with the English weather. In November 1528, already afflicted with gout, he "was seized by an attack of lumbago". The reason suggested for this was that "the climate of England was so damp and the weather so damp and changeable." (1) The dampness as much as the changeability was dangerous for Campeggio. His coming upon these November conditions unprepared to meet them could have been the most dangerous thing done by him.

The dietary part of Straparola's dictum was certainly observed in England, but it did only represent one part of a whole. Britons tended to over-do eating for insulation against the cold so that the first visual impression that Pius II would give of James I of Scots was that "he was thick set and heavy with much fat." (2) In England Edward IV was also "very fat though not to the point of deformity." Yet, presumably because he relied too much on this natural insulation, "he allowed the damp cold to strike his vitals" while he was watching fishing from a small boat. It caused him to contract an illness that soon proved fatal. (3) When one returns to Arlotto's comment on the subject of eating, the reason why "there was not one, Englishman, however small an eater, who did not eat for three Italians", might have been the need for protection against a cooler climate. Yet, so excessive did it all seem that Arlotto could not discern the good for all the adverse consequences. The English, on the other hand, did not blame their eye trouble and other infirmities on their over eating. Arlotto's

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1. Geraldo Molza to the Msa. of Mantua, SHV IV, 25 Nov. 1528.
  2. Pius II: De Europa, Ch.46, p.443.
  3. Mancini, 73.

prayer for these people could only be that "at least their fault (i.e., over-eating) should give them strength to do it." (1) It was apparently not answered because in Giovio's time the English were still eating excessively and their eyes were still dim. (2)

However, if the climate prompted them to over-do matters in this respect, generally it had a beneficial effect upon health. The climate, according to Trevisan, was "very healthy, and free from all complaints with which (Venice) was afflicted." (3) Savorgnano in 1531 took the matter one step further. He had "expected to find the climate cold and windy and worse than in France, but it was the contrary." There was even one part of the country where men lived to such a great age that, when tired of life, they had to commit suicide. (4) His mentioning of the clement climate and longevity in the same breath certainly seems to imply a connection between the temperate climate and good health. There was "no sourness or evil savour of the air, insomuch that diseases reigned seldom, and consequently less use of physic than in other places. Whereby it came to pass that many men lived in divers places 110 years" or more. (5) So said Vergil, agreeing with Savorgnano and further explicitly pointing out the connection between moderate weather and good health.

The superficially contradictory note about these opinions was that the cold of winter seemed to do nothing to check the country's plague epidemics and the English were quite unresilient to the stresses of the sweating sickness. Most plagues were evident in the summer season. From a cold June of 1525 the plague raged more

1. Arlotto, No.5.

2. Giovio: Besc. p.15.

3. Trevisan, 8.

4. Savorgnano (San.54) SPV III, 25 Aug. 1531.

5. Vergil: AH(ET), p.19.

violently in July and continued into August, all the while increasing.

(1) It was possible to hear of plague even in the coldness of January.

(2) Perhaps the very equitable nature of the climate was seen not to provide a severe enough temperature-drop to inhibit the disease.

Certainly, the Englishman's lack of experience of extremes of heat was a liability when the Sudor Britannicus struck because the natives were noticeably badly affected by the strain of profuse sweating.

Giustinian noted how in London foreigners, presumably more used to sweating, seldom died of the disease while "an immense number of the natives" were struck down.(3)

Yet, despite these two partial exceptions, the general consensus of Italian opinion was that the climate did keep the people healthy and this was further reflected in their medical practice and sanitary precautions. Giovio's idea that the English were by nature healthy led him to maintain that they had "no doctors but indigenous ones and they only for the nobility and the town merchants (who were) given to the voluptuousness of greed."(4) Indeed, the practice of medicine in England seemed to be fairly efficient, when compared with the Italian situation. The poet Agnolo Firenzuola once exclaimed, "The English medics let them be blessed... (they) at least know how to doctor..."(5) It was not quite clear if he meant that English physicians had so much more work and hence so much more practice, or if little work gave them more time to perfect their profession. In the long run it came to the same thing: if they had earned a good reputation, did this not mean that English health was good or at least well cared for? Boranzo in 1554 had the last

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1. L. Orio (San.39), SPV III, 29 June, 21 July, 14 Aug. 1525.

2. Ibid., (San.40), SPV III, 3 Jan. 1526.

3. S. Giustinian in RB, 6 Aug. 1517.

4. Giovio: Desc., p.15.

5. Agnolo Firenzuola: 'Capitolo', p.213.



enlightened word on the question. He played down the awful nature of the plague. The weather was very temperate and, although "they had some plague in England well nigh every year,...they were not accustomed to make sanitary provisions, as it did not usually make great progress." Besides, it mostly "occurred among the lower classes, as if their dissolute life impaired their constitutions." (1) In other words, Henry VIII's efforts to avoid contact with the disease had displayed an undue fear of something that, if one did not weaken oneself by excesses, the English weather naturally eliminated. In this light King Henry's peregrinations in a plague ridden January of 1526, appear to be rather alarmist or over precautions (2): in the end of the day, the Italians had been told that even the plague in England was subject to the healthful climate.

However, although the climate had a remarkably hygienic effect on the nation, it could endanger life and limb and indeed economic well-being in other ways. A sudden freeze could be dangerous; it could bring communications to a stand-still. In February 1517 Giustinian found that he "could not go to Greenwich by water, owing to the very thick ice, the journey by land likewise being difficult on account of the frozen and dangerous roads." (3) It was a minor hazard but likely to have been a familiar one to him. Magnified, as ten years later, it could become a major problem. The famine of 1527, which had resulted from England's "superabundant rains" in the previous May, could not easily be alleviated because "supplies could not be procured for some months owing to the frozen seas." It was the result of a bad season culminating in a severe freeze. (4)

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1. Soranzo, SPV V, p.541, 18 Aug. 1554.

2. L. Orio (San.40), SPV III, 3 Jan. 1526.

3. S. Giustinian in RB, 10 Feb. 1517.

4. M.A. Venier, (San.46), SPV IV, 20 Oct., 27 Nov. 1527.

However, far from complaining about English water-ways being frozen solid, the Italian usually directed his fury against the volatile storminess of the island's seas. Vincenzo Quirini had encountered "a terrible hurricane" in the English Channel in 1506(1) and in 1515 Giustinian recorded how, while crossing from France, the ship's passengers had "been at sea twenty-four hours owing to the foul weather, which buffeted them mercilessly."(2) There was nothing temperate about weather conditions in the English seas. Violent November storms in 1517 caused "four large ships, freighted with various merchandise for Flanders, to perish in the Channel; and eighty fishing vessels...with their crews were also lost."(3) If the sea was not exacting such a dreadful toll, it certainly still engendered the fear of death. Crossing back to France in 1531, Savorgnano encountered a "tremendous sea." As he said himself, "The waves looked like mountains, and looked as if they would sink us, so we remained the whole time in suspense." Although he did arrive safely, he had to recuperate at an inn in Calais, the sea having prostrated him.(4) As if the seas could not contain themselves within their bounds, floods became associated with the British Isles in the mid sixteenth century, albeit in a fictional context. Giraldi wrote one tale in which an Irish king of unscrupulous nature, while in the Isle of Man, was threatened by the sea as a divine warning against him: "the sea raised itself up onto the island, beyond the normal, so that, with a great amount of the inhabitants' deaths, it submerged...houses..and corrupted and ruined the island."(5) Bernardo Segni said something similar. The seas

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1. Quirini, *SPV* I, 23 Jan. 1506.

2. S. Giustinian in *RB*, 12 Apr. 1515.

3. *Ibid.*, 11 Nov. 1517.

4. Savorgnano, (*San.54*), *SPV* IV, 25 Aug. 1531.

5. Giovanni Battista Giraldi (*Cinthio*), Dec.3, Nov.1, pp.267f.

round Holland and Ireland, "swelled by the winds and pushed towards the land, swamped many lands and cities and parts...were entirely restored to the sea." People were "terrified by this most grave calamity...and believed that the universal flood had returned to the Earth."(1)

The weather could give Britain its prosperity and health but it also could hit at the roots of its economy and endanger human life. Since Britain, as an island, depended as much upon its mastery of the sea as upon its <sup>exploitation of</sup> the land, the usually clement land conditions could be nullified by the tempestuous force of the surrounding seas. It was of little use to produce the merchandise to send to Flanders if the cargo vessels were to be sunk during the passage by water. It was a thing that deeply concerned the Italians. In December 1517 Giustinian reflecting on recent numerous shipwrecks, hoped that the long awaited Venetian galleys would arrive safely. More so perhaps because the sinking of rival ships could only "make a good market for their cargoes."(2) The British attitude towards the weather was less calculating, more submissive to the whim of the moment. Long before this Poggio had told his story of the Irish captain who, caught in a violent storm, promised the Blessed Virgin Mary "a taper as high as his main mast" for his safety. The danger of the moment was terrifying but it would soon pass and the Virgin would have to "content herself with a penny taper."(3) The bad weather was there; one could invoke divine aid; but meantime one just had to wait: it would pass eventually, as surely as a penny taper would be offered up.

## 7. The Surrounding Sea.

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"They are putting in order a very old ship, to which in

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1. B. Segni, Vol.I, Bk.v, p.334.
  2. S. Giustinian in RB, 10 Dec. 1517.
  3. Poggio: Lib. Facet, No.207.

their superstition they attach great importance and esteem, saying or pretending that it is the ship upon which St. Thomas of Canterbury crossed to England, and for this it has I know not what charm." (1) So said Cristoforo di Bollato, the Milanese ambassador to France in 1474, at a time when an English fleet was being prepared for an invasion of France. His was the attitude of a land-locked Lombard; the English, surrounded by the barrier sea, were slowly becoming a nation conscious of the need to control or at least live with the sea. The process was indeed slow. Compared with Italians from sea-facing states, the English were evidently much less expert in naval matters even than those less water-bound. The English sailor's first task, even in the face of Milanese scepticism, was to evoke divine protection: without it he could scarcely expect any mercy from the tempestuous British sea. In turn the sea had its advantages. It contained and excluded. "In London Aeneas (Sylvius) found that the king had forbidden any foreigner to leave the island unless he had a royal passport." Therefore the English king with his well defined natural frontiers could theoretically control the movements of aliens, unless they had enough money for bribing port-keepers. (2) He could, moreover, enforce successfully over a period of time a law "that no money, nor gold nor silver plate should be carried out of England under a very heavy penalty." (3) This meant a greater ability to control the economy. Similarly the sea compelled traders to congregate at points most "convenient for trade", such as the Thames estuary. (4) This caused a concentration of resources and a more precise channel for mercantile activity. The sea also represented a form of defence against

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1. C. di Bollato, SPM, 12 Sept. 1474.

2. Pius II: Coms. p.21.

3. Trevisan, 28.

4. Savorgnano (San.54), SPV IV, 25 Aug. 1531.

an enemy: it was a relatively defensible fortification that, at times when vigorous activity against an enemy was impossible, acted as a natural barrier. In 1461 Camulio reported that in the Straits of Dover "Warwick was said to have a fleet, not so much to give battle to the French one in open sea, but merely to prevent them from landing in the island and to guard that passage." (1) No invasion came: the sea was daunting in itself. Warwick's fleet just needed to stand guard to ensure French inactivity. The sea, however, could be just as much of a hindrance to the English themselves, if only because, to take an example from Agostino Dati, any "transport ships sailing in the British sea (Britannico mari) could be hit by a tempest, and (see) perish...300 passengers." (2) Or indeed "the horrible force of the sea", causing ebb and flow up navigable rivers (3), could represent an initial obstacle to sea-traffic.

Nevertheless, this was not regarded as a complete hindrance to commercial life. After all it was well enough known that in the British fishing industry there lay a clue to part of the secret of the country's riches. When Albizzi was sailing towards England in 1429, one of the first things that met his eyes near Plymouth was the sight of "many barques of fishermen appearing in the gulf and saluting with their flags." (4) Trevisan later did much to explain the existence of a fleet such as this. Not only were English rivers stocked with "every species of Italian fish, except... carp, trench and perch", exceptions not wholly justified, but also the English had a "quantity of salmon, a most delicate fish, which they seemed to hold in great estimation, because these people greatly

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1. P. di Camulio, SPM, 2 June 1461.

2. A. Dati, p.31.

3. Falier, 13.

4. Albizzi, p.237, 29 Nov. 1429.

preferred sea-fish of which, indeed, they had many more than (the Italians) had."(1) What Trevisan was saying was that the English seas contained this fine salmon and that, since this appealed to English taste, it was evidently made available to them. When Giustinian mentioned the sinking in the Channel of "eighty-four fishing vessels, averaging from fifty to 100 butts each with their crews" in 1517(2), this must have given Italians some idea of the size of the fishing fleet in that area and a rough idea of the tonnage of the vessels used. The incident, however, also emphasised how the English, though so involved with the sea if only for fishing, had not developed a storm-resistant type of boat suitable for use in English waters.

If anything the Scots appeared to be more orientated towards and dependent upon the fishing industry. According to Pius II, fish figured largely in poor people's diet: they "ate bread as a luxury (but) stuffed themselves with meat and fish." Moreover, of the country's main exports, "leather, wool, fish and pearls", the last two both depended upon the availability and exploitation of sea-creatures.(3) The activity of fishing fleets in Scottish waters certainly seemed more intense and commercial than in England. Giovio remarked that the sea near the Orkney Isles was "most fertile in fish" and that it was "a marvellous sight to see all the fleets of Britain, France and the whole of Germany...working on the bounty of the sea." The main fish caught was the herring, which was cured prior to being exported. Often the fishing fleet could number as many as a thousand and so many fish could be caught that, "when they landed, they obscured the shore." Even the weather hazard was

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1. Trevisan, 9.

2. S. Giustinian in RB, 11 Nov. 1517.

3. Pius II: Coms. p.18.



overcome by binding the ships together for safety in tempestuous conditions.(1) The industry was manifestly well organised and, although it was quite clear that foreign vessels as much as British ones exploited the situation, the Orkney islanders operated the shore industries of curing and marketing herring products.

Another important and commercial aspect of naval life in Britain was the development of cargo and passenger carrying ships. Leaving aside the transport ships used in war, one can still find Italian evidence of passenger ships moving round the island's shores and over to the Continent, but it is often quite obvious that much of this trade was not carried out by British sailing companies. The ship which brought Aeneas Sylvius to Scotland and which he had intended to use on his return voyage was probably Flemish. Since it had set out from Sluys, the skipper, drowned while going "back to Flanders to marry a young bride", was also very likely Flemish.(2) There was certainly nothing to suggest that the ship in which, said Agostino Dati, 300 passengers were drowned during a storm in British waters was an English ship: its most noteworthy passenger, Giulio Ridolfi, was a prominent Italian.(3) Indeed, in England about this time there could be a remarkable degree of apparent improvisation about passenger transport at sea. When Edward IV fled in 1470, he made his way from England "on a fishing boat."(4) There is nothing to suggest that there was no passenger ship available and indeed in a time of crisis any boat would have sufficed, but it is significant that Edward in time of need found no craft available other than a fishing boat. When there was some sort of organised passenger service,

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1. Giovio: Besc., p.41.

2. Pius II: Coms, 17, 19.

3. A. Dati, p.31.

4. Emanuel de Jacopo and Sforza de Bettini (in France), SPM, 20 Oct.1470.

the main Italian complaint was that it was very uncomfortable and complicated. In 1531 Savorgnano recalled the difficulties that he had in embarking at Dover. He had to go out to his ship in a little boat but, "the wind being so high and the surf off the beach so heavy that they tossed the little boat here and there as if it had been a box." The constant motion of the tremendous sea made boarding the big vessel very difficult.(1) If there was little evidence of English-run passenger services the excuse could have been the scant encouragement given to them by the natural elements round Britain.

By contrast, Italian visitors to Britain were struck by the use of transport on inland waters in the country. The Thames was most noticeably used for inland transport. When in 1508 the great company of the royal household had to be transported to the king's house at Greenwich, they all went "in a sumptuously decorated and recently constructed royal barge."(2) In 1515, Piero Pasqualigo recalled, he was summoned to Richmond and taken there in "a richly decorated barge."(3) On less formal occasions, ordinary rowing boats were used. Andrea Badoer in 1512 remarked how on his arrival in England he had to go to see Henry VIII to discuss the international situation "and went to...Greenwich, six miles hence by water."(4) In 1517 Giustinian was considerably inconvenienced when he found that he "could not go to Greenwich by water owing to the very thick ice." (5) Venetians at least seemed to have very little trouble in accustoming themselves to this style of transport. Savorgnano even chose to use it in an extended form. When he was leaving, instead of going overland to Dover he "went...by boat down the Thames, which was very broad and covered with swans, and thus...to Dover, the

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1. Savorgnano, *SPV* IV, p.289, 25 Aug. 1531.

2. P. Carmeliano, p.7.

3. P. Pasqualigo in *RB*, 30 Apr. 1515.

4. A. Badoer in *RB*, 24 July 1512, I, p.68.

5. Giustinian in *RB*, 10 Feb. 1517.

passage port."(1) This river and coastal service could not have been uncommon if Savorgnano, after a few days residence in London, knew about it and was able to patronise it; operating between English ports, it was almost certainly run by Englishmen.

However, as soon as there was a suggestion of English ships being used for international freight transport, the Italians, undoubtedly comparing them with their own, discerned a distinct weakness. What cargo ships could be seen at sea were vulnerable. The English could plunder other ships but their own were easy prey. In 1472 Pietro Aliprando remarked how "the king of Denmark had taken a ship laden with English cloth" and how against the Easterlings and French combined the English could do nothing: they did not even have a fleet at sea.(2) Later in Edward IV's reign, as Mancini recalled, when the Flemings had abandoned their English entente, "the French seized trivial pretexts and began to plunder English traders and vessels." Edward IV, unable to do anything about it, "fell into the greatest melancholy."(3) It was precisely this sort of information that could have bolstered up the Italian belief that English riches existed despite rather than because of efficient and established commercial channels. Again one is left with the impression that foreign merchants used their own ships to transport merchandise rather than use what vulnerable English freighters were available.

It could therefore have been all the more surprising for Italians to have read about English patronage of trans-Atlantic voyages of exploration during Henry VII's reign. But what patronage! Zuane Caboto had "committed himself to Fortune in a little ship with eighteen persons" and had wandered out from Bristol across the ocean

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1. Savorgnano, SPV IV, p.238, 25 Aug. 1531.

2. P. Aliprando, SPM, 25 Nov. 1472.

3. Mancini, pp.71-3.

to find an excellent and pleasant land. Henry VII had been pleased: he hoped that further exploration might "make London a more important mart for spices than Alexandria"(1) and was initially thought to have promised to send Cabot in the next spring "with fifteen or twenty ships."(2) Later Lorenzo Pasqualigo learned that Cabot was to "have ten ships, armed to his order, and...all the prisoners... to man his fleet."(3) The last that Italians were to hear of this second voyage was a terse line that he had "left recently with five ships, which his Majesty sent to discover new islands."(4) How profitable this might have proved for England was never known: as Vergil later remarked, "after that voyage he was never seen again anywhere; he was thought to have descended together with his boat, the victim himself of that...ocean."(5) If John Cabot happened to take on the appearance of the victim of Henry VII's greed for wealth or just of his meagre generosity with equipment, his son Sebastian Cabot, patronised with only two ships but with 300 men on board, gained a place "among the explorers of the glacial regions", but, discovering only the phenomenon of "enormous blocks of ice floating on the sea" in the month of July, he was recalled from the service of the English king after Henry VII's death and served instead the Spanish king.(6) The episode of the Cabots served only to explain two facts: the English at times had to rely on foreign nautical experts to carry out extraordinary exercises of seamanship; and even in times of peace ships of any kind were in short supply.

This chronic numerical deficiency of ships was seen as a general theme, particularly noticeable during times of war. Venetians

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1. Raimondo de Soncino, SPM, p.338, 18 Dec. 1497
  2. News letter from England, SPV I, s.m. Aug. 1497.
  3. L. Pasqualigo, SPV I, 11 Oct. 1497.
  4. Agostino de Spinula, SPM, 20 June 1498.
  5. Vergil: AH(Hay), p.117.
  6. Pietro Martire d'Anghiera: De Orbe Novo, Dec.3, Ch.6, pp.285-6. and cf. J.A.Williamson, The Cabot Voyages and Bristol Discovery under Henry VII, (Cambridge 1962), for a convenient collection of the Italian documents relating to the Cabots' service to the English Crown, pp.203-4, 207-11, 224-5, 227, 229-30, 266-73, 282-5.

especially were only too aware of how an English king, "making great preparations and a naval armada against the king of France", could, as Henry V did in 1417, "detain three Venetian cogs for the formation of his armada." (1) The situation did not change later in the century: in 1460 Edward IV, hearing that Venetian galleys had departed from England, "was indignant as he wanted to employ them on his own service" and in 1468 the Milanese Zannonus Coyrus remarked that Edward IV was certainly preparing a large fleet at sea because, besides anything else, "having recently found four Genoese galleys in port, he had them unloaded and armed...for no other purpose than to make war on France." (2) At less aggressive moments during this time, as has been shown, the English navy was too weak to defend commercial ships; it required a positive effort to prepare a fleet that would intimidate rivals. (3) Evidently English ship-building yards had difficulty in supplying ships enough to satisfy home demand or Piovano Arlotto would not have been confident of selling galleys to the English while on a wool-buying visit to London in the 1480s. (4) One wonders if this in any way could account for the very obvious variety of ship designs to be seen in Pinturicchio's Scottish court scene and in Carpaccio's depiction of the 'Return of the English ambassadors' in the St. Ursula cycle of paintings. (Plates 1 & 9) Long low galleys with sails and a complex arrangement of oars contrast very markedly with the smaller but roundly sturdier sailing cogs of a more British design. While respecting licence in artistic compositions, one cannot ignore the fact that Italians did have some reason to imagine that British waters were graced by Mediterranean galleys,

1. Decree of the Venetian Senate, SPV I, 26 Apr. 1417.

2. Decree of the Venetian Senate, SPV I, 16 May 1460; Z. Coyrus (at Lyon), SPM, 7 Nov. 1468.

3. Cf. supra, p. 209, notes 1 and 2.

4. P. Arlotto, No. 5.



unsuited though they might have been to such seas, as well as with more resilient sailing barques.

Under the Tudors at times there could be detected signs of continuing naval weakness. What could be made of Perkin Warbeck being able to land in Cornwall in 1497 "with three small ships and about 300 persons"? (1) Even this number of ships was an Italian overestimation but it still suggested that this was an armada sufficiently big enough to invade the country. Under Henry VIII the government at times would feel the need to requisition every available ship. This could easily lead to a situation in which, as in 1522, Wolsey would demand galleys in Southampton from the Venetians and "they, knowing that he would take them in any case, handed them over with the appearance of willingness." (2) The suggestion implicit in their resigned attitude is that this was not a new thing but one to be regarded as a possible risk for a maritime state like Venice. She could condemn this as a "violation of the jus gentium" but it made very little difference. The fact that some Venetian "merchants, officials and mariners...quitted England in despair and died on the road, begging their bread" (3), only emphasised how the English sometimes would stoop to such practices to bring together a fleet: they had to. Until the mid sixteenth century there lasted the impression that England had no control over the straits between her shores and those of France and Flanders. Sebastiano Erizzio, about this time, did not hesitate to recount a story about a Flemish cloth-merchant whose galley was attacked and actually captured by corsairs in that very same stretch of water. (4)

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1. Raimondo de Soncino, SPM, 30 Sept. 1497.

2. A. Surian and Gasparo Contarini, SPV III, 31 May 1522.

3. Council of the Ten and Junta to A. Surian in England, SPV III, 15 Oct. 1522.

4. S. Erizzio, Day II.9.



However, although it often appeared to Italians that the English seldom could lay hands on as many ships as they would have liked and that they showed little in the way of brilliant expertise in naval matters, as a maritime nation their reputation was steadily growing. It was well enough known that from the beginning of his French wars Edward III was in possession of an adequate fleet but the sea-battle at Sluys in 1340, as recorded by Giovanni Villani, gave Italians some idea not only of English naval power but also of English tactical skill at sea. The English had "120 armed transport ships"; the French opposed them with "200 ships, with thirty between Genoese galleys and barques equipped with oars" and yet at the end of the day "all this fleet, arms and gear, remained as booty for the English and Flemish", who had succeeded in trouncing the French.(1) Even the makeshift nature of armed transports had not detracted from the efficacy of the English attack. In Italian eyes it might have seemed that after this Edward III saw greater possibilities in developing his strength at sea because in 1346 the fleet that he amassed at the Isle of Wight had risen in strength to 600 but, from the evidence that he sent it back to England once his army had disembarked, Italians might have deduced that he really had not developed the possibility of campaigning by sea.(2) Certainly, about this time the French and their allies seemed to have had a low opinion of English naval prowess because in 1447 seventy French ships, armed and carrying victuals for beleaguered Calais and in the company of twelve armed Genoese galleys, thought themselves more than a match for the 200 armed English ships being furnished in Dover harbour. But neither sail nor oar saved them from being

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1. G. Villani, XI.110.

2. Ibid., XII.63.

defeated and captured by the English.(1) From this point of proven strength there was no reason to suppose that English naval power declined as long as the war continued. In 1358, for example, the duke of Lancaster was sent to France with 120 ships, which then left him and returned for the king. It might have seemed that there was a shortage of vessels but, taking into account that these were later "joined by many other ships" and that the number of soldiers to be transported was very large, no one could now deny Edward III's strength at sea.(2) But by this time the English fleet's reputation for tactical skill was already well established. About 1351, after some Spanish ships had audaciously damaged English ships and robbed them of their merchandise in the Flanders sea, Edward III sent his son to Spain with a fleet and there he inflicted a severe defeat upon the Castilians to their great damage.(3) Thereafter, English enemies at sea had a timorous, even cowardly appearance. In 1359 when Edward III was well occupied in France, the Normans gathered together 105 ships with which they raided Southampton but, as soon as the English ports gathered together a makeshift fleet to oppose them, "they in fear returned quickly to Normandy to save themselves." (4) Hence the Italian opinion of English naval strength in the fourteenth century was rather high, and increasing, even although it was fairly apparent that the English seldom seemed to achieve a numerical saturation point: they were always eager to capture the enemy's ships and keep them for their own use.

In the first half of the fifteenth century, the English navy still preserved a fairly good reputation. When Henry V set sail

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1. Ibid., XII.95.

2. M. Villani, IX.53.

3. Ibid., I.99.

4. Ibid., IX.83.

for France in 1415, according to Frulovisi, he took with him about 1,000 ships, a fair number in itself and well below the 1,500 figure thought to have been mustered by the king.(1) Yet, whatever number of ships was gathered together, there could have been no doubt that many of the vessels were pressed into service more as transports than as armed ships of war. This was only two years before Venice was scandalised by the seizure of her trading cogs in England. Nevertheless, despite their shortage of boats, it was quite evident that the English were at home on the sea, if only because they could stomach sea-travel better than their neighbours the French. The passage home to England in 1415 after Agincourt was so boisterous that to the French prisoners at least it "seemed worse than the battle itself." (2) Moreover, in 1416, according to the Genoese Giovanni Stella, an English force of 300 ships were to prove more than a match for the French fleet of 100 and eight armed Genoese galleys.(3) One could easily be doubtful about Stella's round figures because, as even he had to admit, the Franco-Genoese ships were either destroyed or put to flight: experienced sailors should only be outmatched by uneven odds. Yet, until this point Italian writings make no suggestion that there was an English royal navy with ships built specially for military purposes: hitherto the general idea was that England used armed transport and merchant vessels. But in 1430 when Albizzi went to Humble near Southampton, there he was able "to see the great ships of the king of England. The greatest was said to be able to carry 3,000 casks...and in truth (he) never had seen so great and so beautiful a structure." It was truly enormous compared

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1. Frulovisi, p.8.

2. Ibid., p.22.

3. Giovanni Stella, RIS 17, p.1268, s.a. 1416.

with other ships: it was about ninety-two yards long and fifty yards broad.(1) If this kind of ship were to serve as the hard core of the English navy of the future, despite the continuing need to press virtually every available vessel into royal service at times, it is small wonder that by 1468 it seemed as though the only way to beat England at sea and inflict any losses on her was for the sovereigns of two nations such as Scotland and Denmark "to unite together...and make a great fleet with all their adherents."(2)

If in this case England did lose face, the disgrace of it was minor; the reflection on the English fleet small. It was well enough recognised that the fleet had become an important political factor: for why else would Richard of Gloucester have been so anxious to cause it to desert its admiral, Edward Wydeville, in 1483, when his own eyes were on the throne? It was to become increasingly obvious that the Scottish fleet was no mean opponent. If Richard feared the English armada because it was led by "two particularly formidable" Genoese galleys lent by their trading community in London because "Genoese sailors and captains...surpassed the other nations both in navigation and the conduct of naval warfare"(3), in succeeding decades the self-confidence of a Scots king like James IV was striking. He wanted to captain another crusade; the hard core of the fleet for this he would supply with 150 of his own ships in the face of naval powers of ancient reputation, Genoa, Venice, even France.(4) The Scots, moreover, were bold enough at sea: according to La Rotta de Scocesi in 1513 "twenty and more ships, great and well armed" sent to France by the Scots king, had not fear enough of English might to prevent them from plundering the shores of Ireland.(5)

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1. Albizzi, pp.258-9, 31 Jan. 1430.

2. G.P. Panicharolla (in Senlis), SPM, 15 Sept. 1468.

3. Mancini, pp.105-7.

4. A. Badoer (San.10), SPV II, 29 May 1510.

5. Rotta de' Scocesi, p.9.

This was an opportunist's boldness that persisted. In 1533 the court of France resounded with the news that the Scots, in a state of semi-war with England, had "taken seven English ships of great value." (1)

Again there was the feeling that English shipping was partly vulnerable. Moreover, if one takes a glance at Italian figures for English vessels, for example, "upwards of 100 ships and vessels for conveyance of the troops and provisions" for Henry VIII's proposed French expedition in 1512 (2), they might suggest that by comparison with, for example, Henry V's fleet in 1415 numbers were greatly reduced but a second glance could tell one that if in those 100 ships, some of them recently stolen from the Bretons, 20,000 men could be transported (3), each boat therefore accommodating an average of 200 men plus provisions, the vessels must have been considerably larger than previously. In fact, it became increasingly obvious that size was now to be the decisive factor in naval warfare. Soon, in 1515, Giustinian would be writing about the launching of the 'Henri Grace de Dieu', "a galley of unusual magnitude...with such a number of heavy guns that (it was) doubtful if any fortress, however strong, could resist its fire." (4) A fleet of this type of ship could be confidently built up after the English armada's effective opposition to the French fleet in 1513. The two sides engaged and the English had been left as victor with two large ships as spoils. (5) One can only surmise that what proved devastating was the use of the bronze cannons which, as Giovio later so particularly mentioned, had been mounted on the English ships for this campaign. (6) Very much more

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1. G.S. Robio (at Regmont), SPM, 14 Apr. 1533.
  2. Sanudo 14, SPV II, 25 May 1512.
  3. L. Pasqualigo (San.14) SPV II, 17 Aug. 1512.
  4. Giustinian in RB, 29 Oct. 1515.
  5. N. di Farvi, (San.17), SPV II, 12 Oct. 1513.
  6. Giovio: Hist. I, xi. 230.

of a permanent navy was developing. In 1531, in peace time, Falier said that "by sea, his Majesty could arm 150 sail. He had six large ships in the island, a galleon, and two galleys which were built during the war with France." (1) The basic 150 armed vessels were numerically far superior to the fleet mustered during his first French campaign and in addition he now had laid up for himself nine other ships of war of some considerable magnitude. This trend evidently continued. If one looks forward to 1551 during Edward VI's reign, the naval resources which Daniele Barbaro described were even more impressive. "The English...had a very great quantity of both ships and sailors and were very powerful at sea. In case of need they could fit out 500 vessels, of which upwards of 100 were decked; and many men-of-war were stationed permanently in several places. There were also some twenty...galleons, not very high, but long and wide, with which in the late wars they had fought all their battles." This represented an enormous sea-power, a force which in Edward's reign created floating ramparts for an island fortress, a Protestant and psychologically unstable fortress. Defence had to be professional. The principle that some ships should be built purely for war had been accepted; it was recognised that Mediterranean-type galleys, such as painters put in British scenes and such as English kings had been wont to seize, should now not be used "by reason of the very great strength of the tides in the ocean." (2)

Hence, the period of the Italian Renaissance saw crucial developments in England's position as a maritime power. Gradually a pedestrian approach to nautical matters was being replaced by one requiring greater expertise. Commercially, there was a certain degree

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1. Falier, 24-5.

2. D. Barbaro: Report, SPV V, p.351, s.m. May 1551.



of increased activity in the carrying trade and more acute awareness of the value of fishing. Politically a navy of an increasingly professional, less makeshift standing was making its contribution to the safety and prestige of the English monarchy within the bounds of Great Britain and in the field of international relations. All this quite patently came about because of Britain's geographically peculiar position as an island. The surrounding seas were effective barriers in their turbulent selves but they were still borders that had to be fortified for political and commercial security. It was a certain development in the proficient operation of a necessity that Italians were observing in this pivotal age. The contradictory thing was that England, a sea-bound island, should take so long to develop an effective navy and to exploit the sea fully.

### 8. Insularity.

The geographic phenomenon of Britain as an island produced in the attitudes and actions of the inhabitants a recognisable distinctiveness. This insularity was as much a product of a feeling of divorce from and security from the threats of the mainland as it was the result of several distinct nations being bound in together by the hems of the sea. This was the endemic cause of a series of contrary political attitudes which spoke of fear of encroachment, envy and greed for a greater sphere of influence in a situation limited by its very nature.

There is no doubt that the concept of Britain as an island was never far from the back of Italians' minds. They probably had a more acute feeling of this than Britons consciously had of themselves as islanders. In his letters Poggio constantly talked about "the Island." "Almost all the Island is harassed by plague", he would say; or, "The Island was for a long time harassed by out-

side nations."(1) Indeed, Britain was a place so cut off from the rest of Christendom that it apparently invited independent actions from foreign officials. Francesco Copino, bishop of Terni, shocked Pius II by "assuming more power than the Apostolic See had given him...in his embassy to England."(2) Copino had imagined that, since England was so far from the Roman nerve-centre, what was politically expedient for England had seemed to be more important than curial permission. But one wonders if Pius II could really not have understood the situation. He knew the insularity that pervaded parts of Britain. Were not people who bizarrely asked the future pope "if he was a Christian"(3) living in a world of their own? Was he not to detect the same opinion in the sentiments of his colleagues at the Council of Basle? Some of the conciliar fathers had objected to the choice of a Scots abbot as one of the chief electors because "in so important a business a man not from an island but from the Continent, who knew others should have been chosen."(4) Vespasiano breathed the words, "that distant isle"(5), and Trevisan, closely followed by Quirini, emphasised one aspect of the concept of insularity: Scotland was virtually an island in itself because it was "separated from England by two arms of the sea, which penetrated very far inland, one to the east and the other to the west." Although they did not meet, the "mountainous country between them" had the psychological effect of eliminating the reality of Scotland's peninsular state. Instead, the mainland of Britain was almost regarded as two islands.(6) Quirini reinforced this Italian idea by calling England as such an

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1. Poggio: 'Epistolae', in Omnia Opera III, Epis.vii, s.a. 1420; Epis.xiii, s.a. 1421.
  2. Platina: Lives., vide 'Pius II'.
  3. Pius II: Coms., p.19.
  4. Pius II: De gestis, Bk.II, p.201.
  5. Vespasiano, p.439.
  6. Trevisan, 13.

island. There is no doubt that he was thinking of England as England and not confusing it with Britain because he went on to describe it as "a very rich and great kingdom." (1) The view of the contemporary Raimondo de Soncino that "the marshes between England and Scotland were so extensive that it would have been all but impossible for the Scots to move in winter", only served to emphasise the geographic division between them. (2) Half a century later Giovio recalled the same theme. While emphasising the fact that Britain as a whole was an island, he maintained that the River Tweed at the narrowest part of the country ran so much across the centre of Britain that, "making virtually another island", it effectively divided the land into two parts. (3)

As far as the external effects of British insularity were concerned, this internal division only served to emphasise the rather more English aspects of the phenomenon simply because England lay nearer to the Continent. The English usually did not care to have their fingers in more than one continental pie at a time. A French enemy was enough for most of them. The English barons in 1347 were very suspicious of Edward III's proposed imperial election and counselled him not to accept any honour proffered. (4) This would have meant a division of interests. They became unusually sensitive when there was any suggestion of an attack on their own shores, although there was seldom any real danger of this. The days of the foreign invasion of England seemed to have passed before Edward III's time. When there was any threat of a foreign landing, the English reaction was usually neurotically violent. When the French fleet attacked Dover

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1. Quirini, p.18.

2. Raimondo de Soncino, SPM, 16 Sept. 1497.

3. Giovio: Hist.I, p.238.

4. G. Villani, XII.106.

in 1347 and the Normans despoiled Southampton in 1360, the English reaction was fiercely revengeful; the enemy was briskly chased away or captured. The English king and his army were said to have derived comfort from these defeats.(1) There was nothing more to be feared than possible invasion forces sailing in the Channel and the English certainly gave the appearance of being determined to eliminate them at all costs. Pius II, repeating Cardinal Albergati's view, defined the factors necessary for a foreign invasion. When the Burgundians and French made friends, the English would "find it very difficult to invade France." (2) Could Italians not have deduced the corollary of this? The French would have difficulty in invading England unless they had an ally in the country. They had the Scots, indeed, but their back door was a long way from the political nerve-centre of England. It was this that made Jacopo Bracciolini's romance about how "a great French army moved into England and did incredible ruin to each of its provinces" itself an incredible statement.(3) In the Renaissance period no French king dared attempt such an invasion to exact homage from an English king. It is therefore surprising that an Italian like Bracciolini ever thought of writing a tale like this unless his mind was on fiction bent or he had been affected by his father's cool attitude towards England.

Sixteenth century writers presented no such confusion. Falier maintained that "by so much the less as (the English) fear the French, by so much the more they fear the Scots." (4) The very contrast of their two political enemies' geographical positions told how the English king had more faith in the protective barrier of twenty miles of water than in 400 marching miles. Polydore Vergil saw one sign of this around him in England. The people "neither

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1. *Ibid.*, XII.95; M. Villani, IX.83.

2. Pius II: *Coms.*, p.444.

3. J. Bracciolini, p.43.

4. Falier, 24.

built forts and castles neither did they repair them, which being built long since, through time were become ruinous."(1) There was, needless to say, nothing ruinous about Berwick on the Scottish border; Vergil's eye must have been fixed on castles nearer London. What need had the southern sea coast of castles? Savorgnano himself spoke of England in the following terms: "The island has the appearance of a fortress, the sea having advanced and given form to the cliff, producing a fine effect."(2) In peace-time impressive indeed, but for an enemy this must have been a daunting sight. It is not surprising that Pope Clement VII could confidently urge Henry VIII to fight the Turks because he knew that the "kingdom was perfectly safe by reason... of the sea which completely surrounded it."(3) If fortress cliffs and sea spelled English security to Italian observers, that was reason enough for thinking that the English themselves rested confidently with the same feeling.

Insulation may exclude danger from without but it also binds in more closely the menace from within. The English were sensitively conscious of this and gave the appearance of being concerned to curb it or drive it out of their minds by dynastic interference within the Scottish royal house. One thing that would make Pius II describe Henry V as "easily foremost among the sovereigns of his time" was the fact that he had James I of Scots as his prisoner. (4) It was not the first time that a king of Scots had fallen into English hands and been kept prisoner for a long time. Villani did not forget how, with David II in his power, Edward III did not experience any "quelling of his ambitions for vain glory."(5) But now

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1. Vergil: AH(ET), p.25.

2. Savorgnano (San.54), SPV IV, 25 Aug. 1531.

3. Pope Clement VII to Henry VIII, (San.45), SPV IV, 4 Jan. 1532.

4. Pius II: Coms., p.435.

5. M. Villani, VII.101.

James I, when "yet a boy,...while sailing, fell into the hands of the English" and was kept by them because of the "perpetual hostility between the Scots and English, who...were not able to subject the Scots." By keeping James "in captivity for eleven years the English hoped to humiliate Scotland." It was fortunate for them that by marrying Cardinal Beaufort's niece to James, they made him promise to observe perpetual peace, a promise which in the freedom of his own kingdom he showed little inclination to keep.(1) It certainly appeared that a tight rein on the Scottish royal house meant a more secure England. Another way of doing this was to create a dynastic marriage on equal terms, as Henry VII did between James IV and Margaret Tudor, but this did not prevent the battle of Flodden being fought in 1513. Indeed, there was no Italian suggestion, except in the biased Rotta de Scocesi, that Queen Margaret did much, if anything, to prevent her husband's campaign against her brother.(2) However, the death of James IV almost seemed to facilitate the English dynastic aims because it left Henry VIII as the uncle of the child king of Scots. It was a position of influence and before long Leo X was writing to James V and saying that it was "natural that (he) should take the advice of his most prudent uncle, the king of England."(3) In other words, Italians expected the English king to exploit his blood relationship to James in order to exert some measure of political control over his kingdom. When Henry's sister was expelled from Scotland by the duke of Albany in 1515, Henry's immediate reaction was to threaten to invade in order to reinstate her.(4) Scotland with a king controlled by Albany, no friend of

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1. Pius II: De viris, No.32.

2. Rotta de Scocesi, p.24.

3. Jacopo Sadoleto: 'Epistolae in nomine Leonis X', in Epistolae Clarorum Virorum, Vol.I, pp.347-9.

4. S. Giustinian in RB, 24 Dec. 1515.



England's, was an uncomfortable thing for England: it represented a complete collapse of Henry's influence there. However, Italians could gauge the measure of the danger that Scots evidently saw in the prospect of any English influence in their affairs by the terms of the agreement whereby Queen Margaret was allowed to return to Scotland. The Scots did not want the education of her children under her control(1) and they insisted that, although "she was to be honoured as a queen,...she was not to be admitted to the administration of the kingdom." Moreover, the number of Englishmen in her entourage was to be limited to twenty-four.(2) For all practical purposes, Henry VIII's dynastic hold over Scotland had disappeared; he therefore fell back on his theoretical connections. He boasted to the Venetian ambassador that he was "king of this island" and, à propos of the suggestion that the duke of Albany should return to Scotland in 1518, he maintained that he would not tolerate his presence there because, as he said, "The title of the kingdom is mine, for I style myself king of England and Scotland." (3) These were so many vain words: he was even less the king of Scots than he was king of France; his influence was now negligible but the psychological effect that his words were intended to have on foreign envoys probably failed and it was realised that this was a form of paranoid auto-suggestion that his rule really did extend to the northernmost confines of the island. It was only at a time when his influence was at a low ebb that titular claims and theoretical rights were aired. There was no suggestion of Italian surprise when in 1545 Henry VIII's army advanced into Scotland and began negotiating an agreement which "proposed to marry the daughter of the queen of

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1. Ibid., 31 May 1516.

2. Ibid., 13 Apr. 1517.

3. Ibid., 15 Mar. 1518.

Scotland to the son of the king of England."(1) It was quite obvious that Henry VIII wanted himself and his heir to have control over the weak back door to their kingdom. It was clearly seen that he was striving "so that he would be king of England and Scotland together" but he only succeeded in driving the queen-regent and the baby Queen Mary into the French camp. Mary was betrothed to the dauphin of France.(2) The king of France, and not Henry, was trusted by the Scots: after James V's death they "were almost subjects in the empire of King François", who had their young queen in his protection.(3)

Henry VIII had not succeeded in his dynastic aims and certainly gained little control over Scotland; if anything, he aggravated the problem of how to avoid French influence in Scotland rather than solved it. His son therefore succeeded to an inheritance of worry about Scotland rather than to a matrimonial crown. However, the whole question of English rights over Scotland was at this time so much in the air that one is not surprised to come across one of Giraldi's tales, in which an English king, defeating the Scots king in battle, kills him and, as though by perfect right, he gives Scotland to his own son and daughter-in-law to rule.(4) The story itself was pure fiction, but it did have its roots in the near contemporary realities of Henry VIII's dealings with Scotland and with incidents as far back as, perhaps even further than, Flodden. Yet, the fact remains that this was the product of an acute Italian awareness of the constant, deep-rooted worry that the open flank of the often hostile Scottish border caused in English kings' minds and of their attempts to alleviate the situation.

1. Doge and Senate of Venice, dispatches to Constantinople, SPV V, 11 Apr., 2 Sept. 1545.
2. Giovio: EVBI., p.490.
3. B. Segni, II.x.268.
4. Giraldi, Pt.I, Dec.ii, No.9.

On the other hand, it was quite obvious to Italian observers that the Scots just as strongly feared and hated the English and would do anything, political or military, to hit at them directly or to aid the enemies of the established power in England. As far as they were concerned survival was most important in order that they should live to preserve their share of the island-cake. Before the Renaissance period, Italians had seen how Scotland had resisted Edward I's designs on them and Edward II's filial continuation of this aggression. A writer like Villani was usually sympathetic to the English, so he explained their actions as just warfare against the usurping Bruce family and, when, with the accession of Edward III, fresh campaigns were conducted against the Scots, the justifying factor, apart from the Scots' obstreperous mood, was found in Robert (really Edward) Balliol who could logically "be made the new king (to oppose) David, the king, born of Robert the Bruce." (1) However, there was little else made of the situation by fourteenth century Italian writers and no constructive comment made about David II's marriage to Joan of England after his release from English captivity. Relations between the two countries were not quiet but little in the way of apposite observation came from Italians.

It was really not until the time of Pius II that much was again said. He had personal experience of their antagonism. It began with words: "there was nothing the Scots liked better to hear than abuse of the English." (2) He experienced too the active side in a typical border raid after he had just crossed into England. The local inhabitants took the matter in their stride: "the men and

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1. G. Villani, XI.38, s.a. 1335.

2. Pius II: Coms., p.18.

children hastened away to take refuge in a tower"; women and strangers ran no mortal risk, so they were left undefended.(1) This does imply that some form of code of conduct was being observed in this strife. The Scots and English had their own quarrel; they did not allow it to affect outsiders or the weak; they were only concerned to spite each other. Scattered throughout the works of Pius II, almost every aspect of this island conflict was touched upon by the pope. First of all it was a lowland characteristic. Pius particularly pointed out that those Scots who abused the English were those who spoke English, unlike their fellows to the north.(2) He did not say so but the truth was implicitly there: the English speaking part was only too convenient a unit for absorption by the southern Anglo-Saxon kingdom. It was in the vulnerable border area that the most neurotic warfare went on. The English would capture a piece of territory and the Scots, at a national level, would try to undo the damage. It was precisely this that James II was doing at Roxburghe in 1460 when he was accidentally killed: "the young king of Scots was at war with the English and was fiercely attacking a fortress which the enemy had taken from him." Pius II captured the spirit of the islanders' quarrel. James II was "attacking fiercely": honour and homeland had to be defended. He was killed because he was standing too near a bombard that misfired and struck him. It was as though he personally had to be as closely involved as possible in the endless task of beating back the traditional enemy.(3) But the matter was not quite so spasmodic and simple as that. When the English were weak internally, the Scots would do as much as possible to help the party opposed to the established power in the land. So it was that Pius II could record

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1. Ibid., pp.19-20.

2. Ibid., p.18.

3. Ibid., pp.365-6.

how after the initial defeat of the Lancastrians by Edward IV the royal family "fled to the Scots and by a jest of Fortune were saved in their adversity by those whom they had often feared in their prosperity." (1) It would have been very strange if Pius II really believed Margaret of Anjou's claims that her "foes pitied their affliction." (2) Half a century later, Polydore Vergil did not hesitate to say that the Scots were only interested in making Henry VI surrender Berwick in return for their aid. This Henry did none too willingly. (3) It was just another aspect of a see-saw struggle within a limited scope. If one went up, the other necessarily went down. The final part of Pius II's piecemeal discussion of the problem of Anglo-Scots incompatibility dealt with external relationships on the Scots' part. France was England's other neighbour, England's rival; she too was England's prey. As long as she was such, she stood close to Scotland. It was only in Giovio's time that mythical stories were recounted, mainly from the Scot Hector Boece's works, to the effect that a Franco-Scottish entente had existed in some form since the time of Charlemagne. (4) But until Giovio's day it had been generally evident in Italian sources that the closer that relations were between France and Scotland the more strained they were for either country with England. The aspects of this that appeared in Pius II's writings were, firstly, that Scots were willing to pour men into France to fight the English; for example, a force of some 12,000 Scots, observed Pius, were annihilated at Cravant while the French looked on helplessly. (5) Secondly, that Scottish kings were much more likely to look to France for royal marriage

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1. Ibid., p.272.

2. Ibid., p.578.

3. Vergil: AH(Ellis), pp.111-112.

4. Giovio: Desc., p.27f.

5. Pius II: Coms., p.588.

alliances than to England. James I had taken Beaufort's niece as his wife but this in no way changed his political orientation. He "was very friendly to Charles (VII) and hostile to England and often had been exceedingly useful to the king of France (so) he sent his four beautiful and marriageable daughters to his friend to find husbands." This was done within the French ambit at no cost to himself because "he could not provide them with dowries."<sup>(1)</sup> Whether for daughters or fighting men Scots kings found France and the Continent in general a useful over-flow channel for relieving the pressure brought about by an internal situation that inhibited expansion and did not provide adequate resources or outlets for the human potential of the land. From Pius II's time Italians were constantly to see the working out of the pope's definitive notion of this insular conflict: the constant push and counter-push in the border area; the Scots tendency to look out beyond the island for friends and allies.

In 1461, according to Francesco Copino, the Scots in addition to trying to prize Berwick from the exiled Henry VI's grasp, since they had "long claimed it as their right from the English", mooted a marriage for "the sister of the present little king to the son of the said Henry."<sup>(2)</sup> It did not take place but even the suggestion of it highlighted a Scottish desire to thwart England's rulers. So it was in 1471 when the earl of Pembroke represented, with the help of the Scots, a continuing source of annoyance to the reinstated Edward IV.<sup>(3)</sup> But the Scots' government was even more ambitious. In 1473 it was manifestly using the English vulnerability on the borders as a lever to gain money from France. They "promised

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1. *Ibid.*, p.453.

2. F. Copino, *SPM*, 1 June 1461.

3. Bettini, *SPM*, 6 Aug. 1471.



to help France if they received as their predecessors did, an annual pension of 60,000 crowns." In effect, if they did not receive this, they were threatening to "leave the English safe on their side." (1) In the following year the French king, well aware of the diplomatic importance of Scotland in the European power-balance, was at pains to prevent an Anglo-Scottish alliance by advocating a substitute one between Scotland and the Milanese. As an incentive, he even remarked that Scotland could be a good source of hardy troops for the Milanese.

(2) When in 1475 it seemed very likely that the Scots king would hold to an English alliance, the type of rumour that was circulated to imply that he had "been poisoned by his brother at the instigation of the king of France" (3), did imply how important the aggravation or healing of Britain's internal running sore of discord was to France and England respectively. It was soon quite obvious that the Scots were more naturally inclined towards France and in 1480 Carlo Visconti was recounting stories of English and Scottish incursions across their common border. The Scots gained nothing and they themselves had cast out the English, who "had gone away with the worst of it." The whole crisis was thought to have been the handiwork of the king of France. (4) This was not unlikely if only because Louis XI wanted to deflate Edward IV in his assumed role of arbitrator between himself and Duke Maximilian. Italians knew, as did Louis, that the slightest stirring of the Anglo-Scottish embers at this point would create a self-consuming blaze that would give nothing to either side and would certainly divert the attention of those most hostile to continental powers. As if in recognition of the pendulum motion of

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1. C. di Bollato, SPM, 12 May 1473.

2. Ibid., SPM, 17 Sept. 1474.

3. J.P. Panicharolla, SPM, 26 July, 1475.

4. C. Visconti, SPM, 29 Oct. 1480.

the Anglo-Scottish rivalry, the pope in 1486 "blessed a golden rose and gave it to the king of Scotland." (1) The English kingdom was politically and dynastically unstable; therefore the king of Scots could be honoured.

Indeed, a pacific ascendancy was not to be enough for the Scots. Henry VII soon appeared to be a strong king and so in 1496, when Perkin Warbeck appeared on the scene, it was the king of Scots who in Britain bolstered his position with a royal marriage and some of the abundance of men that he had. (2) Such was the dry view of a contemporary Milanese diplomat. It took the vehemence of a Polydore Vergil to analyse the situation. James IV's council did try to decide on the validity of Perkin's claim but, "while they judged the facts of the case to be uncertain, urged that it would be greatly to the advantage of the country if they exalted Peter, so that, under the guise of giving him assistance, they might wage war on England. Thus they might either extend the borders of their country or make a favourable peace with England." (3) When Trevisan reflected on the Scottish situation soon after this, he saw it in general terms. The power of Scotland was "never exercised but against the English, their natural enemies, as is commonly the case with neighbours." Common or not, he himself recognised that, hemmed in by the sea, these neighbours had an antagonism more bitter and concentrated than usual. Did he himself not make much of the Scots' at present "possessing a particle of land" in England beyond their boundary, though what minute piece of territory it was hard to say? Conversely, did the English not possess Berwick on the Scottish side of the Tweed and had they not "caused the deaths of many thousand men

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1. Ascanio Maria Sforza, SPM, 5 Mar. 1486.

2. G. de Bebulcho, SPM, 3 July 1496.

3. Vergil: AH(Hay), p.87.

in former times" in their efforts to secure this one fortress?(1)

The Anglo-Scottish marriage alliance that was soon to come obviously did not quell the urge to push beyond received border areas. There were uneasy moments, although in 1509 it was being reported that "the king of England had made peace with his brother-in-law, the king of Scotland." Yet this was said in the same breath as it was announced that Henry VIII was arranging to invade France.(2) Within six months the Venetians were to witness how James IV, in proposing to supply 10,000 men and 150 vessels for the campaign against the infidels, hoped to make himself captain-general of the crusade.(3) His nation's surplus energy, honourably frustrated by peace treaties, needed an out-let elsewhere. This, however, was neither a new trend nor one peculiar to Scottish kings. In 1474 it was "the Senechal of Saintonge, who was of Scottish nationality", that Louis XI deputed to treat the matter of a Milano-Scottish alliance, not simply because he was a Scot but because he was a soldier-diplomat in his own service.(4) In 1500, as Castellar recalled, it was "a Scottish man at arms called Duncan" who seized Ludovico il Moro of Milan at the climax of his war with France.(5) The man known as the "Seigneur d'Aubigny" was a Scot, Robert Stewart, who was familiar enough to many Italians as the man who, as a valiant captain in the French king's army, rose to be the governor of French occupied Milan and was later conspicuous among the French captives after Pavia in 1525. At the end of his life, Giovio particularly mentioned him as being "of notable virtue and a general famous with

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1. Trevisan, 16, 17-18.

2. Badoer (San.9), SPV II, 7 Dec. 1509.

3. Ibid., (San.10), SPV II, 29 May 1510.

4. C. di Bollato, SPM, 17 Sept. 1474.

5. Giovanni Andrea Saluzzo di Castellar: Memoriale, p.445, s.a. 1500.

the French,...born of the royal blood of Scotland."(1) It was also well known that the duke of Albany, of the same stock, came from exile in France to Scotland and eventually returned to France where he fought in the army. He too was conspicuous in the French king's Italian campaign of 1525. He it was whom François I sent to molest Naples in order that the Spaniards should be distracted from Lombardy.(2) Although this miscalculation brought the French king no credit, it did reflect quite favourably on Albany, especially in the years after the sack of Rome. These Scotsmen only represented the cream of the quantity of excess population that could at any time supply as large an army as required in Scotland,(3) but which at times of English quiescence often flowed into continental outlets.

By the time of Flodden, the Italian picture of Scotland showed mounting frustration and envious desire for glory enough to counteract the power and prestige being won by Henry VII. Italian diplomatic sources of the period did not go too deeply into James IV's motives for invading England. It was assumed that this was a side-line of the French reaction to English designs on them. But in the Scots' attitude there could be detected a revengeful touch. Marco Dandolo noted particularly how on the preliminary invasion the Scots had been intent on "doing great damage everywhere."(4) This reckless desire to hit out pointlessly in all directions was curiously reflected in the Rotta de Scocesi, whose version of the campaign claimed that "accursed and treacherous jealousy had for a long time corroded the breast and soul of the king of Scotland, as he saw the reputation of King Henry, his glory, fame and triumph." Envy and greed would

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1. Leone Cobelli: Cronache Forlivesi, pp.359, 369, s.a. 1494; Castellar, p.485, s.a. 1509; p.597, s.a. 1525; Giovio: Ragionamento, p.45.
  2. Castellar, 595-6; B.Varchi, I.ii.8.
  3. Trevisan, 16.
  4. M. Dandolo (San.17), SPV II, 8 Sept. 1513.

let nothing change James IV's resolve.(1) No Italian writer was willing to imagine what Scotland's position would have been if England had been allowed to gain mastery of Scotland's traditional ally, France, nor to speculate who next might have been forced into an English empire. As it was, the tendency very selfishly to rejoice that word-breaking schismatics had been defeated or, in a less sanguine mood, an Italian like Leo X could see the pointlessness of the islanders' struggles and mourn "such an effusion of Christian blood and the destruction of so many thousands of people of our common Lord."(2) However, if any Italian imagined that Flodden would put an end to the conflict, he was soon to see that the opposite was the case. Within a month of the crushing defeat, one of the few remaining Scottish nobles, the earl of Douglas, was reported to have undertaken a successful raid over the border.(3) It was even suggested that Queen Margaret "in her grief at the death of her husband...would make war on her brother to avenge (his) death."(4) This did not take place but the Scots' anti-English feeling did not diminish. In fact, it even turned against Margaret herself for a time when she was expelled by Albany. She had been made to surrender her children so that they should have a non-English upbringing.(5) This feeling was so strong that the Scottish allies in France could count on it and respected it. In 1515 the French even declared themselves willing to "leave Tournai to England, rather than renounce the protection of Scotland."(6) But Scotland seemed willing and able to defend herself. In 1516 the discovery of a plot against him by Henry VIII was enough to make Albany amass his troops on the English

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1. Rotta de Scocesi, pp.6, 18.

2. Leo X: Letter to Henry VIII, in W. Roscoe: Life of Leo X, I, p.320.

3. V. Lippomano (San.17), SPV II, 8 Nov. 1513.

4. Paolo de Laude, SPM, 11 Oct. 1513.

5. S. Giustinian in RB, 26 Sept. 1515.

6. Dandolo (San.20), SPV II, 23 Mar.1515.



border.(1)

There was nothing new in the set-up. In winter 1523-4 the news was that the English had "captured a certain place (in Scotland) and made some prisoners", who had subsequently been recovered by Albany in a counter attack. A truce arranged with Henry VIII only continued the process by giving Albany the chance "to cross over to France with a Scottish force in aid of the king of France." (2) Even although the young James V "had emancipated himself from the guardianship of the duke of Albany...and had taken the king of England for his protector" later in 1524, (3) before many more years he himself was using Henry VIII's refusal to return to him his father's body as a pretext for campaigning against England. (4) Although James did not dare to come to London to fetch it away as he threatened, he let his subjects plunder the Isle of Man in 1533 (5) and himself took part in a dispute over "an island in the middle of a stream dividing England from Scotland." Although it contained only thirty houses made of straw, as Marin Giustinian deliberately pointed out, it was thought that the French king would have to be brought in as an arbitrator. (6) How seriously his judgment would have been considered is doubtful. Marin must have been aware of the sentiments of his namesake Sebastiano Giustinian, who had reminded Italians in 1518 that the old alliance between France and Scotland "always proved a burning ember to England." (7) In the years to come after James V's death, the Scots, looking to France for protection for the infant queen, Mary, must surely have convinced observers that nothing English, especially when it savoured of political motivation, was in the interests of Scotland. Whether it was an

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1. Andrea Rosso (San.22), SPV II, 22 Nov. 1516.

2. G. Badoer, (San.35), SPV III, 13 Nov. 1523 and 7 Jan. 1524.

3. Gasparo Contarini, SPV III, 1 Sept. 1524.

4. C. Capello (San.47), SPV IV, 18 Sept. 1532.

5. Ibid., (San.48), SPV IV, 21 July 1533.

6. M. Giustinian, (San.48), SPV IV, 19 Mar. 1533.

7. S. Giustinian in RB, 10 Sept. 1518.



infant queen, the corpse of a long dead king or a collection of straw huts, the questions involved were those of fear of even the slightest degree of encroachment and of political opportunism. The limiting nature of the narrow island dictated that one's minutest loss was one's hated enemy's gain; the mildest interference from one side could imply antiquely conceived imperial designs on the other. Only when Italian commentators had pro-English axes to grind, were these reasons slightly obscured, as when Vergil implied that James I was interested in no honour, only the chance to scourge England cruelly(1) or when the Rotta de Scoresi, written in papal-biased Rome, saw James IV as nothing but a greedy and envious man. Generally speaking, the Italian view was usually equitable in that it blamed and disapproved of the Scots as often as it did their fellow islanders but enemies, the English.

#### 9. Xenophobia.

Italians could discern British turmoils bred from the geographical fact that Scotland seemed to have more man-power than she could provide for. They could see that England had more political pride than a weak northern border allowed. But a much more noticeable feature of insularism was a violent xenophobia on the part of the English nation as a whole. This was manifestly engendered by an incomplete familiarity with foreigners, an acute sense of economic rivalry and a general fear of encroachment on home territory. In complete contrast, most English kings displayed a marked benignity towards foreigners, although at times politics worked against this. Certainly, this royal xenophilia seldom spread further down the social scale from the throne. As soon as one reaches the level of royal ministers much of the kindly disposition towards strangers

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1. Vergil: AH(Ellis), pp.62-3.

has evaporated in the heat of political necessity. It was in some ways a convenient balance that need not have compromised a monarch, especially if he were married to a continental wife, but one that ensured the security of his interests.

The strange thing about the whole problem of English xenophobia, as far as the Italians were concerned, was that it did not appear to be provoked by any marked hostility on the part of foreigners. There was very little evidence of anything like that. The French had no cause to love the English. It was only really in 1515 that someone like Giustinian took note of how the king of France was "treating all Englishmen as enemies, allowing his subjects to capture the ships and vessels of this Kingdom..and not enforcing compensation."(1) This was official policy implemented because of extreme provocation and yet it did not necessarily suggest the underlying hate that could be found in some English xenophobia. More positively, the Scots presented a striking contrast to the English. Although Pius II spoke for all Italians when he said that there was "nothing the Scots liked better to hear than abuse of the English"(2), according to Trevisan, they were found by visitors to be "extremely courteous" and it was felt that "all the Scottish nation were extremely partial to foreigners and very hospitable."(3) Certainly they were renowned for their long friendship with the French, whom they openly "cultivated and imitated" in their friendships and commerce.(4)

As far as exceptions to the English xenophobic rule were concerned, there is only one distinct, non-royal example of this in

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1. Giustinian in RB, 6 July 1515.
2. Pius II: Coms., p.18.
3. Trevisan, 15.
4. Giovio: Desc., 29.

Italian Renaissance literature. Even this was set in a fictional context. Only Bandello would explain that a Florentine, Frescobaldi, generously entertained Thomas Cromwell when he was poor simply "for the love of the English nation, from whom he had received many kindnesses."(1) Habitually Italians had to look to the king to find such respect among the British. Edward IV particularly struck Italians as being xenophilic. He was scarcely on the throne when the Milanese Conte Ludovico Dallugo was writing home to Milan that his embassy had been much honoured by Edward. Indeed, "at no time was so much honour paid to an embassy." Dallugo assured his master, the duke of Milan, that "King Edward loved him as if he were his father." No courtesy or kindness seemed to be too much for the visiting Milanese.(2) This was not an isolated incident. The Florentine Piovano Arlotto maintained that, since he himself had appealed to Edward IV's sense of humour, the king "out of respect for him made many to be pleasant to all those Florentine merchants who were in those lands."(3) The implication surely was that without the king's good-will his subjects would normally have been less than kind in their dealings with Florentines. Mancini talked of Edward IV's magnanimity in even more general terms: he was friendly to strangers and "more favourable than other princes to foreigners who visited his realm for trade or any other reason."(4) At the end of the fifteenth century Vespasiano looked back over the part of Giovanni de' Bardi's life spent in England and commented on how this Florentine's serenity and honesty had earned him the trust of "the most serene king of that island and all the nobles with whom he had

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1. Bandello, II, 34.

2. L. Dallugo to Francesco Sforza, SPM, 30 Aug. 1461.

3. P. Arlotto, No.5.

4. Mancini, pp.79, 81.

had to do."(1) The Bardi family, long established because of its usefulness to English kings, had earned the respect even of some of the English nobles. But this was a very exceptional case, with underlying tones of politic courtesy. Of this period a much more typical expression of opinion would centre on the king. Henry VII gained for himself as much of a reputation for xenophilia as his father-in-law. In 1506 Castiglione was highly flattered when the English king "paid him the greatest honour and affection and every day did more."(2) More generally, Polydore Vergil, a harsh enough critic of Henry VII when the occasion warranted, did not hesitate to say that "his hospitality was splendidly generous; he was fond of having foreigners at court and he freely conferred favours on them."(3) Vergil himself could vouch for his kindness in this direction: he had Henry VII to thank for all his English appointments.

His son Henry VIII showed himself just as amicably disposed towards foreigners for most of his life. His ability to "speak English, French and Latin (and to) understand Italian well"(4) betrayed the beginnings of an interest, but his patronage of and friendship for foreign musicians and artists was outstanding. Did he not like Pietro Carmeliano, the Brescian lute-player, well enough to "give (him) 300 ducats annually for playing the lute"(5) and was he not so fond of the Venetian organist, Fra Memo, to make him one of his closest familiars?(6) Indeed, Venetian envoys and Italian visitors to Henry's court seldom had cause to complain of any discourtesy on the king's part. He preserved a gentility towards foreigners that lasted well into the period when his patience with foreign powers was rather

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1. Vespasiano, (Proem), p.439.

2. Baldassar Castiglione: Lettere., Let.27, s.d. 6 Nov. 1506.

3. Vergil AK(Hay), p.145.

4. Pasqualigo and Badoer in RB I, p.76, 3 May 1515.

5. N. Sagudino in RB I, p.80, 3 May 1515.

6. S. Giustinian in RB, 27 Aug. 1517.

brittle. In 1531 Savorgnano summed up his attitude when, after his own friendly reception at court, he remarked that Henry VIII was "glad to see foreigners and especially Italians." (1) The "especially Italians" part was obviously meant and was enough to give the king a lasting reputation for xenophilia.

However, this feeling seldom went further than the king. His minister Wolsey could be quite genial and kind to foreigners in England and gracious to them in their own countries, but he did gain rather a reputation for being very harsh in his day to day dealings with them. For example, in May 1516, Giustinian complained to Wolsey about letters to him from Venice being "taken out of the hands of the courier at Canterbury by the royal officials, and opened and read." Giustinian, however, did not press the point lest Wolsey should be exasperated (2), the implication being that he was quite likely to be extremely annoyed, even actively harmful, if over pressed in this way. Indeed, in December 1516 Wolsey flew into a rage with Chierigato, the papal nuncio, and demanded to know what he had written to the king of France or said to the Venetian diplomats. He threatened that "unless he told by fair means, he would put him to the rack." (3) Wolsey was naturally suspicious of the stranger, especially at times of crisis, while at other times a species of national superiority could lead him to do the most discourteous things to men of other states. In 1521, when at Bruges, he deliberately snubbed the king of Denmark and worsened Anglo-Danish relations by saying about a proposal for them to meet that, "as the representative of the king of England, it did not seem to him decorous to pay the visit." Naturally, the Danish king "departed in great wrath...and the hatred between the

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1. Savorgnano (San.54), SPV IV, 25 Aug. 1531.

2. Giustinian in RB I, 31 May 1516, p.225

3. Ibid., 7 Dec. 1516.

Danes and the English would continue."(1) In much the same way in 1527 an anti-foreign move would come from the royal ministry: "all the Flemings were expelled and banished from England so that they were prevented from trading.."(2) The figure of the benign king was not besmirched by this move, although the parallel pro-French policy was as much his as Wolsey's. It was the cardinal whose reputation for being hard on foreigners, individuals and peoples in general, grew as he pursued a policy of political expediency. But even after his fall his virtual successor, Norfolk, seemed to be at no pains to disguise the fact that he "bore ill-will to foreigners, especially to (the) Venetian nation."(3) This was, in fact, said by Falier in 1531 at almost exactly the same time as Savorgnano was expatiating on the king's graciousness to them.

The antagonism of royal ministers was one thing: they often had cogent reasons for being offensive to foreign nationals. But, as far as Italians could see, the xenophobia that they observed ingrained in the make-up of the ordinary Englishman was much more widespread, less controlled and often less rational. In the fourteenth century there were some distinct hints about latent xenophobia in England. In 1384 The Venetian senate was to decree that captains of their galleys for England were "earnestly desired not to allow the oarsmen to go ashore for the avoidance of affrays and mischief."(4) How much this was a fear of sailors' exuberant spirits or of a real antagonism from the Englishmen with whom they would come in contact was not stated, but from the opinion that a Venetian like Ruggiero Contarini expressed in 1400 about an England that he personally did not know: it was, in fact, "said to have strange and dangerous men

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1. Antonio Surian (San.31), SPV III, 21 Aug. 1521.

2. S. Giustinian, in Paris, (San.45), SPV IV, 23 Apr. 1527.

3. Falier, p.14.

4. Decree of the Venetian Senate, SPV I, 3 Aug. 1384.



and was not without danger and especially to good men"; one can gather that the English were regarded as being unlikely to treat foreigners well. This can be deduced from the fact that Contarini was saying this with particular reference to the visit of another member of his family to England; he made the point even clearer by comparing the habits of the English with the Parisians': theirs were "valiant and of good conversation."<sup>(1)</sup> One reason that filters to the surface is economic rivalry. Venetians were well aware of the competition that was latent in England. Why else would they have made it a condition, when the future Henry IV was allowed to have a Venetian galley in 1392, that he should "not ship merchandise or passengers"?<sup>(2)</sup> But these were only faint murmurings of growing trouble.

In the fifteenth century the English antagonism towards foreigners was becoming more widely felt. In 1402 Lorenzo Contarini was only given permission by the Venetian senate to visit Thomas of Canterbury's shrine while he was at Sandwich on condition that he would "go and return in one day, (he) not being allowed to sleep out of the galley."<sup>(3)</sup> No reason was given but the understanding must have been that this was the safer thing to do. It seems unlikely that a Contarini would have become involved in trouble as the carsmen might have in London. In taverns they would pledge themselves beyond their pay "so the masters were compelled to go round the taverns to redeem them at very great trouble and expense."<sup>(4)</sup> In fact, this was the fault of the sailors but the northern tavern-owners did not seem to avoid placing them in such difficulties. The situation did not seem to have grown any better since the senate tried to deal with sailors

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1. Ruggiero Contarini, in 'Lettere a Giovanni Contarini', s.d. 13 Sept. 1400 (41); see too A. Luttrell in JWCI, Vol.29, 1966.
  2. Decree of the Venetian Senate, SPV I, 18 Nov. 1392.
  3. Decree of the Venetian Senate, SPV I, 3 Aug. 1402.
  4. Motion of Venetian Senate, SPV I, 3 Feb. 1408.

in trouble ashore in 1384. However, in the same 1408, a much greater disturbance arose. Venice had to make representation to Henry IV about the seizure of goods and vessels of certain Venetian merchants by the citizens of London because of non-payment of duties. The worst thing about it was that the English had also seized "goods belonging to merchants who had not transgressed." Moreover, even after the king had released the galleys, "the customers of London proceeded to a second act more harsh and not usually enforced against any nation." Packed bales were opened and new duties were imposed even on some on which taxes had already been paid on the pretext that their value had been underestimated. At this even the king allowed the merchandise to be forfeited, to the great consternation of Venice.(1) The senate continued to show great concern about this antagonistic English attitude, which at the time had the appearance of springing entirely from fear of economic rivalry. In 1414 a Venetian decree was passed to avoid possible trouble over non-payment of dues in London: this could lead to "the customers seizing sails and rudders...and forbidding departure at the period appointed." It was therefore decided that all Venetian vessels were not to stay there more than fifty days.(2)

This was basically the product of commercial squabbles. Indeed, the Venetians tended to treat them as such and to make appropriate reprisals, as they did in 1444 when they clamped down on the English practice of exporting partially finished cloths to Venice for processing into simulated Venetian cloths.(3) Yet, there was beginning to be some hint of an English tendency to dislike individual foreigners for the general characteristics which Englishmen ascribed

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1. Commission from Doge Michele Steno to envoy for England, SPV I, 29 Nov. 1408.
  2. Decree of Venetian Senate, SPV I, 29 Mar. 1414.
  3. Decree of Venetian Senate, SPV I, 17 Dec. 1444.

to particular nations. In 1435, when Aeneas Sylvius crossed the Scottish border into England he was regarded as something of an oddity. The natives wanted to know "where he came from, what his business was and if he was a Christian." He was obviously a figure which, while not hostilely treated, was regarded as something completely outside the scope of their insular concept of life. As he journeyed down England in the company of an English judge, he experienced this man's feeling of antagonism against his own master, the Cardinal of Santa Croce, and seemed to have been sure that, had his identity been known, the English would have put him in prison for the 'misdeeds' of his fellow countryman. In fact, at the time, official policy was so geared to suspicion of foreigners that the king, though more probably his ministers, had forbidden any foreigner from leaving the country unless he had a royal passport.(1) In other words, all foreigners were suspect; therefore, the easiest thing to do was to put them all through a governmental sieve.

By 1453 it was becoming evident to home-based Italians that really active English xenophobia was doing their interests great harm. For too long their galleys to Flanders had been detained for long periods in London with the result that "a good part of the crews remained behind and was ruined." The only thing to be done about it was to keep the ships from going beyond Greenwich.(2) In 1456 the citizens of London became violent and the Venetians realised that not only themselves but their fellow Italians were threatened. Restrictions were placed on their movements, "an extraordinary insult." Special provisions had to be made to restore the right of movement of the merchants at the Venetian factory.(3) By the next year the

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1. Pius II: Coms., 19, 21.

2. Decree of Venetian Senate, SPV I, 25 June 1453.

3. Decree of Venetian Senate, SPV I, 14 June 1456.

situation had so seriously deteriorated that something drastic had to be done by Italian nationals in London: for "by reason of the insult perpetrated by certain artificers and shop-keepers of London against the Italian nation, to the risk of their lives and property, the merchants of the Italian nation, namely, the Venetians, Genoese, Florentines and Lucchese, met together and after consultation determined that it was necessary to quit London for personal safety and the security of their property. For their asylum they selected Winchester" and stipulated that no Italian was to trade in London. They further demanded that a judge should be appointed at that town to deal with "all lawsuits and causes arising between Englishmen and Italians that they might not have to go to the law courts in London."

(1) Although the cold terms of this decree of the Venetian senate did not attempt to explore the causes of this situation, it quite abundantly showed, from the fact that the Italians' enemies were the artificers and shop-keepers and that a large amount of litigation was necessary between them, that questions of property and commercial dealings were at the root of the Englishmen's violence.

But the Venetian home government was not the only one to register complaints. In 1471 Milanese merchants were complaining about how the English had supported a claim by the heirs of an earl of Kent against Milan for a dowry, outstanding for about fifty years, by putting an embargo on their trade to their mutual detriment.(2) The Milanesi regarded this with an incredulous eye because they were sure that the English fury against them hurt England as much as Milan. The English appeared to show little national discrimination. If, as in 1472, they received reports about the taking of an English ship by

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1. Decree of Venetian Senate, SPV I, 23 Aug. 1457.

2. Petition of the Milanese merchants to Galeazzo Maria Sforza, SPM, s.m. Jan. 1471(?).

the Easterlings, they would "cause all goods of the Easterling merchants to be taken" in London. 100,000 ducats' worth could be seized on the strength of "evil information." Pietro Aliprando considered the vehemence of this five-fold revenge of the Londoners in general terms. The subsequent prohibition on the export of money was the last straw. Matters had risen above simple commercial rivalry: the English "considered all foreigners as mortal enemies" but, he added, "in secret the Burgundians most of all."<sup>(1)</sup> It was an interesting rider, calculated perhaps to make Italians think that some were suffering more than themselves from English xenophobia. Certainly, it soon seemed that the traditional English enmity for France had now transcended the chivalric exchanges of war. In 1475 the Milanese Antonio de Applano was convinced that the Englishman's reaction to Edward IV's peace negotiations with the French would be violently hostile. He was convinced that "King Edward would be torn to pieces the moment he returned to England", if the English learned about the treaty.<sup>(2)</sup> Apparently this antagonistic attitude persisted even in ordinary Englishmen employed abroad, as, for example, those in the duke of Burgundy's motley army at Lausanne in 1476. "The English and the Lombards (Italians) had a quarrel with each other to such an extent that every day someone was murdered in the camp and in the town."<sup>(3)</sup> Pietro Panicharolla could see that the roots of a trouble that was giving rise to murders and numerous robberies lay in national arrogance: "the English were a proud race without any respect and claimed a superiority over all other nations."<sup>(4)</sup> This was the crux of the whole problem. Although there was certainly no opinion

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1. P. Aliprando, SPM, pp.166-7, 25 Nov. 1472.

2. Antonio de Applano, at Valperga, SPM, 5 Sept. 1475.

3. Ibid., SPM, 20 Apr. 1476.

4. G.P. Panicharola, SPM, 3 May 1476; 22 Apr. 1476.



formulated by the English on the subject, to Italians it emanated from their every action against them. This was one of the most distinctive and articulated of the opinions expressed by Italians about Englishmen of this period. It was the same opinion that would make Pope Sixtus IV say that Richard III would be "held infamous by all men", not for any political or moral misdemeanour, but because he had issued restrictive measures against the Genoese trading in his kingdom. It was a "measure...at variance with civilisation and contrary to the law of nations."<sup>(1)</sup> But what did the English care about the civilisation of the rest of the world? Where English interests seemed to be the slightest bit threatened no respect for things foreign lingered in them. In 1489 the papal envoy in England, Perseo Malvezzi, hoped that a papal mission to be sent to England would not appear because it would have reflected badly on those who were on the spot "in the eyes of this suspicious race, which might readily give out that the bulls were forgeries." Suspicion was at the root of English dislike: Malvezzi was sure that the English thought that foreigners, even papal envoys, would necessarily be dishonest in their dealings with them.<sup>(2)</sup>

Indeed, the rest of civilisation did not impress them. Trevisan summed up their attitude: "the English were great lovers of themselves, and of everything belonging to them; they thought that there were no other men than themselves and no other world but England." They could not imagine anything fine or handsome in a foreign country. In all "they had an antipathy to foreigners and imagined that they never came into their island but to make themselves masters of it, and to usurp their goods." In fact, such was this

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1. Sixtus IV to Richard III, SPV III(App.), 30 July 1484.  
 2. Perseo Malvezzi, SPV I, 19 Mar. 1489.



dislike of the outside world and its peoples that they considered that the Englishman who had been judicially exiled "had better have died than go out of the world, as if England were the whole world!"(1)

This did not imply that the English were oblivious of the rest of the world, just that they disliked it. In the years following the Trevisan Relation, Italians were to see striking examples of this. In 1506 Quirini explained their attitude towards Denmark, no new opponent of England's. When there was talk of a Franco-Danish marriage, Quirini was sure that this was being done to intimidate the English with the power of the king of Denmark, "the enemy of the king of England and (the one) whom the English dreaded more than any other sovereign, as he rules a race naturally hostile to them."(2) Fear bred their hatred and suspicion. In England the active hostility towards foreigners would not abate of its own accord. In 1509 it was only the suggestion of a coming entente between England and Venice that prompted a royal warrant ordering the considerate treatment of Venetians' ships throughout the kingdom. The implication again was that they were normally ill-treated.(3) In 1513 naturally it was the French who were singled out as particular objects of hatred. Di Farvi noted how most of the rich French merchants in London left quickly but those who lingered on were imprisoned and their goods sequestered. Some of the French tradesmen who remained were maltreated by the people.(4) But the picture was even more complex: Badoer later added how the English, annoyed at a Venetian truce with the French, had wounded three of his servants and caused himself to remain indoors out of fear.(5) The motivation for this petty outrage arose purely out of a complex, official foreign policy, but still ordinary Englishmen were acute

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1. Trevisan, 20-21, 23-24, 35.

2. V. Quirini, SPV I, 23 July 1506.

3. Badoer (San.8), SPV I, 28 Apr. 1509.

4. N. di Farvi, (San.15), SPV II, S.M. Feb. 1513.

5. Badoer (San.16), SPV II, 3 July 1513.

enough to snatch the excuse to vent an anti-foreign feeling that seemed seldom to be far beneath the surface of society.

In May 1517, when England had less political reason for international ill-feeling, there was an enormous explosion of xenophobia. In Sebastiano Giustinian's words, "after Easter a certain preacher, at the instigation of citizens of London, preached...and commenced abusing strangers in the town and their mode of life and customs, alleging that they would not only deprive them of their industry, and of the emoluments derivable thence, but disgraced their dwellings, taking their wives and daughters."<sup>(1)</sup> The reasons for the outburst were quite clear: fear and jealousy derived from economic, social and even sexual sensitivity; the preacher's was a violent flaring up of a resentment against anything strange impinging upon or taking over the Englishman's mode of living. Francesco Chiericato repeated the story in even more graphic terms. "A friar", he said, "preached a crusade against foreigners as against infidels; the populace, being generally averse to strangers, was easily persuaded."<sup>(2)</sup> There it was in a nut-shell, inexplicable, but in terms that any Venetian could understand. The results had been far more alarming than fatal. Apprentices and artisans "with a number of bandits" had raided the parts of the city where Flemish workmen dwelt and sacked their houses and wounded many of them. The king's French secretary's house had been sacked and Florentine, Lucchese and Genoese merchants had been insulted. Giustinian preened himself: the houses of the Venetians had not been harmed because "they had ever comported themselves with so much equity and decorum that there was none wishing to harm them." However, it was evidently not an English discrimination that he himself

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1. Giustinian in RB, 5 May 1517.

2. F. Chiericato, SPV II, 19 May 1517.

cared to count on: he had previously withdrawn to Richmond(1), presumably where he could hide behind the king, who, as Chieregato said, "showed great love and good-will towards the strangers."(2) However, the royal example of love and magnanimity had little effect upon the English. Perhaps they were not left alone by their women, who vented their malignity because they "evinced immense hatred towards all strangers."(3) For in the following September the citizens of London again planned "to cut all strangers to pieces and sack their houses." Wolsey scotched the plan easily but there was no guarantee that the English would forget their ill-feelings; Giustinian immediately pleaded to be recalled.(4)

It was in 1520, only a few months after that diplomatic attempt at xenophilia at the Field of the Cloth of Gold, that the English government itself built upon the natural hatred of the people. Regulations and statutes against aliens were framed and a proclamation enforced the presentation at the mint of all Venetian pence for their devaluation. The government regulations were perhaps reasonable from an English point of view but Antonio Surian regarded it as "very detrimental to the French and Flemish merchants." The suggestion that Venetian pence were made of base silver was far from pleasing to the Venetians themselves.(5) Moreover, only two years later Venetians saw their galleys detained in London. It was an action against the law of nations: it caused great commercial damage and much human suffering as stranded mariners struggled home to Venice or died on the way.(6) It would almost have seemed that foreigners were not to be treated as human beings. The decrees that caused such a situation may have emanated

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1. Giustinian in RB, 5 May 1517.
  2. Chieregato, SPV II, 19 May 1517.
  3. Giustinian in RB, 5 May 1517.
  4. Ibid., 26 Sept. 1517.
  5. A. Surian (San.29), SPV III, 10 Nov. 1520.
  6. Council of Ten and Junta, SPV III, 15 Oct. 1522.

from a royal hand but the nature of their execution lay in those of ordinary Englishmen. Apparently it was their opinion that counted. In 1524 Gasparo Contarini was to say with certainty that no marriage between either the emperor or the king of France and the Princess Mary would take place "as, although the king of England might desire it, his subjects chose to have a king of their own, and not an alien." At present they were only using Mary "as an owl with which to lure birds." (1) In 1532 a situation in which it could be said that "the queen might be styled king of this island by reason of the love the people bore her, for her goodness and wisdom" (2) was quite exceptional and, when the English prejudices about the divorce case and the feelings of the Italian reporters of the situation are taken into account, one can only be left with the feeling that Catherine of Aragon, after spending a large part of her life in England, had earned a special place in the hearts of the people. Besides, royalty generally did not show feelings of xenophobia nor, in turn, earn them. It was only at a lower level that such feelings were current. It was only there that Englishmen in 1530 would take up arms intending to kill Venetian merchants because they exported the wool from England and took away employment from the people. (3) Venetians had to be wary. Not a tactless word could be said about the king's divorce or the English would not hesitate to use it as an excuse to confiscate the cargoes of their merchants in England. (4)

It was easy enough for Italians to see instances of xenophobia and to interpret them in the light of commercial antagonism but it was only occasionally, as when Giovio echoed the Trevisan

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1. G. Contarini, SPV III, 4 Dec. 1524.

2. C. Capello (San.46), SPV IV, 23 Apr. 1532.

3. Falier (San.53), SPV IV, 23 Mar. 1530.

4. Parti Segrete Consiglio X, SPV IV, 30 July 1530.

Relation on the subject of English contempt for outsiders, that the real root of the problem could be seen in geographic terms. The English were divorced from the rest of Europe; their nearest neighbours were habitual enemies; they had a reasonable enough civilisation of their own to be proud of. Therefore, it had become part of their nature to "think him most unfortunate and half man who had been born in a place other than Britain and he who left the island for an alien land most unhappy." (1) If an Englishman could not be happy except in England, one might deduce that Giovio felt that to them foreigners in their own lands could also not be happy except in some sub-human way. It was certainly a jarring doctrine and one which, in the end of the day, could only be explained, like so many other aspects of English life, in terms of England's geographically phenomenal situation and the economic facts of life that grew up out of it.

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1. Giovio: Desc., p.16.

### CHAPTER III.

#### Intellectual Life in Britain.

One of the most important strands in the Italian inquiry about Britain during the time of the Renaissance was the state of learning and the apparent level of intelligence innate in the islanders. It was an inquiry distinctive in as much as many of the writers were children of the Renaissance with humanistic educational back-grounds. They were therefore interested to see what potential there was for the development of the new learning in the north and to gauge its importance. In this matter they tended to show only the bias of their devotion to their learning: when they saw it lacking or thin on the ground, they were damning; when it flourished richly or in rich places, they commended it. Because of this one can discern a quite distinct crescendo of approbation in their comments on British learning, from a poor, faltering, almost non-existent beginning to a peak of applause during Henry VIII's reign. After that a quick withering away of contacts and a desire to avoid identification with the intellectual progress of the English religious movements led to a general denigration of the advance of English learning as a whole. The late Professor Weiss did much valuable work on the subject.<sup>(1)</sup> His view was general and his concentration was fixed on the Quattrocento. Therefore, he did not write the last definitive word on the subject from the Italian point of view as it developed up to the middle of the sixteenth century. Moreover, Italians themselves saw the subject of intellectual exercise in a broader context. They were as much aware of the economics of the leisure demanded for the cultivation of learning as of the availability of money that the aristocratic or clerical dilettante could shower on it to make it flourish. Often

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1. Cf. Weiss: Humanism in England.



indeed they could see well enough how a basic native intelligence could be diverted by the pressures of every-day utilitarian economics, which could produce no reason why Englishmen should cultivate their minds outside the confines of the chosen cursus honorum of their lives.

Cunning and natural intelligence Italians could discern in the English. In the fourteenth century Villani would comment on the skill of the English in military strategy. Before the battle of Poitiers Prince Edward's arranging for three mounds of booty to be heaped up to distract the greedy enemy, his making up of great fires whose "smoke settled upon the plain like a thick cloud, so that the French were not able to see what the English would do"(1), both were well thought out and successful ruses. On the other hand, military folly could be very much more noticeable. Filippo Villani made no secret of the fact that he considered an English company, such as the one that moved about Tuscany in 1363 attacking everything in sight, lacking in strategic wisdom: they lost many men and "so little by little the English wore themselves out."(2) The English mind that could do great things in battle at other times could tarnish its reputation with diffusive overeagerness. In the fifteenth century only a little was said about innate intelligence. This tended to be highly subjective and, with reference to the less civilised parts of Britain, not very complimentary. The rural folk that Pius II encountered in the north of England he far from condemned: they had worked out for themselves a palatable modus vivendi; but he thought that they showed a certain ingenuousness which prompted him to call them barbarians.(3) However, his was not a general judgment on the English any more than was Prospero de Camulio's when in 1461 he complained

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1. M. Villani, VII.16.

2. F. Villani, XI.81.

3. Pius II: Coms., 19-20.

about a confusion over the numbers involved in a Lancastrian raid on Cornwall: "the truth could not be obtained from England, owing to the stupidity of the people there." (1) It is hard to believe that Camulio really dismissed every Englishman as stupid. In 1506 Vincenzo Quirini came across just as much lack of communication with the Cornish but attributed this to their universally unintelligible language and did not ascribe their slowness to understand and carry out requirements to the islanders in general. (2)

The Trevisan Relation took a cooler look at the question. It was apparent that the English were "gifted with good understanding, and were very quick at everything they applied their minds to." It might have seemed a pity to some Italians that "few...were addicted to the study of letters", but Trevisan's account of the rigorous apprenticeship of English children and their determination to succeed in business by any means or guile must have counter-balanced their lack of letters with the knowledge that their active intelligence did not lack some form of training nor some practical application. (3) Vergil also commented on the sober calculation of their objectives in life. "They took counsel with deliberation, knowing none to be so great an enemy of wisdom as rashness." (4) This was real intelligence. Even the Scots, about whom he was to say, "as touching the sharpness of their wit, nature seems to have failed them nothing, as their erudition and literature doth well declare; for to what art soever they apply themselves, they profit therein without difficulty", did not come up to the English standard because they demonstrably "yielded themselves up to ease, to sloth and unskilfulness", if they had any pretensions to nobility at all. Vergil obviously doubted the wisdom

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1. P. di Camulio, SPM, 18 June 1461.

2. V. Quirini, SPV I, 25 Feb. 1506.

3. Trevisan, 22, 24-26.

4. Vergil: AH(ET), p.24.

of their maxim that "it was better that a man of gentle blood should want, than by craft or science gather for his living." (1) Giovio added some comment of the same kind about women in England. Their minds were not as cultivated as those of Italian women. (2) This only implied a lack of learning rather than a lack of intelligence. On the whole, therefore, the general feeling emerging from Italian writings was that in the British peoples there existed a basic intelligence, sometimes uncultivated, sometimes applied a little narrowly to living rather than to life, but nonetheless fairly noteworthy.

As far as actual learning was concerned, it was seen against a back-ground of pre-Renaissance scholarship and within the setting of British library-facilities or university institutions. These formalised and highlighted Italian appreciation of the state of English intellectual attainment. Coluccio Salutati was well enough acquainted with Latin poems of the twelfth century writer Joseph of Exeter to be able to quote from them (3) and his knowledge of John of Salisbury's work as a writer and translator of Latin again seemed to be substantial. (4) But it was the thirteenth century Grosseteste, Robert of Lincoln as Salutati called him, who stimulated his mind. Grosseteste's conception of truth interested him, although he objected to it. It could not, he felt, "be found in passion, habit and the working of the near-at-hand object, but only from the intellect, which comprehended and which was the subject of such habit." Salutati was convinced that only if one could speak of learning as such that Grosseteste's triple distinction would be clear. (5) The arguments were not of the Renaissance and they did not appeal to the Italian but

1. *Ibid.*, p.11.

2. Giovio: *Desc.*, 16.

3. Salutati: *Epistolaria*, X.12.

4. *Ibid.*, VIII.22, IX.4.

5. Salutati: *De Nobilitate*, Chs.6, 16.

Salutati's thinking them worthy of his attention more than a century after their postulation gives one some idea of the regard in which the works of that English savant were held. In fact, it was the work of <sup>John of</sup> Salisbury and Grosseteste that kept the reputation of English scholars alive through a bleak fourteenth century. Only from the other side of the border could be found anyone of an intellectual reputation enough to rival them. John Duns Scotus was as well-known in Italy as he was important to that country's learned society. Unfortunately it was not until 1546 when Giovio published a work on the lives of learned men that anything like a cohesive biographical study of the late thirteenth century Scottish philosopher was available. However, what Giovio did do was to compile facts known in Italy and undoubtedly supplemented them with information drawn from Boece's histories. "There was none more ardent....in serious studies either acute or subtle than John Scotus." He had "instituted a new following with his name..; he had illustrated a new form of Christian dogmatics" and had indulged "in disputations about sacred faith...and in the philosophy of wisdom with veritable Scythians." Giovio was obviously not too seriously concerned about the nature of his philosophy; he was interested in him as a very noteworthy Briton from Sylvan Caledonia, although to him that was "so less the wonder." Scotus had formulated a disputed intellectual discipline which stood up well under attack.(1) So it was with Scotus that Britain was propelled into the fourteenth century with high repute in intellectual matters, though not one that greatly appealed to Italian humanists.(2)

In the fourteenth century very few English scholars engaged the attention of Italians. Petrarch was particularly interested in Richard de Bury, the king of England's chancellor, whom he had met on

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1. Giovio: ECVI., pp.6v.-7.

2. Surprisingly William of Ockham (d.1349) received little attention in works of the Italian Renaissance. He is, e.g., alluded to in the Cronaca Sanese (RIS 15, p.81, s.a.1328), but no valuable comments are made. His works, however, were certainly known to Renaissance Italians: e.g., a volume of his commentaries, entitled Expositio aurea super totam artem veterem, was published in Bologna in 1496.

his mission to Avignon at the beginning of the Anglo-French wars. He saw him as "a man of burning mind and not unlettered." On the basis of promise that he showed from an early age he was educated in his native Britain. In other words he had intellectual talent and Britain was not the place where this was neglected. However, Petrarch did not pretend that there was anything particularly original about Bury. He was a learned man, interesting enough for discussions and as a source of useful information if one wanted questions answered about the mysterious island of Thule, but, being a man primarily concerned with matters of practical administration, he did not rank among the outstanding philosophers of Christendom.(1) Virtually the only other fourteenth century English letterato to whom any Italian paid attention was Thomas Fitz-Alain of Arundel, sometime archbishop of Canterbury under Richard II. Arundel himself had come to Florence and met there Salutati, with whom he afterwards corresponded. Their letters, partly concerned with political events, did on occasions take the form of cultured discussions on theological matters ranging from the time of Hiram, king of Tyre, to Augustine.(2) But as with Petrarch and Bury, there was nothing in what Salutati wrote to suggest anything more than that he thought of Arundel as a cultivated man of letters with an agile, inquiring mind. Of his contemporaries only the man who was to become Henry IV received much commendation for intellectual attainment. De Reduzzi said that he "was learned in many things"; he was particularly distinguished in mathematics and music. These arts he had apparently used to calculate the place where he should die.(3) This by implication could suggest astrological leanings. Though hardly to be discounted itself in the Renaissance

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1. Petrarch: Familiari, III.1.

2. Salutati: Epist, XI.7; XII.8; XIII.6.

3. A. de Reduzzi, RLS.19, p.792.



world, astrology was a practical science, usually the product of basic studies and so could easily have been regarded as a passing merit in the English king. It did not add much to England's reputation for original scholarship.

These Englishmen, contemporaries of the early Italian humanists, had been notable for their fairly conventional book-learning. Bury and Arundel might even have been called bibliophiles. Certainly bibliophilia was a thing that interested Renaissance Italians themselves and its manifestation in Englishmen no less. However, they were to experience some initial disappointment when they probed into library facilities and scholars' attitudes towards them in England. When Poggio Bracciolini came to England after the Council of Constance, his main objectives were to study and to try to discover Classical books in English libraries. However, although he was largely able to "pass this time...wrapped in his books", he soon gave up "any hope of a great work being recovered" in England. He "managed to lay hands on the inventories of not a few monasteries that were considered distinguished and old, (but) there was nothing very excellent in them." He feared that once, when the barbaric nations had occupied the island, the monastic libraries had been sacked and the books destroyed.(1) Part of Poggio's disappointment was caused by his having had high hopes in the first place. Manuel Chrysoloras had told him and others had written to him about Classical books in Salisbury but a thorough search by him revealed nothing. He was evidently looking for Origen's works but none came to light and the indifferent teachers there and at other monasteries could give him no help. In all there were only to be found "a few volumes of the ancients which were in the same category as our (the Italians') better ones", but evidently not of the first rank.

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1. Poggio: 'Epistolae' I, in Opera Omnia III.i.6, s.m. Mar. 1420; 7, s.m. June 1420.



The papal collector, Simon de Tromo, might have told him that "in this island there were very ancient monasteries and endless books" but Poggio now knew how "to suspect the Syrens": the monasteries in England might be opulent but they were less than 400 years old; "they were destitute of gentile books; they were filled with... ecclesiastical books,...nothing worthy of humanistic studies." It was a disappointed Poggio who turned his face towards Italy again: Oxford had been his last hope and he had been sure that he would not be able to visit the place.(1) That he did not probably saved him another disappointment, although to Italian readers it probably remained as a possible oasis in a bibliophile humanists wilderness. More than a century later Giovio was to make similar comments about Scotland. The Danes had sacked monasteries of the Outer Isles where royal archives and libraries housed ancient books and these were dispersed.(2) Giovio's personal disappointment was not like Poggio's but he, in his day, as Poggio did in his as regards England, dispelled any idea that Scotland might have a precious back-log of ancient texts waiting to be discovered.

Quattrocento Italy, however, was already well enough aware of Britain's deficiencies through Poggio and was conscious of an English effort to make them up. What other reason could there have been for John Tiptoft, earl of Worcester, as Ludovico Carbone put it, "to despoil all the Italian libraries in order to adorn England with the most beautiful literary monuments."(3) This suggests a greater increase in bibliophilia than, for example, the correspondence of P.C.Decembrio with Humphrey of Gloucester tells one about that duke's collection of books. A letter by Gloucester himself suggests

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1. Ibid., III, i.10, s.m. Oct. 1420; 11, s.m. Dec. 1420; 13, s.m. Feb. 1421.

2. Giovio: Desc., 39.

3. L. Carbone: Orazione Funebre., p.401.

that his interest was in works by Cato, Varro, Lucius Florus, Livy and Pliny(1) but Decembrio was concerned to write mainly about translations of Plato for the duke. Therefore the impression that could have been given was that Gloucester's interests were more scholarly than purely bibliophile.(2) The Tiptoft figure of a generation later, exploring Florence and buying great stores of books, in the long run said very much more for English libraries.(3) Vespasiano da Bisticci, the Florentine book-seller, seemed to have been much patronised by book-hunting English scholars. William Gray, bishop of Ely, when in Florence, ordered many books from Vespasiano so that after an active career he was able to pursue his interests in England: "he kept himself to his studies and founded a noble library." (4)<sup>(4a)</sup> Andrew Hollis too: Vespasiano "kept a vast number of scribes copying books for him to take back to England." So many did he in fact collect that they became too numerous to be sent by land, so Hollis had to await the sailing of a ship to England.(5) More generally Vespasiano mentioned how he had a world history by Zembino da Pistoia copied and widely distributed in Italy, France and Spain. England too was apparently among the countries where, he knew, the book would find a ready market to make the enterprise worthwhile.(6) In all, the flow of Renaissance books into England seemed to give the impression that the deficiencies mentioned by Poggio were being made up. Near the end of the fifteenth century Vespasiano was able to speak in equal terms about Federigo of Urbino's famous collection and the catalogues of the papal library, of S. Marco in Florence "and even of the University of Oxford, which (he) had procured from England."(7)

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1. Humphrey, duke of Gloucester, to P.C. Decembrio, SPM, 15 July 1443.

2. P.C. Decembrio, SPM, s.a. 1441, p.11.

3. Vespasiano, p.335.

4. Ibid., pp.184-86, Gray's MSS in fact were left to Balliol College library.

5. Ibid., pp.206-8.

6. Ibid., p.421.

7. Ibid., p.104.

4a. Cf. also R.A.B. Mynors, Catalogue of the Manuscripts of Balliol College Oxford (Oxford 1963), for a list of the college's medieval MSS and for a discussion on Gray's life and works, pp.xxiv-xlix.

Although many decades had passed, it might have seemed to Italians that Poggio had indeed missed something by not going to Oxford. In all, the English, though still apparently athirst for books, were not so obviously deficient in those approved by Italian humanists.

At the turn of the century and into the sixteenth century, the interest in and distribution of books was maintained. It is perhaps too much to hope for that the slim volume with a clasp that can be seen lying under the hands of the merchant Paul Withypool in Solario's painting of him (Plate 8) was a Renaissance text: it was probably a religious manual of some sort, but it is interesting to note that this was the sort of object that a painter could find in a burgher's household and would think appropriate as a finishing touch for his patron's picture. But on a higher level more eminent men showed an even more substantial interest in books as such. After profound studies of Greek codices in Italy Thomas Linacre returned home to become a royal tutor and brought with him "learned volumes" to assist him in his studies at home.(1) In 1526, when Wolsey was told by Lorenzo Orio about the famous collection of the late Cardinal Bessarion's books, which had been brought to Venice, Wolsey thanked him, "saying it was impossible to do him a greater favour." He was apparently more than pleased at the prospect of being given a list of these books.(2) Yet, what scholarship Wolsey could have done must have been very slight. Compared with a professional scholar like Richard Pace, he was of little importance. In 1527, when Gasparo Spinelli, a sophisticated Venetian, visited Pace near London, he was astounded by his library: Pace was "surrounded by such a quantity of books, that for (his) part (he) never saw before

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1. Giovio: ECVI., p.39.

2. L. Orio (San.40), SPV III, 12 Feb. 1526.

so many in one mass."(1) This indeed was a high commendation for English bibliophilia. It showed the kind of basis on which English scholarship rested.

However, although the libraries that engaged Italians' attention were usually those connected with private individuals, English universities were not without interest for them, even though they did initially represent a type of learning rooted in pre-Renaissance thought. It was not without reason that Poggio hoped to find something intellectually stimulating at Oxford. He showed considerable annoyance because he was not able to visit the university. Its reputation had reached Italian ears before Poggio's departure and certainly had been high enough in Vespasiano's time for him to procure the inventory of the library.(2) About 1497 the Trevisan Relation told of how in England, although "few, except the clergy, were addicted to the study of letters,...they had great advantages for study, there being two general universities in the kingdom, Oxford and Cambridge; in which were many colleges for the maintenance of poor scholars." One, Magdalen at Oxford, Trevisan knew himself; "the founders had been prelates, so the scholars were also ecclesiastics."(3) This highlighted once again the possibility that these institutions might have a built-in religious orientation. Vergil's idea was that, following the example of Charlemagne's foundation of a university at Paris under the influence of the English scholar Alcuin, Sigibertus, king of the East Angles about 893 had founded a university at Oxford. This became renowned "both for the studies of divine and human knowledge, and for the multitude of such as busily employed all goodly faculties." The scholars there lived in colleges

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1. G. Spinelli (San.45), SPV III, 30 July 1527.

2. Poggio: Epist. III.13, s.m. Feb. 1421, Vespasiano, p.104.

3. Trevisan, 22.

and always attended divine service before commencing their studies. They "lived in union of chaste life and innured themselves with all laudable arts and sciences." The university at Cambridge was even older than Oxford and at least its equal in size and renown "in the affluence of good arts and liberal sciences."<sup>(1)</sup> Although these institutions had early royal foundations, they were distinctly run on orthodox religious lines. In the centuries to come the foundation of additional colleges, as Italians saw it, was usually done by rich clerics. In the mid fifteenth century, Henry Chichele, archbishop of Canterbury, "built two colleges at Oxford wherein he placed two companies of scholars." One was dedicated to All Souls; the other to St. Bernard, and "neither the labour nor expense of these two houses had been spent in vain."<sup>(2)</sup> A bishop of Winchester, William Wainflete, had built a college at Oxford in honour of St. Mary Magdalene so that, just as she had "refreshed sometime the feet of Christ with sweet ointment, so good wits might be there fed perpetually with the heavenly liquor of learning."<sup>(3)</sup> <sup>(3a)</sup> Although Falier might maintain that the building of universities at Cambridge and Oxford must be accredited to enlightened sovereigns always accustomed to introduce scientific literature into their realm<sup>(4)</sup>, in his day it was a cleric like Wolsey who was more apparently interested in educational foundations. In 1526 Gasparo Spinelli noted how Wolsey had "proceeded to Oxford where he was founding a most beautiful college."<sup>(5)</sup> The fact did remain that, despite Polydore Vergil's condemnation of him for executing "grandiose schemes for founding two colleges, one at Oxford, the other at Ipswich, an unimportant

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1. Vergil: AH(ET), pp.217-220.

2. Vergil: AH(Ellis), p.70.

3. Ibid., p.74.

4. Falier, 18.

5. G. Spinelli (San.42), SPV III, 3 Aug. 1526.

3a. Vergil also wrote a rather critical account of the state of the universities at the end of Henry VII's reign, vide AH(Hay), pp.145-147, but this only appears in the manuscript version of the Anglica Historia (cf. AH(Hay), pp.xiii-xv). It is, therefore, doubtful if more than just a few sixteenth century Italians could have read this passage.



place where he was born..., intending to enhance his own empty glory, rather than serve the interests of religion and scholarship", Wolsey was interested in a glory of this sort. It was in the grand prelatal tradition; he himself did not spare expense nor the effort of dissolving a monastery in order to make the Oxford foundation possible.(1) However, to some Italians this may have seemed like the use of one set of ecclesiastical funds to endow another religious enterprise. Their writings do convey the distinct feeling that universities in England had a theological bias.

If, as Trevisan said, only clerics in England were lettered at the end of the fifteenth century, how many then received a university education? There must have been a fair number of them if in 1517 Chieregato could report that "in Oxford (which, were it not for the university, might have been called a small town) upwards of 400 students had died in less than a week."(2) If so many could die, how many were there altogether? Falier suggested in 1531 that at Oxford and Cambridge there were 3,000 scholars who were instructed free.(3) Italians could not have been too surprised by the numbers if, as Giovio said, they knew that at the universities there had been built up twenty-seven colleges of solid foundation.(4) There would have had to have been these facilities if, as he maintained, any "child...too delicate for military service...was set to study." (5) This, it seemed, applied to the poor almost more than to the rich (6), so the facilities must have been considered great. Giovio made the situation in Scotland appear just as fortunate. He mentioned no numbers of scholars but listed three universities: St. Andrews,

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1. Vergil: AH(Hay), p.317.

2. F. Chieregato, SPV II, 6 Aug. 1517.

3. Falier, 18.

4. Giovio: Desc., 13.

5. Ibid., 16.

6. Trevisan, 22; Falier, 18.



graced by the presence and illustrious, grave mind of Cardinal Beaton; Aberdeen, where the liberal arts had flourished under Boece; and Glasgow, celebrated as much as a university city as an archdiocese. (1) In all, Giovio made it appear that the British universities facilitated a large amount of educational activity. The question was: but of what kind? Giovio believed in his day that emanating from the English universities came "intelligence which in dialectic, philosophy and sacred letters filled all Europe with admiration of its subtlety." In times past they had indulged in sophistic disputes but, Giovio continued, in his life-time Thomas Linacre had "brought to Britain from Italy Greek letters." (2) This was indeed so. And not only Linacre, a list of eminent scholars were seen by Carbone to flock to Guarino da Verona for his Classical teaching and most of them had come to Vespasiano to buy their texts of the Ancients. But how much of this could have affected the universities if even in the 1520s Reginald Pole felt it necessary to go to Padua to study and was quite noticeably still there after five years? (3) If English universities had been wholly devoted to learning in the Italian style, would they not have been attractive enough to keep a man as important as Pole in England? Italian writers virtually answered this themselves by the amount of detailed attention they paid to the activities of individual scholars in England, scholars whose studies apparently seldom had much to do with formal university life. They were the men who brought humanistic attitudes to England.

It would be foolish to say that humanistic learning touched English life much before the time of Poggio's visit in the 1420s. Previously Leonardo Bruni had even implied that Englishmen

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1. Giovio: Desc., 30, 31.

2. Ibid., 13.

3. A. Surian (San. 30), SPV III, 1 Apr. 1521; Sanudo 42, SPV III, 8 July 1526.

were not fully capable of absorbing humanism. A friend of his, the monk Thomas of Britain, he said, had come to Florence in 1395 to buy books and had shown himself "a most ardent devotee of (Italian) studies, as much as that nation understood."<sup>(1)</sup> This was the condemnation of faint praise. Despite Manuel Chrysoloras's rather favourable report on Britain's own literary resources, after his brief visit to the island, Poggio, during his own visit, did not take long to see just how misleading Chrysoloras had been and just how true Bruni's epigram on the British seemed to be.<sup>(2)</sup> Even the visit of Poggio himself seemed to have been of little literary importance. As Vespasiano later put it, he "found much to censure there": his attention was diverted more by English greed, wealth and ribaldry than by learning.<sup>(3)</sup> Where he saw learning, it was institutionalised in monasteries. Poggio insisted that he could only discover "very few lovers of letters and those barbarians rather learned in disputations and sophistries than in learning."<sup>(4)</sup> This surprised him despite the fact by now he was convinced that England "contained nothing worthy of humanistic studies"<sup>(5)</sup> for the simple reason that he had expected more of a country to which one of its leading men, Beaufort, had invited him ostensibly to extend and disseminate his humanistic learning. But he soon found that his patron was more interested in politics than learning. He was invariably "absent wandering like a Scythian"; Poggio was left to his own devices with only the provision of his food and clothing. That was sufficient, although he had hoped for more liberal treatment.<sup>(6)</sup> When he was indeed given the income from a curacy, he was

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1. Bruni: Epistolae II, xviii, p.55.

2. Poggio: Epist., I.i.10, s.m. Oct. 1420.

3. Vespasiano, p.351-2.

4. Poggio: Epist., I.i.10.

5. Ibid., I.i.13.

6. Ibid., I.i.6, s.m. Mar. 1420.

dismayed to find that it required of him priestly duties which, since he was unwilling, indeed, unable to undertake them, he had to unburden onto some cleric with the consequent loss of half his income.(1) This was the last straw. As he himself said, "Riches and dignities I do not want, if they take away from studies...I sought little other than I should live freely and study."(2) However, at other times he could recognise that there were others in England who were deeply interested in humanistic studies. After he had left the country, he still communicated with Richard Petworth, secretary to Cardinal Beaufort, and discussed with him the problems of such studies. From a variety of references to the works of Seneca, Horace, Sallust and Jerome and a mention of the philosophy of the Epicures, one may assume that Poggio knew that Petworth was familiar with them already.(3) Also in Beaufort's entourage was Nicholas Bildestone, archdeacon of Winchester, whom Poggio knew in England and with whom he was still corresponding in 1436. He impressed Poggio, who described him as "a doctor of laws, the envoy of the king of England,...a man very friendly and close to (him); for (they) were both in the household of the same lord, and joined in the greatest necessity; he desired to have other books of Petrarch."(4) Bildestone evidently felt the same restrictions as Poggio, in which case he must undoubtedly have been interested in the Classics, but, because he expressed this desire to extend his knowledge of Petrarch, it does indicate that he was already familiar enough with and interested in new Italian works to be an admirer of the creative side of the humanist's work. In as much as it was Beaufort who

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1. Ibid., I.i.17 & 18, s.m. Feb. & Mar. 1422.

2. Ibid., I.i.20, s.m. May 1422.

3. Ibid., I.ii.12, s.d. 12 May 1424; 18, s.d. 18 Oct. 1424.

4. Ibid., I.ii.35, s.d. 20 Nov. 1425; Vol.II, v.22, s.d. 6 Feb. 1436.

brought Poggio to England and into his household and he who employed Petworth and Bildestone, although he himself seemed to give them little encouraging attention, to Italians he might well have appeared as the first aristocratic English patron of humanistic letters.

Humphrey, duke of Gloucester, however, was the country's first patron really personally interested in the new learning. The early figure of Gloucester was, in Italian minds, not a particularly cultured one. Frulovisi, one of his humanist employees, when he wrote the life of Henry V, noted how on the king's death the duties of government were split up among the royal dukes. Gloucester was given the task of governing England, while the education of the young Henry VI was entrusted not to him but to the duke of Exeter.(1) If Gloucester had then been renowned for his scholarly pursuits, would not he have been a more obvious choice? A humanist like Pius II tended to concentrate upon the political and personal side of Gloucester's life and apparently only once acknowledged how much of an advocate of the new learning the duke had been as he "received the humanities into (the) kingdom with high zeal...He cultivated poets marvellously and particularly venerated orators; hence...many Englishmen had turned out really eloquent."(2) However, from the pen of Frulovisi Italians eventually did begin to gather a clearer idea of the duke's literary tastes if only from the Humfroidos, a laudatory poem in praise of Gloucester. This work, written in the contemporary Renaissance style of such panegyrics, apparently was not of the highest standard in style and Latin composition; it was not very well known.(3) This may imply that Gloucester's taste for Latin verse was discriminating enough not to allow him to be over-enthusiastic about

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1. Frulovisi, 91.

2. Pius II: Coms., 585ff; Epist.64, in Opera, p.548.

3. Cf. R. Weiss: 'Humphrey, Duke of Gloucester and Tito Livio Frulovisi', pp. 218-227.

the work. Nevertheless, his patronage of Frulovisi for the creation of such works, the Humphroidos and the Vita Henrici Quinti, both original products, however imperfect, of a humanistic style of writing, does tell one of one side of Gloucester's interests. It was evidently important enough for him to have an Italian humanist who could write for him like this when the need arose. However, in Italian eyes Gloucester began to appear as a patron of the Classics much more through his dealings with Leonardo Bruni and Pier Candido Decembrio. Later Vespasiano recalled how Bruni had "enjoyed the highest consideration in England, especially with the duke of (Gloucester) to whom he dedicated his translation of Aristotle's Politics and sent a copy to England. The duke sent a reply which in Messer Leonardo's opinion, did not show due appreciation of such a fine work so he withdrew the dedicatory proem." (1) As Bruni himself explained, this had only come about because Gloucester had written to him asking to see the books of the Ethics that he had translated and, after praising them to the skies, he had urged him also to translate the Politics into Latin. This done, Bruni sent a finely ornamented copy to the duke (c.1437) but apparently he was not impressed by the Englishman's reaction. He himself denied that he was disappointed over financial rewards, as Decembrio and Vespasiano implied: he had "never accepted anything, not even one obol..., from that duke." He had sent that volume to him as freely as he had the others. (2) As far as one can gather, Decembrio held an even more extensive correspondence with Gloucester with the purpose, as he said, of supplying the duke's literary wants and of spreading his fame among his fellow men. Decembrio suggested that, since Bruni had

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1. Vespasiano, p.367.

2. L. Bruni: Epistolario II, (Flor.1741), Bk.8, Let.6, pp.120-121.



undertaken work on Aristotle's Politics for the duke, he would translate Plato's Republic and in due course the translation was sent with a dedicatory epistle, which traced the history of the translation and assured "the most literate prince" that the work was dedicated to himself, whose name had already been spread to the ends of the earth by Zeno Castiglione, bishop of Bayeux. Neither the distance of the islands nor the importunate British sea could obscure his glory.(1) Certainly this seemed to have been Decembrio's considered opinion: Gloucester was well enough known in European literary circles, and not only because of Zeno Castiglione's propagandising. Rolando Talenti, a Milanese in diplomatic service, as well as Gerardo Landriani, the bishop of Lodi, both apparently bore to Italy favourable reports of Gloucester's literary tastes.(2) Moreover, Bruni's friend Francesco Piccolpasso, archbishop of Milan, considered it important enough to flatter him on paper for his interest in the Fine Arts and in most erudite humanistic studies.(3) If Decembrio's flattery was well placed in this respect, he does not seem to have achieved very many more of his financial ambitions than those which Bruni denied in himself. Not so with Decembrio: he confessed an interest in a villa once owned by Petrarch, but no amount of hinting prompted Gloucester to buy it for him.(4) He was evidently interested in it for more than sentimental reasons. Perhaps he hoped that Gloucester would see it as an appropriate gift for a humanist. But it was not forthcoming. One wonders how this affected Gloucester's reputation as a patron. His association with Bruni ended with some misunderstanding over money or honours and Decembrio's material hopes were obviously not satisfied by him. However, this

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1. P.C. Decembrio, in M. Borsa: 'Correspondence', EHR (1904), xix.525.
  2. Cf. K.H. Vickers: Humphrey, Duke of Gloucester, pp.354, 356ff.
  3. Piccolpasso to Gloucester, s.a. 1439(?) in W.L. Newman: 'Humphrey, Duke of Gloucester, and P.C. Decembrio', EHR.xx, (1905), p.496.
  4. Decembrio, EHR.xix, p.521, s.d. 1 June 1444.



did not detract from his reputation for appreciation of the Classics: he was still praised by Decembrio for the fame of his name; and not without reason: even Bruni remarked on his initial deep interest in his translation of the Ethics. For him also to sustain interest in such a large project as the translation of the Republic certainly must have indicated more than just a dilettante's involvement in humanist studies.

The next impression that British scholars made upon Italians came from those who had left the country, often precisely for the pursuit of their studies. But even among those who travelled abroad on other business there was a significant number of men who took advantage of their situation to dabble in the humanities. The breed was not new. Of all the non-Italian representatives at the Council of Basle, Thomas Livingstone, "the abbot from Scotland", whom Pius II described as "a man of keen intelligence", was known as a very capable debater. But he stood rather at the end of the line of great medieval teachers. His forte was theology.<sup>(1)</sup> Indeed, what Aeneas Sylvius was admiring for itself in this Scot, Poggio would have condemned as old fashioned sophistry in others. However, by the 1450s, Poggio could have had little to complain about. Ludovico Carbone reflected on the death of Guarino da Verona in 1460: "A great many men whom nature had made barbarians he liberated from barbarity of speech and he returned them to their native land, Latinised in language and culture. A testimony of this was given in the Englishman, the bishop of Ely, William Gray, born of the renowned and most serene stock of the kings of England, an outstanding philosopher and theologian." And not only he, Robert Fleming, John Free, John Gunthorp and the earl of Worcester were all among

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1. Pius II: De Gestis, Bk.I, pp.17, 31.

these 'barbarians' who soaked up Guarino's humanism.(1) The notion that these men might not have been Latinised in language before coming to Guarino is rather curious. How else could he have communicated with them? But it was true that they returned to England with a considerably deeper and more refined knowledge of the Classics than before. Gray, basically educated at Cologne, soon acclimatized himself to the Renaissance atmosphere. Buying books, learning with Guarino, patronising the young Greek scholar Nicolo Perotto, founding a noble library (at Ealliol), he combined in himself all the attributes of the Renaissance man absorbed in Greek and Latin Classicism. As a prelate, a diplomat and a statesman, he led an active life in the world and yet so ordered it that he lived and governed in peace and intellectual reflection.(2) Vespasiano's picture of Gray shows a character well rounded by his Italianate intellectual studies and by his furtherance of learning through patronage. It was quite possible that Italians, looking at his activities in sequence with Gloucester's, saw him as the duke's spiritual successor.

Following in his foot-steps came other Englishmen who absorbed Italian learning, but, by concentration, did not match Gray with his general proclivities. Andrew Hollis, also a cleric and diplomat, was by inclination more of a heremitical scholar: he "avoided pomp and dignities" and, beside the Englishman's usual propensity for habitual gluttony, his life was one of comparative sobriety and abstemiousness. He too patronised book-sellers, but with a vigour that surpassed Gray's. Yet, he was seen by Vespasiano as essentially a recluse. "In England he withdrew from the temporal world and...devoted himself to study and religious exercises."(3)

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1. Carbone: Orazione Funebre, p.399.

2. Vespasiano, 184-6.

3. Ibid., 206-8.

The books, his learning, they were for his own edification. Italians were given no suggestion that his knowledge might be used for others nor that his plethora of books would go to found the basis of a fine library, as in Gray's case. According to Carbone, Robert Fleming, dean of Lincoln, "because of his singular excellence and ability in literary studies, was made procurator in Rome by the distinguished king of England." (1) Carbone's sketch is brief and it gives one no idea what his peculiar interests were, but it does indicate that Italians might have assumed that a brilliant Englishman in high ecclesiastical circles could advance himself to a position of importance in secular administration. The fact that Fleming was to work in Rome might have suggested, to any Italian who did not positively know, that he would have been actively interested in the papal libraries at a time when they were undergoing crucial development. John Gunthorp provoked little Italian comment. Yet for Carbone to link him with John Free, when he called them "most faithful friends...and very learned men" (2), was high praise from one who knew the top intellects of Europe gathered at Guarino's feet. As far as Free was concerned not only Carbone thought highly of him. Guarino himself mentioned how he was the common talk of everybody but added that he did not want to labour the point lest he might seem to be flattering him more than holding him dear to himself. (3) In other words, Free not only impressed the great Italian master with his intellectual capabilities; he also earned his respect and friendship. This was no mean compliment from a man inundated by budding humanists, all eager for his attention.

The last, most striking English humanist of this period

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1. Carbone: Orazione., p.399.

2. Ibid., p.399.

3. Guarino da Verona: Epistolario, Vol.II, No.908, pp.652-3.

was described by Carbone as "John the Englishman(Anglico), nay rather angelic, the earl of Worcester" of the English blood royal, a man who at the age of twenty-five had risen to the post of Grand Treasurer of England and subsequently had distinguished himself as a man of arms. As a man of religious impulse he had been undertaking a pilgrimage to Jerusalem when, "seduced by the sweetness of the Muses, he remained for three years in Italy" and avidly indulged his passionate interest in literary studies. Carbone obviously received the impression of a man anxious at all costs to absorb anything that touched on the new learning. Not only was he interested in "despoiling all Italian libraries" for books to take home, but also he apparently had such a high estimation of Carbone's intellect that he wanted to conduct him straight to England. It was only his loyalty to the Ferraresi that kept Carbone from going, so he said, but he was still obviously impressed and flattered enough by Tiptoft's interest to call him "my sweetest lord." (1) Vespasiano complemented this character-sketch. On his return to England Worcester was "accounted one of the chief men of the government" and the reason that Vespasiano saw for this was the prestige of "his learning and his great wisdom and prudence." (2) In other words the Italian view was that he and also Gray were beginning to realise how their studies were being appreciated by their fellow countrymen. But, said Vespasiano, Worcester overstepped himself because "he had brought into England certain laws of Padua.., which were hateful to the people." The earl's studies had evidently taught him that "unheard of cruelties" could be used if one was "urged on by the lust of power." "Many of the greatest are blinded by ambition", moralised Vespasiano, but he very nearly

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1. Carbone: Orazione., pp.399-401.

2. Vespasiano, 336.

implied that Tiptoft had learned this ambition in Italy.(1) The human figure that he condemned was virtually the forerunner of the prince that Machiavelli commended as the son of the dispassionately man-orientated world of the Renaissance. The French and the Britons, Carbone might claim, had even by the 1460s benefited from the revelation of "Roman and Greek eloquence" with the result that they "possessed good orators and poets"(2) but a more general application of such learning was still not wholly acceptable to them. Tiptoft, having anticipated the pace of absorption, was rushed to the scaffold.

Only slowly did humanism make itself felt in high places in England. The young Edward V showed promise. Mancini said that he had "talent and remarkable learning" and added that "in word and deed he gave so many proofs of his liberal education of polite, nay rather scholarly attainments far beyond his age." This precocious youth had a notable knowledge of literature as he showed in elegant discourse and in his understanding of the received corpus of literature.(3) It is not easy to say just how accurate was Mancini's description of Edward. He was certainly at pains to idealise him. However, true or false, the effect upon the Italians would have been the same: Edward V had shown all the signs of developing into England's first Renaissance prince. The rule that he promised was put off for a quarter of a century. Admittedly, in his day a knight could be well enough versed in a language like Italian to be able to understand a joke in it(4) and his uncle's successor, Henry VII, could impress Italians by "speaking very blandly in the French tongue,

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1. Ibid., 337-8.

2. L. Carbone, preface to Plinius Secundus: Epistolae, in P. Hirsh: Printing., p.40.

3. Mancini, 95, 115.

4. Arlotto, No.5.

with which he was thoroughly acquainted"(1), but contemporary languages, though commendably useful, to the Italian humanist were not the stuff of learning. Moreover, Vergil's litotes-formed claim that Henry VII "was not devoid of scholarship"(2) was neither whole-hearted nor very explicit. The credit that his England gained in this field must surely have come from his patronage and from the court he kept. His own son Arthur was a product of this. Already at the age of eleven he was evidently "very ready in speaking Latin."(3) Moreover, this kind of learning was gradually growing out from court circles. John Colet was doing the same for other youths. Andrea Ammonio eulogised him as the "learned creator of a school for boys."(4)

But both Colet and Linacre were more than school-masters. Colet was also a prominent theologian; Linacre to the Italians was known as Ermolao Barbaro's friend, whose work on Greek codices in Rome had seen the unravelling of Plato's Phaedrus. Linacre himself had edited the Sphere of Proclus, and afterwards read it to Prince Arthur; it was he who could then turn to Galenus and study medicine, an interest which led him to found a college of physicians in London; he who could turn at the end of his days to the translation of Aristotle, with the initial collaboration of Grocyn and Latimer. All of this Giovio saw and admired.(5) But his was just the first in a cavalcade of names that went to make up what he called "the picture of British intelligence" at the beginning of the sixteenth century. Unlike fifteenth century England, this seemed very productive of original works and Classical commentaries. Cuthbert Tunstall of Durham, producing a Libel of Arithmetic by using some very

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1. Lionel Chiericato, bp. of Concordia, SPV IV(App.), 7 Apr. 1490.

2. Vergil: AH(Hay), p.145.

3. Raimondo de Soncino, SPM, 8 Sept. 1497.

4. Andrea Ammonio, poem xvii, 18.

5. Giovio: ECVI, p.39 r.-y; Desc., 13.



difficult material; George Lily, a lover of elegant studies, composing a series of laconic volumes, were the least of them.(1) Polydore Vergil himself was a notable scholar patronised by Henry VII and later Henry VIII, but, although Giovio thought his "most beautiful Proverbs, belles lettres in the style of Erasmus, most acceptable, he was at pains to discredit him because of his English histories, which, he said, were unfair to the Scots and French and designed to curry favour with the English. Giovio actually accused him of "telling many things sooner according to others than according to his own will." (2) This, however, was a thing about which Italians would have had to make up their minds: Vergil's works could have had great influence upon their opinions about Britain and here was Giovio saying that, at least in the incomplete 1534 edition of the Anglica Historia, Vergil had distorted the truth. This did, however, not obscure the fact that Vergil, an Italian, could work in and add lustre to cultivated society in England at this time. The paradox of the situation was that in Scotland the contemporary scholar-historian, Hector Boece, who was ostensibly saving and collating the fading pages of Scottish history, was seen by Giovio as saving a historical heritage from oblivion, but by some subsequent historians as the "father of lies." (3) Giovio and other Italians managed to ignore the more renowned Scottish writers of the period. But this is understandable: their attention was monopolised by England's brilliant scholars. Richard Pace, for one, "the distinguished writer" first known in Italy in a diplomatic capacity, had rendered himself an excellent Hebrew and Chaldean scholar and was, according to Gasparo Spinelli in 1527, undertaking extensive annotation and correction of the

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1. Ibid., Desc., 13.

2. Giovio: ECVI, 73r.

3. Ibid., 73r; and cf. Herkless: Cardinal Beaton., p.35.

Old Testament. Already he had been able to find "a stupendous amount of errors": such was his learning. "The work would assuredly prove most meritorious and render him immortal." (1) This was one of the highest forms of Renaissance scholarship: the study of ancient languages was shedding new light on biblical as well as Classical texts. It was giving England a reputation rivaling Italy's in this field. Few did more by their lives and deaths to illustrate this trend in scholarship than John Fisher, bishop of Rochester, and Sir Thomas More.

Fisher was well known in Italy for his staunch defence of Catherine of Aragon's marital position. With the strength of Christian virtue he had stood up against the rage and torments of the frustrated Henry VIII until he was executed for his principles. He had written books to support the queen's position, and others to refute Luther and uphold papal authority, but his most lasting contribution to scholarship was seen in five books which he wrote in defence of the Real Presence and another which was a "spiritual and most holy exposition of seven psalms of David." There were more, said Giovio, but some, "which he wrote most worthily in prison, were burned by the Tyrant." (2) Giovio certainly admired Fisher's defiance of the authorities; his admiration for Fisher's scholarship may consequently have been parti pris. There could be no such doubt about Italian admiration for More. As early as 1518, Sebastiano Giustinian was speaking about him in most friendly terms as "most sage and virtuous." (3) Lorenzo Orio thought him "a man of singular and rare learning." (4) Vergil considered him "greatly distinguished

1. G. Spinelli (San.45), SPV IV, 30 July 1527.

2. Giovio: ECVI, 57r-v.

3. S. Giustinian in RB, 28 Feb. 1518.

4. L. Orio (San.39), SPV III, 12 June 1525.

in his writings and his virtuous life."(1) To Bandello he was "a most upright man and endowed with good Latin and Greek letters."(2) It was, in fact, seen that these two facets of his character were incompatible with his duties at Henry VIII's court: for the reason for his fall was seen at an early stage as the result of his "refusal to gratify the king by writing in favour of the divorce."(3) In other words, he declined to employ for unvirtuous ends his literary talents, which were so recognisably useful to a man like Henry VIII. However, it was again Giovio who came nearest to describing the nature of the erudition in which he excelled. Although he was "a master of epistles"(4), his greatest work was an imaginative brain-child born from his "weariness of the corrupt and base customs of (his) century." He wrote a most graceful work about blessed people who lived in a "republic governed by good laws and contained in highest peace and felicity." It was an attempt to "rediscover the true way of living well and happily."(5) It is quite possible that Giovio had read More's Utopia and appreciated its Classical roots as well as its fashionable concern with the Golden Age as an artistic subject.

But how much of this golden age of humanism was reflected in English life? As far as an important personality like Henry VIII was concerned, the initial Italian reaction was to be dazzled by his capacity for languages. "He spoke English, French and Latin (and) understood Italian well"; so Pasqualigo and Badoer reported in 1515(6) All that Giustinian added in 1519 was that he could also speak Spanish(7), but with a Spanish wife this was no great

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1. Vergil: AH(Hay), p.335.

2. Bandello, III, Nov.62.

3. C. Capello (San.46), SPV IV, 16 May 1532.

4. Giovio: Desc., 22.

5. Giovio: ECVI, 56r.-v.

6. Pasqualigo and Badoer, in RB I.76, 3 May 1515.

7. S. Giustinian: Report, in RB II.312.

intellectual feat. When in 1531 Savorgnano said that he was "learned and accomplished", he was vague about the details.(1) Of the few positive examples of his learning one came with the news in 1521 that "the king was writing a work against Luther and would publish it and send it to the princes of Christendom."(2) Another was the fact that a Latin comedy Menaechmi by Plautus could be recited at his court as an entertainment.(3) The education that he afforded his daughter Mary certainly reflected well upon his discrimination. From an early age she was recognised as having "great and uncommon mental endowments"(4) and her ability at fifteen years of age to speak Spanish, French, Latin and English and understand Italian and Greek showed that her education had not neglected humanistic influences.(5) It was the sort of thing that impressed Giovio. Mary was not so educated just because she was a princess. Other women in England could read Latin, he was sure, and for this one particularly had to admire not only Mary but also the three daughters of Thomas More.(6) Yet, more important, the new administrative class was seen to lean towards humanistic erudition. Falier's picture of Wolsey showed a man of mean parentage who had used his Classical studies to rise from a position as a pedagogue to one at court, where his natural and well-trained mind ensured that he rose to high administrative and ecclesiastical positions under Henry VIII.(7) The influence of his education did not end there. Of his own accord, he could arrange, as an after dinner entertainment for ambassadors, a recitation of Terence's Phormio by the scholars of St. Paul's.(8)

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1. Savorgnano (San.54), SPV IV, 25 Aug. 1531.
  2. Surian (San.30), SPV III, 23 Apr. 1521.
  3. G. Spinelli (San.44), SPV IV, 4 Jan. 1527.
  4. Spinelli, (San.45), SPV IV, 7 May 1527; and cf. Scarpinello, SPM, 16 Dec. 1530; 6 June 1531.
  5. Savorgnano, SPV IV, 25 Aug. 1531.
  6. Giovio: Desc., 13v.-14r.
  7. Falier, 26.
  8. G. Spinelli (San.46), SPV IV, 8 Jan. 1528.

Moreover, had Vergil not disliked Wolsey, he might not have condemned him so much for attempting "to enhance his own empty glory" by founding colleges at Oxford and Ipswich.(1) Another Italian might have regarded this as an appropriate memorial for a man like Wolsey to want. Wolsey's successor, Cromwell, also had the reputation of being at least adequately educated or, as Bandello put it, "he knew how to read and wrote very aptly after the English fashion", a characteristic that Bandello admittedly ascribed to most ultramontanes.(2) But Cromwell was also of low-birth and, moreover, a lay-man. By Bandello's day a revolution apparently had happened since the Trevisan Relation, about 1497, maintained that few except the clergy were lettered.(3) Giovio would have agreed: for by the last days of Henry VIII's reign not only the daughters of the king and Thomas More could use Latin, but the nobles as well.(4) Even the heretics whom the English burned were sometimes "very learned in Latin, Greek and Hebrew literature."(5)

Thus, up to this point Italians thought of the intellectual accomplishment of the English in fairly rosy terms. Their picture was fairly complete. Even the scant attention paid to Colet and Waynflete and the virtual ignoring of Peter Courtenay, bishop of Exeter, and Thomas Langton, bishop of Winchester, all of whom were acquainted with Italy and her learning, did not subtract a great deal from a good over-all report. However, by 1551, Daniele Barbaro maintained, students were not going to the universities at Oxford and Cambridge as much as before and that "at present the care taken heretofore in this important matter of education was at an end."(6) In 1554 Soranzo agreed. The English took no delight in literature. The nobles in

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1. Vergil: AH(Hay), 317.

2. Bandello, II, Nov.34.

3. Trevisan, 22.

4. Giovio: Desd., 13v.-14r.

5. C. Capello (San.48), SPV IV, 12 July 1533.

6. Barbaro: Report, SPV V, p.345, s.m. May 1551.

particular held it in little esteem. The only cultured person in England at the time seemed to Soranzo to be Queen Mary herself: she was still an able linguist, although her Greek was not now noticeable. To compensate, she was "more than moderately read in Latin literature, especially with regard to Holy Writ."(1)

Religious feelings may indeed have accounted for this Venetian attitude. What intellectual state could be expected in a country recently so submissive to a Calvinistic reformation? Mary alone was uncompromised. Nevertheless, despite biases, this was a period of English history when political and religious upheavals were not conducive to extensive humanistic learning nor to artistic creativeness. To sum up, Italians faltered from Poggio's low estimation in the 1420s into a quickly and steadily heightening good opinion of the state of learning in Britain as a whole, though particularly in England, up to a high plateau during Henry VIII's reign, after which there seemed to be this sudden dropping off of activity. Therefore, they did manage to see a generally accurate image of the effect of Italian humanism on England and of the English reaction to it.

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1. Soranzo: Report, SPV V, pp.544, 533, s.d. 18 Aug. 1554.



## CHAPTER IV.

### Religion and the Church in Britain.

During the period bounded by the reigns of Edward III and Henry VIII, most aspects of religion in England saw some degree of change. This was of course a period that ended with the Reformation of the English Church. That itself was considered to be an appalling enough event by <sup>most</sup> Italian observers, but, at the time it was seen neither as particularly likely to be permanent nor as being very novel. There had long been a noticeable anti-papal strand in English political thinking. The disarming thing was that English kings had managed successfully to counteract such differences of opinion by manifestations of devotion to the Holy Father and the Roman Church. England's orthodoxy was, after all, quite remarkable: with a few exceptions, the country was practically unaffected by heretical movements even up to the end of Henry VIII's reign and even then charges of heresy tended to be made mostly by writers not intimately acquainted with the English scene. Although from the time of Henry's first divorce there had been a weakening of Anglo-Italian friendship and a loosening of ties, Italians were aware of Henry's theological rectitude and, at his death, held high hopes that his son might imitate his father's virtues and reject his vices, religious and otherwise. One could deduce that this Italian feeling of hope stemmed largely from the belief that the English and other Britons were basically religious people who, for all their shortcomings and the dictates of their practical reasoning, nurtured a real if somewhat unexuberant piety which, by its very unemotional quality, gave the impression of stolid equanimity.

#### 1. Piety and Heresy:

Unfortunately piety is a thing that is usually judged by

its outward, most extrovert appearances. Although Italians did try to look into the souls of some Englishmen, perhaps more successfully than Englishmen themselves, it was not often that they were afforded the spectacle of religiosity on the scale of a popular devotional movement in English lands. One was recorded in the Chronicon Patavinum(1), a late fourteenth century Paduan anonymous chronicle, as having taken place in English-ruled Ireland. Inspired by a rustic's vision of the Blessed Virgin Mary, a certain White Society was constituted to preach public confession, penitence and devotion to the sacraments. Its white robed and hooded converts apparently quickly set Ireland ringing with their cries of "Misericordia" and soon the devotion spread into England, France and thence the Italian states where it evidently brought peace and concord between traditionally warring factions. But this account was imprecise. With the movement dated only by the dogeship of one Iacopo Gradenigo, one imagines that it took place in the first half of the fourteenth century when Gradenigo doges, though none by the name of Iacopo, held sway over Venice. This penitentialist type of movement was not uncommon in those post-Franciscan days but it seems to have made some impression upon Italians who knew about it.

While there was no suggestion of unorthodoxy in the tenets laid forth by the Society, only its mildly exhibitionistic aspects stand out as an exceptional instance proving the rule about the quietly sophisticated piety of the British Isles.

A much more typical example of piety could be seen in Giovanni Villani's account of the English reaction to the victory at Crécy.(2) He frankly thought that the English were overawed by an obvious manifestation of God's power in the beating down to the

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1. Chronicon Patavinum, in AIMA, Vol.4, p.1166.

2. G. Villani, XII.67.

ground of the great army of France as a punishment for the sins of the French king, his lords and his people. Firstly they showed their thanks with a solemn Mass of the Holy Ghost and then proceeded to bury friend and foe alike. Villani gave the scene an air of complete self-control and sobriety. A most reflective mood prevailed in their obsequies for their slain foe, King John of Bohemia. Edward III, in the midst of his triumph, "of his love, wept for his death; he and all his barons dressed in black" as they sent the body off on its last journey to Luxembourg. Still three days after the English had left the place the Sanctus was being said in thanksgiving. Similarly, after the victory at Poitiers, "the Prince of Wales was not puffed up with pride as he might have been." He was content not to tempt fortune further, but, collecting his forces, "made a solemn office for the dead to give thanks to God for the victory." Even his letter conveying the good news to his father was "not too exuberant but gave thanks to God." Likewise, Edward III, far from allowing any festivity in his kingdom, "sent to the island to have said in all the churches for eight days solemn sacrifice for the souls of those killed in battle." Everyone followed the king's example and injunction.(1) However, when one reads in the anonymous Cronica di Bologna(2) that English soldiers, very likely veterans of the French wars, carried out the sack of Cesena in 1377 and earned the local reputation of men "who had left behind the Faith", one cannot help feeling that the circumstances were rather exceptional and scarcely reflected upon the faith of Englishmen in general. Similarly, Friar William of England (William Flete), whose religious exercises as a hermit in Italy led Catherine of Siena to discuss abandonment of the world

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1. M. Villani, VII.20.21.

2. Cronica di Bologna, RIS 18, p.510.

and mortification of the flesh in her letters to him, could perhaps be counted as a counter example of excessive piety that may have appeared less English than Italian in style.(1) On the whole, Italians seemed to have seen the English as more practical than retiring in their religious habits. Coluccio Salutati was not surprised or disappointed that "in England there were preachers and few religious." (2) When in 1420 Poggio Bracciolini wrote about the yearly increase in monastic institutions in England, he was looking upon them mainly as educational institutions more than as havens for the pious recluse.(3)

Italians were rather more forcibly struck by examples of piety in the laity. The great place of popular pilgrimage, the shrine of St. Thomas a Becket at Canterbury, had developed such a reputation that one hears of requests to the Venetian senate for permission for two members of the Contarini family, Lorenzo and Stefano, to visit the tomb in fulfilment of vows on two separate occasions, 1402 and 1429 respectively(4): Canterbury's fame as a devotional centre attracted even those whose land was richly enough endowed with similar shrines. On the other hand, religious devotees from England more than reciprocated the compliment by pilgrimages abroad. Andrea de' Reduzzi recalled the impression made upon Venice when "the Duke of Lancaster in England, banished by the king from the English kingdom for 100 years, one month, one week and one day...sought to go to visit the threshold of the Holy Sepulchre." The Venetians were considerably impressed and, when he died as Henry IV, while not oblivious of his faults, they preferred to remember his pious wish to die in Jerusalem, even although he had to make do with the Jerusalem Chamber. However telling might be

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1. St. Catherine of Siena, Let. XI.

2. Salutati: Epistolario, XIII.6.

3. Poggio Bracciolini: 'Epistolae' in Omnia Opera Vol.3, Let.X, p.43.

4. Decrees of the Venetian Senate, SPV I, 3 Aug. 1402; SPV IV, s.m. May 1429.

his confession that his leprosy was consuming him because he had visited the Holy Sepulchre out of motives of pride, his pious words of advice to his son and his religious exercises up to the moment of his death made some impression on de' Reduzzi.(1)

Nevertheless, Henry IV's confession, strangely<sup>enough,</sup> did reveal a British tendency to be concerned with appearances in religion. It puzzled Italians. It almost shocked them to think that such people might hope to deceive the Deity by such piety. Poggio told a remarkable tale about an Irish captain who, in the midst of a storm, promised the Blessed Virgin "a taper the height of his main mast" for his safety, but added, sotto voce, that once he was out of danger "she would content herself with a penny taper."(2)

On a more exalted plane, even the idealised pen-portrait of Henry V, that paragon of religious virtue, described by Frulovisi, displays elements of contradiction. Henry had had a wild youth but, on his accession, he had publicly promised to reform and urged all young nobles to follow his example. He immediately founded two monasteries as he ushered in a reign of religious fastidiousness. He put down heresy and, on the eve of his French campaign, showed violent abhorrence to the suggestion that a man named Holland should renounce monastic vows that he had taken, in order to fight with him in France. Holland's fervour was now for war and he died fighting against Henry at Agincourt. Henry's unwillingness to offend God in any way could imply that religion was like a talisman to him. Harfleur was the first French town to fall to him and here, as always, he would permit no despoilation of religious places. Also, even in tight corners, he would not allow the priests of his army to fight.

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1. A. de' Reduzzi, RIS 19, p.792.

2. Poggio Bracciolini: Lib. Facet., No.207.

Agincourt inevitably was preceded by "matins, masses, prayers and supplications." (1) On his second campaign, during Lent, Henry "indulged in religious exercises and chose to stay at Bayeux to attend to this", while his brothers, Bedford and Gloucester, spent their time capturing many French towns to add to the English imperium. (2) It was the same blend of religious righteousness that caused him to keep the Archbishop of Rouen in prison until his death for having excommunicated himself and his army as he besieged the city. To Henry Rouen was his own town; its citizens were his subjects. Therefore those prolonging their sufferings by delaying surrender were being wilfully cruel and treacherous. He even threatened to crucify one of the prominent men of the city. Frulovisi made a point of mentioning this symbolical piece of warped indignation. (3)

Pius II's view of Henry V's religious life was no so biased. He, after all, was not being patronised by the king's brother, the duke of Gloucester, as was Frulovisi. Although Pius's Henry V was a severe, cruel man, he did not fail to record how he had spent the whole night before Agincourt at his devotions and next morning presided over a bizarre scene of soldiers confessing their sins to one another and taking up the earth of the ground as a form of communion because the Eucharist was unobtainable. (4) Pius, as a cleric, was perhaps anxious to denounce the flippant attitude of the French before the battle; perhaps he wanted to rationalise divinely the amazing victory of the English. What he did do was to convey a most curious picture of Englishmen at their most uninhibitedly devout.

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One of the most striking things about many of these

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1. Frulovisi, pp.1ff, 7, 16.

2. Ibid., p.44.

3. Ibid., pp.56ff.

4. Pius II: Coms., p.430; De viris, No.27.



fourteenth and fifteenth century examples of piety is that they are set in the context of war or of political dislocation. The heroes of the age were warriors and therefore their religious mores tended to meet the observant Italian's eye first. It was the visit of a general like Talbot to Rome during a Jubilee year to obtain an indulgence that impressed Pius II.(1) Ludovico Carbone described how John Tiptoft, that many faceted earl of Worcester, in the middle of a career as a royal administrator, an admiral and a humanistic scholar, found time to go on pilgrimage to Jerusalem.(2) It was the same man whom Vespasiano da Bisticci regarded as the unspeakably cruel author of savage laws and as the epitome of greatness blinded by ambition. He was ripe for a bad end. Yet, at his execution, he made such a great display of penitence and resignation to the justice of his sentence that he even asked for his head to be cut off by three strokes of the axe in honour of the Trinity. "These ultramontanes showed the greatest devotion, especially in religious affairs", was Vespasiano's general comment on this occasion.(3) The outstanding was taken as the general.

Yet, the Italian's degree of admiration for the devout Englishman was always tempered by practical considerations. Pius II could commend Henry VI as "a devout man and very religious in sacred matters", but did not hesitate to condemn the resultant weaknesses that diminished his efforts to aid the pope's crusade.(4) A chronicler in the Venetian world, Iacopo Zeno da Feltre, mentioned a Scots king's son's visit to Jerusalem as a part of his theological grooming, but no other Italian was impressed enough to expand the reference.(5)

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1. Pius II: Coms., p.451.

2. L. Carbone: Orazione Funebre..., p.399.

3. Vespasiano, pp.366-8.

4. Pius II: Coms., p.268.

5. Iacopo Zeno, RIS 19, p.350.

Poggio's son, Iacopo di Poggio Bracciolini, wrote a story which told how a fictional English princess had been so well trained in Christian morality and was so naturally given to devotion that she did not hesitate to repulse her father's improper advances and abandon her royal environment for a Provençal monastery where her religiosity was regarded with admiration.(1) When the doge, Agostino Barbarigo, in 1485 wrote to Richard III and praised his wife, Anne, recently dead, for having "led so religious and catholic a life and (for having been) so adorned with goodness, prudence and excellent morality", one imagines that he was eulogising diplomatically: the husband was praised in comparably favourable terms. Nevertheless, Italians apparently saw enough basically fine qualities to be puffed up.(2) Much more suspect was Mancini's claim that the youthful Edward V, while in the power of the same Richard III, "like a victim prepared for the sacrifice, sought remission of his sins by daily confession and penance, because he believed that death was facing him."(3) It is easy now to reflect how Mancini was bent on blackening Richard's character, but at the time it was precisely the image of youthful piety and avuncular impiety that Italians easily absorbed.

With later fifteenth and sixteenth century writers, there was a tendency to comment on general aspects of popular piety as well as the mark made by particularly outstanding individuals. Already there had been many references made to the popularity of Becket's shrine at Canterbury. Pius II made special mention of it, although he seemed to be more interested in the riches that the pilgrims brought to the tomb. Pius II appears to have regarded the shrine of the Blessed Virgin at Whitekirk as one of the Scottish equivalents of Canterbury.

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1. Iacopo di P. Bracciolini, pp.11ff, 17.

2. Barbarigo to Richard III, SPV I, 2 May 1485.

3. Mancini, p.113.

Certainly, once he was in Scotland, Whitekirk's reputation, if only as the one shrine of Our Lady nearest to his landing place, attracted the future pope enough for him to fulfil a vow by walking ten miles barefoot to it. It was an act that did his feet untold harm but one that let Italians know by inference something about Scottish devotional habits.(1) Popular respect for notable saints was naturally not wholly unmotivated. A Milanese ambassador to France, Christoforo di Bollato, was inclined to laugh at Englishmen who were putting in order an ancient ship which, they claimed, St. Thomas had used when he had crossed over into England, but this was in 1464 when an invasion of France was being considered. It was small wonder "that in their superstition they attached great importance and esteem" to the ship.(2) It was not necessary to say that they hoped that the saint would be duly flattered. If these ultramontanes were very devout, there was a practical side to their devotion.

About 1497 the Trevisan Relation could discuss Englishmen's mercantile mind and add that "they do not fear to make contracts on usury." In the next breath he observed that they not only "all attended Mass every day and said many Paternosters in public", a woman and her companion, complete with rosaries, might even recite the offices themselves in church, but also "they always heard Mass on Sundays in their parish church and gave liberal alms; nor did they omit any form incumbent on good Christians."(3) Certainly, Italians noticed how Englishmen used their money ostentatiously to proclaim their care for religion. St. Thomas's tomb was a much quoted example of this, but St. Paul's Cathedral in London was evidently a splendid edifice in, moreover, a more urbanised area. The Venetian observer,

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1. Pius II: Coms., p.17.

2. C. di Bollato, SPM, 12 Sept. 1474.

3. Trevisan, p.23.

Niccolo di Farvi, even likened its situation to the great S. Marco in Venice.(1) Polydore Vergil, in fact, saw this practice of piety in the context of a long tradition stretching back to St. Gregory. The English, though the Scots too could be "counted devout and sound as touching religion"(2), showed true service to the glory of God, "a good testimony in this case being their noble churches which abounded everywhere; the great assembly of men repairing to them daily; and...so many sumptuous tombs of heroical ancestors." The chief commendation of Englishmen was that "of all others they were most Christian."(3) It seemed to be cultivated as a national characteristic. All this probably contrasted markedly with Italians' lax devotional habits and their notable reluctance to communicate frequently.

In Tudor times, religiosity was to become a self-conscious part of the royal image. It blended with the popular ideal. Henry VI was venerated as the pious 'saint' of the Lancastrian cause of which Henry VII regarded himself as heir. Andrea Ammonio, a court secretary, topically writing a hymn of praise about Henry VI, recalled how a wicked man's piercing the sacred breast with steel had sent Henry to augment the number of saints in Heaven.(4) Gone now was Pius II's half condemnation, Henry VIII, as Sebastiano Giustinian noted, heard three masses daily when he hunted and sometimes five on other days, as well as hearing Vespers and Compline every day in the queen's chamber(5), or even just the two masses daily and three on feast days, in addition to distributing 10,000 gold ducats in alms each year, as credited to him by Lodovico Falier(6); his subjects from the peers of his realm

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1. N. di Farvi (San.18), SPV II, 12 July 1514.

2. Vergil: AH(ET), p.11.

3. Ibid., p.26.

4. A. Ammonio: 'Hymnus ad Dom.Henricum VI', in Carmina Omnia, pp.35-40.

5. S. Giustinian, in RB II, p.312.

6. Falier, 11.

to his common soldiers did not ignore his example. Nicolo de Farvi noted how the Venetian ambassador in London, Badoer, always went "to mass at day-break arm-in-arm with some nobleman."<sup>(1)</sup> The king's troops were also religious paragons. They were not immoral or profane swearers like Italian soldiers. Indeed, according to the ubiquitous di Farvi, "there were few who failed daily to recite the office and Our Lady's Rosary."<sup>(2)</sup>

In fact, in the British Isles, even in the years <sup>immediately</sup> preceding the Reformation, recorded examples of piety were fairly similar to <sup>those</sup> noted in the fifteenth century. While on St. John and St. Peter's Days, the populace delighted in unusual pageants with a distinctly scriptural flavour in their tableaux<sup>(3)</sup>, the king not unworthily was seen by Falier in the rôle of a student of Holy Writ and the queen as one "virtuous, just and replete with goodness and religion."<sup>(4)</sup> Even at times when the king was discounted as being irrationally cruel, as when he executed the duke of Buckingham in 1521, religious devotion still permeated the atmosphere. Not unlike Tiptoft, Buckingham made a very pious end. "He knew that it was the king's will that he should die and he was content to accept the punishment not for the crime laid to his account, which was utterly false, but for his great sins."<sup>(5)</sup> Moreover, in British society, the propensity for undertaking pilgrimages still continued. From a Scottish background, one finds three good examples that illustrate their continued variety. In 1508, "the Signoria of Venice...treated with distinction" and entertained a rich Scots bishop (Blackader of Glasgow) who was, even at that date, going on a pilgrimage to Jerusalem. It was a hazardous journey, a real test of faith. In fact, in this case, out of a galley of thirty-six pilgrims, twenty-seven died, including "that rich bishop of Scotland,

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1. N. di Farvi (San.15) SPV II, s.m. Feb. 1513.

2. Ibid., 12 Oct. 1513.

3. L. Spinelli (San.31), SPV III, 1 July 1521.

4. Falier, 11, 10.

5. L. Spinelli (San.30), SPV III, 14-17 May 1521.



the king's relation." (1) In 1532, a certain Scots gentleman (John Scott) came to Rome and startled the inhabitants with his "miraculous abstinence." He even agreed to give an exhibition of fasting, though "not for ostentation but because it may be seen that the divine power operates in anyone." One apparent alleviation of the rigours of this mortification of the flesh was found in his habit of praying and repeating "certain Psalms which he had printed in the Scottish idiom."

(2) A little later Paolo Giovio would take particular note of the Scottish town of Whithorn or Candida Casa where the church of St. Ninian had grown rich as a place of pilgrimage because it was particularly productive in miracles. (3) One, therefore, can say that as far as Italians could see there was no weakening of faith nor decline in religious observance in British lands up to the time of the Reformation. Perhaps the contrary was the case: there were certainly more examples of this in the years immediately preceding the deluge.

With the religious upheavals of Henry VIII's reign, a new form of piety could be seen among the orthodox, the piety of protest. It was akin to saintliness in some; in others it smacked of intransigence. The Irish, whom Giovio saw in the light of licentious wife-repudiators, paradoxically wholly devoted, even in the wildest parts, to the tenets of religion (4), revolted because of Henry's religious changes. About 1540, Italians were to learn of the request of two Franciscan friars from Ireland for imperial help against Henry. They maintained that if the emperor would help them against their own king they would become his subjects. (5) The very fact that no great stress was laid on religion in this case does imply that the Irish, through

1. Sanudo 7, in SPV I, 16 May, 14 Nov. 1508.

2. Zorzi Andreasio, Milanese ambassador in Rome, SPM, 18 Aug. 1532.

3. Giovio: Desc., pp. 31-2.

4. Ibid., pp. 35-6.

5. F. Contarini, SPV V, 26 Dec. 1540.



their friars, were using it as an excuse to justify political rebellion. Perhaps less suspect in motives, although more personally involved, were Catherine of Aragon and her daughter, Mary. Although Henry VIII relegated his wife "to one part of the island where, among other things, with few servants, it was not possible to speak out, and was still kept like this for many years in the company of Mary, her daughter, who was kept from marriage like a recluse, both still maintained, in spite of the king, the Christian religion as it is held in the Court of Rome." So said Bernardo Segni, with the sympathy of one emotionally concerned. Yet, he did objectively show something of the tribulations that they suffered for their faith and their continued devotion to it. Others suffered worse fates. Segni was near the truth when he claimed that the king in his fury "publicly beheaded some holy men resisting him out of zeal for religion."<sup>(1)</sup> But even the numerical force of their protest did not outweigh the sensational effects when Sir Thomas More and John Fisher, Bishop of Rochester, died for their beliefs.<sup>(2)</sup> It was Giovio who defined More's death as a form of martyrdom. "He was a very good and holy man, who, full of true justice and divine religion", preferred to "seek the justice of the divine" rather than "adulate this furious tyrant", who wished to use More's literary talents for his own nefarious ends.<sup>(3)</sup> Giovio was using forceful, perhaps slightly biased language, but it did highlight some of the Italian feeling about the heroic piety of More. Likewise Fisher, "whom in true religion, openness and constancy of mind, one could reasonably compare to those most holy early fathers, inner observers of faith", so confounded King Henry with his defence of Queen Catherine's marriage that he found himself the victim of the royal quarrel with

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1. Segni, II.vi. 23.

2. Andreasio, SPM, 3 June 1535.

3. Giovio: EVCI, p.56.

the pope. His laudable virtue and constancy in the faith earned for him a red hat that his severed head would never wear.(1)

This was the new form of protest through piety. For more than a century, however, there had been an element of protest in unorthodoxy. Until Henry VIII's death informed Italians made no complaint about England's orthodoxy, although they were not unaware of the occasional heresy that sprouted up usually only to be extirpated by the authorities. There was a quiet undercurrent of it in English religious life; truthfully no Italian could ignore its presence in a large sea of unimpeachable catholicity.

John Wycliff was the most outstanding example of an English heretic. Italians paid no great attention to him during his life-time: his presence was felt mainly locally. It was only after his death that his teachings began to present themselves, in conjunction with those of John Hus, as a potentially dangerous force in Christendom. The Pisan pope 'John XXIII' held a 'Roman Council' in 1412 in order, among other things, to condemn Wycliff's heresy. His religious tracts and libels were seen as attempts to "subvert the Catholic faith"; they contained "the leaven of the Pharisees". They were "the abomination of desolation" because they put forward perverted dogmata. They were as leprosy in the human body. Such books were to be burned and the followers of their teachings were to go to the stake.(2) In 1415, during the session of the Council of Constance, definite steps were taken to condemn the memory of Wycliff. He was "declared to have been a notorious and pernicious heretic"; his teachings were damned; and his bones, if possible, were "to be separated from the bones of faithful Christians,...exhumed and

1. *Ibid.*, p.57.

2. 'Concilium Romanum', decree in Mansi, p.505.

thrown forth." The conciliar fathers well recognised the radical nature of his tenets. They were anti-hierarchical, anti-sacerdotal, anti-monastic and intolerant of the Church's financial organisation. Wycliff wanted to see popes thrust down; the Council merely wanted control over them.(1) Later in the fifteenth century, Battista Platina considered this important enough to constitute part of his 'life' of 'John XXIII' in his Historia...de Vitis Pontificum Romanorum. At the council "the heresy of John Wycliff was condemned" and John Huss and Jerome of Prague were burned as the contemporary heads of the movement "because they affirmed, among other errors, that ecclesiastics ought to be poor."(2) True or not, Wycliff's radicalism in England was regarded by Italians as pernicious to the state of Christianity throughout Europe and as the direct inspiration of the Bohemian errors. Something had to be done to stop up the source of the trouble.

There was a vague element of contradiction in the English response to Wycliff's Lollardy. Sercambi diligently noted that in the army that the emperor had collected in 1421 in order to fight the Hussite heretics there were men from all over Europe, even from England and Scotland.(3) They vindicated their country's orthodoxy, but, only a few years earlier, Henry V had had to deal with an uprising of Lollards prior to his French campaign. Frulovisi mentioned how "John Oldcastle, Lord Cobham and Sir John (Roger) Acton..led a multitude of people in erring from the truth." It had been their desire to subvert the Church, the clergy, the king, in fact, the whole realm, but they were turned to flight and the ringleaders executed.(4) Orthodoxy epitomised by the pious Henry V had triumphed.

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1. Decree of Constance (Session VII), May 1415, in Mansi, p.631ff.

2. Platina: Lives..., RIISS 3/1, vide 'John XXIII'.

3. Sercambi, II.320.

4. Frulovisi, pp.5-6.

For the rest of the fifteenth century, Italians saw virtually no sign of theological heresy in the British Isles. Admittedly the papal collector, Piero del Monte, had regarded the death of James I of Scots as the result of divine wrath at his having despoiled the church and pensioned off clergy to gain money for his wars against England(1), but this was not exactly heresy. It was not even on a par with the irreligion implied in the suggestion that Edward IV's brother, Clarence, was arrested on a charge of "conspiring the king's death by means of spells and magicians." Mancini let it be known that Clarence's disfavour with Queen Elizabeth Wydeville, his handsome and regal appearance and gift for public eloquence were more likely to have been the reasons for his downfall than his addiction to the Black Arts.(2) However, this was not the first time that the English authorities had rid themselves of a political nuisance on the grounds of heresy and witchcraft. Pius II had been in two minds about Joan of Arc but he in no way denied that the reason given for her execution by the English was that she held superstitious beliefs and had paraded her addiction to wearing men's clothes. Pius saw that Englishmen were truly convinced of her occult powers and they did not feel safe from them until she had been put to death.(3) By 1521, Machiavelli's view of the incident was more decisive and cynical. King Charles VII of France had only pretended to be advised by the Maid and thereby, he implied, the French as well as the English had been duped.(4) Not every one was so hard. Pius II's view of the Englishman's over-zealous orthodoxy and devotion to his cause was more likely to have convinced an Italian public that knew no St. Joan until

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1. Piero del Monte: 'Newsletter' in EHR 52.

2. Mancini, p.77.

3. Pius II: De viris, No.25; Coms., p.441ff.

4. Machiavelli: The Art of War, Bk.IV, p.129.

the twentieth century.

Italians seldom mentioned the existence of Lollards in England. In 1499, when Raimondo di Soncino, in an ambassadorial dispatch to Milan, reported that "a new set of heretics had appeared in England", it was an unusual piece of news. He did not express great surprise at the teachings of the new sect. They did claim "that baptism was unnecessary for the offspring of Christians, that marriage was superfluous...and that the sacrament of the altar was untrue." That was radical enough, but not entirely novel. Besides, "the prelates had commenced persecuting them and it was to be hoped that they would put an end to the heresy." (1) Italians seemed to have had enough trust in England's zealous theological rectitude for them not to worry over much about those in error. However, as events of the sixteenth century took their course, there began to be some confusion about the heretical elements in society. While Vergil would later acknowledge the nominal heresy in the case of one Richard Hunne, who brought on himself charges of heresy and the unofficial fury of the administrators of the diocese of London for denying a priest's rights "to a linen cloth from the baptism of his dead baby", this was a minor matter: it perhaps only came to Italians' notice after 1555 and it concerned a man of little social importance and influence. Vergil was more concerned to write in pre-1513 days that the University of Cambridge "never brought forth any child which was erroneous as touching religion." (2) However, this was not to appear in print until 1534 and, in the meantime, Lodovico Falier had asserted in 1531 that at Oxford and Cambridge some of the eminent scholars who annotated holy writ "often entertained opinions totally opposed to the Roman Church" and their "numbers would increase

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1. R. de Soncino, SPM, 13 July 1499.

2. Vergil: AH(Hay), p.229; AH(ET), p.220.

daily were they not purged by fire and sword."(1) Again there emerges the picture of a small minority of heretics being subject to the rigours of the Establishment's wish to maintain the theological status quo. As the king and bishops' own position became more suspect because of structural ecclesiastical changes, the more violently they suppressed heresy.

Italians had witnessed in 1530 Henry VIII's annoyance at the Englishman, Tyndal, who from his retreat in Germany had produced a pamphlet entitled The Practice of Prelates. It attacked Henry's methods of gaining support for his divorce, but it was its anti-hierarchical tone that caused the king to have it publicly burned.(2) If Tyndal himself escaped the flames by being out of reach, other heretics were less fortunate. In 1531, the Venetian ambassador, Carlo Capello, reported the burning of a Benedictine friar who had recently taken a wife.(3) Official policy was evidently to show shock at disregard for clerical celibacy. Yet, this can hardly have been a surprising attitude at a time when Henry VIII was posing as a champion of marital rectitude. About the same time, Capello was to add to this a report that "here in London they burnt a man alive, a mercer, for being a Lutheran, and in two days it was said they would burn two others, husband and wife."(4) In 1533, Capello was again writing to Venice about heretics being burned in London. Two of them died with great constancy. One, moreover, was "very learned in Latin, Greek and Hebrew literature."(5) Martyrs to their heresies could be seen emerging from all sections of society.

Heresy, however, was subject to official definition and its punishment to social acceptability. In 1531, a parish priest in

1. Falier, 18.

2. Augustino Scarpinello, Milanese ambassador in England, SPM, 16 Dec. 1530.

3. C. Capello (San.45), SPV IV, 24 Dec. 1531.

4. Ibid., 22 Dec. 1531.

5. Ibid., 12 July 1533.



London could be safely put away in prison for disseminating Lutheran ideas about the removal of images and about the fiction of Purgatory. He was "of great reputation" so presumably imprisonment was considered to be a more tactful and less public form of punishment for him.(1) As Henry VIII created a wider rupture with Rome and assumed functions of a papal nature, a charge of heresy could be levelled against a Carthusian friar who disagreed with official preaching against the Holy See. His case was evidently not seen in the same light as More and Fisher's negative opposition. He was positively opposing what was official doctrine and therefore suffered death by burning, the fate of a heretic.(2) When Thomas Cromwell was arrested in 1540 on a charge of having "uttered certain words concerning the faith against the king's supremacy", his offence was seen by a distant observer like Francesco Contarini as having a heretical content. The king was now supreme over his church; to deny this was heresy. Contarini quoted the bishop of Bath when he said that "Cromwell would be burned, together with two other heretics."(3) Although this was neither the precise nature of Cromwell's offence, nor was burning to be his fate, it does illustrate how Italians regarded the English concept of heresy and observed the continued process of its official condemnation.

The other side of the heresy coin was more complex. Governments in Britain sometimes used the threat that heresy might gain ground in the state or be officially adopted by it, in order to deceive enemies or to make the pope more pliable. In Scotland, this policy rebounded disastrously against the Establishment. In 1531 James V complained that he needed "to raise an army against the Lutherans, who were beginning to swarm in his kingdom", but it was

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1. Gilino, Milanese ambassador to the king of the Romans, SPM, 1 Apr. 1531.
  2. Ottavio Visconti, Milanese ambassador in Venice, SPM, 5 Oct. 1535.
  3. Fr. Contarini, Venetian ambassador with the emperor, SPV V, 19 June, 10 July 1540.

quite evident that he was using this as an excuse to persuade the pope to give him permission to raise a third from ecclesiastical revenues to build up an army that he himself would control.(1) However, it was soon evident that, although James was still using the Lutheran threat to control his parliament, the fact that round St. Andrews the Lutherans were "in very great number and were plundering the countryside, doing much mischief", showed that the Scots king did not have complete control over the situation.(2) Certainly, ten years later, at the end of his reign, James V's Scotland seemed to be in a hopelessly weak position because a faction under Lord Maxwell, "being of the new Lutheran and heretical sect, and disagreeing with Cardinal Beaton, who at present... ruled the king and realm of Scotland in his own fashion", had deliberately manoeuvred the rout of the Scots by the English at Halidon Hill.(3) Scotland contained untrammelled Lutheranism that divided the kingdom and threatened to take it over. Official use of Lutheranism in England, on the contrary, was diplomatic and controlled.

Henry VIII was a man of energy whose passions led him from one extreme to another. Italians observing him were often confused. They could look back to reports in 1521 that Henry, in accordance with a papal bull, was making sure that none of the works of Martin Luther were to be found in the island. He was, moreover, writing a book against Luther for distribution among the princes of Christendom.(4) Yet, by 1531, once the king's divorce case was under way, there was a convinced Italian feeling that Henry might act "without further dispensation from his Holiness, which result would favour the Lutheran affairs."(5) But this was merely the outcome of the logic of Italian conjecture.

1. Z. Andreasio, SPK, 14 Mar. 1531.

2. Capello (San.46), SPV IV, 11 June 1532.

3. H. Zuccato, SPV V, 16 Dec. 1542.

4. Antonio Surian, Venetian ambassador in England, (San.30), SPV III, 23 Apr. 1521.

5. Surian (San.53), SPV IV, 5 Sept. 1530.

By the next year, however, there were stronger rumours about an impending split with Rome and the English authorities "hinted at becoming Lutherans or worse heretics." (1) This, of course, was seen juxtaposed against the incident of the burning of the Lutheran mercer in London. Yet, Italian observers remained alarmed and suspicious. Early in 1533, a rumour that Philip Melanchthon had arrived in London lost none of its horror because of <sup>the</sup> admission that no one had seen or spoken to him. (2) The situation was aggravated by the news that Henry had "appointed two persons for the reformation of the benefices... who are reputed great Lutherans." (3) Soon there was also to be the spectacle of the auditor of the bishop of Worcester, Latimer, "heretofore accused of Lutheranism", being allowed to preach publicly against the pope. (4) By February 1534, Henry VIII was threatening openly to join the Lutherans if the pope did not unbend. (5) Indeed, diplomatic circles in Europe were quivering with the fear that a positive papal action against Henry might "plunge him into the camp of the Lutheran heresy." Such a malignant infection would be catching; neighbours might easily succumb. (6)

If Italians had cared to make deductions from these suggestions of English dabblings in Lutheranism, they might have imagined that Henry VIII's England differed from Catholic Rome substantially only in its official rejection of papal control. During Henry's reign, they made little or no mention of articles of religion or vernacular bibles. Commentators retrospectively dwelling upon the years of Henry's reign looked through windows dirtied by Edwardian excesses and smeared by Marian attempts to clean them. Matteo Bandello

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1. Letter to the duke of Mantua from Rome, (San.45), 29 Nov. 1531.
  2. Capello (San.47), SPV IV, 23 Feb. 1533.
  3. Robio, SPM, 17 Feb. 1533.
  4. Capello (San.48), SPV IV, 23 Aug. 1533.
  5. Andreasio, SPM, 6 Feb. 1534.
  6. Ibid., 14 Feb. 1534.

saw Henry as the man who had not only "rebelled against the Holy See and made himself head of a new heresy", but also had "raised up a new sect in the island and a new manner of living, never before seen or heard." (1) Bandello talked about sudden changes and hinted about social novelties that might have suggested a new moral system. Bernardo Segni was writing before 1555, within a decade of Henry's death; yet the Henry that he visualised was the king who had "turned out so much in favour of Lutheran opinions and (who) became an enemy of the Catholic Religion so that throughout the whole realm he prohibited the celebration of Mass; caused to be taken away the images of the most sacred Virgin and the cross and crucifix, bringing back, according to that heresy, everything with white walls." (2) Such then was the state of Italian opinion when a writer such as Segni could describe Henry VIII's mild iconoclasm in terms of the excesses of a Calvinisticly puritan reformation, labelled with the tag of Lutheranism, whereas, during his reign, he had largely been seen as the strict persecutor of Lutherans and as no countenancer of heresy or superstition. His connections with Lutheranism, real or merely speculative, were not to be seen in later years in the light of diplomatic opportunism.

## 2. The Church in England.

In view of England's difficulties with Rome, some Italians tried to understand the nature of the Church in England and the relative strength of its relations with the state and the papacy. In earlier years there were few references of importance. Obviously much was taken for granted or the English Church was not recognised as having any peculiar standing. The English produced their trickle of cardinals. Adam Easton suffered as a curial cardinal under Urban VI.

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1. Bandello, preface to III, Nov.62.

2. Segni, II.vi.22.

and left a visual memorial of himself and his anguish in his tomb in Sta. Cecilia-in-Trastevere in Rome. (Plate 10) In the early sixteenth century, Cardinal Bainbridge also left his mark as an English cardinal resident in Rome to the day of his mysterious death. (Plate 11) More common were home-based cardinals, but, in comparison with the numbers created in other provinces, they were rare figures. Flavio Biondo mentioned the creation of seventeen new cardinals in 1440. Of these four were French and, although four came from the "English province of Normandy", the only one to be appointed to the island itself was John, Archbishop of York. Moreover, when Biondo described him as "the other cardinal of the English kingdom", one wonders if Italians had any feeling that cardinals in England as such were comparatively few. (1) If so, it could have implied a lesser dependence of the English Church upon Rome. Certainly, Italians tended to be impressed by the degree of autonomy enjoyed by it.

Sanctuary was just one example of a legal anomaly that gave the English Church extraordinary privileges in secular matters. The power of the Church to protect a miscreant or a political refugee could be a great advantage. But it seemed to be a circumscribed and limited one. The Church's sanctuary afforded protection to Edward IV in 1471 when he "took refuge in a certain church in a fortress, in what they called a franchise there." (2) Therefore the protection of the fugitive was limited by place: it only <sup>operated</sup> in certain specially defined institutions.

It was circumscribed by the degree of tacit consent given to this practice by the authorities. Mancini reflected that in England sanctuaries were "places of refuge of ancient observance, so that up to those times, either from religious awe or from fear of the people, none had dared to violate them." Whatever

1. Biondo, Decade 4, Bk.1, p.561.

2. Sforza de' Bettini, Milanese ambassador in France, SPM, 9 Apr. 1471.



10. Paolo Romano, Effigy Portrait of Cardinal Easton.



11. Tomb of Cardinal Bainbridge, c.1514.



his crime, no man could be dragged out from them. When Queen Elizabeth Wydeville had given birth to the future Edward V in sanctuary, Henry VI had done her no harm, but since those times, either "religion had declined or the people's power had diminished for sanctuaries were of little avail against royal authority." (1) In other words, times were so troubled that law, even the moral law, was not so secure that its legalised loop-holes could be guaranteed. But could Italians, within a few years of the Pazzi conspiracy, justly complain about the abuse of English churches' sanctuary? In the more settled times of Henry VII's reign, Trevisan related precisely how sanctuary still operated in, indeed, every church, but pointed out that a limit of forty days did circumscribe the Church's power of protection. After that, the civil authorities could take an offender and exile him from the country. (2)

Another power that lay in the hands of the Church and made it more independent of both king and pope was the ability of criminous clerics to escape secular punishment. In England this was the legacy of Becket's struggles. Although Becket's cult was still very popular in England, it offended Trevisan to see how English priests "usurped the privilege that no thief nor murderer who could read should perish by the hands of justice." If he could defend himself by displaying his ability to read from some holy book, he would be handed over to be dealt with by the bishop. (3) As Trevisan implied, this caused some scandal, so it was to rectify this precise fault that Clement VII issued a bull to allow Wolsey to degrade clerics "who had committed an atrocious crime." They were to be handed over to the secular authorities and were not to be sent away

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1. Mancini, pp.97-9.

2. Trevisan, pp.34-5.

3. Ibid., pp.35-6.

unpunished.(1) Evidently clerical immunity was a thing that worried the authorities and the fact that it had to be curbed did not necessarily mean that the Church valued the purity of its reputation more than the necks of clerical riff-raff. However, the fact that the power to degrade was kept in clerical hands meant that the Church's position had not been completely abandoned. Certainly, in 1532, Carlo Capello, reporting how a priest had been hanged in London for clipping coins, regarded this case as "remarkable, as he was put to death without being degraded, contrary to the will of the bishop, a thing, they said, never done in this island since it embraced Christianity."(2) Secular authority was becoming more impatient of clerical privilege. It was certainly no coincidence that the sanctity of priests' orders no longer protected them from physical harm at the very time that Henry VIII resolved to dispense with the formality of a papal authorised divorce.

Yet another source of clerical power in England was money. There was much evidence of surplus wealth. Hopes of a rich benefice had drawn Poggio Bracciolini to England. Financial security would have been a great help to his scholarship, but he experienced the disappointment of being expected to do something for his emolument. Yet, Vespasiano did not pass over the fact that an English cleric like Andrew Hollis, after spending years collecting books in Italy, could "withdraw from the temporal world and, living on his benefice, devote himself to study and religious exercise."(3) The money was evidently there to provide a form of unofficial patronage. Trevisan was one of the first of many Italians who, used to poorer churches in Italy, attempted to explain the English Church's powerful riches.

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1. Bull of Clement VII, in Wilkins, Vol.3, p.713.

2. Capello (San.46), SPV IV, 10 July 1532.

3. Vespasiano, p.208.

If a man died, his inheritance was divided into three and one of those third parts was taken by the Church. No one dared tamper with it. Although Trevisan does seem to have exaggerated the value of these mortuary dues or death duties, Italians certainly believed that this was what enabled England to have rich parish churches abounding with plate worth at least 100 pounds and "even mendicant friaries to have ornaments worthy of a cathedral." (1) Wealth also came from the land: "there was not a foot of land in all England which was not held either under the king or the Church." Of the 96,230 knight's fees into which the land was divided, the Church owned 28,015. (2) Even the Church's obligation to support impoverished gentlemen whose family inheritances had gone to elder sons, though a great expense, was not over burdensome: these gentlemen would have been expected to live in rural areas and that is precisely where churches appear to have been richest. (3) Vincenzo Quirini acquired the vital figures of the English Church's income and added them up to a total of 860,000 ducats per annum, almost half of which was monastic income. (4) As an indication of the income of individual churchmen, Italians took much note in 1514 of how much the estate of the late Cardinal Bainbridge was worth. In Italy he left 20,000 ducats in money and plate and in England 30,000 ducats, but the important figure was the 15,000 and more that his archbishopric yielded him annually. (5) A Venetian estimate of his estate came to 110,000 ducats, of which 20,000 were left for the building of St. Peter's. There seemed to be no need to mention his annual income:

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1. Trevisan, pp.26, 29.

2. Ibid., p.38.

3. Ibid., p.41.

4. Quirini, pp.20-1.

5. Protonotary Caracciolo, SPM, 17 July 1514.

he was just "very rich indeed." (1) As far as annual income was concerned, Piero Pasqualigo, the Venetian ambassador in London, reported that in 1515 the Archbishop of Canterbury's emoluments came to 30,000 ducats. (2) Evidently to Venetians this figure spoke for itself. Certainly, if they noted when Bishop Blackader of Glasgow visited them, that he had an annual income of 2,000 ducats, and subsequently called him "that rich bishop of Scotland", those infinitely larger English diocesan incomes must have impressed them enormously. (3) However, no Italian could have been unaware of the unevenness of distribution of ecclesiastical riches. Wolsey was, for example, a well-known pluralist who held dioceses and enjoyed their incomes in absentia. No one expressed surprise when, at his fall, he was ordered to visit his diocese of York because he had not previously done so. (4) his only interest in it had been the income and prestige bestowed by it.

The wealth of the English Church made it powerful and influential, but, of itself, this gave the Church no physical force that could withstand the extraordinary onslaughts of kings. The fact that it was not really until Henry VIII's reign that its whole financial position was attacked, for a long time led Italians to believe that it was unassailable. Then the convocations of the Church sat back and apparently dumbly paid the king a fine of 100,000 pounds "for the remission of the crime of Praemunire", a crime which was "understood by no one or only a few". (5) Cromwell could double the king's income by sequestrating annates and church benefices. (6) Finally, Henry VIII could lay hands on and confiscate for his own use

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1. Vettor Lippomano (San.18), SPV II, 21 July 1514.
  2. Pasqualigo in RB I, p.84.
  3. Sanudo in SPV I, 16 May, 14 Nov. 1508.
  4. A. Scarpinello, SPM, 17 Nov. 1530.
  5. Ibid., 19 Feb. 1531.
  6. Capello, SPV V, 3 June 1535.

the lands and money of every religious community in England, right down to those of the Knights of Rhodes.(1) It seemed apparent that nothing could stop Henry from consuming the entire surplus wealth of the English Church by one continuous process: "he despoiled the monasteries of the Minor Friars and of St. Benedict, which had in the island in great plenty very rich abbeys and took their whole incomes." The temporal influence had manifestly slipped easily into secular hands.(2)

Another sphere in which the Church made its influence felt was in royal administration. One obvious reason for this was the literacy of the clergy: for, although there were some lay administrators who were noted for their learning, the same fact that the ability to read a given passage from some holy book proved that one was a cleric and allowed one to enjoy clerical immunity, also implied that literacy was the monopoly of the clergy. They were likely, therefore, to enjoy prominence in royal administration. This tended to wed them more to the state: the days of serious archiepiscopal confrontations with the king appeared to have died with Becket and the Church enjoyed the compatibility in the form of political influence. Poggio was the first to complain about the political preoccupations of Henry, Cardinal Beaufort, his patron, whose continual absences from London and his "wandering like a Scythian" worried him mostly because it reduced the amount of his literary patronage.(3) Beaufort was, in fact, as Pius II put it, "directing the realm for a time!"(4) If he appeared to owe his position to his royal connections, Italians did not have to look far to discover less highly connected examples

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1. F. Contarini, *SPV* V, 14 Nov. 1540.

2. Segni, II.vi.22.

3. Poggio Bracciolini, Epist.6, in *Omnia Opera* III, p.31.

4. Pius II: *De viris*, No.32.

of clerical administrators. Pietro Aliprandi, as the pope's messenger, in 1472 wrote furiously that the English were so disrespectful to him that they "needed rods for deeds and not talk." He bitterly added, "When I speak of England you must understand those old prelates, abbots and other fat priests who rule the Council" and who urged on the king an anti-papal policy.(1) Here were all the elements of nationalistic thought wedded to clerical political supremacy. The whole council was dominated by ecclesiastics who appeared to value their own and England's position more than the pope's.

An even more compelling example of the English Church's political power was the diocese of Durham. The Trevisan Relation described how this diocese on the Scots border had its own jurisdiction; it manned its own castles and even, as it still did, minted its own coins, a good sign of virtually independent sovereignty in any political unit.(2) There could have been no reason for doubt about the raison d'être behind this: some strong political control and defensive strength was needed on the Scots border. The Church was obviously considered to be capable of carrying out this function. Yet, political power was not always inherited as the attribute of a particular office, such as the diocese of Durham. A man like Cardinal Bainbridge may well have been Archbishop of York, but a Venetian in Rome, like Vettor Lippomano, was inclined to think that "he had great power with the king of England (because he was) a man of bold speech." (3) The forceful personality rose to the top and the Church provided the ladder necessary for his ascent. When Piero Pasqualigo was enumerating the official functions of William Warham, Archbishop of Canterbury, at the end he added that he was "moreover the Lord High Chancellor."(4) There were certainly no exclamations of surprise that

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1. Aliprandi to the duke of Milan, SPM, 25 Nov. 1472.

2. Trevisan, pp.37-8.

3. Lippomano (San.18), SPV II, 21 July 1514.

4. Pasqualigo, in RB I, p.84.



the man holding the highest ecclesiastical post in the land should also hold one of the most important political positions. However, it was with Warham's contemporary, Wolsey, that the whole question of the Church's political position came to a head.

It was quite easily seen that political office depended more upon the man than his position. Warham had political power; Wolsey, as Archbishop of York theoretically his junior in some respects, although a cardinal and a legate besides, considered himself well above the Primate of All England because of the secular influence that he held over the state. When Warham, as Polydore Vergil bitterly wrote, once addressed Wolsey as 'brother', "he felt insulted and began to exclaim just as though Canterbury had come forward with a damaging attack..He would soon arrange for Canterbury to learn that he was not even his equal let alone his brother." Warham's retort that "the man had lost his wits on account of his happy fortune", does reflect upon the element of chance in the political elevation of a man like the cardinal.(1) Wolsey was soon to show to what lengths he would go to retain his political power in the face of possible opposition from the Boleyn faction. But no amount of double-dealing with the king and pope availed him and the king at a word "stripped him of all his dignities and wealth." (2)

Therefore, it was apparent that ecclesiastical influence in secular matters was a power wholly dependent upon the whim of the king. Whenever a cleric did not serve him as he wished, he took away his position. Wolsey certainly appeared to reach new heights of governmental power, but it was evident that no cleric after him enjoyed influence that in any way approached his. Latimer and Cranmer

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1. Vergil: AH(Hay), pp.255-7.

2. Ibid., pp.331-3.

were used by Henry VIII, but really only as tools of his religious policy. Latimer, as a reputed Lutheran, had a certain irritant quality that kept foreign courts in a state of speculation; Cranmer was seen by Italians as the former tutor of Anne Boleyn and logically in a compromised position.(1) As far as government was concerned, Wolsey's real successor was undoubtedly Cromwell, who, although Wolsey's constable, was a layman. Yet, from his master's fall, he "had the whole governance of the island in hand." (2) It was the king's pleasure that measured the amount of ecclesiastical influence in the state.

If the English Church was seen to have some degree of political importance and an amount of traditional control over governmental jobs at least until Renaissance influences produced the educated layman to replace the cleric, the amount of power that the king had over the Church was conversely not inconsiderable. Despite the tendency still to apply to Rome for bulls for the bestowal of benefices, the king in England had a substantial hold over the Church. Trevisan had recorded that English priests would have considered themselves happy if they had not had the obligation to help the Crown in time of war and to help feed the impoverished gentry. When the greater part of the prodigious number of religious houses in England were of royal foundation, as Poggio and Frulovisi had already said, it was small wonder that there was a degree of royal control over them.(3) Moreover, the Crown showed its influence by enjoying the revenues from cathedral churches, monasteries and other benefices during vacancies, "for which reason such vacancies were not very speedily filled up." (4) Also, it was evident that the pope was not

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1. Capello (San.47) SPV IV, 24 Jan. 1533.

2. Bandello, III, Nov.62.

3. Trevisan, pp.40-1.

4. Ibid., p.51.

averse to the king's having influence over the filling of vacant benefices. Even before Bainbridge's death in 1514, there was speculation about a possible successor for his archdiocese, but the pope made it clear that in this as at all times he would gratify the king of England.(1) As evidence that the sovereign's will regarding the filling of benefices and prelacies was respected, even the small number of high ecclesiastics drawn from royal kinsmen spoke for itself. Beaufort's royal connections were undeniable and well known. Vespasiano thought fit to describe William Gray, bishop of Ely, as a "kinsman of King Henry who then ruled England", a notion confirmed by Ludovico Carbone.(2) In Scotland, the same thing could be seen. Zeno at least took note of Peter, "one of the King of Scotland's children", who was reading theology.(3) No one of royal blood had ever been known to do that without hopes of preferment. Robert Blackader, that rich bishop of Scotland who so impressed the Venetians was said to have been a relation of his king's.(4) At the battle of Flodden, said the Rotta de Scocesi, among the dead was numbered "the archbishop of St. Andrews, a natural son of the king...He had left his pastoral staff at home and showed his power with a levelled lance."(5) All this could have suggested a fairly close link between church and the state in Scotland. The lack of comment, however, could indicate that there was nothing untoward in the bestowal of high office upon royal kinsmen in the Scottish Church. In it there was certainly some activity that need not have been discounted as being non-political. In 1492, papal approval was given to the creation of a second metropolitan province, at Glasgow, alongside the existing

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1. Caracciolo, Milanese ambassador in Rome, SPM, 12 July 1514.
  2. Vespasiano, p.184; L. Carbone: Orazione..., p.399.
  3. Iacopo Zeno: Vita, RIS 19, p.350.
  4. Sanudo 7, in SPV 1, 14 Nov. 1508.
  5. Rotta de Scocesi, p.35.

archiepiscopal province of St. Andrews.(1) Although several decades later Paolo Giovio was to maintain that the Scots still sought the archbishop of York's judgments in divine matters since he was spiritual overlord of Scotland(2), for anyone who cared to investigate the matter, Innocent VIII's creation of this second autonomous province on James IV's recommendation may well have appeared as a politically inspired measure designed by the king to discourage interference from south of the border. In fact, the Archdiocese of Glasgow was intended to have a standing in Scotland comparable to York's in England, as though a deliberate attempt was being made to stress Scotland's politico-religious autonomy.(3) This autonomy was confirmed in 1514 when Pope Leo X declared himself willing to allow James IV's widow, Margaret, to control ecclesiastical transfers and nominations. The pope certainly did not feel that this diminished his own ability to suggest candidates for high office and his tone conveyed a note of anxiety that Scotland's relationship with the papacy should remain as before.(4) Scottish kings' virtually complete control over ecclesiastical preferment would continue to imply a pre-Reformation state domination of a national Church.

Meanwhile, in England much the same process of royal domination of the Church was taking place. In 1521, the pope gave Wolsey the authority "to confer benefices of England and to receive the annates, except those of bishoprics, a thing never before conceded to any other magnate."(5) It was not co-incidental that at the time the pope wanted support for his Italian designs, so England confirmed officially its right to fill its own benefices. This may have seemed

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1. Cardinal Ascanio Sforza, SPV I, 9 Jan. 1492.

2. Giovio: Desc., p.11.

3. Cf. letter from Robert Blackader, Abp. of Glasgow, to Erasmo Brascha, SPM, No.460.

4. Iacopo Sadoletto, letter in Epistolae..., Vol.I, pp.349-54.

5. A. Surian (San.31), SPV III, 18 July 1521.

a meagre concession because the operative power was granted to a churchman, Wolsey, but, despite his clerical standing, he was so closely identified with royal policy, sometimes even against the interests of the Church, that this measure could have been interpreted as an extension of royal control: for the way in which Wolsey did not hesitate to act as a royal minister before anything else was quite blatant. In 1523, he was reported to have manoeuvred the election of four of his creatures to the ecclesiastical orders of parliament in order to press the Church into handing over two thirds of its revenues to the king.<sup>(1)</sup> As Henry VIII's divorce wrangle proceeded, it could be seen that nothing would stand in the king's way. In 1531, there was the business of the fine for Praemunire. This the ecclesiastics could do nothing to stop. In much the same way at that time they made no general complaint that was evident to Italians about pressure to acknowledge the king as "the chief protector and supreme head of the whole Anglican Church (*Anglicanae Ecclesiae*)."<sup>(2)</sup> Nor, apart from a few dissenting voices, was there any attempt to censure the king's annulment plans. In fact, the bishops of London and Lincoln went out of their way to "confute malignant opinion which insinuated that the king sought this divorce from a false and libidinous motive: ...his Majesty acted from upright and just, holy and righteous cause." This was confirmed "by learned divines to the greater part."<sup>(3)</sup> At this point there was certainly no evidence of a general desire to resist this royal domination. The prelates had just seen how the king could utterly ruin Wolsey himself; less eminent men could not have felt it wise to oppose the king. The significance of the terms in which Carlo Capello was to couch his news of Cranmer's elevation to the

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1. Sanudo 34, *SPV* III, 29 May 1523.

2. A. Scarpinello, *SPM*, 19 Feb. 1531.

3. *Ibid.*, 20 Apr. 1531.

See of Canterbury in 1533 could hardly have been misunderstood by the Italians. "His Majesty," he related, "has created Dr. Cranmer, who had been tutor to the Marchioness Anne (Boleyn)..., Archbishop of Canterbury; this having been done by the favour of the said marchioness." (1) Henry VIII did indeed preserve the form of waiting for the arrival of the archbishop's bull of consecration, but no one could have thought that Cranmer was anything other than the king's man, put in office through the influence of a royal paramour. The structural reformation of the English Church that Italians as well as everyone else saw take place left no room for doubt about how complete royal domination of it had become. However, the point to stress is that the novelty of Henry VIII's ultimate position lay only in the legal basis of his control: his predecessors seemed to have possessed, de facto, almost as much power over ecclesiastical matters as himself, as indeed did many princes in Europe.

### 3. England and the Papacy.

Much the same could be said about the English state's relationship with the Papacy. From the fourteenth well into the sixteenth century, there was always a great amount of respect shown by each side for the other. Yet, Italians were not unaware of the fragile nature of their relationship nor of the historical examples of English disregard for papal claim for respect in matters of religion and politics. No Italian, looking back to the quarrel of Becket and Henry II or seeing the still visible signs of Becket's cult both in England and Italy, could be unaware of the anti-papal attitude in that king's stand. By the fourteenth century, the affair appeared to have been settled peacefully. Yet, in that century, another stage in an arguably anti-papal mood came upon the English

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1. Capello (San.47) SPV IV, 24 Jan. 1533.



because of the wars with France.

Benedict XII, Giovanni Villani clearly saw, was so concerned about the inception of war in 1337 that "he sent two cardinal legates to France to the king in order to make an agreement between him and the King of England." After parleys in Paris, they crossed over into England, but achieved nothing there.(1) No Italian needed to be reminded that the popes at Avignon were, in Cisalpine estimation, French and hence would be suspect of having a French bias or a cautiousness about offending the French king. Besides, in this instance, the fact that conversations were held first in Paris and only afterwards with the English might suggest that the English had reason to be doubly suspicious of the peace mission. In 1345, during the earl of Derby's successful Gascon campaign, "the pope and cardinals, hearing the news of so much upheaval in the realm of France because of the war sent there at once two cardinal legates to make peace or a truce...but they were able to do nothing." This was hardly surprising since Derby had just captured one Robert d'Osi, Pope Clement VI's nephew, who had been fighting on the French side. Annoyed at the English rejection of his peace plans, "the pope took part in upholding the cause of the king of France, more than that of the king of England; thence grew up many evils." Clement even wanted to proceed against the English, but, lacking his cardinals' agreement, he could take no positive action.(2) It was small wonder that the English did not pay the pope much respect nor fall in with his peace plans. That the pope did indeed throw his weight into the French balance was evident in minor matters. The dauphin, Jean, had taken a vow not to quit the siege of Aiguillon until he had captured that castle, but, finding the nut hard to crack

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1. G. Villani, XI.72.

2. Ibid., XII.47.

and the process lengthy, he asked the pope to absolve him of his oath. Absolution was immediately forthcoming.(1) In 1346, when Edward III was besieging Rouen, the pope sent out another two cardinals to make an agreement between the kings of France and England, and expressed the wish that Edward should submit himself to his judgment. But he "did not trust the pope and did not want to hear of an agreement"; he interrupted the legates' negotiations because "it appeared that the pope favoured too much the part of the king of France." Edward showed the cardinals no disrespect. Indeed, he recompensed them when they were robbed by some of his own men, but he was so firmly convinced that the pope was not acting disinterestedly that he paid him no respect in this matter.(2) The pope did not give up. Again, when Edward was determinedly besieging Calais, the same two cardinals, Annibaldo da Cecono and Pierre de Clermont, were sent out to try to arrange an agreement between the two warring kings in order to save Calais from further suffering. But Edward III had kept up the siege so long that, hourly expecting to take the place, he stipulated terms of a truce unacceptable to France. Edward was more concerned about avoiding the humiliation of going home empty-handed than about pandering to an Avignonese pope. Nevertheless, to be fair, it was recognised that the two cardinals did have some moral influence on him when they added their supplications to those of Edward's wife and mother as they pleaded for the lives of the scapegoat burghers of Calais.(3) War and his claims generally interested Edward more than papal approval or disapproval. Matteo Villani's relation of the story of the capture of the castle of Guines clearly illustrated that. The castle, which controlled the county of Guines, was taken

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1. Ibid., XII.61.

2. Ibid., XII.64.

3. Ibid., XII.96.

by some sergeants-at-arms and handed over to Edward III. Since England and France were then, in 1351, in a state of truce, the matter was referred to a papal consistory, which found in favour of the king of France's claims to the place. Edward III's answer in itself showed some regard for the consistorial findings while it in no way contained any element of submission. He handed back the castle to those Englishmen who had originally given it to him and the death of Pope Clement forestalled the raising of the question again in Avignon.(1)

In 1353, the pope himself even brought the ambassadors of England and France before him to arrange the prolongation of the truce, but this time his presence seemed to have inhibited free discussion and prevented an agreement, while his personality lacked the force to impose his will upon the hostile parties. Instead, "each parted in discord, with little honour to the Holy Father and cardinals." (2) The same mixture of respect and strong-arm tactics was shown in the Black Prince's Carcassonne campaign of 1355. He advanced, ravaging the country as he went, until he came to St.-André opposite Avignon. The "Court of Rome" was terrified; Avignon was there for the taking, but only one word from the pope made the prince turn back out of deference for his person.(3) Indeed, when the voice of Avignon pleaded in tones of morality, there was a tendency for the English to listen. Just before Poitiers, the Cardinal of Périgord appealed to the prince of Wales and pointed out the vain and chancy nature of the desire of two of the greatest lords in Christendom to engage in mortal conflict; the prince, apparently less hardened than his father, gave the matter sympathetic consideration and might well have made some unfavourable

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1. M. Villani, I.49, 50.

2. Ibid., IV.36.

3. Ibid., V.86.

truce with the French had not the belligerent Bishop of Chalons whipped up the anti-English sentiments of his fellow Frenchmen, who in consequence plunged themselves into a disastrous battle. The prince, for his part, could call Périgord "to witness that it was not he who relinquished the agreement." (1) The fourteenth century English attitude towards the papacy seems to have been one of respect, even one of desire to have papal approval. But, in cases where the pope was biased in favour of France and at odds with English aims, the English rulers seemed to have no compunction about rejecting firmly all elements of papal interference.

About the turn of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, English relations with the papacy took on a slightly different complexion. This was hardly surprising in a period of schism and conciliarism. There was less papal authority to antagonise English kings. Yet, there seemed to be no reduction in English self-interest in their papal relationships. Frulovisi pointed out how at the Council of Constance, Henry V's England received special praise for its devotion to the Roman pontiff. (2) Frulovisi was a biased writer; he seldom explored Henry V's ulterior motives. The more disinterested historian, Platina, looked back and remarked that at the Council of Pisa, although all nations took part in 'depriving' the Avignonese and Roman popes of their positions, England also presumably consenting, of the three excepted as staunch supporters of 'Benedict XIII' of Avignon two were Scotland and the ruling Armagnac faction of France. Whatever side they supported, England supported the opposite or, by the time of Constance when Roman and Avignonese popes were more thoroughly deprived of office, the absence or dissent of "especially the Scots and the Count

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1. *Ibid.*, VII.10-13.

2. Frulovisi, 30.

of Armagnac" was extremely pointed. Avignon was their only hope: it was not favoured by or favourably disposed towards the English.(1) It was not until well into Martin V's reign that "Spain acknowledged Martin's authority, and so did the Scots and those of Armagnac not long after."(2) As far as the Roman pope was concerned, England did appear as the dutiful daughter.

In the literature of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, there is surprisingly practically no mention of Edward III's anti-papal statutes of Praemunire and Provisors nor of Martin V's campaign to have Provisors repealed in the 1420s. Nevertheless, when one comes to the Congress of Arras in 1435, it is plain from what Pius II wrote that the Cardinal of Sta. Croce's absolving of Burgundy from his oath of allegiance to England and his patching up an agreement between Burgundy and France rendered the papacy suspect in English eyes. The future pope himself, Aeneas Sylvius, bore the brunt of this when, as a papal official passing through England, he was "an object of suspicion to the English" and his movements were restricted until Cardinal Beaufort came to his rescue.(3) Vespasiano's glib explanation that Sta. Croce's efforts brought about peace between France, England and Burgundy with the best possible effects ignored the bitterness of the English attitude to the papacy.(4) The interesting thing is that by the time the Council of Basle, which in conjunction with Eugenius IV had sent out Cardinal Albergati, had become daring enough to think of electing its own pope in 1439, the English were as conspicuous by their absence as was the Scots abbot of Dundrennan (Thomas Livingstone) by his presence, virtually as a French delegate:

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1. Platina, 'lives' of Gregory XII and John XXIII.
  2. Ibid., 'life' of Martin V.
  3. Pius II: Coms., 16.
  4. Vespasiano, pp.33-4.

for "some people were murmuring that the abbot from Scotland seemed more like a Frenchman than a German." To interpret this situation as Pius II described it, one could see that the English, although they had run foul of Eugenius IV through his faithful legate, Albergati, at Arras, appeared to remain on the right side of the legitimate papacy if only in a negative way because France and Scotland were busily supporting the Savoyard anti-pope, 'Felix V'.(1)

Therefore one can say that, up to this point, virtually all the examples of Anglo-papal dealings noted by the Italians were connected with England's external war policy. There was little else that arrested their attention. Even when the French war lost much of its heat and English energies were turned in on themselves, papal relations were still noticeably affected by warfare. The papal legate, Francesco Coppini, bishop of Terni, took it upon himself to lend support to the Yorkist cause. Just how important Italians considered this to be can be deduced from the concern shown about the possibility of Coppini being raised to the cardinalate in order that his legatine status should be bolstered and his enemies immediately confounded.(2) On the other side, some Lancastrian priests claimed that Coppini, wrong in supporting the Yorkists, had been declared so by the pope and that, while all those who deserted to Henry VI's side would receive a plenary indulgence, all with Edward IV would be excommunicated.(3) The pope, Pius II, was a self-confessed supporter of Henry VI, but the distinct impression is conveyed that the English partisans of both sides used papal threats and pressures purely for their own ends and with little regard for the papacy itself. Indeed, in 1472, after Edward IV had returned to his throne, the papal diplomat Pietro

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1. Pius II: *De Gestis...*, Bk.II, pp.201,219.

2. Antonio della Torre, envoy to Edward IV, *SPM*, 24 Jan. 1461.

3. *Ibid.*, 25 Mar. 1462.



Aliprandi discovered to his horror that if a papal attitude did not please the English, they rudely rejected it. When he tried to come to England to support the late earl of Warwick's brother, the archbishop of York, he himself was violently prevented from entering the realm. Since Edward IV ordered him not to cross into England, the royal messengers almost threw him overboard from his ship. The papal envoy understood the warning and, while cursing the English for their evil ways, departed vowing to have them excommunicated and the country<sup>put</sup> under interdict. This was the only way to deal with a nation whose ecclesiastics could use the royal council to "represent to the king that he must have all who come from Rome arrested" and with a people that was trying to convene a council against the pope.(1) There is no evidence to suggest that the affair developed into a serious confrontation between king and pope: Aliprandi's own experiences obviously prejudiced his outlook, but the lesson of the matter was self-evidently that papal interference in English political matters was only respected when it was in Englishmen's interest to do so. This attitude was epitomised by the practicality of one of Richard III's ministers, John Kendall, who, bearing with letters from the pope bulls of interdict, "exerted himself in such wise with the king...that not only were those bulls not published nor observed, but with his own hands he tore them up." The Venetians were pleased at this: it suited their as well as English commercial minds to hinder papal meddling in a country's internal affairs.(2) However, this attitude is not surprising in an age when popes were local Italian princes rather more than ecumenical pontiffs. Undoubtedly Italians realised that papal bulls were often the subject of English suspicion. In 1489, when some

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1. Pietro Aliprando, SPM, 25 Nov., 2 Dec. 1472.

2. Decree of Venetian Senate, SPV I, 19 Apr. 1485.

question of a mission to be carried out by Adriano di Castello was mooted, the papal envoy in England, Persio Malvezzi, was in a dilemma. He wanted to be absolutely sure that it had papal authorisation because he felt that the English, "this suspicious race", would be the first to "give out that the bulls were forgeries." (1) Similarly, in 1497, when Perkin Warbeck "published certain apostolic bulls affirming that he was the son of the king of England", the people of England ignored him and his promises. They either denied his pretensions or accepted the king's pardon as their situation warranted. (2) On the other hand, in the same year, when the pope was persuaded by Henry VII to excommunicate all rebelling against him, Italians did not doubt that the poisoned crops that grew in Cornwall that year were in effect a result of the papal condemnation and a punishment for defying the king. (3) In other words, the English seemed to respect the pope when he was useful to them, but generally they were dominated much more by royal authority. The king for his part suited himself. When in 1502 Henry VII wanted other disturbers of the peace of his realm anathematised, Edmund de la Pole and his adherents were the subject of a condemnation or, when Henry wanted a dispensation for his son, the future Henry VIII, to marry his sister-in-law, Catherine of Aragon, the pope complied and removed barriers over the "question of consanguinity and another matter, which cannot lawyers call the justice of public honesty." (4) Many of these examples might have suggested to the Italian mind that much of the trouble that Henry VIII was to have later with Clement VII stemmed from English kings' having become used to pushing popes into what they wanted them to do or ignoring them when they were at odds

1. P. Malvezzi, SPV I, 19 Mar. 1489.

2. Raimondo de Soncino, Milanese ambassador to England, SPV I, 30 Sept. 1497.

3. Ibid., 8 Sept. 1497.

4. Vergil: AH(Hay), pp.133, 135.

with one another.

The same lack of concern with papal feelings coloured English dealings over the question of the crusade. Pius II sadly reflected how in Henry VI's reign the work of organising a crusade was neglected because not only were the French increasingly vexing the Holy See, but also "the English were involved in bitter feuds at home."<sup>(1)</sup> It was a sad continuation of the situation in which during the French wars both France and Burgundy's involvement on whatever side had conveniently prevented them from sending troops to the pope.<sup>(2)</sup> Even when Venice, a close friend of England, was advocating the crusade in 1501, the response from Henry VII was "fine words with great promises, but few deeds."<sup>(3)</sup> That was the view of a Venetian, Girolamo Priuli, but according to his fellow citizen, Antonio Giustinian, in 1502 Henry VII freely gave 15,000 ducats of his own to England's total of 40,000 as their contribution for the Jubilee and the crusade.<sup>(4)</sup> This was a surprisingly large sum from a king with a reputation for meanness. Certainly, in 1510, when his son, Henry VIII was asked to pay crusade money, he did not hasten to do so. Julius II threatened to label him with the description of "heretic and enemy of the church, to the body of God" and was prepared to excommunicate him, although only a few months previously he had been preparing to send him the Golden Rose for being a devout ruler.<sup>(5)</sup> This, in fact, had the appearance of a serious crisis and, although it came to nothing, it does represent another precedent indicating a degree of pre-Reformation incompatibility between the pope and the English king. The ironical thing about it was that, at the same time, King James IV of Scots

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1. Pius II: Coms., p.268.

2. Ibid., p.855.

3. G. Priuli, RRISS 24, Pt.3, Vol.2, p.187.

4. A. Giustinian, Vol.I, pp.48-9.

5. Sanudo 10, in D.Hay: 'Pietro Griffio, an Italian in England', in Italian Studies (1939), p.125; and SPV II, 6 Apr. 1510.

was promising 10,000 fighting men and 150 vessels to Venice for the crusade if only he could be made captain-general of the expedition.(1) Yet, it was James whom Italians saw die and excommunicate three years later at Flodden, while it was Henry VIII who, as the dutiful son of the Church who had saved the papacy from France, was honoured with the gift of "a gilded sword and scabbard...and a cap of maintenance of purple satin...covered with embroidery and pearls."(2)

The holy war was to remain a point of Anglo-papal contact, not always a happy one. Just as popes were dependent upon the resources of Christendom's sovereigns for their wars, they were quite unable to do anything when someone like Wolsey could put off the expulsion of the Turks from Hungary by saying, "Let us first expel these Turks here at hand", meaning the French."(3) Therefore again it appeared that a French war was more important to the English than the defence of Christendom. Strangely enough, nothing discouraged the pope. In 1532, despite precedents for refusal and despite the awkwardness of his relations with Henry VIII, Clement VII did not hesitate to write urging Henry to give him help in the war against the Turk.(4) Although no help was forthcoming, it is interesting to note how, in the midst of the acrimonious divorce question, there appeared to be no reason why the quarrel should have drastic results nor why Henry VIII should not still be regarded as a pillar of Christendom. Part of the reason for this was that Italians constantly reminded themselves that there was a financial and feudal tie between the English Crown and Rome.

The Trevisan Relation argued, "This kingdom of England is not quite independent of the Holy See." Although English histories

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1. A. Badoer (San.10), SPV II, 29 May 1510.

2. N. di Farvi (San.18), SPV II, 12 July 1514.

3. Gasparo Contarini, SPV III, 31 July 1522.

4. Clement VII, letter to Henry VIII (San.45), SPV IV, 4 Jan. 1532.

tactfully did not mention the fact, when William of Normandy "was about to set out upon the conquest of England, he did homage for it to Pope Alexander II." Moreover, during Innocent III's pontificate, "King John acknowledged holding the kingdom from the Church of Rome and paid an annual tribute of 2,000 marks." But this too had been miraculously forgotten in England. Even the Peter's Pence, which originated as a Danish conquerer's tax derived from the English Church, had been farmed out by the Apostolic Chamber to the bishops for fixed sums. The bishops were no losers by the transaction, so presumably the writer thought the pope was.<sup>(1)</sup> This picture is confusing. There was great stress laid upon the feudal relationship that apparently did not sit heavily upon English consciousness. There was also great stress laid upon the activities of the Apostolic Collector in England who had the mild job of collecting a small sum from tax-farmers. Yet, the process whereby Rome collected income in the form of very substantial annates and first-fruits was not mentioned by Trevisan. The Bergamasque friar, Giacompo Filippo, known as Foresti, published a rather romantic chronicle in 1521, in which he appeared to be under the illusion that because King John had made "the province of England and Ireland tributary to Rome" in thanksgiving for a victory against his French invaders, he and his successors had always carried out his vow to pay the annual tribute. As for the English kings' recognition of papal overlordship, that stemmed from Henry II being given permission to repress the population of Ireland and from his submission over his complicity in Becket's murder. Hence, the Holy See would confirm the kingdom to himself and his successors "so that all kings of England recognised the overlordship of the pope."<sup>(2)</sup> Falier, in 1531,

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1. Trevisan, pp.53-4.

2. Foresti, Bk.12, pp.425, 430.



was perhaps more inclined to stress historical as well as contemporary links between England and Rome. Were there not in English history "many examples of immense love and deference towards the Roman Church"? He recalled tributes and homages and ended by asserting, "The annual tribute to the Church of Rome is still levied by his Holiness's collectors. The English call it Peter's Pence and for this reason, as feudatories, they receive investiture (sic) from the Roman Pontiffs." (1) Moreover, this formal relationship was complemented by the compliments paid by the pope to the English king. There was the Golden Rose and in 1514 the cap and sword. There was the little book written by Henry VIII to bolster the orthodox theological position against Lutheranism; and Leo X's confirmation of the title of Defender of the Faith for Henry as a reward. (2) When the divorce case arose, Italians, perhaps mindful of these complex historical relationships, were at first slow to grasp the seriousness of the conflict with the pope. There had been a series of disagreements up to that time, but always the atmosphere of congeniality had returned sooner or later.

The one thing that added an enormous complication to the whole question, and Italians were aware of it more than most, was the imperial presence in Rome from 1527 and so, when a report issuing from curial consideration of the case was made in 1528, it was apparent that the marriage could not be annulled. The three cardinals who considered the question, it was said, "acted thus not to displease the emperor", whose relationship with Henry's wife, Catherine, was never forgotten. (3) From the pope's point of view, it was quite immaterial that Henry should protest that he had a weight on his conscience about his marriage; from Henry's, it was of little

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1. Falier, pp.16-17.

2. Vergil: AH(Hay), p.277.

3. A. Surian, (San.47), SPV IV, 30 Apr. 1528.



consequence that Catherine said that "no other husband than the present king had consummated marriage with her and affirmed the same to the pope." Already in 1529 Henry had declared, "If the pope will not annul it (the marriage), I will annul it myself." (1) It was a mood that continued. Even the tactful Milanese ambassador, Agostino Scarpinello, thought fit to record the English feeling that, although both sides were being obstinate, the pope was certainly in the wrong. (2) The matter was taken out of the pope's hands really when many observers saw Henry's consultations over the divorce question take place with foreign universities.

In 1530, it was apparent that parliament at least would not fail to please the king by reducing the power of the English Church and clergy and by the enforcement of the law of Praemunire, which was intended to prevent papal control over appeals from England. It cowed potential papal support in England: for apparently almost every clergyman had offended against this law. (3) In fact, the bishops of Rochester, Ely and Bath were immediately arrested on the charge of bestowing benefices contrary to orders. Praemunire was merely an excuse. It was noted that "these bishops were of the queen's faction, so the king chose to be revenged on them." (4) It may have been a hit against the queen; it was certainly aimed at hurting the pope's feelings. As the months passed and the pope still kept his decision on the case in reserve, Italians in Rome in 1531 were treated to the spectacle of English orators announcing that they would appeal to the next council, and that neither might the "Apostolic See expect ever again to have England subject to her, nor friendly or obedient." (5)

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1. Falier (San.50 and 51), SPV IV, 31 Mar., 29 June 1529.

2. Scarpinello, SPM, 20 Sept. 1530.

3. Ibid., 20 Oct. 1530.

4. Falier (San.54), SPV IV, 29 Oct. 1530.

5. Letter from Rome to the duke of Mantua (San.45), SPV IV, 29 Nov. 1531.

It was a move that, in its distinctly anti-papal tone, was a logical corollary to Henry's pragmatical decree of a few months earlier that forbade pluralism of benefices and formally reserved nominations to them for himself(1), although this in practice was no novelty. But more strikingly it was the outcome of the English clergy's promise to disburse 100,000 pounds sterling "for the remission of the crime of Praemunire, incurred by them." Praemunire, though few claimed to be able to define it, was in essence anti-papal. The clerics could have been in no doubt about its practical effect when Henry had himself acknowledged as "the chief protector and supreme head of the whole Anglican Church." (2) As far as England was concerned the situation was, 'le pape est mort. Vive le roi!' However, Henry VIII was not the first Christian prince to have declared that he had <sup>the church in</sup> authority over his own territories, an assertion which in the past had <sup>usually</sup> been no more than an instance of folie de grandeur or a passing objection to papal pressures. Italians themselves were not above even taking up arms against the Holy Father. The very fact that the announcement of the English orators in Rome was put in the form of a psychological threat aimed at influencing a consistorial decision meant that the doors to reconciliation were not yet shut. Even the fact that Henry waited for another year and scrupulously sent and waited for Cranmer's bulls of archiepiscopal consecration to come from Rome was indicative of a large flaw in Henry VIII's headship of the English Church, even although his patience was seen only as a means for giving traditional validity to the position of the one ecclesiastic who would engineer the passage of his divorce. (3) This was attended to in the "Parliament of the Ecclesiastics", which, by suspending over the pope's head the

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1. Mantuan ambassador in Venice (San.54) SPV IV, 3 Mar. 1531.

2. Scarpinello, SPM, 19 Feb. 1531.

3. Capello (San.47), SPV IV, 23 Feb. 1533.

threat that "should his Holiness not assent to the divorce, they would withdraw their obedience", again showed just how tentative Italians regarded Henry's unilateral declaration of independence of 1531(1) They regarded the question as still open even after April 1533 when Convocation finalised the divorce; rearranged church administration and "prohibited papal monitions and interdicts."(2) In September 1535, Pope Paul III issued a bull of suspended excommunication of Henry VIII and by it appeared to desire Henry to repudiate his second queen and her offspring and to return to the holiness of his youth, to those zealous days when he earned the title of Defender of the Faith.(3) Moreover, it must be borne in mind that this indecisive sentence, rather an ultimatum by its very tentative nature, came after the execution of Fisher. This had, in fact, been recognised as a direct result of the pope's promoting him to the cardinalate: Henry VIII was regarded by, for example, Gregorio da Casale, as having been almost forced into retaliation. His Majesty, who was usually slow to execute anyone, made up his mind in a morning and resolved on the execution, which, should it not have been "more than necessary, he would not have done what he did."(4)

Anglo-papal relations may have been clouded over, but no one, least of all Italians, gave up hope of a rapprochement. Even in March 1536, when Anne Boleyn was still alive, the same Casale could tell of conversations with Cardinal Palmieri and Pier-Luigi Farnese, the pope's son, about a settlement so that "a pristine amity should come about again."(5) Certainly, after the fall of Anne Boleyn, not only the pope but also the king of France and the emperor seemed

1. Capello (San.48), SPV IV, 30 Mar. 1533.
2. Ibid., 12 Apr. 1533.
3. Bull of Paul III, 3 Kal. Sept. 1535, in Wilkins, Vol.3, pp.792-7.
4. Gregorio da Cassale to Cromwell, in SP Hen.VIII, Vol.VII, Pt.V cont., Let.430, 27 July 1535.
5. Ibid., Let.441, 24 Mar. 1536.

concerned to set in motion diplomatic activity that would "dispose him (Henry) to come into the obedience of the Apostolic See."

However, according to Giovanni Guidiccione, an almost carte blanche submission was expected of Henry and the pope himself apparently held out little hope because he was sure that all depended on a rather unlikely agreement between England and the emperor.(1)

In the last ten years of Henry's reign, it was evident that Italians were despairing of the possibility of a reconciliation. Polydore Vergil was acutely aware that "the English Church assumed a political organisation never seen in former ages." The king's establishment as "head of the church itself"; the reorganisation of the appeals system to eliminate the pope's function; the adoption in England of "new religious observances and very different ways of worshipping God", all contributed to Vergil's picture of a church irreconcilably divorced from Rome.(2) Whatever the true physical form of the English Church was, Italians, as the years went by began to regard it as something unusual and unorthodox. There was no more public advocacy of a papal concord and Henry VIII did nothing to compromise. When in 1540 he "made his bishops declare that by no contract could the sister of the duke of Cleves be his wife", he was merely displaying to all Europe how completely the English Church and its government was under his thumb.(3) One way towards reconciliation was seen in the person of Reginald Pole, who had been raised to the cardinalate because, as Paolo Giovio maintained, "he was related to the king by blood and hence had greater authority", but even he, learning of the king's anger as he journeyed towards Britain, did not dare to cross over from France.(4) It certainly did appear that "Henry

1. G. Guidiccioni: Opera, Vol.II, pp.114-5, 154.

2. Vergil: AH(Hay), pp.333-5.

3. F. Contarini, SPV V, 19 July 1540.

4. Giovio: Desc., pp.22-3.

had turned all the fury of his rage on the pope."(1) It is little wonder that an Italian like Segni saw Henry as the epitome of all that was bad in religion. He could not have been unaware that the cult of St. Thomas a Becket in England celebrated the triumph of English ecclesiastics' right to protect their own. Becket's had been an anti-royal, pro-papal stand; and in 1538 Henry VIII "had disinterred and removed from its church the body of Thomas of Canterbury, canonised and held as a saint, and, burning the bones, threw the ashes to the winds."(2) There was a symbolic irreversibility about that action. It was, so to say, Becket's second death: it signified, after centuries of patched up differences, England's final severing of its papal connections.

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1. Giovio: Hist., II, Bk.42, p.338.

2. Segni, II, vi, pp.22-3.

## CHAPTER V.

### The Secular State.

At the end of the Italian Renaissance period the secular authorities in England, as embodied in the person of the king, his administration, parliament and the legal system, seemed to Italians to be in a very strong position: the state, after all, had just subdued the church with apparent ease. However, as far as Italians were concerned, this was more a matter of self-evident truth than deducible fact. All the institutions involved seemed constantly to change, contract, expand in accordance with political necessity. Italians often could not define them in terms of legitimacy or right. Frequently they had no idea what to expect next of any one institution. None of them was more baffling than the concept of kingship in Britain, particularly in England.

#### 1. The Crown.

Renaissance Italians were by no means unfamiliar with the practice of monarchy. Virtually all of Christendom and the world of Islam was governed by <sup>sovereign</sup> princes. In Italy itself the Visconti, Sforza and Medici families, <sup>independent rulers</sup> virtually at Mantua and Ferrara, the Neapolitan kings, even the popes themselves showed what monarchy was in practice, <sup>in theory, if not</sup> in practice. However, they did also show in themselves limitless variations in their theoretical conception. It was perhaps this more than anything else that gave Italians an almost ingenuous tone when referring to English kingship. If they discovered a grain of theory, they repeated it verbatim. If something was acceptable in England, it was acceptable to them. For example, in March 1400 the Venetian senate sent messages to Henry IV "to congratulate him on his coronation."<sup>(1)</sup> He was visibly king; that was enough for him to gain Venetian approval. Or in 1496

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1. Motion in the Venetian Senate, SPV I, 28 Mar. 1400.



Piero Contarini thought fit to remind Henry VII of how the doge had been "the first to congratulate (him) on his accession and to style him king of England." (1) What Contarini was implying was that Venetians had a practical approach to the mechanics of English monarchy and should be given some consideration for their willingness to accept the faits accomplis in the current situation.

Moreover, Italians were under no illusion about the attitude of the English people, even of English kings, to the principle of monarchy. Giovanni Villani particularly noted how, when Jan van Artevelde organised the overthrow of the sovereign count of Flanders in 1339, it was the king of England's agent in Brabant who "spent much of the king of England's money in Flanders and caused to happen all these revolts." (2) When Villani was concerned with Edward III's apparent willingness to end the rule of David II in Scotland, he had to call him a rebel against the king of England. Indeed, initially he could point to Edward's upholding the legitimacy of Edward Balliol's claim to the throne in 1335 but, in later years, Edward III was still trying to subdue David and not even Villani could see a Balliol to justify his actions, so David had to be cast in the rôle of the rebel. (3) It was perhaps the pre-existence of this English, indeed British, careless approach towards the sanctity of the sovereign that led Italians to notice particularly the frequent incidence of regicide in Britain. About 1428 Giovanni Sercambi recalled how Henry IV put down an uprising in favour of the imprisoned Richard II and, "having killed the old king, he maintained the realm of England." (4) In 1485 Giovanni Sabadino used the subject for part of a novelette. After his

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1. Piero Contarini, SPV I, 6 May 1496.

2. G. Villani, XI.83.

3. Ibid., XI.38; XII.64.

4. Sercambi, I.672.

dethronement by Henry IV, the ex-king was depicted as having been put in a cage, where he was starved and where eventually, "gnawing away his hands through madness, he died of hunger." (1) That was the sort of cruelty Italians <sup>perhaps</sup> believed Englishmen capable of inflicting upon their sovereigns. In 1471 the Milanese Sforza de' Bettini calmly announced that "King Edward (IV) had not chosen any longer to have the custody of King Henry...and had had him put to death secretly." This, following as it did on the deaths of the prince of Wales and other Lancastrians, was the last word at the end of a chapter. It could quite simply be said that "in short (Edward had) chosen to crush the seed." (2) England and Italy said no more about it. When it came to the supposed murder of Edward V, his youthfulness drew out sentiment. Vergil, some decades later and under Tudor rule, could say that "great grief struck generally to the hearts of all." (3) Mancini, writing at the time, had just as much reason for saying that men could "burst forth into tears" when mention was made of his removal, but he himself reported, without many histrionics, the rumour that in 1483 "already there was a suspicion that he had been done away with." (4) English king-killing was not so new that it excited too much comment. In 1485, when Cardinal Ascanio Sforza reported that "the people had cut into pieces" Richard III, he related it dryly without a word of approval or disapproval. (5) If the English could individually murder sovereigns, the notion that they could anonymously band together to cut them to pieces must have seemed well within the realms of possibility. Neither did the sanctity of the sovereign's wife seem to be valued very greatly. Henry VIII himself

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1. G. Sabadino, Nov. 22, pp. 111ff.

2. S. de' Bettini, SPM, 17 June 1471.

3. P. Vergil: AH(Ellis), p. 189.

4. Mancini. 115.

5. A.M. Sforza, in Rome, SPM, 30 Sept. 1485.

could permit the execution of two of his wives. All Italians knew that. Yet, they seemed to show interest more in the reasons for execution than in the action of killing a queen.(1) Even Matteo Bandello, who could inveigh against Henry VIII for having "waxed very terrible and cruel and having shed human blood to an enormous extent", described the executions of two queens, but looked upon them as wayward wives rather than as crowned first-ladies of the realm.(2)

The Scots seemed to be little better. James I, said Pius II, had "cut down several chieftains with the sword and himself... was killed by his domestics."(3) It was seen by Pius as a simple case of quid pro quo. Even such humble people as palace servants, so he seemed to think, did not feel inhibited about striking back. As for James IV, Giovio regarded him as being responsible for his father's murder and described him as unhappy to the end of his life because of this impious crime.(4) His own son James V, Giovio considered, might even have been poisoned. So quickly did he die that some thought that his "physician had made him die as though of sickness."(5) By the 1540s it must almost have seemed that the Scots were not as devoted to their Crown as the Trevisan Relation claimed about forty years earlier. Certainly, in regicide tendencies, they appeared almost equal to the English, of whom, it was to be understood, "few...were very loyal. They generally hated their present, and extolled their dead sovereigns."(6) An attitude of automatic hatred of kings was one step away from active regicide; admiration of the dead can ease the conscience for misuse of the living.

Italians, however, saw little sign of conscience colouring

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1. Vide Doge and Venetian Senate deliberations, SPV V, 14 June 1536.
  2. Bandello, III, Nov.60, 62.
  3. Pius II: De Europa, Ch.46, p.443.
  4. Giovio: Hist. I, Bk.I, p.5.
  5. Giovio: EVBI., 490; Hist. II, Bk.42, p.338.
  6. Trevisan, 32.

the Englishman's general attitude towards kingship. The elements of popular participation in king-making was enough to give Italians the impression that legitimacy counted for little and that a de facto ruler with popular or aristocratic support was all that mattered. It was not a concept unfamiliar nor particularly repugnant to some Italians. In the 1430s Frulovisi, compromised by Lancastrian patronage, might say that "after the death of King Richard, (Henry IV), as was his right, was preferred to the Crown of the realm."<sup>(1)</sup> However, when Sercambi wrote his version of the affair, no mention was made of right. He said simply that Henry IV, "with the consent of the royal lords and the people and community of London, was created and elected king of England." Here was right interpreted in terms of popular consent. Once the English had elected one king there was little support for the deposed monarch, as Sercambi could see from the efforts to oppose Henry IV on the part of those loyal to Richard: they appeared to be soon easily crushed.<sup>(2)</sup> The picture formed by Giorgio Stella, a virtual contemporary of the Lancastrian take-over, dwelt upon two facts. Henry of Lancaster was related to Richard by blood: that was right enough in itself. But, more important, Richard II could have been considered irresponsible as a king and "not worthy to rule." Therefore Henry "by public instrument...was elected to the kingly state."<sup>(3)</sup> This view implicitly contained the notion that English kings should only rule if fit to do so. Stella, a Genoese, must have known how unsuitable doges could be deposed; The English were employing a similar practical approach to monarchy.

Over half a century later, Pius II admitted that there were nearer kinsmen to the dead Richard, men who had a more legitimate

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1. Frulovisi, 3.

2. Sercambi I, 670, 671.

3. Giorgio Stella: Annales Genuenses, RIS 17, p.1176.

claim than Henry IV, who had used the sword to substantiate his pretensions.(1) This was a new concept for Italians, but even Pius had to admit that in Henry VI's time, when the question of the right of the king, "the successor of a murder", to reign was raised, practical considerations, such as Henry VI's long reign, Lancastrian service against the French and nobles' oaths of fealty to the Crown, did not make many Englishmen predisposed to depose him. There was very little question of blood-right here. In fact Pius II saw that the only reason for York's initial opposition to Henry VI was because the "king was a dolt and a fool who was ruled instead of ruling." York wanted another form of government, one in which he had some say.(2) His approach, while seen to use legitimist-type arguments, was recognisably self-interested and ambitious. Pius would emphasise how he was to compromise his claims by accepting the promise of heirship and an annual pension. Moreover, the rest of England seemed to have no real concept of legitimacy. In 1461, when Edward IV took the throne, the Milanese Pigello Portinaro said that the English commons regarded him as "a boon from above. All comforted themselves with hopes of future well-being."(3) Self-interest and material prosperity seemed to be the main considerations when choosing a royal cause to support. As the dynastic conflict continued the same considerations moulded the opinions of those whose economic life was threatened, especially in a commercial centre like London. They supported whatever party "assured (them) that they would not be plundered or suffer violence." (4) It was only in a remote area like Yorkshire, paradoxically opposed to Edward IV and very friendly to Henry VI, that Warwick

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1. Pius II: Coms., p.429.

2. Ibid., pp.269-71.

3. Pigello Portinaro, a Milanese merchant in Medici service at Bruges, SPV I, 14 Apr. 1461.

4. C. Gigli, at Bruges, SPM, 19 Feb., 22 Feb. 1461.

had to prevent a rising in favour of Henry VI.(1) In other words, while the people of London looked to economic well-being, those more removed from the seat of royal government tended to cling to the established institutions more familiar to them. For neither type did legitimacy seem to matter. As a Florentine like Michele Arnolfini would put it, by the wish of "several lords, spiritual and temporal, and that of the people they crowned the earl of March, king of England."(2) The same Edward, after many vicissitudes, would return to England in 1471 and claim that he only "wished to be duke of York." He was received in good faith.(3) It emphasised the underlying fact that he himself was basically a magnate, at times a magnate with extended powers. As an Italian like Zannoto Spinula saw it, popular approval was the only criterion for differentiating between Edward as king or as duke of York or earl of March. It was to be obvious during much of his reign as Edward IV that he could do little effectively without popular support. It was the convinced opinion of the papal diplomat Pietro Aliprando that those who surrounded him ruled the king "so that he followed no course that they did not approve." They could tell the king frankly that "they would not serve him any longer and he could not compel them."(4) Aliprando's eye was invariably jaundiced. In 1483 Mancini much more coolly observed how Edward's brother, Richard of Gloucester, used to his own advantage the outward form of noble and popular consent in the act of king-making. He pressurised them, the nobles, the people of London and the heads of the clergy, into coming to him with their oaths of fealty that signified their consent. Richard seemed to set almost as much store

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1. G.P. Cagnolla of Lodi, SPM, 28 Aug. 1461.

2. M. Arnolfini, at Bruges, SPM, 9 Mar. 1461.

3. Zannoto Spinula, at Bruges, SPM, 26 Apr. 1471.

4. P. Aliprando, at Namur, SPM, 27 Aug. 1475.



by this recognition as by his own efforts to discredit the legitimacy of Edward IV's children's right to the throne.(1) He observed the forms and England again had a de facto ruler. Few Italians questioned his right to occupy the throne.

Much the same was the case with Henry VII. He was king because he occupied the throne and could maintain that position. As Trevisan said, when there was "no direct heir, the succession... was often settled by force of arms." Henry VII kept his position by luck and guile: "his good fortune had been equal to his spirit, for he never lost a battle." (2) Therefore, implied Trevisan, he was king. As far as most Italian writers were concerned, Henry's right to the throne by conquest was infinitely more important than his right by popular consent. Falier, in 1531, did say that he was "proclaimed and crowned king"; this implied consent; but what he stressed was that Henry had wrested England from a murderer and had "justly taken possession of the kingdom." (3) Falier was only concerned with an established fact that he could see perpetuated in the kingship of Henry VIII. By the very same means, it was mooted in 1535, the Princess Mary could be "made queen and succeed to the kingdom" after Henry VIII's death, despite the existence of two or three pretenders to the throne. (4) This was the same Mary who at the time was not even allowed the style of 'princess'; the same whose mother might have been "styled king of this island by reason of the love the people bore her." (5) In other words, what struck Italians as important in English king-making was popular support, physical as much as verbal; the niceties of the legal position mattered little to the public mind.

1. Mancini, 119.

2. Trevisan, 46.

3. Falier, 8.

4. C. Capello, SPV V, 3 June 1535.

5. Marin Giustinian (San.48), SPV V, 28 June 1533; Capello (San.46), SPV IV, 23 Apr. 1532.

It is small wonder that in 1551 the Italian concept of the question, as expressed by Daniele Barbaro, was that "besides the succession and heirship, the consent of the Lords and the Commons was required" before a king's crowning. This was seen as much as a prerequisite for a king's security as it was considered a popular right.(1) In the workings of the English monarchy, long before the accession of Edward VI, Italians were convinced that as much depended upon elements that made a king de facto sovereign as upon those that gave him a legitimate right to be so.

Part of the reason for this was that Renaissance Italians often had no clear notion of the workings of hereditary succession in England. When Villani mentioned the initial reasons for Edward III's war against France, in his mind were the English claims to Gascony. It was only afterwards that Edward "demanded...from Philip VI of Valois the realm of France", on the grounds that it was the inheritance of his mother as "the daughter of King Philip the Fair...of whom there did not remain another branch from the royal line." Therefore, it would seem that to Villani the English king was upholding a hereditary system of succession by which a man might succeed to a throne through his mother. Italians were well aware that his mother was still alive, but they heard no suggestion that she might succeed herself. An additional confusion was that, in conjunction with his own claim, Edward III was pressing the rights of a male claimant to the county of Artois, while Philip championed the cause of the daughter of the late comte d'Atrois.(2) However, in England there was no confusion at that time: the eldest son succeeded to the father's throne. When Edward III died

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1. D. Barbaro, SPV V, p.338, s.m. May 1551.

2. G. Villani, XI.55.

his grandson succeeded. A contemporary anonymous Roman author remarked on the practice whereby three outstanding younger sons of the late king were excluded "by force of English custom, which held that the son ought to succeed in all things in which the father, if he were living, should succeed."<sup>(1)</sup> By such a definition, it might have seemed that a pure system of male primogeniture governed the workings of the succession. Henry IV, however, contradicted the laws of this by "being created king...by the power of the magnates", although he was known to be Richard II's cousin.<sup>(2)</sup> When his own first-born son ascended to his throne, the old hereditary system might have seemed to be operating again, but one wonders what Frulovisi thought when he recorded that "the estates of the realm paid him oaths of fealty even before his coronation."<sup>(3)</sup> Could Frulovisi have realised that a premature ceremony like this was the sort of thing that a king uncertain of his new kingdom would welcome?

When Henry V himself died, leaving the kingdom to an infant son, the confident way in which he arranged an education and regency for his son certainly seemed to imply that there was little doubt that his son would succeed.<sup>(4)</sup> This was Frulovisi's view. What he did not record was that Henry V drew up his last will while his wife was pregnant. The expected child could have been a daughter. Yet, still Henry V apparently expected her to succeed him by law, if necessary. Henry's strength and prestige at the hour of his death would have constituted his daughter's right. By the end of Henry VI's reign the picture had changed. Hereditary primogeniture within the usurper line was one thing, but, as Pius II recorded, the duke of

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1. *Vitae Romanorum Pontificum*, anon., *RIS* 3/2, p.653b, s.a. 1377.

2. Lorenzo Bonincontrio, *RIS* 21, p.21.

3. Frulovisi, 5.

4. *Ibid.*, 91.

York now claimed the throne as "the nearest kin of the murdered King Richard." (1) Unfortunately, Pius II did not explain precisely why. If he had, the distaff succession might well have confused some Italians. For about this time and in the following decades, the question of how good a female's claim to the throne was in the air. Edward IV claimed to be king by right (2) and he was obviously concerned to keep his faction in power by hereditary means. Particularly he was anxious that his crown should pass to a son. In April 1469, when the queen gave birth to her third daughter, the king and nobles rejoiced but "they would have preferred a son." (3) The son would seem to give added security, but the Italian opinion still was that daughters were not without their uses. Jacopo Bracciolini, writing about the same time, told a story of an English princess, the king's only daughter, who was able to succeed to her father's throne, despite the obvious presence of a male heir in her uncle, a "John, duke of Lancaster." (4) The story was fictional, but Bracciolini apparently did not think it impossible that a woman could become the English sovereign. However, the confusing factor was that, as with Edward III's claims to the French throne through a still living mother, it seemed that in Edward IV's time a distaff claim to the throne by a mature male was of considerable importance. Edward IV, Giovanni Pietro Panicharolla believed, "in secret...hated (the duke of Burgundy) owing to the claim and right he had to that realm for he had a most just title to the succession and much better than the king's." (5) That was the opinion of a Milanese diplomat at the French court. Seeing in Burgundy a very close relative of the Lancastrians, he was concerned to tell

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1. Pius II: Coms., 270.

2. Letters from Ghent, anon., SPM, 4 Apr. 1461.

3. Luchino Dallaghiesia, in London, SPM, 12 Apr. 1469.

4. J. di Poggio Bracciolini, pp. 41-2, 15.

5. G.P. Panigarolla, SPM, 9 Feb. 1476.

Italians that Edward IV was painfully aware of him as a possible counter-claimant to his throne. What some one like Panicharolla did was to look at a century of irregularities in the succession to the English throne and to make much of anyone with a legitimate hereditary claim to it. He also amply showed the weakness of the indistinct definition of succession rights in England.

Mancini was one of the first Italians to give some idea that the English had any distinct and rational order of succession. When Richard of Gloucester was in the process of taking over the kingdom in 1483, he could observe the steps being taken to put out of action those standing between him and the throne. Ostensibly awaiting coronation, the young Edward V was safely in the Tower; his brother Richard of York was inveigled out of sanctuary on the pretext that he would have to attend the coronation. Even Clarence's son, a boy of ten years, was kept in custody "because he feared that, if Edward IV's children died, this child would be an embarrassment." (1) In other words, even attainted Clarence's son appeared to have a hereditary right to the throne superior to Gloucester's. Moreover, Gloucester appeared to be so concerned about carving out for himself a legitimate claim to the throne that he did not hesitate to say that Edward IV was illegitimate and that his progeny were not worthy of the kingship because Elizabeth Wydeville "had been ravished rather than espoused by Edward." This would imply that only the off-spring of completely regular marriages could be considered as legitimate heirs. In much the same way, the irregularity of a conviction for treason theoretically deprived one and one's son of the right to succeed, as in Clarence's case, but Mancini was aware that Gloucester knew that this was only a theoretical impediment to succession.(2)

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1. Mancini, 109.

2. Mancini, 117-9.



Nothing could take away from blood-right in the order of succession. As evidence that Richard III himself thought little of his attempts to bastardise Edward IV's children, Vergil later was to claim that Richard had kept Edward IV's eldest daughter Elizabeth unharmed "with a view to marriage."<sup>(1)</sup> This implied that Richard was as aware of Elizabeth's legitimacy as of her right to the throne. His rival, Henry of Richmond, was just as conscious of her dynastic importance. According to Giovanni de Giglis, one of the first things that the new king, Henry VII, did was to declare "the first-born daughter of King Edward...duchess of York" and then purposed marrying her.<sup>(2)</sup> The implication of this settling of the duchy on her was that her brother Richard, duke of York, was dead and that she was to be regarded as the head and heiress of the house of York. However, apart from that, no Italian suggested that she, as Henry VII's wife, was anything like queen-regnant. Thereafter, the only hint of even her parity with Henry can be seen in Torregiano's tomb for Henry and Elizabeth: their coats of arms are to be seen impaled together under a single royal crown, as though in fact, as the de facto heads of the two senior branches of the royal house, they had enjoyed some degree of equality.<sup>(Plate 12)</sup> However, the problem was glossed over in the end because their son Henry VIII automatically succeeded to the one throne to which they both had a claim. Indeed, Vergil remarked that Henry VIII was not half-heartedly acclaimed because "on his father's side (he was) descended from Henry VI (sic) and on his mother's from Edward IV."<sup>(3)</sup> Though slightly incorrect, this did stress his double hereditary claim to the throne.<sup>(4)</sup>

Yet in Henry VIII's reign the problem of female succession

1. Vergil: AH(Hay), 3.

2. G. de Giglis to Innocent VIII, SPV. I, 6 Dec. 1485.

3. Vergil: AH(Hay), 151.

4. Cf. E. Hall's Chronicle (London 1809), which reproduces the title-page of the 1548 edition. This describes Henry VIII as "the undubitate flower and very heire of both the sayd linages."





12. Pietro Torregiano, Tomb of Henry VII and Elizabeth of York, c.1514.



13. Pietro da Milano, Portrait of Margaret of Anjou, c.1463.

rose again very noticeably. In 1511 Andrea Badoer had been able to see the great rejoicings at the birth of the king's son.(1) But the baby-prince died; nor was he the last to do so. In 1516 when Catherine of Aragon gave birth to a daughter, Giustinian frankly said that, if it had been a son, he would have been quicker about his congratulations and that the doge "would have experienced greater satisfaction."(2) From that one must infer that they thought that Henry VIII too would have experienced greater satisfaction. In 1518 Henry's lack of a son was causing concern and so, by an agreement with the king of France, it was decided that, should Henry die without a male heir, his daughter was to inherit the kingdom.(3) This was quite explicit; it seemed almost a natural thing to do, but, if the right of a female to succeed was recognised in English practice, why was there any need to ratify this with the French king? In the long run, it probably confused the Italians, because by 1531 Falier was convinced that "by English law females were excluded from the throne." This did not, however, apparently seem to debar from the throne a Courtenay with a royal distaff descent.(4) But all this came after Giustinian himself in 1519 had discussed the possibility that any one of the dukes of Buckingham, Norfolk or Suffolk might succeed on Henry's death(5), indeed, after Henry's elevation of the Courtenays and of his illegitimate son Henry, whom he was reported to have legitimised in 1525.(6) Conversely, by 1531 Princess Mary was being threatened with bastardisation. Yet, when in 1533 Anne Boleyn brought forth a daughter, an event which was seen as divine judgment upon a

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1. A. Badoer (San.10), SPV I, 20 Feb. 1511.

2. S. Giustinian in RB, 20, 24 Feb. 1516.

3. Venetian ambassador in France (San.25), SPV II, 6 Aug. 1518.

4. Falier, 26, 15.

5. S. Giustinian: Report, in RB II, 315-6, s.d. 10 Oct. 1519.

6. L. Orio (San.39), SPV III, 12, 29 June 1525.

king who was so anxious for a son.(1), the question of heirship arose between the two daughters. In 1534 news reached Venice that Princess Elizabeth had been "declared heiress" and invested with the principality of Wales, of which Mary had been deprived.(2) This Italian rationalisation of the situation certainly now seemed to imply that females themselves could ascend to the throne, although a year later Ottavio Visconti, Milanese ambassador in Venice, was repeating that the conditions of a marriage between Princess Elizabeth and the duc d'Angoulême stipulated that "if the king of England died without heirs male, the duke would succeed him."(3) This does reveal that there was some considerable Italian confusion about the technicalities of this English problem. What struck them most forcibly was that sons were far more acceptable to English kings than daughters. Giovio even suggested that Anne Boleyn used adultery and incest and risked death "to prove that she could have male children."(4) In the mid 1530s a male child seemed to be the only thing that could ensure the stability of the régime and protect the persons of queens. Yet, in 1551 Daniele Barbaro would confidently define that the throne "in default of the male line...passes to the female line, but, as the sovereignty is undivided, the eldest daughter becomes sole heir."(5) In 1554, when Mary sat securely but childlessly on the throne, Soranzo, assuming the exclusion of Elizabeth on the grounds of bastardy, listed the order of succession as defined in Edward VI's reign. The next four heirs-in-line were all females of the house of Suffolk, basing their claim on a double female descent from Henry VII.(6)

The hereditary system of English kingship could be very

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1. Zorzo Andreasio, SPM, 1 Oct. 1533.
  2. Letters from the French court to Milan, SPM, 8, 14 & 15 Apr. 1534.
  3. O. Visconti, SPM, 18 June 1535.
  4. Giovio: Hist. II, 201v.
  5. D. Barbaro, SPV V, p.338, s.m. May 1551.
  6. G. Soranzo, SPV V, p.535, 18 Aug. 1554.

confusing for Italians. Until Edward VI's definition of succession they were often uncertain of females' rights in the matter. One could almost say that, when the politics of the question did not concern them, they tended to concentrate on the outward and visible signs of English kingship and on its mystique. Italians saw all the trappings of monarchy, the bodyguards, the richness of kingly dress, the formal progresses through the realm and the state appearances in company with the royal family. They were perhaps even more struck by the divine aura apparently surrounding the Crown. In 1340 the bishop of Brescia gave an account of how Edward III had challenged Philip VI of France to decide who was the real king of France by standing the "test of ravenous lions who in no wise harm a true king, or performing the miracle of touching for the evil."<sup>(1)</sup> This suggests that Edward III believed that a real king could be discerned even by wild animals and that he had the powers virtually to perform miracles of healing. In this atmosphere, it is not surprising that Sacchetti in one of his stories made a character address Edward III as "Holy Crown."<sup>(2)</sup> This emphasised the double notion of a crowned and consecrated person and of the authority of the Crown as an abstract concept. It meant that Pius II could still talk about Henry VI as a crowned king near the beginning of his reign, when he was still a minor, and at the end of it when it was seen that he was "ruled instead of ruling... the royal power (being) in the hands of his wife." Indeed, in such a situation Henry VI's enemy, Warwick, even proposed, simply because he was king, that Henry should not be deposed but retain the trappings of kingship in his life-time.<sup>(3)</sup> For, although in an emergency unction and crowning could be postponed until rivals for the throne had been eliminated,

1. Friar Richard, bishop of Brescia, SPV I, 27 Aug. 1340.

2. F. Sacchetti; Le Trecento Novelle, III.

3. Pius II: Coms., 435, 269, 271.

as Edward IV did in 1461(1), and, although Warwick in 1470 thought to repeat a form of crowning for Henry VI at his 'readeption', as if to eradicate the stigma of deposition(2), the English seemed to regard visible ceremonies of coronation and unction as uniquely bestowing some divine grace upon the recipient. Even the treatment of Lambert Simnell by Henry VII made Italians marvel. In 1497 the king still kept his rival in easy custody and even contemplated making him a priest, simply out of respect for the sacred unction that he had received as a pretender to the throne.(3)

Italians were well enough aware of the symbolic actions involved in the consecration of English kings. The idea of the crowned sovereign was perhaps even more comprehensible than the anointed, almost priestly king, especially when the English themselves often appeared to have little respect for the physical persons of their kings. Yet, one cannot be too sure of how well Italians grasped the significance even of crowning. In 1523 Antonio Surian's description of the crown itself as "a hat...of crimson velvet, surrounded by an ermine border, the crown being covered with certain long gold bands tied together at the summit"(4), seems to put the cap of maintenance before the crown itself. Similarly Italians tended to look at the uses to which the crown was put rather than the powers that it implied or the grace symbolically bestowed by it. Their eyes saw the functional aspects. Baby kings, Henry VI and James V of Scots, were crowned in childhood to secure their thrones, and Edward V's succession led immediately to coronation plans; Richard III and Henry VII both sought popular acceptance by fairly quick coronations, performed, as in

1. P. di Camulio, SPM, 27 Mar. 1461.

2. Emanuelo de Jacopo & Sforza de Bettini, Milanese ambassadors in France, SPM, 20 Oct. 1470.

3. Raimondo de Soncino, SPM, 16 Sept. 1497.

4. A. Surian (San.34), SPV III, 16 Apr. 1523.



Richard's case, by a reluctant archbishop.(1) The incidence of crowning queen-consorts seemed just as significant to Italians. Pietro da Milano's portrait medal of Margaret of Anjou (Plate 13) shows her wearing a continental-style crown, which is reminiscent more of a helmet than a royal diadem. It is possible that this was the impression that he wanted to give of an English queen who used her crowned state to lead armies for her weak husband. Similarly the Rotta de Scocesi represented Catherine of Aragon as a crowned queen who, in her husband's absence, was prepared to defend his kingdom against the Scots.(2) What Italians were noticing was the visible functioning of the crowned state. Further, queenly coronation could be used as the means of officially recognising a queen whose status was in doubt. Cornazzano praised the <sup>way that</sup> Edward IV brought his wife Elizabeth Wydeville out of obscurity and used the ceremony of crowning to present her as queen to his subjects.(3) In just the same way it was not her wedding that gave Anne Boleyn recognition as queen but the public spectacle of her crowning. Italian commentators were quick to note the wrangle that was caused when the previous queen, Catherine of Aragon, refused to hand over her crown. If she were to give it away, she would be handing over her queenship. Henry VIII obviously thought the recognition that crowning would give his new bride was worth the great expense of having a new diadem made.(4) The amount of glory that a king reflected onto his consort was diminished by Henry VIII's executions of two queens. Certainly, during the reigns of the Tudors from the time that a potential usurper could be spared death because of his anointing, until queens, crowned and anointed, could be cast aside or done to death, much had

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1. Vettor Lippomano (San.17), SPV II, 8 Nov. 1513; Mancini, 99ff., 123; Falier, 8.

2. Rotta de Scocesi, 12.

3. Antonio Cornazzano, in EHR.76, (1961), p.671.

4. Advices from London and Vienna to Milan, SPM, 3 June 1533.



changed. One wonders if a contemporary novelist would have thought to call Henry VIII "Holy Crown" as Sacchetti did Edward III. By the time of Henry VIII's death the hereditary system had been so misapplied and manipulated and the mystical process of coronation so overexposed and used apparently for ulterior motives that the political actuality of being in control of a secure throne was by then very much more of a reality to Italian observers.

## 2. Government.

During the Renaissance period there was a growing Italian awareness that British government was not simply a matter of arbitrary action on the part of the king. The monarch increasingly was seen linked with a governor-figure or a governing faction in the management of his realm. The governor at once counterbalanced his deficiencies and made up for his disinclination for government. No one, however, made the mistake of imagining that the individual governor was a permanent fixture. Governing factions might attempt to survive the fall of kingly régimes but it was more common for Italians to see how kings tried to make their thrones secure by using their governors as the butt of criticism that logically should have been directed against themselves. Conversely, there was never any doubt that England only thrived under the guidance of some strong figure and that, if the king himself did not wholly supply the required eminence, it had to be supplemented. In 1461 Prospero di Camulio summed up this concept when he said that "these English had not the slightest form of government unless they had some leader, and this they had in King Edward and the earl of Warwick."<sup>1</sup> Alone Edward IV was not sufficient; certainly the Lancastrian distaff was no substitute. Government, in other words, was as much a question of personalities

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1. P. di Camulio, SPM, 2 June 1461.

as was kingship. Italians focused on the court. They knew of the administrative function of local government in the provinces and the nature of its ties with the Crown; they knew of the Isle of Man where "the earl of Derby was king", only ultimately dependent upon the central government; and of the bishop of Durham with his own jurisdiction and the right, at least until Henry VII's time, to strike his own coins.(1) But to Italians these regional seats of government took away very little from the central authority. There was always a king; there was invariably some governor-figure. Below them little mattered. Royal councils were purely practical, almost unseen bodies. Italians commented very little on them.

When the king was a minor or insane, the governor-figure achieved most prominence. It was not a concept very familiar to Italians in Venice, Tuscany or even Rome: minorities or periods with incapable rulers only very occasionally could be seen in places like Milan or Naples. But in England the practice of governing for a minor king was well established before the Renaissance period and, during it, the government of the king with an immature mind was carried on in the same relatively smooth way. As a minor Richard II ascended unquestioned to his grandfather's throne. Government continued. No Italian cared to make much comment on the form it took up to the time of his majority. It was really Frulovisi who first touched on the subject of minority government when he related how the dying Henry V "gave his son to the care of Gloucester, who was to see that his realm flourished; Exeter was to attend to his education; and Bedford was to be his regent in Normandy."(2) Government continued virtually as before: the king still ruled in name, as Aeneas Sylvius found out

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1. Vergil: AH(ET), 1, 18; Capello (San.48), SPV IV, 21 July 1533; Trevisan, 37.  
 2. Frulovisi, 91.

when he could not leave England without a royal passport in 1436, because "the king had forbidden it."<sup>(1)</sup> The fourteen year old king would have had little to do with this, but so closely was the regent associated with the Crown that to an observer like Aeneas Sylvius they seemed as one. Cardinal Beaufort, who "directed the realm of England for a time", was seen by Pius II as immensely rich and influential in his own right but there was no suggestion that his identification with the Crown at any time overbore its innate supremacy.<sup>(2)</sup> This also applied to the Scotland of that age. During James II's minority it was the queen with several barons, especially the earl of Douglas, who governed Scotland. The queen was English by birth; the Scotland that she helped to govern was anti-English and pro-French; yet there was never any question about her not being devoted to the welfare of the Scottish Crown during her regency.<sup>(3)</sup> Similarly, during the minority of James III, it was Kennedy, bishop of St. Andrews, described by Vergil as "a very good man and adorned with all virtuous qualities", that governed Scotland for a long time.<sup>(4)</sup> His aureole of integrity and competence only added to the notion that, when the mature qualities of kingship were lacking in a British king, an important subject used his administrative skill to supplement the temporary weakness of the Crown.

Yet again, when a Henry VI turned out to be, as Pius II reported, "a dolt and a fool", he too had to be "ruled instead of ruling." It was evident to observers that "the royal power was in the hands of his wife and those who defiled the king's chamber." There was strong opposition to this in England. The duke of Suffolk first

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1. Pius II: Coms., 21.

2. Pius II: De viris, No.32.

3. Ibid., No.32.

4. Vergil: AH(Ellis), 100.

had made up for Henry's lack of administrative talent, but had ruled so arbitrarily that the enemies that he made ousted and beheaded him. After him Somerset was given the king's permission to govern his realm.(1) Thus successive dukes and Margaret of Anjou, as partners in government, perhaps in more than that, if what Pius II insinuated was true, jointly made up for the weaknesses of the husband. Pietro da Milano's portrait medal of Margaret speaks of the queen as the proud, strong and sensuous woman about whom Italians wrote.(Plate 13) Her own and her helpers' strength made up for the king's gentler characteristics.

From this point onwards there appeared to be a deterioration in the integrity of British regents. Mancini pointed out the irony, as he saw it, of Richard III's days as regent. Edward IV appointed "as protector of his children and realm his brother Richard, duke of Gloucester, who shortly afterwards destroyed Edward's children and then claimed for himself the throne."(2) It was immaterial that Richard did try logically to prove his nephews' ineligibility for the kingship or that no one ever proved that he did murder them. What Mancini was pointing out was that now regents in Britain might be expected to abuse their powers. Scottish examples in the following century rather confirmed this. When James IV died, it was his wife Margaret who became regent, later with the added assistance of her second husband, Angus. Badoer described him as "ruling the kingdom for her son."(3) Yet, Italians soon saw how the duke of Albany appeared in Scotland and "styled himself Governor." Giustinian was sure that he would "not desist until he compassed the death of the queen and of the infant king in order to render himself master of

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1. Pius II: Coms., 269; De Europa, Ch.45, p.442.

2. Mancini, 73.

3. Badoer (San.19), SPV II, 30 Oct. 1514.

that realm."(1) Giustinian saw Scotland from a London vantage point. His fellow Italians had little opportunity of gauging whether he was right or wrong about Albany's designs. What he did was to depict a situation which seemed likely to turn out as an exact parallel to their picture of Richard III's progress from the regency to the throne in 1483. All the faithlessness that was seen in Richard seemed likely to recur in Albany. Regents, even close relatives of minor kings, were now objects of suspicion. Although Albany did not carry out the ultimate breach of trust expected of him, he evidently kept a firm grip on the person of the young James V. It was not until 1524 that the Venetian Gasparo Contarini related how the "king of Scotland emancipated himself from the guardianship of the duke of Albany and exacted oaths of allegiance as king." As evidence of the violence needed for this coup d'état, Contarini pointed out how James had arrested some of Albany's faction and "had taken the king of England for his protector."(2) However, James and his uncle Henry VIII seldom seemed to be on good terms and it was not until James's premature death that Henry gained much influence in Scottish government. Then his power, according to Giovio, only came through factious Scottish nobles, led by Maxwell. In reality it was their rival Cardinal Beaton who, until his murder, was the regent-figure committed to protecting his infant queen. Giovio even thought to imply that Henry would encourage Maxwell to become the stereotype, self-seeking regent by having himself elected king.(3) It must have been small wonder that, when Henry VIII himself was dying, he manifestly took care to appoint "sixteen commissioners and governors of his son." The earl of Hertford, as the young king's uncle, was to be their chief.

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1. S. Giustinian in RB, 6 July 1515.
2. G. Contarini, SPV III, 1 Sept. 1524.
3. Giovio: Hist. II, Bk.42, p.338.

He was to be approached in negotiations and the other governors, as a council, were to dispatch them.(1) This was a new concept of regency, self-evidently designed to diffuse power among a number of administrators. The figure of the lone regent as absolute governor was avoided. Since the time of Henry VI's senility, it had been noticeably declining as a safe mode of government for an immature king.

However, this type of governor was obviously only necessitated by the peculiar circumstance of a monarch's incapability of ruling. To Italians it seemed that English kings almost invariably relied on some kind of right-hand man, even an alter ego, to carry out the functions of government in his name and, if necessary, act as a buffer between himself and his subjects. The hazards of personal rule could be too uncomfortable for that institution the Crown, whose essence was permanency. In 1531 Falier, recalling how Henry VIII took over the reins of government after Wolsey's fall and "took such delight in his own rule that from liberal he became avaricious", regarded this as being highly unsatisfactory for the maintenance of good relations between the king and his subjects.(2) The governor could be a useful scapegoat as well as an assiduous servant. This aspect of government first struck Renaissance Italians about 1340 when Edward III, returning to England from Sluys, "immediately...imprisoned treasurers and officials who had not at all well furnished him with money and stole from him much money."(3) The exceptional circumstances of war had led Edward to leave a band of men as a government to administer his kingdom in his absence. It failed to come up to his expectations. Perhaps Italians realised that Villani only mentioned this government because it was a failure.

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1. Report of the announcement of Henry VIII's death to the Venetian Signory, SPV V, 2 Mar. 1547.

2. Falier, 11.

3. G. Villani, XI.112.



Certainly government, apart from regencies, was either not noticed or taken for granted by Italians until the time of Edward IV when rival claims for the privilege of governing spot-lighted the mechanics of its existence.

Italians were aware that many of the functions of government at this time were carried out by increasingly learned administrators, such as William Gray and John Tiptoft, whose deeds Vespasiano described: Gray was Henry VI's "chancellor...and one of the king's most trusted advisers"; Tiptoft, "on account of his learning and his great wisdom and prudence was counted one of the chief men of the government."<sup>(1)</sup> But what met the Italian eye more readily was a situation in which, as in 1469, for example, Elizabeth Wydeville, in the process of aggrandising her family, "had brought things to such a pass that they had the entire government of the realm." The situation was so bad that "the rest of the lords about the government", Warwick in particular, were annoyed. Warwick, indeed, had been constructing a plan to be chief man in the government by marrying his daughters to the king's brothers. Such was the considered opinion of the Milanese Luchino Dallaghiexia.<sup>(2)</sup> In this complexity of rivalries Edward IV himself seemed to exercise very little governmental control. After the readeption it was Gloucester who felt it necessary to retire from court to avoid the jealous rivalry of the queen's relatives.<sup>(3)</sup> If the common-place substance of government was dealt with by Edward IV's three great ministers, Rotherham, Morton and Hastings, Mancini had no doubt that men like Rivers and Dorset exercised enormous influence over it. It was this power that all the Wydeville relatives tried to keep hold of after

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1. Vespasiano, 186, 336.

2. L. Dallaghiexia, SPM, 16 Aug. 1469.

3. Mancini, 77-9.

Edward IV's death, if only because they feared what would happen if all their power fell into Gloucester's hands. Dorset imagined that their hold over the royal council was strong enough to override the king's uncle Gloucester, if necessary. Of course, this did not happen: it was Gloucester who subdued them and emerged as the personal embodiment of government. It was not inappropriate nor accidental that Gloucester's ally Buckingham at this time said that "it was not the business of women but of men to govern kingdoms."<sup>(1)</sup> It would have seemed that by the beginning of the last Plantagenet king's reign there was a degree of disillusionment in England about the governments that could flourish if kings were weak or over-uxorious.

With the Tudor kings it did appear as though a new phase in administrative history began. In 1496 Milanese inquirers into Henry VII's affairs "asked who ruled him and controlled him" and were told that only one could do anything, a colourless figure named "Master Bray", who seemed to owe his position to his financial genius. (2) But it was soon obvious that such faceless men, far from controlling the king, were useful to him, in more than one way. During the uprising of 1497, the Cornish rebels' prime complaint was about royal exactions of money but their demand was that "the king should hand over to their direction four of the leading men of his court."<sup>(3)</sup> Evidently the agents carrying out the king's policy could become so closely identified with it that the king himself could avoid being associated with it and emerge unscathed. Later Vergil was to relate how specifically blame for the country's plight was "attributed...above all to John Morton, archbishop of Canterbury, to Reginald Bray and to many other counsellors."<sup>(4)</sup> The rebellion aimed at ridding the king of

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1. *Ibid.*, 83-5, 87, 91, 95.

2. G. de Belulcho, quoting news from Aldo Brandini, *SPM*, 3 July 1496.

3. Letters from the Milanese Chancellor at the Imperial court, *SPM*, 10 July 1497.

4. Vergil: *AH*(Hay), 93.

his blame-worthy administration. This manifestly made little difference to Henry VII. Before long "there...came upon the scene two astute lawyers, Richard Empson and Edmund Dudley", who gave him advice as to how he might swell his treasury by savage exactions of money from his subjects. They all, especially the king, benefited from this but, whereas Henry before his death could virtually plead ignorance of what was going on under the supervision of "those two most brutal extortioners", as soon as his son was king they could be executed so that "all the indignation of the people was appeased."<sup>(1)</sup> None could forget Henry VII's avarice but eventually he was given credit for the grand gesture of being concerned about his people's plight. His ministers could only be sacrificed to propitiate those suffering from its severity. Henry VII had the ministers that suited his character: when as a king struggling to hold his head up among European sovereigns he "fell into error, (he had Bray who) was bold enough moderately to admonish and reprove him"; when he alone seemed bent on money-making, Empson and Dudley were there to "aggravate royal harshness against the people."<sup>(2)</sup> He took the fruits of their government; they the blame for it.

During his reign Henry VIII was seen by Italians largely as one half of a king plus a minister team. The "Re serenissimo et il Rev.mo Eboracen."<sup>(3)</sup>, Henry and Wolsey, so common a formula in papal and Venetian ministerial letters, at once created a verbal balance that accurately portrayed a complementary partnership of personalities. In 1515 Badoer might say that Wolsey had "sprung up like a mushroom"<sup>(4)</sup> but before long he was established enough<sup>as</sup> a royal minister to be "left...to negotiate and despatch state affairs (while) the king was

1. Ibid., 129-31, 153.

2. Ibid., 135.

3. Acciaiuoli, at Poissy, in Lettere di Ministri della S. Sede, (Fondo Pio 54.124), F.63v., s.d. 27 Mar. 1527, et passim.

4. A. Badoer, SPV III (App.), 31 Mar. 1515.

gone for his amusement."(1) Italian envoys soon found out that he was the virtual seat of power which they had to approach to conduct their negotiations. The cardinal, maintained Giustinian, "for authority in point of fact might be styled ipse rex." He was all powerful; Italians dealing with him took care to "avoid...everything that might irritate him."(2) There was no doubt about what he could do with his given powers: he could mould the life of almost any Englishman; even the king's brother-in-law, Suffolk, was not immune from him. In 1517 Chieregato would comment on how the duke had "regained his former favour...by means of the person who degraded him."(3) Wolsey was the man who could confidently assure foreign powers that he would "bring the king to do what he wanted" and no Italian doubted that he could.(4) He was the man to whom Italian governments always had to "consider making some offering...otherwise their affairs would have little reputation."(5) Whatever the gift, carpets from Venice, a pension from a Spanish see(6), there was no doubt that Wolsey was a "fish not to be caught save with a golden hook."(7) Moreover, in time he began to take on the appearance of a ruler. When the king abandoned London for fear of the plague, Wolsey, surrounded by his own court, would stay behind, having in his hands "the entire management of the realm."(8) The Italian estimation of his standing heightened even more. In 1529 Marc Antonio Venier declared that "the Cardinal of York was more than king", for three reasons: he was supposedly very rich; he aspired to the papal tiara; and he was regarded as the chief enemy of the emperor in

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1. S. Giustinian in RB, 24 Aug. 1516.

2. Ibid., 2 Jan. 1516.

3. F. Chieregato, SPV II, 10 July 1517.

4. Augustino Scarpinello, SPM, 5 Sept. 1526.

5. Ibid., SPM, 10 May 1527.

6. Sanudo 28, SPV III, 7 Feb. 1520; A. Surian (San.34), SPV III, s.m. Mar. 1523.

7. A. Surian (San.29), SPV III, 18 Oct. 1520.

8. L. Orio (San.40), SPV III, 3 Jan. 1526.

Europe(1), at a time when the emperor was a thorn in the Italian side.

Wolsey's character was strong. But the same qualities that could make him the king's alter ego, his learning, his vast ability and his indefatigability, contained the corrosive elements of pride, corruption and greed.(2) He had no security in office. He was base-born, a butcher's son, as Italians cared to recall, especially after his fall.(3) He was so insecure that he dared not visit his diocese of York without the Council's travelling with him.(4) Ultimately his position depended upon the good-will of the king. In 1523, when he over-stepped legal bounds in his taxing of the people, a popular riot caused the king's anger to turn on Wolsey.(5) The dishonesty was Wolsey's, according to Vergil, but Henry VIII was the recipient of the extorted taxes. It was Wolsey who had to bear the blame, as Henry VII's ministers had, when the king's subjects complained vociferously enough to embarrass him. Wolsey himself knew what could threaten his supreme governmental power. He was seen to back-pedal on the question of the king's annulment because, if the king could marry Anne Boleyn, "her father, one of the chief personages in England, would deprive Wolsey of his repute." (6) Vergil saw well how Wolsey could tell that the Boleyn was "more to be avoided than death, because of the arrogance of the girl." (7) The moment he "lost royal favour and incurred his Majesty's utmost indignation, his supreme authority was converted into bondage and calamity." (8) His fall could be manoeuvred by legal processes and his natural rivals were the first to prevent his rise again by accusing him of treasons that conceivably could have further humiliated him.(9) Italian detractors even whispered

1. M.A. Venier (San.50), SPV IV, 2 Apr. 1529.

2. S. Giustinian: Report, in RB II, 314-5.

3. Falier, 26; Varchi, V.1; Segni, I.v.340.

4. S. Giustinian in RB, 20 Apr. 1518.

5. Vergil: AH(Hay), 315.

6. L. Falier (San.50), SPV IV, 24 May 1529.

7. Vergil: AH(Hay), 331.

8. Piero Francesco de' Bardi (San.52), SPV IV, 24 Oct. 1529.

9. A. Scarpinello, SPM, 20 Sept., 17 Nov. 1530.



against him accusations of the ultimate sin, suicide, by poisoning(1), but for most it was enough that he died humiliated and in disgrace. Like Scarpinello, they could gloat over the degradation of "the man who boasted that he ruled the whole world." Indeed, at one time he might accurately have claimed that, but, in the end, all that remained of the supreme governor's influence was the last glimmer of friendship that the king felt for him as he exclaimed that he "missed the Cardinal of York every day."(2)

This showed how a Tudor always had control over his government. If the servant at times seemed greater than his master, as Vergil suggested(3), ultimately the servant was accountable to him and by no means immune from his savagery. When Cromwell in time replaced Wolsey, he was seen to gain as much power and be as basically insecure as his former master. But what more suitable successor was there to Wolsey? As Giovio pointed out, he had been "instructed wisely in York's arts..., therefore he was most prepared to be exalted to high position in the state."(4) Certainly he showed the strength of his position. By 1535 Carlo Capello was reporting that "this Cromwell,... a person of low origin and condition..., was now the Secretary of State... and had supreme authority", a view justified by Cromwell's having arranged increased returns from taxes and royal wardships; and absorbing much church income from annates and benefices into the royal exchequer.(5) As far as Italians were concerned, the other piece of evidence that emphasised the extent of his power was his ability to ruin many great noble families. Giovio heard about the systematic decimation of nobles near to the throne and claimed that Cromwell

1. Bandello III, Nov.62.

2. A. Scarpinello, SPM, 2 Dec. 1530.

3. Vergil: AH(Hay), 231.

4. Giovio: Desc., 22.

5. C. Capello, SPV V, 3 June 1535.



"was infected with a hatred of the nobility and rejoiced in the ruin of the greatest heroes."(1) The opinion about Cromwell that Bandello put into the duke of Norfolk's mouth was that this "son of a vile cloth-worker" was determined to wash his hands in noble blood so that there would be no one to "dare reproach him with the meanness of his beggarly blood." However, although nobles became "rarer than white crows"(2) and although Cromwell was clever, educated and could "dissemble his passions better than any man in the world"(3), the final Italian view of him was that he was completely Henry VIII's pawn. He could be used as the convenient instrument of Anne Boleyn's downfall.(4) Early in 1537 when "well nigh the whole Island had rebelled", it was "at any rate Cromwell and four others" whom the insurgents wanted handed over to them.(5) In June 1540 Cromwell in turn fell. The Italian view again was that here was an English governor who had transgressed one inch beyond the enormous powers given to him. He had "uttered certain words concerning the faith, against the king's supremacy." The great sum of money found in his possession was incidental; it was his possible trespassing upon what elements of royal authority the king reserved for himself and his independence of action and deception over the Cleves marriage that ruined him.(6) He was over-dedicated to self-conceived policies. He could be dispensed with, with no discredit to the king. An Italian flatterer like Pietro Aretino would say that his fall resulted "from divine sentence and not from human counsel." The king remained the "illustrious Henry"; Cromwell died bearing the blame for an age's misdeeds: "an example of misery and desperation..., he organised his own future without a drop of pity"(7); therefore no

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1. Giovio: Desc., 23.

2. Bandello III, Nov.60.

3. Ibid., II, Nov.34.

4. Ibid., III, Nov.62.

5. Lorenzo Bragadino, SPV V, 3 Jan. 1537.

6. Francesco Contarini, Venetian ambassador to the Emperor, SPV V, 19 June, 29 July 1540.

7. P. Aretino: Il libro secondo delle lettere, Pt.I, pp.265-7, s.d. 15 July 1541; Pt.II, p.115, s.d. 3 Nov. 1541.

Italian pitied him. The moment he fell "the bishop of Winchester... was appointed Vicar General of Religion in his stead"; the Norfolk faction rose, gaining for a while his influence in other matters.(1) The king merely added to his administration the servants capable of matching his personality and serving his needs in government. If and when he wanted it, they could be replaced by more suitable men, less compromised by association with formal royal policies. This, Italians felt, was the method of government developed by English kings and perfected by the early Tudors.

### 3. Parliament and Law.

Secular government in England was served by two institutional hand-maids: parliament, the representative assembly of the realm, and, emanating through it from the king, the forces of law and justice. Italians saw in neither of these potentially powerful authorities much reflection of nominally similar institutions in Italy but tended rather to regard them, especially parliament, as increasingly ineffectual bodies. Parliament, in fact, seldom seemed to them to show much independence of the Crown or much private initiative.

Parliament first really engaged Italian attention in the fifteenth century. Sercambi dwelt on the idea that its approbation was an essential part of king-making. Henry IV, he said, "with the consent of the royal lords and of the people and community of London, was created and elected king of England."(2) He gave no clear idea that it was a legislative body, merely that it was an assembly of important personages gathered to approve a fait accompli. From this point onwards there was little doubt that it was the king who was

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1. Contarini, SPV V, 2, 29 July 1540.

2. Sercambi, I.670.

instrumental in assembling parliament and then only for his own ends. Frulovisi pictured Henry V as asking the universities and the Three Estates if it was lawful for him to recover his French dominions by force of arms. They agreed and Henry knew that he had his subjects' support.(1) According to Piero del Monte, in the mid 1430s James I of Scots would do almost exactly the same when he "collected together pontiffs, princes and other primates that he might see to the needs of his realm with their advice and aid."(2) The overall impression given was that British parliaments only existed when they were needed. In England, at a time when the throne was weak or contested, parliament could be used as a governmental façade for strengthening authority. In 1460, Pius II said, "the prelates and nobles of the realm (parliament they call it) convened in London to discuss matters of state."(3) As he saw it, it was a parliament that did not include the third estate, but a variation like this did not disturb him: he was more interested in the body's function. It had been called to rescind previous acts declaring that York, the earl of Salisbury and Warwick were enemies of the realm. It was to act as the instrument of great men's designs. There was little suggestion that it had anything to do with the terms of a compromise between Henry VI and York. In the years that followed, Italians only noticed it at times of transition or crisis. In 1461, as Michele Arnolfini in Bruges surmised, some "lords, spiritual and temporal,...met...and by their wish and that of the people they crowned the earl of March king of England."(4) Prospero di Camulio concurred: the new king was created "by the princes and the people of London."(5) Although the idea of separate estates emerges from these views, the

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1. Frulovisi, 7.

2. P. del Monte, in EHR 52 (1937), p.484.

3. Pius II: Coms., 270.

4. M. Arnolfini to the bishop of Terni, SPM, 9 Mar. 1461.

5. P. di Camulio, SPM, 27 Mar. 1461.

impression given is that these were vague groups collected only for the specific purpose of recognising formally that Edward IV was the victor and was therefore king. Thereafter, he would be the one to call them. They would be summoned merely to be present at his coronation.(1) It was only in 1469, when some nobles began to doubt the wisdom of their choice of him as king, that they "wished to arrange for a parliament to meet and...arrange the government of the realm." Even then this was not thought an advisable step.(2) A notion more acceptable to Italians was the one contained in Piero Aliprando's news that in 1472 a great parliament of three estates had been called to London to reform the kingdom. This was under the king's control. Aliprando's immediate impression was that it was ineffectual as a reforming body: the estates had "done nothing but talk. They devoted every moment to gormandizing."(3) It does come as a surprise to hear Mancini's description of Edward IV's treatment in subsequent years of these well-fed "assemblies of the whole realm." He used to wheedle money out of them on the pretext of defence.(4) Only during Richard III's reign was there a mild attempt to define parliament's functions. The nobles, the people of London and the heads of the clergy, three classes "whom they called the three estates", met and "all important matters were deliberated and decrees made law."(5) In fact, this was, <sup>surprisingly,</sup> the first Italian suggestion that parliament was a legislative body. Yet not even Mancini cared to delve more deeply and define its precise nature.

Even into Tudor times parliament was only seen in relation to its functions in crisis situations. The parliament that Giovanni de Giglis saw in 1485 promised to become vigorous under the Tudor

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1. Ibid., 6 June 1461.

2. Luchino Dallaghiexia, SPM, 16 Aug. 1469.

3. P. Aliprando, at Gravelines, SPM, 25 Nov. 1472.

4. Mancini, 81.

5. Ibid., 119.

dispensation. There it sat, presiding over the reformation of the realm, taking a hand in king-making and being involved in the declaration of "the first born daughter of King Edward...as duchess of York"(1), an unusual step, exceeding the restrictions concerning male primogeniture in titular succession and implicitly recognising the death of Edward IV's two sons. In 1489 the view was that "the people of England, that is to say, nobles, clergy and commons, had granted an aid of 300,000 pounds..sterling...for three years to the king above ordinary revenue", for his French campaign.(2) This stressed the notion that the king was dependent upon the representatives of his people for extraordinary financial awards and even for his ordinary income. The function, it would appear, lingered with parliament for some time after that. One of the first things that Henry VIII did as king was to "convoke parliament about French matters." (3) Its approval, and by implication its money, was sought for the initiation of a campaign. In 1513 the situation was virtually the same: "parliament had decided to send the king with 60,000 troops across the Channel..."(4) Nicolo di Farvi here gave the impression that the king was the servant of parliament, which had powers over his army and his finance. Yet, soon there was to be no illusion about who was really in charge.

In 1515 the Commons in parliament might well nigh come to blows with the peers because none of them had given their consent to the marriage of Suffolk and the king's sister. Wolsey had, and that was all that seemed to matter.(5) Parliamentarians might disapprove, but this in no way undid the match.

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1. G. de Giglis, SPV I, 6 Dec. 1485.
  2. Bartolommeo Chalco, SPM, 10 Mar. 1489.
  3. A. Badoer (San.9), SPV II, 7 Dec. 1509.
  4. N. di Farvi (San.15), SPV II, s.m. Feb. 1513.
  5. A. Badoer, SPV III (App.), 31 Mar. 1515.



It was not until 1531, when Falier discussed the system of parliamentary procedure that Italians were given any precise idea of its nature. First of all it was the king who assembled parliament. It consisted of "the chief personages of the island, in number about 400." Its purpose was to be informed of the king's demands through his Privy Council. To them, said Falier, "any member was at liberty to state his opinion freely for the general benefit of the realm." There were general debates and individual members cast votes. This could have seemed like a great freedom. Moreover, parliament's powers to grant gold to the king for wars; its ability to declare the king "supreme spiritual judge" and to confiscate to the Crown property of disobedient prelates, all spoke of considerable power and influence. But, Falier was convinced, "in all its acts the parliament never departed from the will of the king and his Privy Council, which managed everything as he pleased."<sup>(1)</sup> Soon afterwards, in 1533, Vergil published a description of the intricacies of parliamentary procedure in his Anglica Historia. He discussed what the Speaker's functions were and his influence upon law-making.<sup>(2)</sup> But basically what mattered to Italians was parliament's importance in government. Even before Falier's report they knew that under Henry VIII not even the Privy Council as a whole and still less parliament had much power to influence a strong king in the running of his realm. In 1523 it was enough for Wolsey to plant four of his creatures in the ecclesiastical orders of the assembly for them to become pliant in his hands.<sup>(3)</sup> In 1530 when "the king chose parliament

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1. Falier, 21.

2. Vergil: AH (Basle 1570), Bk. XI, p. 188. Vergil, in fact, does not give a very clear idea of the unique nature of the English parliament: he uses the word concilium instead of parliamentum. This could have given rise to confusion between parliament and the king's Council in the minds of his Italian readers. (Cf., Fisher: Political History..., p. 154).

3. Sanudo 34, SPV III, 29 May 1523.



to dispatch the business" of his divorce(1), no Italian seemed to doubt that it would do this. In fact, the Milanese Scarpinello in October 1530 was sure that parliament was "hoping to find better ways of pleasing the king" and "would not neglect their steps to diminish the power of the clergy" as the king seemed to desire.(2) Therefore, the Italian impression was that, although parliament, as Falier recounted, could put into effect many apparently important things, Henry VIII was virtually its inceptor and undoubtedly the master of its voice and arm. At the end of Henry VIII's reign, it was Giovio who saved parliament's face by stressing its usefulness for preventing kings from promulgating new laws arbitrarily. Laws were "not legitimate nor right unless the three classes of the judiciary sanctioned them." The king, he added, used parliament "for the public good for making statutes" and initiating public enterprises.(3) His picture showed a possible balance between an autocratic king and a subservient popular representative body. By implication he suggested that, if a king forced statutory legislation through the passive sieve of parliament, at least the result would be slightly more digestible for the people as a whole. Parliament was the mediating and moderating body facilitating relations between the king and his subjects.

Law: Certainly what Giovio did was to emphasise that out of parliament emerged a living legal system that contributed something to the right ordering of the king's realm. This, however, was not a notion very explicitly expressed until Tudor times. Prior to that, Italian attention had only been caught when, for example, Aeneas Sylvius fell in company with "an English judge, who was hurrying up to London to

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1. Falier (San.53), SPV IV, 9 May 1530.

2. A. Scarpinello, SPM, 20 Oct. 1530.

3. Giovio: Desc., 14.

court" from perhaps as far north as Yorkshire.(1) One imagines that to Italians this could have indicated some sort of itinerant system for dispensing a justice that ultimately emanated from and was accountable to London, where the royal courts were. Apart from that, what engaged Italian attention was an exception to the legal rule in England like the loop-hole offered by sanctuary. Mancini's reference to it was important because it stressed the notion that, if a criminal took refuge in a place of sanctuary, it was "not lawful even for the king to drag him thence against his will." (2), This could have implied that certain laws or sanctions circumscribed even the king's powers but, since sanctuary operated within a religious context in circumstances limited by place and time, the lying together of religious privilege and royal legal powers was simply a matter of give and take. If anything, by Richard III's time it was becoming apparent that the king's influence was greater than the church's because "sanctions were of little avail against the royal authority." (3) Yet, under Henry VII sanctuary seemed to regain some prestige. In 1497, it was noted, Warbeck fled to sanctuary in an abbey and remained there until he surrendered himself.(4) The Trevisan Relation's explanation of the process, while asserting its efficacy, rather poked fun at the Englishman's attitude towards the exile that compulsorily ensued at the end of the permitted forty days in sanctuary. Exile was worse than death; it was a departure from the whole world.(5) One wonders if any Italian realised the full implication of exile from England. This was more than just a journey from Verona to Mantua: it involved crossing the sea into a different linguistic and social ethos.

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1. Pius II: Coms., 21.

2. Mancini, 97.

3. Ibid., 99.

4. Sanudo 1, SPV I, 6 Nov. 1497.

5. Trevisan, 35.

But ordinarily the law ensured a more immediate and severe justice in England. After the suppression of the Evil May Day riots in 1517, the Venetian secretary, Sagudino, noted how "it was horrible to pass near the city gates, where nothing but gibbets and the quarters of...offenders were exhibited." (1) Justice was not only done but seen to be done; and done savagely. The Trevisan Relation agreed. For, although the practice of letting civil and criminal cases be tried before twelve arbitrators, elected from the people, showed great weaknesses because they were locked up until they should come to a decision and so tended to favour the plaintiff or yield to the more determined, for the sake of ending this discomfort the sooner, Trevisan considered it "the easiest thing in the world to get a person thrown into prison in this country." Once there, an opponent "could not be liberated without giving security." He had no redress against slanderous accusations. Despite all these unpleasant practices, the use of torture and arbitrary imprisonment, Trevisan was sure that "there was no country in the world where there were so many thieves and robbers as in England. The towns by night and the country even by day were far from safe. Such was the bad effect that had risen from an excellent cause." (2) It is difficult to say what exactly Trevisan meant by this. The severity of the law could have bred violence, whereas an Italian might have expected its vigorous approach to have diminished crime. No so: despite sanctuary and the immunity of the clergy, it was still possible to see "people...taken up every day by dozens...; yet for all this they never ceased to rob and murder in the streets." On the whole, the Relation was rather sceptical about English justice: it was peculiarly unlike justice in other lands,

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1. Nicolo Sagudino (San.24), SPV II, 20 June 1517.

2. Trevisan, 32-4.

simply because it was so orientated towards the Crown. For ironically the English who hated their living kings "rejected the Caesarean code of laws and adopted those given to them by their own kings." Moreover, the king controlled their administration completely. Criminal jurisdiction was condensed under one head, "the Chief Justice, who had supreme power over punishment by death." Twice a year his commissioners were sent to hold court throughout the shires of England and Wales, just as an officer called the Sheriff administered royal fiscal concerns and was responsible to London. What struck the writer as curious was that the great lords, though deriving their titular names from shires, had no legal jurisdiction in these places. That was the job of the Chief Justice. If the king proposed any change in the laws, the Englishman reacted "as if his life were taken from him." To Trevisan this was the final irony about the rather muddled picture that he had of king-given and subject-venerated legal rules. He gave no clear idea that there was any set of legal strictures that had initially been constructed by the people. His only hope was that, if Henry VII should continue to rule vigorously, he would "do away with a great many" out-moded laws.(1)

That the laws of England were antiquated and bad was to be a continuing Italian complaint. For, although they could often get the better of the clumsy jury system, they themselves, in their dealings with English merchant sailors, often felt the bad effects of a law such as the one allowing the cargo of any vessel wrecked on the English shore to become any one's prey: the result was that "many of the natives sought to destroy and wreck vessels instead of saving them." More altruistically, a man like Carlo Cappello felt annoyed about a law that permitted the reversion to the Crown of fiefs without

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1. Ibid., 32, 36-7.

direct heirs, simply because from Norman times the king had controlled all such civil matters. Even the Crown's simple administration of lands inherited by minors "caused a thousand abuses and improprieties."

(1) Moreover, while admiring the venerable and well developed legal system, dating from Alfred's time, Polydore Vergil did not hesitate to point out one built-in source of legal trouble. Laws from the Conqueror's time had been written in Norman-French, ostensibly for easier understanding, but by the sixteenth century this language was not really known, and so laws were badly interpreted.(2)

Nevertheless, Falier in his report did try to point out how well organised the administration of justice was in England, despite legal anomalies and archaisms. There before his eyes "in a hall of the king's palace at Westminster" he had seen five distinct types of law court, each making its own separate decisions. However, he was not too clear about the functions of each. While the third and fourth (Exchequer and Chancery) respectively dealt with "disputes about customs, duties and gabels" and despatched cases of litigation, a court like that of Common Pleas he only knew as the court with the "coif doctors, who took the name from the cap worn under their bonnets." King's Bench he was in danger of submerging under a flood of praise for its president "Chancellor More...a most eminent and lettered doctor of laws." Only indirectly did Falier say that this court dealt with criminal cases. Yet, he did emphasise that in these "speedy and vigorous justice was done." There was distinct evidence of this: in each quarterly term between twenty-five and thirty criminals were condemned to death. Judges, appointed for life and paid a salary of 500 ducats per annum by the king, must have felt enough incentive to

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1. Capello, SPV V, 3 June 1535.

2. Vergil: AH(Leyden 1649), IX, p.203.

execute this brisk justice. There was nothing to suggest that the three itinerant judges-in-ordinary, whom the king sent into each county to deal with both civil and criminal cases, were any less efficient. If they were not thought so, their frustrated plaintiffs or condemned prisoners had the right to appeal to the King's Council, a right which, to Falier's eyes, criminals tried by jury in London apparently did not have.(1)

Falier's picture of English law in action was essentially factual, but, like the other Italian views, its concept of justice, both civil and criminal, being administered under the auspices of the king at Westminster by judges appointed by the king for the London and the county courts, could have given Italians a fairly clear notion of the king as the supreme head of state, the overall controller of government and of the legislative processes, concerning himself with the relatively just ordering of his subjects' lives, with the ultimate aim of preserving the stability of his realm.

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1. Falier, 19-20, 13. On the question of appeals from the King's Bench, these were apparently not impossible but, after judgment was given, "the criminal was hustled away to execution, and for centuries it was virtually an axiom that criminal judgments could not be reviewed." A. Harding: A Social History of English Law, p.139.



## CHAPTER VI.

### War and Diplomacy.

Italians could discern constant factors in British society, its economic activity, its religious and intellectual traditions and its kingly government. Yet, they were even more aware of the existence of war as an enduring theme in the period of the early Renaissance and later of war alternating with periods of diplomatic activity as a complete process that conveyed a feeling of unceasing movement in foreign and home affairs. For war was of two sorts, external war, mainly with France and her allies and usually not fought on English territory except near the Scottish border; and internal conflict, arising either in areas subjected to the English king's rule or generally from active conspiracy to oppose or change the established régime. Italians were interested in English martial activities abroad; they even had personal experience of English soldiery with the John Hawkwood type of mercenary who used Italy as an outlet for surplus military energy. But this often told them little about the English character; it even tended to breed misconceptions. What Italians thought about English reasons for going to war and how society was geared to it was of more significance to their overall view of the nation.

#### 1. External War.

Reasons: In 1337 when Edward III began his war against France, Giovanni Villani rather apathetically commented that "the reasons were all pretty much the old matters of their fathers and ancestors": Edward wanted Guienne, which the greedy house of Valois had seized because of his father's refusal to pay homage for it. There had been other affronts over an abortive marriage alliance proposal between England and France and over French support for David II of Scots.<sup>(1)</sup> Villani apparently saw Edward's activity as a continuation of a traditional

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1. G. Villani, XI.55.

political struggle against France. It was not until December 1339, when the league of his continental allies joined in "naming (Edward) king of France through the heritage of his mother" that Villani noticed how he implicitly confirmed this pretention of his by quartering the lilies of France with the leopards of England on his escutcheon.(1) In 1340 when the bishop of Brescia was discussing the Anglo-French conflict, he first concentrated upon the lands which appertained to England, Normandy, Anjou and the like, but which were occupied by "that Philippe de Valois, styling himself king of France." Only then did he look at Edward III's challenge to Philip to "the test of ravening lions who in no wise harm a true king, or (to) perform the miracle of touching for the evil" to see who was worthy of the crown of France.(2) The bishop was only concerned with the question of worthiness; he made no attempt to explain what claims Edward III had to France. Even in 1346 the impression that Villani received from a speech that Edward made to his troops, as they embarked for a French campaign, was that Edward was primarily concerned with recovering his lands in Gascony and Poitou, his mother's dowry. Then, said Villani, "he even expounded to his army how he had more reasons for succeeding to the realm of France through the Queen Isabelle, his mother": she was Philip IV's daughter, while Philip VI was only a son of Philip the Fair's brother. In Villani's words, Philip VI "was not of the direct but of a collateral line." (3) In the fourteenth century this was to be seen as the basic justification for English campaigns in France. Edward III's claim was repeated in this form, varying slightly in coherence and accuracy. An anonymous writer of papal lives was convinced that Edward III had shown great indignation from the

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1. G. Villani, XI.109.

2. Friar Richard, bp. of Brescia, SPV I, 27 Apr. 1340.

3. G. Villani, XII.63.

moment when "a count, his relative, though not of the true line", took over the French throne with the consent of the barons and the pope.(1) On the other hand, a writer like Gualvano de la Flamma could give a pretty clear picture of the deaths of Philip the Fair's three sons and successors and of how the line had transferred to the house of Valois, in spite of Queen Isabelle's existence.(2) As the fourteenth century progressed this was seen as the justification for Edward III's activity in France. The contemporary Historia Cortusiorum pictured him as "hurling himself against the kingdom of France for his mother."(3) One wonders if Italians connected Isabelle's death in 1358 with Edward's energetic attempt to secure Rheims for his own coronation in 1359. Here he spent much time threatening and cajoling the citizens to hand over the city to him for his consecration as king of France. Even when this proved difficult, he was certain, said Matteo Villani, that "fortune would bring him France."(4) If anything this would have emphasised the idea of his having succeeded to his mother's rightful inheritance, although Italians did not see the matter in those specific terms.

The curious thing is that Italians did not see the contradiction of Edward III's distaff claim to France. They made no mention of claims that could have been made by Charles de Navarre or through the daughters of Philip V and Charles IV, all of whom had a better claim than Edward III by a simple system of hereditary succession, such as he himself seemed to be advocating. The next remarkable thing was how Edward III supported the claim that Robert d'Artois made to the county of Artois on the grounds of his male

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1. Historia Romanae Fragmenta, in Muratori, AIMA III, Ch.xiv, p.373.
  2. Gualvano de la Flamma: Opusculum, RIS 12, p.1032.
  3. Historia Cortusiorum, RIS 12, X.8, s.a. 1346.
  4. M. Villani, IX.67, 82.

descent from a former count, his grandfather, and against his aunt, whom the king of France supported as countess. As Villani described it, Edward III's and Robert d'Artois's claims were almost jointly put forward<sup>(1)</sup>, although what both condemned in their rivals the one and the other were prepared to use to justify their own claims, simple hereditary and Salic Law succession respectively. In 1347 exactly the same situation seemed to arise over the succession to the duchy of Brittany. With French support, Charles de Blois claimed it "by inheritance of his mother"; the comte de Montfort also did, as the brother of the duke of Brittany. The reason for this, as Villani pointed out, was that the king of France was related to both the distaff candidates for Artois and Brittany, whom he supported, as though in contradiction of his own dependence upon Salic Law theories. (2) Edward III might have appeared to oppose anything that Philip VI supported, as something that would weaken his throne and give reasons for war. The third contradiction in Edward III's attitude was his apparent willingness to compromise for material compensations rather than continue struggling for the French crown. At the truce of Brétigny in 1360, in return for a long list of lands in France, Edward was willing to renounce the title of king of France and his claims to the crown. This, said Matteo Villani, was the ending to twenty-four years of war which had brought "inestimable and incredible damage to the two kings, their realms and followers."<sup>(3)</sup> In fact, this was to become a recognisable feature of English conclusions to their French campaigns. The official aim was always the crown. It was scarcely ever realised.

Henry V alone came near to the French crown. It was therefore easy for later writers to look back and see in him a man

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1. G. Villani, XI.55.

2. *Ibid.*, XII.93.

3. M. Villani, IX.98.

of the purest motives. Yet, writers contemporary with Henry V could be less distinct about his reasons for war. Sercambi seemed to take it for granted that Henry V should invade France. Yet, he only seemed to him ready to do this when Burgundy was antagonised against the dauphin. Henry invaded because he did not expect opposition.(1)

De' Reduzzi even imagined that Henry V adhered to the side of Burgundy and his allies because of his quarrel. The bestowal of the crown upon an English king was seen as a gift of the Parlement de Paris, as though a prize for Henry V's having reached Paris.(2) Even later writers like Frulovisi and Pius II saw doubtful elements in Henry V's claims. Frulovisi pictured him as eager to hear what the universities and parliament had to say about the lawfulness of his attempting to "recover his French dominions by force." (3) His great-grandfather had had no such doubts. Pius II, while agreeing that he "wanted to add to England the crown of France", insisted that Henry, on the eve of Agincourt, would have abandoned everything and withdrawn to England in return for a safe conduct. Moreover, in his speech before the battle, Pius made him say, "In our eagerness for glory and our greed for gold we unjustly invaded another's kingdom." (4) Would Henry V really have said this? No matter: it was obviously what Pius II expected him to have said. There was as much confirmation of this in his drive to discredit the dauphin by imputations of bastardy as in his willingness to drop the title of king of France for that of Heir to the Kingdom in 1420.(5) For what had he to fear from the dauphin if his claim was legally sound and why indeed compromise himself by dropping a title which he claimed by right? The answer could be found

1. G. Sercambi, II.268.

2. A. de' Reduzzi, RIS 19, p.825.

3. Frulovisi, 7.

4. Pius II: Coms., 429-30.

5. Ibid., 434-5.



in the material benefits noted by the Italians. His son Henry VI and his entourage were just as susceptible to compromise. In 1467 the Milanese Panicharolla, commenting on Henry's approach to Louis XI for help, recorded Louis's feeling that, since "King Henry...had been a mortal enemy and had waged many wars against him..., this friendship was worth preserving." (1) The French and the Milanesi may have appreciated the irony of the situation but there was no suggestion that Henry VI hesitated to look for Valois help, an action which would virtually deny his dynastic claims to France.

Edward IV's attitude to war with France was perhaps even more self-motivated. In 1464 as he made his position stronger in England, the more an Italian like Thomaso Portinaro felt that he did not want peace with France. (2) Yet, this state of affairs, as well as that in 1468, subsequently showed that a rather unstable England would claim lands in France but would be content enough to make truces with Louis XI. (3) This did suggest that Edward IV, as an English king, felt that he had an obligation to fulfil by pursuing an anti-French policy. In 1471, according to Sforza de' Bettini, no sooner could the English dynastic dispute be considered settled than there were rumours of English preparations to attack Normandy and Guienne, two places which Edward IV seemed eager to add to his regained English dominions. (4) Yet, these must have seemed a slight aim when compared with designs on the French crown. Certainly, in two years' time he seemed to aim confidently at Louis XI's throne, but it was also apparent that "King Edward was not so eager to make war on the king of France as his subjects. (5) Peace negotiations in 1471 showed just

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1. G.P. Panicharolla, Milanese ambassador to France, SPM, 14 Feb. 1467.
  2. Thomaxe Portinaro, at Antwerp, SPM, 1 June 1464.
  3. Panicharolla, SPM, 1 Oct. 1468.
  4. Sf. de Bettini, SPM, 11 June 19 June 1471.
  5. C. di Bollati, at Tours, SPM, 9 Dec. 1473.



how much interest Edward personally had in the martial motivations of his predecessors. He seemed quite willing to arrange an exchange of lands claimed within the kingdom of France for parcels of Burgundian territory and, moreover, to "surrender all rights which (the English) claimed over this kingdom." (1) Italians at this time do not seem to have been entirely certain what this implied: for certainly in the following years Edward IV's aims were officially the re-possession of Guienne and Normandy and personally the extraction of as much money as possible from his people for wars which he seemed reluctant to fight. (2) Edward did not flaunt his claims to the crown as the prime reason for war. Yet, the claim that now seemed incumbent upon English kings to make seldom stayed much beneath the surface; most were aware of it. Burgundy claimed that Edward IV feared him because of his own claim to the English throne and it was well enough known that with that "he need only lift his other shoulder and forthwith he would be king of France." (3) In fact, one is compelled to assume that Italians took the English claim to France as such an accepted part of English kingship that it was not thought necessary to articulate it. In 1490 Henry VII, though "not yet firmly established in his realm", was seen feverishly extracting money for a campaign in northern France. (4) No reasons were put forward and, when a methodical historian like Vergil reflected upon the results of the treaty of Étapes in 1493, there was mention of "an enormous sum of money to cover his expenditure" and of an annual sum to pay other expenses, but nothing was said about the maintenance of claims to the French crown. (5)

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As for Henry VIII, even before he was king Italians were

1. *Ibid.*, 18 Aug. 1474.
2. *Ibid.*, 17 Sept. 1474; Battista Oldovini, in London, *SPM*, 17 Mar. 1475; Claudio de Aruce, in Lausanne, *SPM*, 10 Aug. 1475.
3. Panicharolla, at Jougne, *SPM*, 9 Feb. 1476.
4. Giacomo Botta, bp. of Tortona, *SPM*, 4 Apr. 1490.
5. Vergil: *AH*(Hay), p.59.

convinced that he would make war on France. At the age of sixteen he was described by Quirini as the "natural enemy of the French"(1) and, on his accession, Sanudo recorded that he was "the friend of Venice and enemy of France;...he would assuredly take the offensive."(2) No reasons were given. Indeed, as he prepared for war in the following four years, little was said in justification of the projected invasion. In 1513 Pasqualigo did say that Henry "hoped that he would go straight to Paris for his coronation." Pasqualigo himself hoped for this because he regarded Henry as the true king of France.(3) However, in this instance Italians were just as likely to have expatiated on how he was "above all...engaged in defending the cause of God."(4) A contemporary work of propaganda like the Rota de Scocesi, while giving a very garbled version of the Capetian origins of Henry VIII's interest in France, concentrated on him as the defender of the pope.(5) The Anglo-French agreement arranged in 1514 impressed the Italians only with its financial compensations and the royal wedding that amicably obscured any question about the throne of France.(6) Henry would scarcely have pressed for a kingly title that was held by his sister's new husband. Italians eventually may have had doubts about the seriousness of any dynastic claims that Henry VIII used as a reason for war: they varied greatly according to the political climate. In 1520, during his meeting with François I, Henry "at one point laughingly asked the herald to expunge his title of king of France" from his official list of titles.(7) The matter was treated as a joke. Two years later the English envoy in Venice, Richard Pace, was refusing

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1. Quirini, p.19.

2. Sanudo 8, SPV I, 8 May 1509.

3. L. Pasqualigo (San.16), SPV II, 16 Mar. 1513.

4. Pope Leo X, in Roscoe I. 320, s.m. Oct. 1513.

5. Rotta de Scocesi, 15-16 et passim.

6. Sanudo 18, SPV II, 21 Aug. 1514.

7. Gioan Joachino, Genoese secretary, SPV III, 3-8 June 1520.

to attend the doge's banquet to avoid being placed below the French ambassador, because "the King of England bore the title Rex Franciae and the king of France was called Rex Francorum." (1) Henry's own attitude could be seen in his stipulation during French diplomatic negotiations that Boulogne should be surrendered to him, and he would be willing to renounce the title of king of France. (2) In March 1527, at Wolsey's request, the French king said that he was willing to pay Henry 50,000 crowns annually "for the title of king of France now held by the king of England, who would renounce it." (3) There was surely little to choose between Boulogne and a pension of 50,000 crowns: they were both as equally removed from a royal crown. In the 1540s, according to Segni, Henry VIII's drive against France was very much part of an agreement with the emperor "to destroy the power of France"; it would also give him an excuse to attack the Scots, who "were almost subjects in the empire of King François." (4) The invasion was therefore seen as an attempt to restore the balance of power in Europe and not as an attempt to reassert the English claim to the French crown. Only a vague suggestion of this might have been deduced from the news in 1544 that Henry "purposed...proceeding straight to Paris and endeavouring to take it." (5) As the capital, Paris was seen as the seat of the government that emanated from the French crown. But it was very soon obvious that a commercial centre like Boulogne was Henry's main objective. The moment it was taken and garrisoned Henry "returned home with the rest of his forces." (6) The peace agreement that ensued, said Giovio, saw the French repurchase of Boulogne for the price of a yearly pension but that only on condition that the peace was kept. (7)

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1. Sanudo 33, SPV III, 28 Dec. 1522.

2. Gasparo Spinelli, at Canterbury, (San.43), SPV III, 28 Oct. 1526.

3. M.A. Venier (San.44), SPV IV, 9, 11 Mar. 1527.

4. Segni, II.x.268.

5. Letter from the Venetian Doge to his ambassador in Rome, SPV V, 7 July 1544.

6. Doge to Venetian ambassador in Constantinople, SPV V, 22 Nov. 1544.

7. Giovio: Hist. II, Bk.45, p.398.

This was virtually the end of the English drive against France , for the official reason of dynastic rights, which in Italian eyes was no real reason at all. At best it was used as an excuse for financial gain.

Superficially the Anglo-French confrontation provided the casus belli for most of England's clashes with the Scots, although the fundamental reasons for their involvements went much deeper. For example, David II of Scots was congenitally an enemy of England but in 1346, when he swept into England, only to be defeated, an Italian like Villani saw this as being integrally connected with Edward III's involvements in France.(1) Or in 1418, while Henry V was occupied in besieging Rouen, "the Scottish people, always adversaries to the English", invaded the north of England.(2) With the English distracted to crisis level by the French campaigns, the Scots manifestly were trying to take advantage of the situation and incidentally helping their traditional allies, the French. In 1475 Edward IV seemed to forestall any war with Scotland, while he undertook a French campaign: he "made sure of the king of Scotland" by setting him at odds with the French king.(3) Not long after, in 1480, the Milanese Carlo Visconti plainly stated that an English invasion of Scotland was thought to be the handiwork of the king of France "in order that others might have to think more of their own affairs than those of others."(4) Louis XI plainly did not relish Edward IV's interference in any of the affairs of his kingdom; Scotland was always a source of distraction for the English. In 1513 the Rotta de Scocesi saw the Scots' invasion of England as the result of a combination of an innate "accursed and treacherous jealousy" that worked in James IV's soul and the devices of the king of France, who revived old Franco-Scottish amities in order to take away from Henry VIII's attack on his own kingdom.(5)

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1. G. Villani, XII.76.

2. Frulovisi, 56.

3. C. di Bollato, in Paris, SPM, 11 Feb. 1475.

4. C. Visconti, at Tours, SPM, 29 Oct. 1480.

5. Rotta de Scocesi, 6-7.

In 1515 it was because François I, as Giustinian said, sent Albany to Scotland "to render himself master of that realm" that Henry VIII contemplated deploying his energies against Scotland.(1) Henry's concern was exactly the same after James V's death. Scotland seemed to be strictly within the sphere of French influence and so, to break this, Henry VIII saw that he had to diminish France's prestige in Scotland.(2) When Italians saw England turn her armies against France, they saw also that she had to guard her Scottish rear; if she was attracted to engage the Scots, the French were invariably involved in some way. Generally, Scottish wars were seen as a side-show of the Anglo-French conflict.

Occasionally Italians tried to look beyond the confines of dynastic aims and financial and commercial self-interest to discover other reasons for English aggression. In the fourteenth century Petrarch's views were interesting. He once had considered the English "the most timid of all the barbarians. Now, a most warlike race, they had defeated the French...with so many and unexpected successes." Petrarch implied that the English, who formerly had been "unequal to the worthless Scots", had suffered from a poor military reputation because of "the unhappy and wretched state of the high king." (3) The personality of the king alone dictated whether the whole nation was warlike or not. The bellicose Edward III had become king since the days of Petrarch's youth, so now the English were behaving as "the successors of the Trojans and Arthur" and were finding that in France "never had such a vast field of glory offered itself to the brave." (4) France, in fact, was becoming a place to which English kings turned immediately their hands were free at home. Henry V, said Frulovisi, "now that Ireland, Scotland and Wales were pacified..set about the recovery of his French dominions." (5) It was a constant process demanded of a new king not completely in control of the lands that he claimed by right.

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1. S. Giustinian in RB, 6 July 1515, 24 Dec. 1515.

2. Segni, II.x.268.

3. Petrarch: Familiari, XXII. 14.2-3.

4. Petrarch: Bucolicum Carmina, No.12, 'Conflictatio'; Familiari, III.10.

5. Frulovisi, 7.



In Edward IV's case the talk of a French war immediately after his readeption could only have meant that Edward wanted to use the victories of "a sharp and terrible" war abroad to discredit the lords who were still "keeping matters unsettled in England." (1)

With Henry VIII, perhaps because he was so inexplicably set on invading France, Italians found themselves searching for reasons. In 1513 Nicolo de Farvi, when referring to the simple soldiers engaged in the French wars, generalised and said that they "did not go to rob but to gain honour." (2) Machiavelli, commenting at the same time, produced a searing analysis of the situation. Henry VIII was making heavy weather of capturing a minor town like Théroutanne, despite his enormous resources of men and money. The fact was that the English were inexperienced in war. (3) Machiavelli evidently thought that this was Henry VIII's way of gaining some practice. He was sure that, if Henry "came to a battle and lost it, it could be that thus he would lose his own kingdom as well as France." The best way to gain prestige and glory, said Machiavelli, was "to spend his money on his own people." Money spent on foreign wars and allies was wasted. (4) That was evidently Henry VIII's mistake, but it did not obscure the fact that some Italians saw desire for glory as a motive for his French campaign, no matter how mistaken they considered it to be. Another Italian view, as expressed by Paolo Giovio, considered Henry's motivation the same but regarded it as "desire for glory in a reputedly just matter." He could only commend it because it "did much to defend the injury of the...pope and to maintain...the cause of religion." (5) Nevertheless, glory was the prime objective and it was noticeable how, when Henry

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1. Sf. de Bettini, in France, SPM, 19 June, 6 Aug. 1471.

2. N. di Farvi (San.17), SPV II, 12 Oct. 1513.

3. Machiavelli: 'Letter', in Chief Works, II, 26 Aug. 1513.

4. Ibid., 10 Aug. 1513.

5. Giovio: Hist. I, xi.231.



was reputed to have acquired glory and praise to suffice, he thought of an honourable peace."(1) This was a long way from an uncompromising drive to gain the French crown, but it seemed to give Henry the satisfaction that he wanted. In 1544 the Italian view on the eve of the English invasion of France was that Henry VIII would send his armies ahead while he stayed at Dover, which he would "not quit until he heard of some victory gained by the English and imperial forces."(2) Henry was making quite sure that his personal re-entry into Europe would be gilded with acclaim. In this way he seemed likely to avoid the stigma of possible defeat such as he might have suffered in his youth. Yet, thirty years apart, his reasons for war, it might have been deduced, sprang from the same source: a desire for glory, the same as that seen by Petrarch in Edward III's subjects, but this time without much serious suggestion of dynastic motivation.

War: a British obsession? At the end of his life the peace that Henry VIII

made with France brought him sums of cash to compensate for the surrender of Boulogne and the expense involved in taking it. Segni said that he thus gained a peace, which he had little time left to enjoy.(3) The question therefore arises: did the British seem to the Italians to be obsessed by war if they would constantly engage in fruitless campaigns? Perhaps not so generally, but at times or in individuals a close approach was made to obsession. Certainly, the Scots sometimes seemed like men possessed with an obsessive need to fight the English. Pius II noted how this was even extended to cover the actions of Scottish soldiers in France. At Cravant (1423) they put up such an uncompromising fight against the Anglo-Burgundian force that their company of 12,000 men was "completely annihilated. Not a

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1. *Ibid.*, I, xiv. 387.

2. News letter from England transmitted by Doge to Venetian ambassador in Rome, *SPV* V, 7 July 1544.

3. Segni, II.xi.345.

man fled; only a thousand came alive into Philip's hands."(1) Such was the Scots anti-English feeling that Pius II was sure that 11,000 of them could fight the English side to the death in a cause that was not their own. Lorenzo Bonincontrio discerned a Scottish recklessness of much the same calibre in a battle fought by the English to take "a great town" in Normandy in the 1420s. While 10,000 French were killed, the Scots contribution amounted to 4,000 dead.(2) This disproportionate slaughter can only be explained in terms of a psychological need to fight the English at all costs, without an eye for personal safety. It was a characteristic to be seen again at the time of Flodden. The Venetian Marco Dandolo did not perhaps produce accurate figures but, when he said that James IV invaded England with "upwards of 80,000 men" and that "others wanted to go but their king would not have them all"(3), the news of a Scottish decimation in the battle that followed could well have confirmed an Italian feeling that the Scots had an all-or-nothing approach to war. There was not quite the same zest in the Welsh attitude towards fighting, although Quirini in 1506 did remark that Welshmen were "brave in arms and given more to war than to any other exercise."(4) Although he obviously believed that the need to fight was an essential part of the Welsh character, this seems to have been a lively side-effect of their reluctance to develop anything more than subsistence level agriculture (5) than from a really deep inner obsession with war.

The English character was less overt. At a <sup>first</sup> glance an Italian could have conceived an idea that it was unwarlike. Henry VII, for example, was said by Vergil to have been "more inclined to peace

1. Pius II: Coms., 588.

2. L. Bonincontrio, RIS 12, p.98. Bonincontrio was here probably referring to the battle at Verneuil (1424), at which anything up to 6,000 Scots perished.

3. M. Dandolo, Venetian ambassador in France, (San.17), SPV II, 8 Sept. 1513.

4. Quirini, 21.

5. Trevisan, 18.

than to war"(1) and during his reign some of his subjects seemed to share his feelings: Perkin Warbeck could appeal to Englishmen as the duke of York, the rightful king, but this did not inspire many of them enough for them to fight for him.(2) By 1554 Soranzo was maintaining that "the English did not delight much in military pursuits"; they evidently did not care to exert themselves over much in fighting.(3) However, there had been times in the preceding two centuries when the English figure at war had appeared anything but restrained.

To Matteo Villani, the Black Prince on campaign presented the figure of a ruthless and rather terrible warrior, who seemed to sweep through France with fire and sword, destroying many towns, or who, in difficult straits, would "show no fear or cowardice."(4) The same drive could be seen in the English companies which later descended into Italy. In 1363 one company applied itself to attacking and capturing towns between Pisa and Florence in such a frantic way that the Italians believed that they were literally wearing themselves out.(5) Italians were more inclined to suggest that war bred its own obsession in Englishmen. To Panicharolla the thirteen year old son of Henry VI presented a savage picture: he would "talk of nothing but of cutting off heads or making war, as if he..were the god of battle."(6) When Edward IV was firmly resettled on his throne and had worked his subjects up into a fighting fever against the French, his subsequent proposals for a French peace irritated his soldiers, who insisted that "they would not return(to England) until they saw war with France."(7) It was only the duke of Burgundy who, according

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1. Vergil: AH(Hay), p.147.

2. Contarini and A. Trevisan, SPV I, 25 July 1495.

3. Soranzo, SPV V, p.544, 18 Aug. 1544.

4. M. Villani, VII.6, 7.

5. F. Villani, XI.81.

6. G.P. Panicharolla, at Bourges, SPM, 14 Feb. 1467.

7. Antonio de Aplano, Milanese ambassador, at Geneva, SPM, 30 Sept.1475.

to Panicharolla, found a solution. He took them into his own service because "he was sure they would cut each other's throats in England." It was well that they could still stay and fight in France; Edward IV would have disturbances enough on his hands when he returned home.(1)

In other words the warlike pressures were only a little beneath the surface of the English character and always ready to burst forth, given the opportunity. There it was in Tudor times in the young Prince Henry, the "natural enemy of France", the youth who had scarcely been crowned before rumours of war were circling around him. (2) It was he who proclaimed his war-like aspirations by appointing, as commander of his invading armies, a Talbot "of a family always accustomed to beat the French." If the French, decades after earls of Shrewsbury had fought in France, could "to that day...still their babes by threatening them when they cried with the coming of the Talbots"(3), Henry's choice of the latest in the line must have been psychologically understandable in terms of belligerence. However, in the end of the day, the very obvious subtlety of this could have only spoken of a calculatingly rational attitude that was slightly less than obsessive. Rather it was the conscious maintenance of a war-like façade in much the same way as, during lulls in fighting, English kings delighted in displays of jousting. Edward III's St. George's Day tournament in 1357 struck Matteo Villani as much with its belligerently vain celebration of England's warrior patron-saint and of its idealised "knights-errant...of the Round Table", as with its brutally pointed attempt to impress the captive King John II.(4) In much the same way Buonacorso Pitti could record how

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1. G.P. Panicharolla, at Vaudemont, SPV I, 22 Oct. 1475.

2. Quirini, 19; Sanudo 8, SPV I, 8 May 1509.

3. L. Pasqualigo (San.14), SPV II, 17 Aug. 1512; A. Badoer (San.14), SPV II, 20 Aug. 1512.

4. M. Villani, VIII.47.

in 1390, only a few years after the French wars, he went to England with the comte de St. Pol, who was to take part in jousts there(1), as though even in times of peace the level of French contact with the English had to be on some type of field of combat. Tournaments were a common enough phenomenon in northern Christendom, but one wonders if the facility with which English warring with France slipped from the battle-field to the lists did not impress itself upon the Italian mind. In 1520 at Guisnes England and France may have been in each other's arms, playing games and jousting amicably, but, when the king of France just happened to be hit in the face in the process and could be seen "with a black eye and a black patch"(2), the harmful potential of the English warrior mentality may have seemed rather fitfully dormant. An Italian's conclusion might have been, as certainly was Mancini's, that the English were rather more than usually orientated towards war. "It was the particular delight of this race that on holidays their youths should fight up and down the streets clashing on their shields with blunted swords or stout staves in place of swords." In later years they became expert with bows and arrows in the field, a thing in which "even the women were not inexperienced." (3) The Italian picture of English war-games and of Englishmen "always having their bows at hand"(4) does convey some feeling of an attitude that very nearly approached an obsession with war.

Society prepared for war: Obsession with and preparedness for war do not necessarily exist alongside one another.

From the writings of some Italians it is possible to put forward a

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1. B. Pitti, p.45.

2. Sanudo 29, SPV III, 21 May to 14 July (10 June) 1520.

3. Mancini, 121-123.

4. M. Savorgnano (San.54), SPV IV, 25 Aug. 1531.



case for saying that at times England was far from prepared for war or that to engage in active campaigning a tremendous effort had to be made, always at the risk of upsetting the commercial balance of the country. Henry V, according to Sercambi, had to "make great preparations" and arrange the re-creation of the fleet before he could set out for France.(1) Or in 1475 Edward IV had not only to make extensive additions to his army and armaments but also personally had to wheedle money out of private citizens.(2) A final push was always needed to make the English army campaign-worthy. But, even when the push came easily, some part of the state's fabric tore at the seams. In 1512 the amount of oxen that Henry VIII had salted down to provision his army made the price of meat rise steeply; bread too was in short supply. Moreover, the armaments suppliers had to strain their resources to produce supplies for the war-effort: "by day and night and on all festivals the cannon founders were at work."(3)

This could not have surprised Italians because there was a general consensus of opinion that fortifications on English soil were not very good and more so because armaments were often not the most modern in Europe. Firstly, the Tower of London, a visible epitome of armed English fortresses, in Falier's view, was "not a strong fortress."(4) Polydore Vergil generalised: the English did not build forts and castles nor repair those which, "being built long since, through time had become ruinous."(5) Although these examples referred mainly to home defence and were phenomena of Tudor times, they did not help to convey a feeling of strength and security on English soil.

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1. Sercambi, II.268.

2. Battista Oldovini de Brugnato, in London, SPM, 17 Mar. 1475.

3. Sanudo 14, SPV II, 25 May 1512; N. di Farvi (San.15), SPV II, s.m. Feb. 1513.

4. Falier, 19.

5. Vergil: AH(ET), 25.



Armaments, however, were part of the science of war both at home and abroad. Yet, as far as English supplies were concerned, few Italians had a good word for them. Sabellico's version of the defeat of the English in the Bordelais in 1453 laid heavy stress upon how they could not stand up to the French army's efficient "iron throwing bombards."<sup>(1)</sup> In 1475 Edward IV, putting his armaments in order, "notwithstanding that he had a large number of bombards,.. had fresh ones made every day."<sup>(2)</sup> Edward clearly realised that English cannons were not yet numerous enough to confront a foreign enemy. The same could be said of Henry VIII's reign: the most noticeable thing about his campaign preparations in 1513 was how he had to push the cannon founders.<sup>(3)</sup> Eventually this may have given an Italian vision of "cannon that would suffice to conquer Hell"<sup>(4)</sup>; Machiavelli might even maintain that that "the king, being a prudent man,...in time of peace...had not interrupted the ordinances of war"<sup>(5)</sup>; but the Rotta de Scocesi, written immediately after Flodden, did suggest that the number of the Scots' guns in 1513 intimidated even the English commander and that in the battle it was impossible "to describe the noise and fury of the great guns that made the heavens shake."<sup>(6)</sup> The Scots, admittedly not facing the main English force, almost seemed to be further advanced in the use of cannon than the English. Besides, as far as Italians were concerned, this only made the English victory against the schismatic Scots look better.

On the other hand what one is forced to conclude is that, although at the end of his reign Henry VII was able to muster "ord nances

1. M. Sabellico. II, p.943.
2. B. Oldovini de Brignato, SPM, 17 Mar. 1475.
3. N. di Farvi (San.15), SPV II, S.m. Feb. 1513.
4. A. Bavarin (San.16), SPV II, 4 July 1513.
5. N. Machiavelli: Discorsi., I.xxi.146.
6. Rotta de Scocesi, 30-1.

and artillery apparatuses such as not even Suliman the Great Turk had in the Hungarian enterprise"(1), Italians saw the bow as the Englishman's 'secret weapon' throughout the Renaissance period. The development of other hand-weapons, for example, the new one consisting of a shaft six feet in length, "surmounted by a ball with six steel spikes", that appeared in 1513, seemed to have impressed an Italian like Antonio Bavarin more than it did the English themselves. (2) Reliance on the bow, it was thought, led to what seemed to be an extraordinary carelessness about other defensive precautions. Mancini explained how ordinary English soldiers did "not wear any metal armour on their breasts or any other part of the body": they thought that soft tunics stuffed with tow efficiently withstood the blows of arrows and swords." What armour there was seemed to have been used only by the better sort of soldiers.(3) One gathers from Savorgnano that it was of rather a démodé type: he called bucklers worn by English soldiers "a ridiculous device" and thought that armour was kept in some castles almost as museum pieces. In Dover Castle he had seen a collection of very old armour and weapons; "a very ridiculous thing" he considered it.(4) All this only emphasised the dependence upon the long bow.

The battle of Crécy really impressed upon Italian minds the deadly efficacy of the English bow: it brought the enemy down in thousands and made such a noise when fired that it seemed "as though Jove thundered."(5) Numerically the English bow also impressed. Italians imagined that "it was a custom of the English that every family in a household had a bow."(6) It was becoming the symbol of

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1. Segni, II.xi.326.

2. A. Bavarin (San.16), SPV II, 30 Apr. 1513.

3. Mancini, 123.

4. Savorgnano (San.54), SPV IV, 25 Aug. 1531.

5. G. Villani. XII.67.

6. Historiae Romanae Fragmenta, wr.c.1354, xiv.373.

the Englishman's preparedness for war, his constant companion even in peace-time. In the crowd of 2,000 Englishmen who surrounded Lionel of Clarence on his marital visit to Milan in 1368, a Milanese annalist noted that many conspicuously carried bows and arrows.(1) The English archer's reputation grew from this point, despite the increasing use of guns. In 1476 the surplus troops that the duke of Burgundy chose to hire were 6,000 archers.(2) However, it was not until 1483 that any real explanation for their superiority was put forward in an Italian work. The bows and arrows which all had were "thicker and longer than those used by other nations." Mancini implied that Englishmen alone could use this weapon because their "bodies were stronger than other peoples", for they seemed to have hands and arms of iron. The range of the bows was no less than that of (Italian) arbalests.(3) But since the bow could be loaded, fired and transported more easily, Italians might have concluded that the English soldier had the more effective weapon. Even as late as 1514 it appeared as though the English would go to any lengths to protect the secret of their special weapon. Bartolomeo Senerega made great play of the agreements made between the English and French, whereby the king of France was not permitted by "any art and industry...to aid himself with bows."(4) In fact, it would seem from Giustinian's version of the Anglo-French concord that Henry VIII was willing to hire to François I 10,000 archers for the defence of his kingdom(5), as though he were frightened that bowmanship as practiced in England would be otherwise copied by France. These two reports together do suggest that England very consciously valued the bow as an English monopoly. Even as late

1. Annales Mediolanenses, RIS 16, Ch.130, s.a. 1368.

2. Francesco Pietrasanta, Milanese ambassador to Savoy, SPM, 7 Mar. 1476.

3. Mancini, 121.

4. B. Senerega, RRISS 24/8, p.174, s.a. 1514.

5. S. Giustinian in RB, 12 Apr. 1515.

as 1531 the Italian opinion was that the English had an idée fixe about it: Savorgnano claimed that the English "always had bows at hand, with which they (would) shoot marvellously, for they did nothing else." (1) This was a rather unbalanced picture of the Englishman, but it did emphasise his preparedness for war in this respect and his continued reliance on an efficient weapon, which gunpowder had not superseded even as late as 1531.

Ordinary individuals seemed well enough prepared to fight at any time and, all things being equal, English kings did not seem to have too much difficulty in raising fairly large numbers of them for their armies. (2) If the Scottish kings could rely upon 50 or 60,000 men to band together well equipped to serve him for thirty days out of love for the Crown (3), the English king, according to Falier, could call upon his people to serve him for forty days without payment and thereafter receive three and a half crowns per month (4), a more business like, if perhaps less spontaneous arrangement. However theoretically unrealistic Falier's view was, it did not in spirit contradict the Trevisan Relation's notion of an England, split up into knights' fees, from which the king even about 1500 still derived "military services." Indeed, it thought it right to call one whole estate in England the "military branch", that is, the lords, whose specific function was to be "employed in time of war mustering troops." (5) This must have been impressive to Italians, although in reality it was much too general a picture, rather over-emphasising unpaid services and ignoring the more practical and complex business-like contracts made for the mustering of royal armies.

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1. Savorgnano (San.54) SPV IV, 25 Aug. 1531.

2. Vide supra, Ch.II, pp.182ff. on population.

3. Trevisan, 15.

4. Falier, 24.

5. Trevisan, 38, 34.

What, however, impressed Italians even more were the scattered examples of English figures that epitomised a warlike orientation of society. Sir John Hawkwood, as a military man, was the subject of countless references in Italian literature. They all added up to the opinion that "there was never a man as experienced in deeds of arms as much as this man."<sup>(1)</sup> He was the man of whom a memorial fresco was painted in the Duomo at Florence. (Plate 14) Succeeding generations of Italians had a constant reminder of this English soldier with his marshal's baton and his subscribed epitaph, "the most careful general and most expert soldier of his age", as the professional soldier ingrained with the practice of war. So it was with that shadowy figure, "Ertogod the Englishman, who... bore all arms better than a young man"<sup>(2)</sup>; or indeed with the figure of Margaret of Anjou, with her severe helmet-like crown, as depicted in Pietro da Milano's portrait medal (Plate 13); or again with Niccolò Fiorentino's medal of Sir John Kendal, whose life was described in one word, "Turcopolier". (Plate 15) They all represented martial figures, not so much men addicted to war, more people who had become recognisably orientated towards the military life. They were figures representing the extent of a society's preparedness for war; indeed, even its occasional overpreparedness, because the Hawkwoods, the Ertogods, the Kendals of England represented the great numbers of Englishmen who, bred for war, perfected and exercised this peculiar professional qualification abroad when their own country did not require them.

## 2. Internal War and Faction.

Since Renaissance Italians thought of English society as one mentally geared to war, it was not remarkable to them, and certainly

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1. Filippo di Cino Rinuccini, p.42, s.a. 1393.

2. Niccola della Tuccia, II, p.124.



14. Paolo Uccello, Fresco of Sir John Hawkwood, 1435.



15. Nicolò Fiorentino(?), Portrait Medal of Sir John Kendall, c.1484.



logical, that at times of external peace or when a lull took place in traditional external hostilities, English belligerence turned in on itself, simply because within the kingdom there was almost as much scope for venting exuberance or developing ambition as in foreign parts. There were times when Italians pointed out the sequence of this mutation as such. Pius II made Margaret of Anjou explain that the civil wars in England were the result of peace with France. This had literally transferred the war onto herself. Her words to Louis XI were, "The English, driven from your kingdom, have not been able to keep the peace at home. They have found an excuse for quarrelling." (1) Also, in his De Europa, Pius himself maintained that, as soon as the English grip on France began to weaken and the French were gaining strength, the duke of York collected troops and overthrew the king's council. (2) So it was, whenever the Crown was weak, legally, morally or physically, and, since in such a state, unlikely to be engaged in foreign wars, that there was often civil strife at home or factious opposition at court. It was this more than anything else that made Italians, when they occasionally did so, think that the English were barbarians. The Wars of the Roses could be called "the uproar of the barbarians." (3) They initiated a time when peace was impossible until vengeance had been exacted for the wrongs that had been done to one's own family and followers (4) or until one crushed the entire seed of the rival faction. (5) These were times when a king could have his own brother drowned because of a suggestion that he was conspiring his death "by means of spells and magicians" (6), or when a victor asserted his triumph over a former friend by exposing his naked body in a church

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1. Pius II: Coms., 578.

2. Pius II: De Europa, Ch.45, p.442.

3. P. di Camulio, in Brabant, SPM, 11 Mar. 1461.

4. Ibid., SPM, 27 Mar. 1461.

5. Sforza de Bettini, SPV I, 17 June 1471.

6. Mancini, 77.

as a public spectacle. A great crowd might press forward to see a dead king-maker but, to an Italian, it was "a thing cruel to see."<sup>(1)</sup>

Civil strife was not new in England when Giovanni Villani described how the hero-king Edward III came to the throne after his mother had invaded his father's kingdom to "revenge herself on her husband" for having led a life of "self indulgence,...luxuriating in the most dishonourable ways." When Villani heard the rumour of Edward II's murder his comment was that, apart from the fact that he did not want to recover his throne, Edward suffered the end to be expected of those whose foul sins blemished every stage of their lives.<sup>(2)</sup> This highlighted a striking Italian capacity for seeing rightness in every ultimate victor's cause. In 1401 Salutati could write to Archbishop Arundel that it was wrong for a noble race to be carried away by bloody incidents from which suspicion and danger grew. The late king had served as an example of this.<sup>(3)</sup> Later historians followed Salutati's line. Sercambi said that Richard II had become odious for having "had killed some royal lords and their relations... and expelled the earl of Derby", whose avenging return had won such support from the "lords and the people and community of London" that they had created and elected him king.<sup>(4)</sup> Andrea de' Reduzzi viewed the process as very much of an extempore affair in which Henry of Lancaster only at the last moment had developed regal aspirations, which could be substantiated because he did to death Richard II.<sup>(5)</sup> The striking point about these accounts, and later about Lorenzo Bonincontrio's, was how much support the invading rebels received from the English peoples.<sup>(6)</sup> It was as though they were anticipating the

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1. *Historia Miscella Bononiensis*, RIS 18, pp.784f.

2. G. Villani, X.7.

3. Salutati: *Epistolario*, XII.8, s.m. Apr. 1401.

4. Sercambi, I.668, 669, 670.

5. A. de' Reduzzi, RIS 19, p.792.

6. L. Bonincontrio, RIS 21, pp.21f.

Trevisan Relation's view that Englishmen "generally hated their present sovereigns." (1) It was small wonder therefore that Italians seldom delayed sending their congratulations to sovereigns who had usurped the English throne: they merely followed the line taken by the English people. (2) It was only a panegyrist like Frulovisi who needed to say that Henry IV was preferred to the crown, "as was his right", but even he had the attitude of acceptance in his account of Henry IV's crushing "rebellions" of the Scots, the Welsh and the north countrymen: they came to nothing; therefore Henry IV remained king and the energies of his son and heir could be diverted into wars at Burgundy's side. (3) As king, Henry V continued this vigorous outward-looking policy. Only at the beginning of his reign, before commencing his campaigns, did he have to deal with an embryonic rebellion among his kinsmen, friends and members of the Great Council. It was soon suppressed and a few executions carried out. (4) This was a premonition of the Wars of the Roses situation: the plot and counteraction took place among relatives and "well-beloved" friends and were carried out apparently without a touch of mercy.

The Italians produced much literature about the wars of Lancaster and York. Diplomats described day to day situations and to a certain extent explained them in their context. It was really only Pius II who concentrated on and expounded the dynastic reasons which

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1. Trevisan, 32.
2. Motion in Venetian Senate, SPV I, 28 Mar. 1400; Italians were quick to accept Edward IV's kingship as a fait accompli, (vide reference to him as such in Decree of Senate, SPV I, 16 May 1460); they would congratulate Edward V on his "pacific accession" (Decree of Senate, SPV I, 9 July 1483); and soon the duke of Milan would treat with Richard III as the true sovereign (Gian Galeazzo Sforza to Richard III, SPM, 12 Mar. 1485). The Venetians did not quickly forget that in Henry VII's case it had been the doge who had been "the first to congratulate the king on his accession and to style him King of England." (Contarini, SPV I, 6 May 1496.)
3. Frulovisi, 3-4.
4. Ibid., 7.

the duke of York gave for his claiming the crown being worn by the descendent of Henry IV, who had murdered the true king and usurped his crown. York was "the nearest kin of the murdered King Richard" and therefore he was first in the order of succession.(1) The unique nature of Pius II's attitude was that, despite this clear picture, he, unlike many other Italians, was eager to see the restoration of Henry VI after his deposition, and fulminated against Edward IV as "that usurper of the English throne."(2) The Italian mind seemed much inclined to follow the vague generalised line taken by Jacopo Bracciolini, who formulated the situation in terms of a good king of England being persuaded by bad counsel to turn from an unjust war in France to a civil war. The details and reasons were indistinguishable. The impressive thing about the war was that it was "the greatest and cruelest that one could find since the destruction of Carthage to the present time."(3) The visual image that Italians absorbed of the progress of the wars consisted of a mass of personalities, some noble, some with royal connections and pretensions, all trying to disrupt or protect the existing royal authority.

Even before the civil wars broke out rumblings of disturbances were heard in England in 1450 as the French wars were faltering to a temporary halt. Jack Cade's uprising took place. Italians were as alarmed as London was evidently plunged into confusion.(4) There was no suggestion that it had any socially high connections and its implicit aims seemed to consist of taking the offensive against authority in London. Another rebellion came in 1469. The Milanese Luchino Dallaghiera told of how "a captain rose in the northern part

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1. Pius II: Coms., 270-1.

2. Ibid., 578, 596.

3. J. di Poggio Bracciolini, p.44.

4. Decree of Venetian Senate, SPV I, 6 Oct. 1450.

of the kingdom, a base man with a following of 40,000 men." He aimed at removing unpopular ministers of the Crown and, in order to gain a better following for this, he had put forward some propositions that were in favour of the people.(1) These Italian accounts failed to bring out the essential difference between these rebellions: Cade's was popular and had no support from great magnates; Robin of Redesdale, himself a knight, was acting in the interests of Warwick. Italians, however, did highlight the fundamental point that both rebellions were aimed against the dominant forces currently controlling the Crown.

Much more striking, though to Italians less explicable, were the examples of opposition to be discerned in the attitude of great nobles towards reigning English kings. It was the earl of Oxford who in 1462, after Edward IV was established on the throne, did his best to disrupt the peace by leading a conspiracy with Henry VI against the king. But on its discovery, "he, his eldest son and many other knights and esquires lost their heads." (2) In 1473, when Edward IV had re-established himself on his throne, it was another earl of Oxford who was seen as "the successor to Warwick's party" because he was intent on stirring up mischief against the king.(3) There was, however, a certain degree of consistency about the earls of Oxford's manifest desire not to acquiesce in Yorkist kingship. Italians were much more fascinated by the figure of Warwick as the over-mighty subject who consistently opposed or dominated successive kings and their governments. It was Warwick, Pius II said, who at the outset was not disposed to have Henry VI deposed, because of the oath sworn to him, and who lent weight to proposals which limited the immediate designs of his ally, York on the throne.(4)

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1. L. Dallaghiera, in London, SPM, 16 Aug. 1469.

2. Antonio della Torre, envoy of Edward IV to Coppino, SPM, 25 Mar. 1462.

3. Cristoforo de Bollati, Milanese ambassador to France, SPM, 6 July 1473.

4. Pius II: Coms., 271.



In 1460 when the active Yorkist offensive against Lancaster commenced, a Milanese like Otto de Carreto would say that "a certain English lord (Warwick)...with a good following of other Englishmen had returned to England....and it was hoped that he would deprive the king of that lordship." (1) Once this was accomplished, the Italian vision of Yorkist England was that of Warwick, side by side with Edward IV, arranging the government of the country. This would remain largely in Warwick's hands and he would make reprisals against his enemies. In this way Warwick alone was regarded as capable of bringing peace and union to the country. (2) A year later Edward IV was seen as a king whose chief function in life was "to try to afford every kind of pleasure that he could to the earl, both festivities of ladies and hunting." Daily Warwick received new favours. (3) As soon as he felt slighted and turned away from Edward IV, the throne shook. In 1467 when he retired to raise troops from his estates, the Welsh under Jasper Tudor rose and proclaimed Henry VI king. (4) In 1469 Warwick was acting even more arbitrarily: he went about the north, taking possession of the estates of lords whom he caused to be beheaded. Italians were presented with a picture of Edward IV pandering to the Londoners, who detested Warwick, in order "to raise as great a force as he could against (him)." (5) In other words, when Warwick's military potential was not being tapped for foreign wars, it only too easily could again be turned against the Crown. The last sign of agreement between Warwick and Edward IV was when they were "thought to be arming for a descent upon France." (6) But within a few months Warwick had "sworn to be a

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1. Otto de Carreto, Milanese ambassador at the Papal Court, SPM, 6 May 1460.
  2. News letters from Bruges, 7 & 15 July, and from London, 7 & 10 July 1460, in SPM.
  3. Giovanni Pietro Cagnola da Lodi, SPM, 31 July 1461.
  4. G.P. Panicharolla, in Paris, SPM, 12 Sept. 1467.
  5. S. de Bettini, at Tours, SPV I, 20 Nov. 1469.
  6. Ibid., SPV I, 13 Mar. 1470.



faithful and loyal subject of king, queen and prince, as his liege lords unto death"(1) and in Henry VI's name had hurled against Edward IV. England was to see its king flee in a fishing boat, as his subjects flocked to the earl's standard.(2) It could have only been considered a logical corollary that, when Edward returned to England, he would try to eliminate Warwick's power. He let this be seen to be done by exposing his corpse to public view. Warwick was indeed a product of the intraversion of the English war-machine; his end a result of this. There was an essential brutality about the whole process. In 1475 the Milanese Panicharolla blandly related how Edward IV, while "returning by sea from London to Calais, had the duke of Exeter thrown into the sea, whom he previously kept prisoner." No reasons were given; it was automatically assumed that Edward had contrived this, although this was probably not true.(3) Exeter, his former brother-in-law, had Lancastrian blood in his veins. It must have been concluded that he was too dangerous to live. This internecine, fratricidal situation could more readily have been understood from the opposition with which Edward IV's brother Clarence troubled the Crown. In 1470 he was to be seen ranged alongside Warwick against Edward as joint masters of the country for a time and, as de Bettini gathered, it was expected that "the tart must be divided between them."(4) When in 1477, after his arrest, Clarence was put to death, Italian opinion was that Edward IV had sanctioned this. From apparent fear of an uprising because of this, it might be suggested that Italians were convinced of Clarence's vocation to be a leader of opposition against his brother, although at the time of Clarence's death he and

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1. *Ibid.*, at Angers, *SPM*, 24 July 1470.

2. Emanuel de Jacopo and Sf.de Bettini, in France, *SPM*, 20 Oct. 1470.

3. G.P. Panicharolla, *SPM*, 4 Dec. 1475. *Cf.*, *The Complete Peerage*, V, pp.214-5.

4. Sf. di Bettini of Florence, at Tours, *SPM*, 3 Apr. 1470.

Edward had appeared to be reconciled.(1) The truth, as Mancini saw it, was that Elizabeth Wydeville contrived to have him killed because she feared "that he would prevent her sons coming to the throne", and so Clarence was "accused of conspiring the king's death by spells and magicians." (2) This, in other words, was what Italians saw become of the sons of the warriors of the Anglo-French wars. For the time being the queen's party exploited its favoured position in much the same way as Richard of Gloucester would exploit his at its expense, when Edward IV was dead. Deliberately Gloucester hit at points of military strength and at potential generals in order to gain control over the realm in 1483. He dispersed the followers of Rivers; he discredited the queen's party by producing waggon-loads of weapons, which were said to be for an ambush by them on himself; he made sure that the fleet was taken out of Edward Wydeville's hands; he even cowed any demonstration of disapproval on the day of his coronation by stationing troops at strategic points in London.(3) In this case English military might was being used to forestall war on English soil.

When Henry of Richmond had invaded England in 1485, although no Italian authority specifically said that he had come to take the throne, the way in which he came out to meet Richard III in the field and saw his defeat and death does suggest that after the battle his passive acceptance of Richard's crown was really the realisation of an ambition which he had set out to achieve by force of arms.(4) It was soon to be seen that the main reason why the Tudors so successfully managed to retain the throne was their ability to see potential sources of dynastic opposition and to check them ruthlessly.

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1. Gianetto Ballinarini, at Arras, to Lorenzo de' Medici, SPM, 14 Sept. 1477.

2. Mancini, 77.

3. Ibid., 95, 103, 105, 123.

4. Vergil: AH(Ellis), pp.215-226, for account of Henry VII's attitude.

One of the first actions of Henry VII's reign, as recorded by Vergil, was his continuation of the young earl of Warwick's imprisonment because "Henry, not unaware of the mob's natural tendency always to seek changes, was fearful lest, if the boy should escape..., he might stir up civil discord." Indeed, he was not happy until Edward of Warwick had been executed. All mourned but Vergil recognised that he "had to perish in this fashion in order that there should be no surviving male heir to his family." (1) Henry VII's and his son's attitude certainly seemed to confirm the truth of this. In fact, apart from the active threat of pronounced impostors like Simnel and Warbeck, dynastic opposition to the Tudors seemed to be imagined rather than real. The de la Pole family, as seen by Italians, appeared to be rather persecuted than actively rebellious. Admittedly in 1502 Henry VII had persuaded Pope Alexander to anathematize Edmund de la Pole and his adherents because they wanted to disturb the peace of the realm (2) and in 1505 men like Quirini and Priuli maintained that "White Rose" actively claimed or at least aspired to the crown (3), but he was by then very securely kept in a Flemish prison at Henry VII's behest. Priuli for one implied that Suffolk's mere existence added to Henry VII's psychological uncertainty about the stability of his throne. The king at least seemed to consider Suffolk as a threat to his throne; his antics spoke of this, his blackmailing Philip of Castile to return him to England and then his sending him straight to the Tower, despite his royal promise to acquit him of all charges of treason. (4) Quirini at least thought that Henry VII considered Suffolk "a great thorn in his eyes for he knew that the people of

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1. Vergil: AB(Hay), 3, 119.

2. Ibid., 133.

3. Quirini, SPV I, 1 July 1505; Girolamo Priuli, RRISS 24/3, Vol.II, p.387.

4. Quirini, SPV I, 17 Mar. 1506; 6 Apr. 1506.

England loved and longed for him."(1) Henry VII's fear did not end in the Tower. In October 1506 the king was demanding the surrender of Richard de la Pole, who had just arrived in Buda. The Venetian secretary Benedetti automatically invested him with the synonymous titles of "White Rose" and "enemy of the king of England"(2), although no Italian attempted to explain how the de la Poles had actively provoked the Tudors' enmity. Henry VIII considered the presence of Richard at the French court in 1513, in the pose of "the rightful heir of that realm" as sufficient reason for beheading his brother Edmund, who had been kept in the Tower since 1506.(3) It was realised just how much of a nuisance the de la Poles were even in Henry VIII's eyes. In 1517 when a certain cordiality was felt between England and France, the French king sent Richard de la Pole away to Milan to allay Henry's suspicions. However, Italians did still think that the crown of England appertained to him(4) and could have scarcely been surprised in 1523 when François I contemplated exalting him to the position of commander of an army designed to invade England.(5) It was only when a potential pretender was given support from a foreign power that he appeared as a threat. In the converse case of the duke of Buckingham in 1521, Italian observers had initially been mystified by the arrest, trial and execution of the duke; London had wept in grief for him; but only after that did Antonio Surian repeat that apparently Buckingham had been told a divination that the king would shortly die and so he had "negotiated with several lords so that on the king's death the kingdom would pass not to Princess Mary but to him." The duke himself emphatically denied the charges made against him.(6)

1. Ibid., SPV I, 20 Dec. 1505.

2. Benedetti, at Buda, (San.6), SPV I, 6 Oct. 1506.

3. Roberto Acciajuolo, Florentine ambassador to France, (San.16), SPV II, 9 June 1513.

4. G.G. Caroldo, in Milan, (San.24), SPV II, 12 July 1517.

5. Giovanni Badoer (San.34), SPV III, 12 Mar. 1523.

6. Surian (San.30), SPV III, 15 Apr., 19 Apr., 21 May 1521; Lodovico Spinelli, (San.30), SPV III, 14-17 May 1521.

Much later Giovio was to imply that his crime was his distinguished ancestry.(1) Meanwhile, the mental effect upon England was unsettling. It made Henry VIII lukewarm about Wolsey's schemes for a French campaign.(2) Later, when Henry had broken with Rome and become more sensitive about his potential dynastic rivals, he would, for example, deal severely with a rising in Northumberland in protest against his "despoilation of the churches." Henry Montague, Pole's brother, and Courtenay, marquis of Exeter, his cousin, both his former friends, he ordered to be cut down. Another cousin, Edward Neville, and Pole's mother, Margaret, were put in prison, she "because she had two kings as uncles." Giovio was quite certain that the real reason for Henry's harshness was his relatives' "popularity and their relationship with White Rose." (3) The Pole family seemed almost to have been equivalent to the de la Poles in the Italian mind. Certainly they were alike in that they appeared to be less terrible, less of a physical threat to the throne than the Tudors themselves seemed to think.

Physically more of a threat to the Crown were the impostors and rebels who had royal aspirations. Yet to Italians the Tudors seemed comparatively less perturbed by them. Lambert Simnel, whom Raimondo de Soncino described as a barber's son, invaded England but, when taken, by royal command was kept in the mildest detention. The king even considered making him a priest "out of respect for the sacred unction." (4) Priest or turnspit it made little difference; Henry VII's treatment of a discredited rival was extremely casual. The case of Perkin Warbeck, however, was initially treated more seriously. For example, Sanudo in 1496 referred to the invader of England as the

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1. Giovio: Desc., 21.

2. A. Surian (San.31), SPV III, 3 Aug. 1521.

3. Giovio: Desc., 23; also cf. M.L.Bush: 'The Tudors and the Royal Race', in History 55, (Feb. 1970).

4. R. de Soncino, SPM, 16 Sept. 1497.



duke of York.(1) He expressed no doubts about his authenticity. Sebastiano Badoer had already described him as "the son of the late King Edward."(2) Still in November 1497 Italian writers were calling Perkin "the duke of York", although within weeks he was to confess his imposture.(3) Italians were much more inclined to see the situation as a question of who had the most influence in the realm. It did not seem to matter if Perkin was York; what counted was that "not a man of any consideration joined (him)."(4) It was only after Warbeck's arrest that there appeared in Italian sources stories about him being persuaded by the Irish and groomed by Margaret of Burgundy to deceive the English.(5) The only way in which Henry VII seemed to be able to destroy his image was to treat him kindly and let all contumely descend upon him for abusing this by trying to escape.(6) Retrospectively Vergil was to do his best to destroy Warbeck's reputation. Duchess Margaret would have stopped at nothing to destroy Henry VII; Perkin's followers were poverty-stricken desperadoes, bribed to flock to his standard. Vergil emphasised the counter-propaganda about his base birth and pointed out that Richard III would have obviously not murdered only one nephew when the other "would have been equally able to claim rightfully the kingdom."(7) Of course, this presupposed that all Europe accepted the idea that Richard III had murdered the princes. Logically, in Italian writings, even in Vergil's completed Anglica Historia, there was nothing that definitely demolished Warbeck's claims. Vergil might call them "foolish impudence" but Henry VII was apparently disturbed enough by

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1. Sanudo: Diari, (Ven.1879) I.381, s.m. Nov. 1496.
  2. Sebastiano Badoer, in Milan, SPV I, 12-17 May 1495.
  3. Sanudo 1, SPV I, 6 Nov., 29 Nov. 1497.
  4. R. de Soncino, SPM, 16 Sept. 1497.
  5. Ibid., 21 Oct. 1497.
  6. Agostino de Spinula, Milanese agent in England, SPM, 20 June 1498.
  7. Vergil: AH(Hay), 63, 65, 69-71.



his "twisting falsehood into truth, truth into falsehood", to make him die on the scaffold as a "victim of his own deceit" and not as an honourable rival.(1)

In Henry VIII's reign virtually no sign of rebellion aimed at toppling the throne was to be seen. In 1530 there was a suggestion that the English people might rebel if the king married Anne Boleyn, such was their regard for Catherine of Aragon.(2) It was even said that she might be "styled king of this island by reason of the love the people bore her."(3) But this was far from active rebellion. That was only to be found in manifestations against the imposition of a war-tax in 1525. This rebellion, mainly aimed against Wolsey, effectively ended with the repealing of the tax.(4) In 1534 Kildare's rebellion in Ireland was certainly aimed against the English Crown but only because the Irish considered the English "enemies of Christ and the Catholic faith."(5) In 1535, as Carlo Capello left England, he felt sure that the king's unpopularity would soon provoke rebellions(6) but, when these broke out in force in the winter of 1536-37, they appeared to be motivated by a desire to destroy the king's ministers, especially Cromwell, and be prolonged only by Henry VIII's apparent dishonesty in promising the rebels pardon and then executing fifty ringleaders.(7) Whatever the occasion for rebellion under Henry VII, Italian observers seemed to be as little perturbed as Henry himself. Opposition to his religious and governmental policies withered away before the severity of his reactions. Only with dynastic rivals did his firmness seem a little excessive because at no time did there seem to be any serious threat to his crown. What rebellion did in his reign was to continue the syndrome

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1. *Ibid.*, 89, 117-119.

2. Scarpinello, *SPM*, 14 July, 15 Aug. 1530.

3. Capello (San.46), *SPV* IV, 23 Apr. 1532.

4. L. Orio (San.39), *SPV* III, 3 June 1525.

5. Thomaso Gallerato, Milanese ambassador in Spain, *SPM*, 27 Oct. 1534.

6. C. Capello, *SPV* V, 3 June 1535.

7. L. Bragadino, *SPV* V, 30 Nov, 6 Dec. 1536; 3 Jan. 1537.

of the previous century, when, as foreign wars ceased, civil strife ensued. With Henry VIII disturbances at home did noticeably alternate with periods of activity against France or of pre-occupation with foreign affairs.

### 3. Diplomacy.

As long as England had been involved in foreign wars a certain amount of diplomatic activity had had to take place for the regulation and for the arrangement of such peace as followed them. However, with the development of formal and regular diplomatic contact throughout Renaissance Europe, England, especially under the Tudors, developed the use of diplomacy as an active substitute for warlike pre-occupations either at home or abroad. The late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries saw the teething time of English diplomacy. For example, in 1514 the great peace-agreement created between England and France perhaps looked like a master-piece of international statesmanship but by 1515 neither side seemed to know how to deal with the other. Henry VIII had to send his Lord Chamberlain to France "with a commission to tell King François to beware of infringing his agreements."<sup>(1)</sup> François for his part, refusing to share any of his secrets and treating all Englishmen as enemies, was turning a blind eye on the systematic damage done by his subjects to English shipping. (2) In fact, this was the period in which the policy of inaction was being tried out. This was well defined in Italians' conscious mind. In 1496, with the threat of a French invasion of Italy, the Venetian envoys in London hoped that an English attack on France might divert the enterprise but, though the English king promised much and "said some fine words...(he) did nothing."<sup>(3)</sup> Nor indeed did they seem to

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1. S. Giustinian in RB I, 3 July 1515.

2. Ibid., 6 July 1515.

3. G. Priuli, RRIISS 24/3, Vol.I, p.51.

expect him to do anything. When other nations were at each other's throats, England liked to sit back and watch. Late in 1526 Castiglione noted how Wolsey announced that he "would like to act as judge" of the differences between the emperor and pope. But he soon made it clear that England had no intention of intervening physically and was rather doubtful about English participation in any form of league.

(1) It began to be noticeable how England became more active diplomatically when she was in a psychologically weak position. In 1532 Henry VIII made a distinct effort to cross the Channel to meet François I. This was only the second time in twelve years. What struck Italians most about it was that Henry VIII was using the opportunity to show off Anne Boleyn in the role of his wife. There she "lived like a queen...and the king accompanied her to mass and everywhere as if she were such." There it was that their marriage was announced.

(2) The people of England would not accept her, so her recognition in international circles could only serve Henry's purpose when his moral stock at home was low. In fact, the only ethic that was involved in English diplomacy of this period was the well-being of the Tudor dynasty: it had no scruples about the extensive use of royal personages as pawns in a system of alliances by marriage, real or projected; the sanctity of no individual was respected when the weal of the Crown was in question.

The use of royal pawns in international marriage alliances was a time-honoured practice long before 1485: Italians had noted particularly Edward II's marriage to Isabelle of France, Lionel of Clarence's to Violante Visconti of Milan, Henry V's to Catherine de Valois and Henry VI's to Margaret of Anjou; but with the early Tudors

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1. B. Castiglione: Lettere, Bk.VII, Let.7, s.m.Nov. 1526, pp.117-8; Let.14, s.d. Feb. 1526, pp.135-6.
  2. G.S. Robio, Milanese ambassador to France, SPM, 2 Oct. 1532; Sanudo 47, SPV IV, 31 Oct. 1532.

a very noticeable lack of sincerity in the arranging of marriages between ruling houses was a new trend in English policy and not unrelated to the increase and novel diversity of diplomatic activity during that period. In 1498 Henry VII was actually negotiating with the king of Scots for a marriage between him and Henry's daughter Margaret, despite the fact that a Milanese like Raimondo de Soncino knew perfectly well that the king "inclined to the eldest son of Denmark...because Dacia was more formidable than Scotland." That the Danish and English princelings were of the same age was not the recommendation: power politics alone counted.(1) Despite his double dealing, Henry VII found himself sanctioning a Scottish marriage and still gained the commendation of a panegyrist like Pietro Carmeliano for having created a good match for his daughter with the "most illustrious king of Scotland."(2) At one time Henry VII was even prepared to let himself be a bait on the marriage market. In 1505, as a widower, Henry was able to entertain Philip of Castile's proposal that he should marry Margaret of the Netherlands; the French countered that with the offer of the dauphin's mother, Louise of Savoy; and Ferdinand of Aragon, it was said, had already obtained Henry's private agreement to a match with his niece, the young queen of Naples. Commenting, Vincenzo Quirini saw each of the three possibilities but felt sure that the queen of Naples would soon become queen of England. Two months later he would be writing that "marriage negotiations between Madam Margaret and King Henry seemed closer."(3) These dragged on unhurriedly until Henry VII's death ended them. Henry, however, had already collected the political capital from them by keeping France on tenter-hooks.

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1. R. De Soncino, SPM, 17 Nov. 1498.

2. Carmeliano, 16.

3. V. Quirini, SPV 1, 27 Oct., 20 Dec. 1505.

Henry had already allied himself to Spain with the marriage of his son Arthur to Catherine of Aragon in 1497 at the very moment that his kingdom was being invaded by Warbeck.(1) Ambassador Contarini at the emperor's court had been perceptive enough to see that Warbeck could force Henry VII in to the league being formed against France, or, "better still, bring England in if the duke of York obtained the crown."(2) It could only have been logical to assume that Henry concluded the marriage to forestall the latter alternative. Immediately Perkin had been defeated, the feeling was that, even without the marriage, the kingdom would be perfectly stable.(3) Perhaps this accounted to Italians as the reason why in the long run Henry VII, although apparently dependent enough on a Spanish marriage to retain the widowed Catherine of Aragon as the bride for his second son, Henry, he was sufficiently emboldened in 1506 to demand that the residue of Catherine's dowry should be remitted to him or he would "send the princess home."(4) However, this boldness, though true to Henry VII's reputation for avarice, was showing itself in the context of the king of France's arrangements for a marriage between the dauphin's sister and the king of Denmark, "whom the English dreaded more than any other sovereign." It certainly was seen that "by these means the king of France hoped to keep the king of England in fear and subjection."(5) In this case, Henry VII's importunate manner might well have suggested that he wanted Spain to be mindful of her obligations as an ally. Certainly, simultaneously he was clearly trying to counterbalance the Frano-Danish offensive alignment not only by publishing the contract of marriage between

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1. Sanudo 1, SPV I, 21 Aug. 1497.
2. Contarini, SPV I, 19 Feb. 1496.
3. R. de Soncino, SPV I, 8 Sept. 1497.
4. Quirini, SPV I, 25 June 1506.
5. Ibid., 23 July 1506.



himself and Margaret of the Netherlands but also by arranging a match between his daughter Mary and "Prince Carlo, eldest son of the king of Castile." (1) All this was foreign policy rather outside the ordinary Englishman's own world but it did show Italians just to what lengths Tudors were prepared to go to secure themselves with peace at home and, indeed, to ensure their economic well-being.

The much mooted marriage of Mary and Charles was contracted amid glittering ceremonies, which Carmeliano carefully recorded. Behind the tinsel and merriment he could see well that this betrothal showed how Henry VII was now being "pursued by all Christian regions for alliance, federation and amity...Flourishing red roses,...so planted, spread in the highest imperial gardens." (2) In other words, Henry had 'arrived' as a European prince because of his fortunate exploitation of his family's marriage potential. For the moment it served to counterbalance a hostile France. In the long run the marriage did not take place. One novel Italian view was that in 1515 Charles would not have Mary because he "wanted a wife and not a mother." (3) Whatever the excuse was, the English needed no second bidding when a marriage between Mary and Louis XII of France seemed an appropriate means of sealing the peace with France in 1514. The Italians did not see England's gaining much financially from the alliance. Only a suggestion that the duchy of Milan might go to Mary as a marriage portion seemed promising, whereas some one like Nicolo di Farvi preferred to point out that by the earlier betrothal Charles of Castile had "already received a considerable sum on the dowry." (4) For a short time this devious diplomatic manoeuvring had brought a much needed peace. Mary

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1. Ibid., 11 July, 25 June 1506.

2. Carmeliano, 32-3, et passim.

3. Vettor Lippomano, in Rome, (San.17), SPV II, 9 Sept. 1513.

4. Sanudo 18, SPV II, 21 Aug. 1514; N.di Farvi (San.19), SPV II, 30 Oct. 1514.



had been a useful bait and might again have proved so as a teenage widow had she not quickly married Suffolk. It is not surprising that the new king of France was known to approve of her marrying in England rather than abroad(1): apart from the question of her income as queen-dowager, by her English marriage she neutralised her importance in international diplomacy.

Within another few years a second Princess Mary, Henry VIII's daughter, was being used as England's eligible spinster. In 1518 the infant princess had a match arranged for her with the dauphin, purely in order to secure peace with France. Sebastiano Giustinian recorded how the English regarded this approach as a face-saving device. Wolsey would "deny that Tournai would be surrendered as a condition of peace: (it was) not the custom of the English to purchase peace with Frenchmen...,it would be conceded on certain terms as a dowry." (2) It was a gentle euphemism, politely covering up reality, but it did achieve the end of sweetening French relations and eliminating the influence of Albany in Scotland.(3) But Mary, the heiress of England, was too important to be a tied pawn in European politics. In 1519 the election of Charles V as emperor made the French king fear war and so, said Grumello, he at once set about creating a firm peace with England.(4) Within one year Henry VIII was indulging in a spectacular and friendly meeting with the French king and also having two meetings with Charles V. Italians made extensive reports about these but few discerned any constructive results. Only Grumello explained how Henry VIII had gone to meet Charles V at Calais to please the French but found that he could arrange no agreement between

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1. S. Giustinian and P. Pasqualigo, SPV II, 9 Mar. 1515.

2. S. Giustinian in RB, 2 Sept. 1518.

3. Ibid., 10 Sept. 1518.

4. Antonio Grumello, Bk.vi, Ch.17, pp.239-40.

them "because the king of France wanted...Lombardy and Charles wanted dominion over all Italy."(1) But, if France and the Empire felt personally involved, and Italy perhaps even more so, England's rôle in the matter seemed rather insignificant. Henry VIII certainly did not earn the reputation of being an honest broker. By 1521 Venetian diplomats were noting an apparent swing over to the emperor's side. But, reflecting upon how much Henry VIII's wars with France had already diminished his inherited wealth, their news that at an international conference at Calais "in the emperor's camp the only current coin was the English Angel", seemed to imply that Wolsey was determined to keep the empire quietly in his pocket, while he snubbed the Danish king enough to eliminate him as a signatory of any possible agreement.(2) Wolsey was earning for England a reputation for diplomatic inscrutability. He did much and mainly gained the welcome attention of Europe. In January 1522 Antonio Surian was sure that Wolsey "took amiss the emperor's part in having Master Adrian elected pope", instead of himself, and so might be expected to form closer contacts with France(3), but in May "the marriage of the princess of England to the emperor was concluded...and the repudiation of her marriage to the dauphin...intimated."(4) In June, after concluding with the emperor a defensive and offensive alliance aimed against France, Wolsey was vowing to take the field against France in person and to "sell even his sacerdotal garments for the purpose."(5) Castiglione clearly saw the English game. A messenger would be sent to the king of France "to offer... a treaty with a pact...with certain other difficult conditions" and, if France refused it, the messenger had a commission to join in a war

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1. *Ibid.*, Ch.24, p.250.

2. A. Surian (San.31), *SPV* III, 3 Aug. 1521; G. Badoer (San.31), *SPV* III, 10 Aug. 1521.

3. A. Surian (San.32), *SPV* III, 27 Jan. 1522.

4. G. Contarini, *SPV* III, 6 May 1522.

5. *Ibid.*, 7 June 1522.

against France.(1) Diplomacy to the Englishman seemed to be the art of being double-tongued; of doing what one wanted, while making others seem responsible. It was a game that could be played in the 1520s, when there was little involvement abroad and comparative tranquillity at home. Its only aim seemed to be to preserve the status quo by maintaining a European balance of power. By 1524 it was becoming obvious that Henry VIII had no intention of marrying his daughter either to the emperor or to a Frenchman. As Gasparo Contarini<sup>rather inaptly</sup> put it, "in time of war the English used their princess as an owl with which to lure birds."(2) It is, however, plain what he meant. If one takes three Venetian examples from the following year, one can see that in January the news was that "a marriage had been made between the daughter of the king of England and the son of the king of France"(3); in the same month it had been heard that "the princess of England was to marry the king of Scotland"(4); and in May the emperor was asking for the princess, "as she was to be his wife." King Henry, however, was delaying sending her.(5) It was only when François I was taken at Pavia in that year that English diplomatic interest became pro-French. There was a suggestion of a rapprochement; the release of the French king was urged and a Scottish marriage, well within the French sphere of influence, was mooted. The princess, though not actually precipitated into marriage, was sent to her "principality of Wales..to reside there until the time of her marriage"(6), as though her alluring qualities were now not to be so prominently displayed. Nevertheless, the emperor

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1. B. Castiglione: Lettere, Bk.I, s.d. 29 May 1522.

2. G. Contarini, SPV III, 4 Dec. 1524.

3. Sanudo 35, SPV III, 15 Jan. 1525.

4. G. Contarini, SPV III, 9 Jan. 1525.

5. M.A. Venier (San.38), SPV III, 22 May 1525.

6. L. Orio (San.40), SPV III, 21 July, 14 Aug. 1525; M.A.Venier (San.39), SPV III, 22 July 1525; A Surian (San.39), SPV III, 26 July 1525.

Orio seems to think mistakenly that Mary was called the 'princess of Wales', presumably as heir presumptive. He was probably recording--in his own way--how in 1525 she was sent to Wales to 'preside over' a new Council in the Marches of Wales.

did not drop his suit and Henry VIII used his interest to keep the princess's financial value at a reasonable level.(1)

The possibility of tangible results coming from this chameleon-like policy were becoming increasingly evident. In December 1526 a proposed marriage between François I and Mary seemed likely to bring permanent peace between France and England and to give England the opportunity of negotiating peace between the emperor and Italy. The mandate of the duchy of Milan seemed a likely reward for England.(2) International prestige, a possible sphere of influence in the Mediterranean, an annual tribute and peace on two fronts were what England seemed likely to secure; and still the princess was not finally married, because she was "so thin, spare and small as to render it impossible...for the next three years."(3)

However, <sup>from</sup> the moment Henry VIII suggested that Mary might be illegitimate, she was not flaunted so much on the European marriage-market. Far from marrying the French king, in 1529 she seemed likely to be given to his second son.(4) At this point in some ways Henry VIII himself took over the rôle of the most marriageable person in England. Falier maintained that part of the reason for his divorce "was originally that he should marry the king of France's sister."(5) But the king was soon to squander any diplomatic advantage that he might have obtained from that. One of the few occasions on which Italians thought of Henry VIII as being compelled to do anything was in 1531 when, with the emperor offended and only Venice of the Italian states in diplomatic contact, he had to make an alliance with France and was driven into the camp of the king of Denmark, England's former enemy,

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1. L. Orio (San.40), SPV III, 18 Aug. 1525; Marco Foscari, in Rome (San.40), SPV III, 8 Oct. 1525.

2. M.A. Venier (San.43), SPV III, 27 Dec. 1526.

3. Gasparo Spinelli, in London, (San.45), SPV III, 7 May 1527.

4. Nicolo de Nobili of Lucca (San.51), SPV IV, 3 Aug. 1529.

5. Falier, 27.

for fear of Charles V.(1) As soon as Henry VIII's second marriage bore fruit an English princess was again used as a diplomatic bait. At the age of one, Elizabeth was being proposed as a bride for the duc d'Angoulême.(2) England's diplomatic reputation had advanced a long way even since 1518, when the news of a betrothal between the dauphin and Mary had been treated as a jest because some maintained that he "had been no sooner born than dead or else that he had not yet been born." Comments might have been made about princes who constantly broke their words over such arrangements(3), but in 1535 Henry VIII was being taken very seriously and was evidently expecting to be so when he started to make much of Mary in order to confuse the king of France, to whom he was showing a little coolness, because he had suggested Angoulême, his third son, instead of the dauphin, as Elizabeth's husband.(4) At the end of 1536 it was Mary, still in the process of being declared legitimate, who was the bride proposed for Angoulême.(5) The fact that he was now second in line to the French throne, as the duc d'Orléans, gave the match more glitter. It certainly suggested that Mary had regained at least as much diplomatic allure as her half-sister had had while in favour.

During the latter years of Henry VIII's reign, when at least he had an heir and when internal pre-occupation with religious matters made England introspective, Italians had little to say about England's rôle as a European power. The international implications of the Cleves marriage were ignored. It was only in 1544 that Henry's agreement with the emperor to attack France seemed to heal the differences between them and bring England back into Europe. Yet,

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1. *Ibid.*, 25.

2. Doge and Senate to the Balio at Constantinople, *SPV* V, 17 Mar. 1535.

3. Vergil: *AH*(Hay), 249-51.

4. Advice from England to Milan, *SPM*, 29 Aug. 1535.

5. L. Bragadino, *SPV* V, 6 Dec. 1536.



strangely enough, the whole matter was in the long run seen in terms of Henry VIII's pursuing a policy of marriage-mongering for the sake of ultimate peace with prestige: while Henry was attacking France he was having their traditional ally Scotland ravaged, with the purpose of forcing a match between the young queen of Scots and his son.(1) The implications of this, though not explicit, must have been obvious, especially when the emperor and the French king settled their differences.

The whole Italian perspective on English diplomacy was that it generally used the possibility of marriage alliances to maintain the shifting balance of power with the ultimate aim of creating peace. Diplomacy was most neglected during times of war. Italians' concept of the balance of power was very acute, perhaps because they often bore the wear of the shift of the scales. Giovio might have exaggerated when he maintained that the expatriate Scot, Bernard Stuart, sieur d'Aubigny, was the means of uniting the kingdoms of Scotland and France but his general assessment of their dual entente, which existed "to create a just counterpoise to the forces of the king of England..., the natural enemy of the French and the Scots"(2), contained an essential appreciation of the concept of balance of power. In just the same way, though with a shift of alignments, Surian's report in 1525 of Henry VIII's "urging the emperor to release the king of France on ransom for the sake of Christendom"(3) was a realisation of a need to maintain a balance of power that would regulate all Europe peacefully. This might have implied a desire to consolidate the forces of Christendom as such;

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1. Letter from England to the Doge, thence to Rome, SPV V, 7 July 1544; Doge and Senate to ambassador at Constantinople, SPV V, 11 Apr., 2 Sept. 1545.
  2. Giovio: Rag., p.45.
  3. A. Surian, Podestà of Brescia, (San.39), SPV III, 26 July 1525.



certainly England's habit of supplementing the deficiencies of either balance often implied a wish for the security that external peace could bring to the English throne.

The Garter and its use in Diplomacy: Between 1461 and 1517 seven Italian

princes were elected to the Order of the Garter and others would have liked the honour: for honour it was considered. In 1462 Francesco Copino, telling the duke of Milan about his possible election to the order and its knighthood, that the Emperor Sigismund had gladly accepted, described the Garter as a "most excellent and honourable device that (the) king confers." (1) Or, in 1504 Antonio Giustinian, describing the conferring of it on the duke of Urbino and the trappings and decorations that went with it, mentioned its reputation as "a most honorific thing." (2) Only on one occasion did an Italian ridicule the institution. In 1473 the Milanese ambassador in Portugal rather scathingly remarked that on the feast of St. George the king of Portugal "put on the insignia which the king of England sent to him. The thing and costume were ridiculous enough but his Majesty put up with them." (3) That the king or indeed the rest of Europe shared this hard-headed Milanese's view is doubtful. The point was that as a piece of pure display the Garter impressed most Italians with its richness and courtliness. They gave many descriptions of the insignia and dress of the order. Perhaps Piero Pasqualigo's picture of Henry VIII in his Garter robes was the most striking: "his mantle was of purple velvet, lined with white satin...girt in front like a gown, with a pendant St. George, entirely of diamonds. On his left shoulder was the garter, which is a cinture buckled circular-wise, and bearing in its centre a cross

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1. F. Copino, in Rome, SPM, 24 Apr. 1462.

2. A. Giustinian: Dispacci, III.30, s.d. 22 Mar. 1504.

3. Francesco Maletta, at Almanzar, SPM, 23 Apr. 1473.

gules on a field argent..."(1) However, from an early stage Italians had been familiar with the devices of the order. In the latter part of the fourteenth century, not very long after the institution of the order, in a Florentine fresco of the Church Militant and Triumphant, Andrea di Bonaiuto depicted a knight wearing the blue and gold garter round his calf.(Plate 16) It has been suggested that this knight was Edward le Despenser.(2) For one's purpose this is of little importance. What matters is that, even at this early date, the Garter device was well enough known in Italy. It symbolised English chivalry. A century later, to commemorate his election to the order in 1474 Federigo, duke of Urbino, had a portrait medal of himself struck. As a border, surrounding his bust, there was a buckled belt, on which the Garter motto in the form, "Hony soyt chy mal y pense" figured prominently. (Plate 17) (3) When in 1504 his son Guidobaldo, duke of Urbino, was also elected, he celebrated the occasion by commissioning Raphael to paint a small picture of St. George and the Dragon as a present for Henry VII.(Now in the Louvre; see plate 19) Another St. George was also commissioned from Raphael and this time the saint was depicted wearing on his left leg a small but very detailed buckled garter in blue and gold, with the word 'Honi' quite visible. (Now in Washington; see plate 20) The former picture might appear, at a first glance, to show an elaborate garter, but a fringe of gold and silver chain-mail only gives a suggestion of this. Raphael, in fact, was probably so familiar with the customs of the order that he would not have dreamed

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1. P. Pasqualigo, in RB I, pp.85-6, s.d. 30 Apr. 1515.
  2. Cf. Sister M.A.Devlin: 'An English Knight of the Garter in the Spanish Chapel in Florence' in Speculum 4, (1929), 270ff.
  3. One can tell from its execution that this medal is certainly Italian, but it is not certain who executed it. G.F.Hill (Medals of the Renaissance, (Oxf., 1920), p.86.) does suggest that Torregiano made during his stay in England (1509-19): the design resembles that of his plaque of Sir Thomas Lovell.(Plate 18) However, the Tudor roses on the Lovell plaque are enough to imply that this was the later work and even that the Urbino medal was not made by Torregiano.



16. Andrea di Bonaiuto, 'An English Knight of the Garter', detail  
from The Church Militant and Triumphant, c.1368.



17. Torregiano(?), Portrait Medal of Federigo, Duke of Urbino.



18. Torregiano, Plaque of Sir Thomas Lovell, 1510s.



19. Raphael, St. George and the Dragon (Louvre), c.1505.



20. Raphael, St. George and the Dragon (Washington), 1504/5.



21. Archivolt of the Porta della Pescheria, Modena, c.1100.

of painting the device on the right, and only visible, leg of the Louvre St. George. The very fact that both were painted to celebrate Guidobaldo's election emphasises Italian knowledge of and familiarity with the customs of this English order with its patron saint, George, and also an extremely fine appreciation of the honour involved in being a knight.

English kings manifestly realised the importance of the order's prestige and used it not merely as an instrument of ostentatious display but also employed it as a golden seal to set upon diplomatic arrangements. It little mattered if late in the day, at a time when Henry VIII was showing little respect for some women, Giovio romantically stressed how the order was founded so that "women should be held in honour, not in amatory vanity."<sup>(1)</sup> What mattered were the political conditions implied in the award of the Garter. It was only given to friends, often to new friends and allies, in order to cement an amicable arrangement. In 1416, recalled Frulovisi, the Emperor Sigismund, doing his best to mediate for peace between England and France, came to be "on terms of greatest familiarity" with Henry V, and so "asked to be admitted into the brotherhood of the Order of the Garter."<sup>(2)</sup> Frulovisi almost gave it the air of a chivalric blood-brotherhood: it formalised friendship. Just as in 1469 Sforza de Bettini commented that the king of England had received the Order of the Golden Fleece from Burgundy "as an additional mark of union and confederacy between them"<sup>(3)</sup>; Burgundy himself, taking offence with Louis XI over the arrest of one of his correspondents, "the next time he appeared in public,...wore the English Garter on his leg"<sup>(4)</sup>, an

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1. Giovio: Desc., 8; Rag., 13.

2. Frulovisi, 24.

3. Sforza de Bettini, at Tours, SPV I, 20 Nov. 1469.

4. Ibid., SPM, 30 May 1469.



action all the more remarkable because he had not yet been instituted as a knight. Charles the Bold, if anything, emphasised this usage of the Garter by wearing it conspicuously at festivals on St. George's eve in 1475, when Edward IV was on the point of invading France.(1) Yet, it could just as easily be used to give the contrary impression. Later that year, when Edward IV came to an agreement with Louis XI, it was reported that the duke "tore up the Garter with his teeth into more than six pieces." In fact, this turned out to be incorrect, although it was evidently considered a distinct possibility in a diplomatic climate in which Edward IV had cared to remind Louis XI of his own Burgundian backing by wearing the Golden Fleece in front of him.(2)

The Tudors enthusiastically used the Garter while bolstering their dynasty by diplomatic activities. They made it their own by giving it a gilding of even greater magnificence. One can see just how much Italians saw it as an instrument of Tudor policy in two works of the sculptor Pietro Torregiano. The royal coat of arms on Henry VII's tomb (Plate 12) as well as the portrait plaque of Sir Thomas Lovell (Plate 18), a Tudor Chancellor of the Exchequer and knight of the Garter, both are encircled by the Garter device in much the same way as the Federigo d'Urbino medal, but this time the stops between the motto words and the eyes of the buckle holes are no longer plain but designed as Tudor roses. Moreover, the Tudors' high regard for the order was shown by a strict administration of its rules: if it was to function effectively this was necessary. In 1498 Raimondo de Soncino wrote to his master saying that it would be difficult for him to obtain election because "members must support each other in war"

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1. G.P. Panicharolla, Milanese ambassador to Burgundy, SPM, 24 Apr. 1475.
  2. Ibid., 27 Sept. 1475.

and at present there was the barrier of the Franco-Italian wars.(1) Next year, when the duke of Milan actually asked Henry VII for the Garter, Henry quite explicitly replied that knights had to be friends of friends and foes of foes and so, since the king of France was a member, he himself could not be one.(2) Therefore, in 1506, after Philip of Castile had been virtually blackmailed into surrendering Suffolk and drawn into a "very close alliance" with Henry VII, he accepted the Garter offered him by Henry and "gave the Golden Fleece in exchange to the prince of Wales."(3) Any Italian of importance could have seen that this was a sealing of the official friendship between them. In much the same way the election to the order of Philip's son Charles in 1508, in honour of his betrothal to Princess Mary, was as much a gesture to welcome him into the English orbit as the general agreement was an attempt to plant a Tudor rose in imperial gardens.(4) It was, in other words, a means of the Tudors' spreading out an international net. In 1519 Giustinian particularly noted how the order's ranks embraced kings and princes among its select numbers of twenty-four knights and how the office of prior had been given to the late Emperor Maximilian.(5) The implied bond of friendship was never forgotten. In 1522, for the signing of a treaty and marriage agreement between Charles V and England, "the two sovereigns wore the robes of the Garter."(6) No one mentioned how Charles had been originally given the Garter at his betrothal to Princess Mary's namesake and aunt; what mattered was that as a knight he had an automatic means of identification with the English king. In 1527 the arrangement of a

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1. R. de Soncino, SPM, 17 Nov. 1498.

2. Sanudo 2, SPV I, 1 Apr. 1499.

3. V. Quirini, SPV I, 25 Feb. 1506.

4. Carmeliano, 30-1.

5. S. Giustinian: Report, in RB II, p.310, s.d. 10 Oct. 1519.

There was, in fact, no office of prior.

6. G. Contarini, SPV III, 19 June 1522.

marriage treaty with France was accompanied by an exchange of the Garter and the St.-Michel. In France any observer could see the Garter being girt on the king's leg and his investment with the robes and insignia of the order by the English ambassador; at Windsor the assignment to the new knight of a place in the chapel where the emblems of his rank lay and where his title was inscribed "as a memorial of this dignity"(1) completed the publication and assured perpetual awareness of the election. It very obviously meant that English diplomacy had won the friendship of France. It was as much an indication of amity as a public rejection of it was of hostility. During the whole proceedings of Henry VIII's divorce of Catherine of Aragon the Hapsburg princes took very little physical action, but in 1535, when King Ferdinand for the second year running departed from his usual custom of "robing himself in the habits of the Garter...on St. George's day" and the emperor had done likewise, this was a form of protest against the repudiation of their aunt and was taken as such by the Italians.(2) The Garter was, in fine, a magnificently ostentatious device, England's golden weather-cock, which, as it dominated the diplomatic highways, could indicate the way the political wind was blowing for England in Europe.

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1. M.A. Venier (San.46), SPV IV, 20 Oct. 1527, 30 Jan. 1528;  
S. Giustinian, in France, (San.46), SPV IV, 7-17 Nov. 1527.
2. Francesco Contarini, at Vienna, SPV V, 29 Apr. 1535.

### Conclusion.

"Quot homines, tot sententiae," said Renaissance Italians' Roman ancestors. On the surface this might seem to apply fittingly to their own observations about the Great Britain of their day. There were indeed many and diverse opinions expressed by them on this subject. Yet, Renaissance writers did show a most remarkable amount of conformity. There was a pattern in the style of their observations. They tended to think of British matters in absolute terms: the good and bad; the black and white; the beautiful and ugly, these struck them most forcibly of all. There was seldom any grey 'in-between' area. Bridge-passages were the exception rather than the rule. If anything, in cases where opinions changed, Italians tended to see the former state through the latter. For Italians of the mid sixteenth century, the act of looking back into English history was necessarily coloured by their knowledge of contemporary events. The degenerate Henry VIII epitomised all English kingship, past and present. Its good points remained distinctly, but deeply in the shadow of later adverse opinion. The situation which Savorgnano described in 1531 was rather exceptional. His Henry VIII was welcoming and "of very handsome presence;...beyond measure affable,...learned and accomplished, and most generous and kind. (Savorgnano) never saw a prince better disposed than this one." That was the first image. On the reverse of the coin there was the legend that there was now living with him "a young woman of noble birth though...of bad character", for whom he meant to repudiate his virtuous and long-suffering wife.<sup>(1)</sup> For Savorgnano this greatly detracted from Henry's merits. Yet, it really only achieved some form of equipoise with his good points and certainly did not cancel them out or lessen Savorgnano's appreciation of them as

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1. Savorgnano (San.54), SPV IV, 25 Aug. 1531.

such. Much more common was the type of impression that Bandello could convey. He saw his contemporary Henry VIII as a man who had "waxed very terrible and cruel and had shed human blood to an enormous extent." Therefore, his actions coloured those of all his ancestors: Bandello concluded generally that it was "proper unto these English kings to exterminate those of their own blood and persecute the nobility, to massacre ecclesiastics and steal the goods of the church."<sup>(1)</sup> From Edward II, who was "a very bad man and so full of vices that...there was no part of him that a good and upright man might commend," to Henry VII, who showed initial promise, but soon seemed "no less athirst for human blood than the others" and <sup>also</sup> ungrateful <sup>(2)</sup>, English kings by the mid sixteenth century were seen as a vicious and cruel group of individuals.

In their commentaries on the social Englishman, Italians similarly voiced absolute opinions, sometimes contrasting among themselves, but invariably absolute. Englishmen could be Trevisan's jurymen who could not stand fasting or privation, nor endure the least discomfort<sup>(3)</sup>; or they could be Giustinian's soldiers who would "do battle with a courage, vigour and valour, that defied exaggeration."<sup>(4)</sup> This dichotomy Falier later saw and explicitly pointed out: Englishmen did not fear death; they were brave but, "when in the field, they endeavoured to give the enemy battle instantly as they could not hold out, and, when hostilities were protracted, they surrendered."<sup>(5)</sup> The English were the people who showed great inhumanity and cruelty in their disputes, in which "neither age nor lordship saved anyone from the sword." So said Prospero di Camulio in 1461.<sup>(6)</sup> In 1517,

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1. Bandello II, Nov.37.

2. Ibid. II, Nov.37, prologue.

3. Trevisan, 32-3.

4. Giustinian: Report, in RB II, p.313.

5. Falier, 24.

6. P. di Camulio, SPM, 27 Mar. 1461.

Chieregato was saying that England contained the wealth and civilization of the world and that "those who called the English barbarians appeared..to render themselves such."(1)

Such were Britons' natural characteristics.

Similarly Britons in their social activities and delineations presented examples of irreconcilable contrasts. Italians saw a distinct contrast between marriage as a business-agreement, contracted, overtly or otherwise, for commercial gain, and marriage as a love-match. The Henry VIII of their day they saw founder simply because of his inability to reconcile these two contrasting aspects of this social convention. These Italians also saw how contemporary Englishmen showed two distinct sides of their social activities. They were mannerly; they appeared to show a genuine kindness and consideration in their treatment of others, but there was sometimes the feeling that they felt a need for a stilted formality. This could obtrude itself into their social doings and contrast coldly and often awkwardly with their warmth on more spontaneous occasions.

So too with Englishmen's attitude towards the arts. Individuals, even whole classes at times, could show great appreciation of the arts for their own sake, but at times Italians could not extricate this aesthetic leaning from their impression that the arts and the ostentatious cultivation of luxuriousness were intended purely for display, purely to impress the uncommitted observer. Moreover, English society, essentially divided into contrasting classes, presented within and between its received expressions certain irreconcilables. There was a contrast between the slow life of the agrarian workers, who seemed to lack the application necessary to transform England from a partially importing to a predominantly

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1. F. Chieregato, SPV II, 10 July 1517.



exporting country, and the urban businessmen, who would have done anything, seen crowns tumble and thrones change hands, rather than endure anything that interfered with their commercial success. In turn, the <sup>bourgeoisie</sup> contrasted with the nobility who, in their rather rural setting, let land lie uncultivated in order to indulge their taste for hunting or to reap the easy profits that could be derived from sheep-farming. Within itself and in its actions the noble class displayed strange contrasts. Of all the classes it was potentially the most powerful. Yet, at times, without much apparent change in composition it could become almost impotent, <sup>politically</sup> an instrument of the will of strong kings, like the Tudors. From the class upon which the last Plantagenet kings relied for the reality of their very kingship, it became a body of men malleable in the hands of the Tudors. The <sup>nobles</sup> became as dependent upon the king for his bounty and for the granting and security of their lands as they were unable to resist his assaults. In fact, at the end of the Renaissance period, Italians almost came to recognise the noble class as comprising those leaders of society who, despite their internal differences, were marked out as a whole by the king for relentless persecution. It was an exaggerated view perhaps, but one that some mid-sixteenth century Italians with grandiloquent pens began to spread in an effort to explain generally the apparent tyranny of Henry VIII's latter years.

The land in which these Britons lived impressed Italians with its natural contrasts. It could boast of lush meadows and gentle rolling hills, but in its outer reaches it was unable to conceal its harsh mountains and <sup>its</sup> rocky barrenness. Despite fringes of unproductiveness, the natural riches of Britain led to a happy state of commercial prosperity. Indeed, had Britons applied themselves more strenuously, an even greater state of prosperity could have existed.

Yet, the irony of the situation in Britain, particularly in England, although it was the richest part, was that the men of commerce were unable to endure anything that smacked of foreign competition. If foreigners bridged economic gaps left by themselves, they reacted against this, the result of their own indolence, but did nothing to remedy it. This was partly caused by the economic insularity of their towns and their partial indifference to the countryside. Towns, especially in the later part of the Renaissance period, were drawing more and more of the English population away from the countryside. The population, already sparse in relation to the natural riches of the land, was drained away from the areas of fertility until Italians conceived of a picture of two absolutes, of an increasingly underpopulated countryside and of overcrowded towns.

Of Britain's natural characteristics strangely it was the weather that impressed Italians by its diversity. This made it difficult for pure black and white contrasts to be drawn. There could be strong cold winds and winter frost enough to freeze the Thames. There were also times when English landscapes smiled with summer warmth. But to Italians it was the type of warmth that was neither strong nor consistent enough to counterbalance the naturally moist atmosphere and contribute the final ripening touch to the land's natural fruitfulness. Yet, this temperate, grey weather did have the effect of keeping <sup>in general</sup> the British population remarkably healthy. This was a striking English feature. But in contrast, there were occasions, intermittent but recurring more frequently in the early sixteenth century, when England was smitten by the devastating common plague and by the sweating sickness, the Sudor Britannicus, the sweat of men of a cool climate. It could cancel out Britons' remarkable reputation for having good health.

Such were the contradictions fostered by the geographic peculiarities of the British terra firma. The sea, no less, produced distinctive facts of life for Britons. It protected the island like a strong fortification. It excluded continental enemies. It compelled the English to be a sea-faring nation. Yet, they were not wholly masters of it. They were compelled to co-exist with it. Until Tudor times their defensive navy often left much to be desired. Their merchant shipping was far outshone by that of some non-insular nations, notably the Italians themselves. Moreover, the sea bound in together and made more acute the confrontation between the English and the Scots. This made Italians much more aware of the paradox of how the English, who could frequently defeat the French, occasionally gain political foot-holds in France and constantly tap her financial resources, were nevertheless quite unable to subdue the much weaker Scots or to make much political or any financial capital out of their constant wars with them. Similarly, while the sea generally protected the English in their political and commercial life, to the Italians it appeared that it sheltered them too much and made them psychologically unsure in their relations with foreigners. Xenophobia existed in England simply because the natives had much less contact and hence less familiarity with foreign nations than did the other peoples of Christendom.

This was only made more pointed by the fact that those Englishmen who had greater contact with foreigners were markedly less xenophobic. However, the unxenophobic Englishman was a rare phenomenon. He only made the Italian more aware of how a sea-bound islander could be unfriendly towards, and suspicious of, his Continental neighbours.

In his religious and ecclesiastical activities the Englishman presented a very devout image to Italians. He was pious, seldom

fanatically, perhaps even in a rather self-centred way, but still devout. Throughout the Renaissance period there were Italian tales of England's adequate piety: the ordinary people; the internationally famous shrines of Bede and Becket both spoke of the same deep but not too ostentatious piety. Yet, at the Reformation, almost overnight and with scarcely an audible murmur of disapproval, the English became schismatics and their king a veritable hammer of the old established practices and institutions of the Church. Monasteries were dissolved. The revered remains of Becket were torn from his despoiled tomb, burned and the ashes scattered to the winds, as though Saint Thomas had been an arch-heretic. Yet Englishmen in general seemed to Italians to bridge the wide gulf between adulation and revilement with an apparently unconcerned ease.

In intellectual matters the English presented a sandwich-like contrast. That true Italian humanist, Poggio, looked askance at the démodé sophistry and medieval scholasticism that lingered on in England <sup>and in northern Europe</sup> into the fifteenth century. Then, with the dilettante humanism of Humphrey, duke of Gloucester, in the mid-fifteenth century growing into the active scholarship of men such as Sir Thomas More on the eve of the Reformation, there was a steady increase in the Italian estimation of the English capacity for and interest in Renaissance scholarship. Immediately after Henry VIII's death, the Italian opinion was that learning had foundered in England. There was a retrogression. The nobles were not interested in books. The universities no longer attracted young scholars. Admittedly the Italians' view was biased: they could not easily have admitted that a schismatic England could have sprung from any stable intellectual sources. Yet, the existence of such a sharp contrast between two levels of English intellectual activity was not out of tune with the

general Italian concept of an England fraught with paradoxes.

This general pattern was evident too in political and administrative matters. Kings were regarded <sup>by the English</sup> as almost sacred, and semi-priestly by their anointing. Yet, the English and Scots did not hesitate to strike them down in cold blood and in the sixteenth century there were even appearances of the ante-type of the English capacity for the judicial killing of crowned persons. The second paradox about British kingship was that the English gave every sign of requiring male monarchs. Kings themselves seemed to go to great lengths to ensure the continuity of their dynasties in the male line. Some Italians even believed that women could not inherit the English crown. Yet, most Italian writers knew that many English kings owed their thrones to succession through the female line and that their claims to France were based on the same theory of distaff inheritance. Moreover, after Henry VIII it seemed likely that England might have a queen-regnant. Scotland already had one.

In kingly government there was a distinct contrast seen between the measure of the king's association with and his disassociation from his governor. The king chose a man or a group of men to govern for him and do his will. Yet, increasingly the second part of their duties was to take upon themselves and away from the king all public recrimination about the unpopular effects of royal government. Conversely, the legislative body, parliament, in theory appeared to guard the law of the land and popular rights against royal encroachments. Yet, what Italians saw in practice was an almost impotent body, which became increasingly ineffectual in competition with strong-willed kings. The final Renaissance Italian image of parliament was that of a pliant group of men completely cowed by royal authority and only too glad to please the king by doing his will. Meanwhile, the

law, which parliament existed to protect and keep up to date, gave the appearance of being comprehensive and severe. Yet, a second glance revealed injustices and dangerous loop-holes in civil law, while the harsh criminal law still did not save England from having a notoriously large quantity of rogues.

Moreover, Italians regarded the black and white contrasts between and within the states of war and peace as something distinctively English. They could regard some kings, such as Edward III and Henry V, as entirely warlike; others, like Henry VI and Henry VII as pacific at heart. It was only rarely that a king seemed to combine in himself both warlike and pacific characteristics. Henry VIII did and might almost have been regarded <sup>by sixteenth century Italians</sup> as inconsistent in this respect. He would have his periods of warlike activity; he would sign a peace treaty and for years he would reign as though an entirely peace-loving monarch. Then again he would plunge into another campaign. In addition, England itself as a warrior nation displayed contradictions. It was a society mentally relatively prepared for war. Society still had a basically military form. Even latterly an up-to-date system of military contracts made quite sure that there was always an availability of fighting men. There seemed almost to be a surfeit of military leaders. Indeed, Italians regarded one whole estate of the realm as an almost wholly military class. Yet, for every foreign campaign it was always apparent that England had to make a considerable effort to gather suitable armies and to provision them. The reasons may well have been partly economic, partly psychological, but the sheer physical action of campaigning strained even as rich a society as England.

Moreover, under the general heading of war, England showed the obvious contrast between the way it would hit out at an external foe and, when lacking one, would turn in on itself. Internal war and



conspiracy showed up the remarkable phenomenon of the Englishman's ability to change sides or to betray at close quarters. An Italian like Frulovisi would stress the kinship of the earl of Cambridge with Henry V, whom he secretly conspired to dethrone in 1415. Edward IV's brother Clarence could betray; be reconciled with and again betray his own brother. Warwick fought for both the houses of York and Lancaster in turn. Richard III could faithfully support his brother Edward IV in his life-time but call him a bastard and apparently liquidate the nephews entrusted to his care by Edward at his death. The early Tudors could turn from leniency or amity to eliminate savagely their relatives, Warwick, the de la Poles, the Courtenays and the Poles, because their nearness to the throne made the parvenu monarchs suspect them of personal treason.

Contrasting with English kings' periods of national or personal strife were the times when England was at peace with her foreign neighbours. Her kings always seemed to make a great display of creating peace. A peace agreement was invariably accompanied by fanfares and *public* rejoicings, but usually the pledges of friendship were short lived, the conditions of agreements, especially of royal marriage projects, unfulfilled. By the middle of Henry VIII's reign Italians were beginning to see quite distinctly the contrast between the English king's pacific words and his real intentions. The Order of the Garter symbolised this. It was a glittering vehicle for displaying richness, gentility and chivalrous behaviour. It was also a diplomatic lever which could be employed by English kings in a particularly calculating and hard-headed fashion.

Italians saw these blacks and whites in English society. They could draw the line precisely between them. They could disapprove of one side; approve of the other; and yet usually showed themselves

quite willing to countenance both. For them Henry VIII came to epitomise these contrasting absolutes. They saw in him blocks of good and bad, beauty and ugliness, just as they saw them in his and his ancestors' England.

For many years Henry VIII appeared as the epitome of beauty. In 1519 he was described as "extremely handsome; nature could not have done more for him; he was much handsomer than any other sovereign in Christendom;...very fair and his whole frame admirably proportioned." (1) In 1531 Falier remarked that in Henry "God had combined much beauty of body and mind as not merely to surpass but astound all men...;his face was angelic rather than handsome." (2) By the end of his life Henry was very unattractive: he was "becoming daily old, heavy and sluggish through being very fat." Even the inflamed and poisonous cancer that afflicted his leg was physically ugly. (3) From a golden youth he had become a gross and physically degenerate old man. Then there was the Henry who could be publicly courteous and appear to be at harmony with his wife, but simultaneously be in the process of repudiating her. (4) He could privately send her away "to live in private house near a marsh, so that the bad air might speedily end her life." (5) So too with his friends, Henry showed his affection to men like Courtenay, More and Wolsey, but they all fell foul of him eventually. A neat example of this came in 1519. Giustinian was sure that some great changes of court personnel were occasioned by Henry VIII's resolve to stop his "incessant gambling." The king abruptly dismissed his friends because they had been the "companions of his excesses." (6) He was the same king who began as the richest prince in Christendom and who, by his last years, had spent so much

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1. Giustinian, in RB II, p.312.

2. Falier, 10.

3. Giovio: Hist. II, p.398.

4. A. Scarpinello, SPM, 28 June 1530.

5. Z. Andreasio, SPM, 6 Feb. 1534,

6. Giustinian, in RB, 18 May 1519.

money that he had had to debase the coinage until it became almost false money of ill-repute. Italians daily anticipated the complete ruin of the country.(1)

Henry was also the megalomaniac king who could plan successive campaigns against France and claim over all Britain a sovereignty that was not his. Yet, he showed personal smallness in his complete fear of disease. He chased around the island to escape from the plague. Or he was the man who became so careful of his reputation in war that he could delay at Dover in 1544 until he "heard of some victory gained by the English" before he himself would cross to France.(2) Above all Henry VIII was the prince who defended the pope and "write literature against the Sect of Luther (and) turn out on the contrary so much in favour of Lutheran opinions and become the enemy of the Catholic religion." He was the same prince who in early years was said <sup>to</sup> "hear three masses daily, when he hunted, and sometimes five on other days", but who, according to Segni, ended up by "prohibiting the celebration of mass...throughout the whole realm; and taking away the images of the most sacred Virgin, the Cross and the Crucifix."(3) The pious amateur theologian, the near insane heretic and iconoclast, Henry VIII successively showed both contradictory sides of his character to Italians. Invariably his good traits developed into bad ones. Seldom did any early weakness improve into a near virtue. True, while Giustinian in 1519 would judge that Henry was no statesman because he "devoted himself to pleasure and left the cares of state to the Cardinal"(4), in 1531, after Wolsey's death, Falier saw the king become an active, if somewhat oppressive, administrator.(5) But this slight amelioration of one of Henry's rare

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1. D. Barbaro, SPV V, p.359, May 1551.

2. News letter transmitted by Venetian Doge to Rome, SPV V, 7 July 1544.

3. Segni, II,vi.22; Giustinian, RB II, p.312.

4. Giustinian in RB II, p.318.

5. Falier, 11.

character weaknesses in early life was unusual. The bad state was invariably preceded by the good. In the end of the day Henry could be compared with the company of Odysseus's men who were turned into beasts by Circe.(1) Such was the Italian vision of Henry VIII. His former goodness was in general now viewed through a film of badness. As Bandello wrote on the death of Henry VIII, "in many of the English kings their wickedness far overpassed such few good points as they had." Because of Henry VIII's cruelty and his barbarously inhuman urge to exterminate the good, Italians in the mid sixteenth century could look back and <sup>find</sup> in his predecessors wickedness and viciousness to compare with his thirst for human blood.(2)

So it was with the Italians' view on Britain and the Britons. To a certain extent Henry VIII personified the existence in them of absolute states of good and bad, light and dark. His image suffered because of the Italian habit of looking back through the bad to a consequently discoloured good. Similarly, by the middle of the sixteenth century the lavish gilt on English society seemed to be becoming tarnished.

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1. Giovio: EVBI, p.504.

2. Bandello II, Nov.37, prologue.

## Appendix I

### The Ancients' View of Great Britain.

Up to the sixteenth century what Italians thought about the British Isles and their peoples depended to a certain extent upon the composite picture that they gained from their readings of ancient Classical authors who made isolated comments about Britain during the days of the Roman occupation. From these sources they must have built up, when they exerted themselves, a rather incomplete image. They had to depend upon rare and often recently discovered manuscripts. Hence their mental pictures of Britain varied in degrees of intensity. Sometimes the authors were not Italians and had not written for an Italian audience, far less a Renaissance Italian one. Often it was only the most erudite Italians with a knowledge of Classical Latin and Greek that could possibly learn much about Ancient Britain. On the other hand, apart from the later popular and none too accurate or substantial stories about King Arthur, these Classical descriptions of Britain remained almost the only fairly scientifically handled sources available to Italians. It was into these works, sometimes written as much as sixteen centuries before the Renaissance, that Italians of that age had to look to discover Britannia Antica and Vergil's Britons "wholly sundered from all the world"(1)

The earliest geographical writer on Britain was Pytheas of Marseille, who flourished about 300 B.C. Apparently he sailed up as far as the Orkneys but, for the description that he produced of this area, he was called a liar for centuries by men like Strabo, and Ptolemy. Unfortunately, the writings of Pytheas have not survived, so one can only really judge their contents from the quotations in

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1. P. Vergilius Maro, 'Eclogue' I.66.

the works of his friends or enemies, who over the centuries made use of his commentaries.

When, in fact, the Achaean historian Polybius, in the second century B.C., mentioned the existence of Britain it was only to dismiss Pytheas's apparent claim to have "traversed the whole of Britain on foot" and denigrate his calculation that the circumference of the island was 40,000 stades.(1) Pytheas's estimate was around double the correct figure but the interesting thing is that anyone in a Classical work could be certain that Britain was an island. This was very important because it was not really until the time of Agricola in first century A.D. that any Roman could be certain that Britain was an island, a factor which in those days, as in the time of the Renaissance, was to emphasise the feeling that Britain was part of Europe and yet peculiarly abstracted from it.

The next important writer on Britain was G. Julius Caesar himself. During the Middle Ages there was some confusion about the authorship of his works. Until Salutati corrected the mistake they were thought to have been written by their reviser, Julius Celsus. For the Ancient Romans, however, the confusion did not arise. Caesar's De Bello Gallico must have been widely known: it was extensively referred to by later historians and geographers. His account was original. During his first invasion of Britain in 55 B.C. Caesar noticed little about the country and the natives' peculiarities. He was rather taken aback by the Britons' method of doing battle. The fierce and lightning onslaughts of javelin throwing charioteers and horsemen alarmed his men. Yet, they were even more disconcerted when they discovered that, because "it happened to be a full moon that night, at which time the Atlantic tides were particularly high, a fact unknown to the Romans," the stormy seas had wrecked some of their beached

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1. Polybius, Vol.VI, Bk.34.5.



vessels. Their consequent loss of prestige did not leave them much negotiating power with the perceptive natives and the would-be conquerors were only too glad to retire to Gaul to spend the winter.(1)

During the next year's invasion Caesar noted more about the country. The coastal inhabitants, he thought, were of Belgic origin. They had settled in the island during and after raiding expeditions. Unlike the probably autochthonous inhabitants of the interior, these men were very similar to the Gauls in language, appearance and habits. These Britons, he noted, were extremely numerous: many homesteads were to be seen; a lot of cattle was kept for domestic purposes. The mining of tin, along with iron, was the subject of comment. But copper, Caesar incorrectly said, had to be imported. Nevertheless, he did have time to observe the natives' use of gold and silver coins or of iron bars of fixed weight as currency, a legacy, no doubt, of trade with foreigners. Caesar kept very much to the area south of London, so he came in contact with comparatively high degrees of civilization and cultivation, but he was led to believe that in the interior of the country little corn was grown and that the natives dressed in skins and lived mainly on meat and milk.(2) These Britons were evidently picturesque, distinctly so because Vergil referred particularly to the fact that in Roman theatres there were pictures of them woven into the curtains. Any Roman could see "how the inwoven Britons raised the purple curtains."(3) For Caesar, however, the Britons had been picturesque in a more literal sense, with rather savage connotations. They had the habit of painting woad on their bodies, completely shaven except for their heads and upper lips, in order to present a fierce appearance in battle. This and

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1. G. Julius Caesar, Bk.5, Ch.1.

2. *Ibid.*, Bk.5, Ch.2.

3. Vergilius I, Georgics III. 24-25.

the Britons' use of hooked axles on their war-chariots at first made the natives appear formidable to the Romans. An initial impression that their society was orientated towards war might have been conveyed. Yet there was no hint of obsession with war as there was with the Romans themselves. Renaissance Italians might have seen in this age, as in their own, a British eagerness to fight to protect their own. For the moment, only the Romans were really obsessed with glory and greed. After all it was that indefatigable gossip Suetonius's opinion that the motivation for the invasion was Caesar's desire for the fresh-water mussel pearls of the island, although in itself it would seem to be a trivial reason for attempting to subject a nation.(1)

Caesar produced a physical description of the island <sup>as a triangle,</sup> One side faced Gaul, its lower point sloping to the south where the second side began. It faced to the west opposite Spain. The third side, facing north, did not lie opposite any land except that its easterly point, in the region of Kent, extended vaguely in the direction of Germany. It faced into a region of darkness: for, according to Caesar, in winter the nights in the north of Britain were very long. Nevertheless, in the south, with the help of a water-clock, he did discover that the nights were generally shorter than in the Latin world. Ireland, en passant, only deserved mention as being half the size of Britain and as lying somewhere off the coast in the general direction of Spain.(2) Overall it is very apparent from his descriptions that Caesar was sure that Britain was an island. From this and his observations on the meteorological traits of the land one might assume that he depended largely upon Pytheas's ideas, although, in the circumference measurements that he produced, some

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1. G. Suetonius Tranquillus, Ch.I, Pt.47, p.30.

2. Caesar. Bk.5, Ch.2.

scientific inquiry and calculation is evident.

Writing in the years after Caesar's death, about 36 B.C. Diodorus Siculus produced his great work the Library of History, which in its comprehensiveness contained a fair amount of material on Britain. It was all second hand: Diodorus admitted that he depended upon legends about Britain and upon the accounts of Pytheas and Caesar. Like Pytheas he wrote in Greek. Therefore, although as a Sicilian he was well within the sphere of the Roman Empire, his work would have had less impact upon a Latin public and even less upon an Italian Renaissance one until Poggio made his Latin translation in 1455. The picture that Diodorus conceived of Britain was idyllic, almost arcadian. His descriptions of Hyperboreans, people so far north that they lived beyond the source of the north wind, are thought to have been of early Britons. They lived on "an island no smaller than Sicily." It was both "fertile and productive of every crop and, since it had an unusually temperate climate, it produced two harvests every year." The fact that Leto was born on the island and that Apollo was greatly honoured there added to its peculiar atmosphere. It may seem fantastic that Diodorus said that the natives "daily praised this god continuously in song and honoured him exceedingly and (that) there was also on the island both a magnificent sacred precinct of Apollo and a notable temple which was adorned with many votive ornaments and was spherical in shape", but the notable temple bears such a striking resemblance to Stonehenge that the devotees that he imagined "continuously played upon (the cythera) in the temple and sang hymns of praise to the god" were very likely to have been Druids.(1)

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However, the contradictory thing is that, when Diodorus

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1. Diodorus Siculus, Vol.II, Bk.2, Ch.47.

came to give a more scientific description of the land, which, after Caesar's invasion, he now called Brettanike, he produced something quite precise. The exact position of Britain was described in Pytheas's triangular mode and came confidently accompanied by measurements of each side. However, in sum these also amounted to double the actual circumference of the island. He reiterated Caesar's ideas about the density of the population and about the simplicity of the construction of the houses. He was interested in the British habit of storing grain to ripen indoors after only the heads of the corn had been harvested. There is a suggestion that he stole this idea from Pytheas. Moreover, some contradictions emerge from Diodorus's own comments. He asserted that, although the land was divided among many kings and potentates, they "for the most part lived at peace among themselves." He himself knew that they were sufficiently practiced in war to have well organised chariots "like Trojan war heroes." Moreover, Caesar's experiences were not unknown to him. Here he also contradicted his Hyperborean notion of "an unusually temperate climate" by stating that Britain's "climate was extremely cold...since it actually lay under the Great Bear."

Diodorus made a point of describing Cornwall as a separate entity. Although he very likely derived his ideas from Pytheas, he was unconsciously setting a trend for later writers who would treat that area as something phenomenal. The inhabitants were "especially hospitable to strangers and had adopted a civilized manner of life because of their dealings with merchants and other peoples." The reason for this foreign interest was mainly the tin which the Cornish crudely quarried from earthy seams; cleansed of its impurities and conveyed at low tide to the partial island of Ictis, probably St. Michael's Mount. There it was purchased in large

quantities by foreign merchants, who then sold it throughout Europe. In saying this, Diodorus was adding to the growing and long-lasting notion that Britain was naturally rich in mineral resources.(1)

Writing during the reign of Tiberius, Strabo in his De Situ Orbis relied largely upon Caesar's for his own account of Britain. There is the mention of pearls, gold and silver; a description of Britain's supposedly triangular shape, inaccurately positioned, and, as with Caesar, a Mediterranean man's complaint about the coldness yet temperateness of the weather. He summed it up by saying, "The weather is more rainy than snowy and on the days of clear sky fog prevails so long a time that throughout a whole day the sun is to be seen for only three or four hours around midday." However, Strabo had more of a sociologist's eye. He took time to describe the inhabitants, if only because he had been stimulated to do this by the sight in Rome of captive Britons, "mere lads towering as much as half a foot above the tallest people in the city." They were even taller than the Kelts of Brittany though thinner and less well proportioned and not so blond. Socially they were like, but simpler than the Kelts in as much as they did not know how to cultivate land properly or even how to make cheese. Nevertheless, they did manage to produce skins, slaves and fine hunting dogs, as well as minerals, for export. Like Caesar and Diodorus, Strabo mentioned the existence of many kings. There was an obviously hierarchical set-up, closely resembling the clannish system of the early Greeks. It clearly showed that society was built for war. The existence of chariots and of cities built within fortified stockades in the forests emphasised this. However, overall much of Strabo's account was noticeably based on hearsay. One can see that in his uncertain description of Ireland. This isle, which he placed

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1. Ibid., Vol.III, Bk.5.21-22.

as parallel to the north of Britain, was apparently the home of savages who indulged in cannibalism and incest as a matter of course.(1)

Another writer of a De Situ Orbis that enjoyed a fair popularity in Medieval and Renaissance Italy was Pomponius Mela. Although he flourished at the time of Claudius's British invasion, he did not alter many of the stock descriptions of Britain. This was still described as "triangular like Sicily" but now sloping down in a more south-easterly direction as Kent elbowed the mouth of the Rhine. Yet, he did give a grand picture of Britain as a land "flat, huge and fruitful enough to light up the breast of man." However, it was Ireland, "equal in extent to Britain"(sic) but oblong in shape, that was more originally described. Too much rain was bad for maturing Irish corn. Instead it produced such luxuriant pasture-land that cattle had to be watched lest they should over-eat. If Mela thought that the Britons were quarrelsome, uncultured and "greatly governed by greed", the Irish were worse. He considered them to be the most ignorant men in the world, although by way of being experts in the practice of piety, a strangely lingering description.(2)

Pliny the Elder, commenting on Britain in his Natural History, is disappointing. He contented himself with using acknowledged quotations from other authors. Pytheas, Isodorus, Dionysius Periegesis and Timaeus of Tauromenium were all used by him when he talked about "Albion...and all the islands...called the Britains (Britanniae)." Circumferences, lengths and breadths of Britain and Ireland he gave. The figures, certainly more accurate than previous ones, he based on the results of fairly recent explorations carried out by the military, who, he admitted, had not ventured "beyond the

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1. Strabo, Vol.II, Bk.4.5.(1-5). Also references to measurements and positions of isles, Bk.1.4(2), Bk.2.4.(1), Bk.2.5.8. & 28, and Bk.4.3.3.

2. Pomponius Mela, vide 'Britannia' in Bk.3.



neighbourhood of the Caledonian Forest." His attention was also engaged by the amazing number of small islands scattered round Britain, eighty-five in all by his calculation. It was from this period that Romans were impressed by the fact that Britain, certainly no cohesive continent, was not even a single island nor even two islands, but the composition of clusters of archipelagos that could protect their inhabitants from over much Roman interference. It was a thing that, right down to Paolo Giovio's time impressed Renaissance scholars as they observed this complex of islands from afar. It might be argued that it was this complete insularity that psychologically daunted the Romans in their attempts to subdue completely "the Britains". On the other hand Pliny did produce a rather unimpressive picture when he retold Timaeus's story about Britons sailing to an "island named Mictis,...where tin was found,...in boats of osier covered with stitched hides."(1) The Romans certainly had better boats. Yet, as Flavius Josephus recorded, even the Emperor Titus had once demanded of the Jews, "For me what greater obstacle is there than the walls of the ocean? Yet even surrounded by this the Britons cower before the arms of the Romans." Josephus considered that the Romans' ability merely to cross the English Channel was a greater feat than their enslavement of a strong people like the Germans.(2) It is small wonder that the Romans in later years found the ragged mass of islands concentrated in the stormy seas to the north of Britain rather untamable. On the other hand this always served to stimulate interest in the inquiring minds of Italians of this and later ages.

Nothing would daunt the great Julius Agricola when, as commander-in-chief of the Roman forces in Britain in the years after

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1. Pliny, Vol.II, Bk.iv.16. 197-99.

2. Flavius Josephus (1837), Vol.II, p.514, Bk.6, Ch.6.

77 A.D., he explored the length and breadth of the British mainland. The account of his observations, set out by his son-in-law, Cornelius Tacitus, in his book De Vita Iulii Agricola, was fuller and likely to have been regarded as more authoritative than earlier writers' works. He began by describing Britain as the largest island known to the Romans. Strangely he was one of the first Romans to be able to assert this authoritatively. Britain's south side was "in full view of Gaul", while to the north in the region of Caledonia there was a huge shapeless mass of land tapering to a wedge. This and his descriptions of promontories, about which at the north the tide ebbed and flowed often and violently, certainly gave the island more character than the earlier triangular ideas. Again the climate was considered to be objectionable with all its rain and mists, though with no extreme cold as a saving grace. Again there were remarks about days being longer than in the Roman world and an even more vivid description of the north's short summer nights when he remarked that "sometimes the sun's glow could be seen all night long", as the sun "simply passed on the horizon." With its peculiar climatic conditions, Britain could grow in its fruitful soil all products except more Mediterranean plants like the olive and vine. This was apparently an improvement on earlier limitations, although Tacitus did emphasise that the air's moist nature made quick-growing crops slow to ripen. By his time the not wholly justifiable reputation of Britain's gold, silver and other minerals seemed to be great enough to present a motive for continued and extended Roman occupation. He too talked about British pearls, although he thought that they came from salt-water oysters instead of from fresh-water mussels. In this he might well have been mistaken because he said that British pearls, described as "dusky and mottled", did not compare in beauty with the pearls from

the oysters torn from the rocks of the Red Sea. Tacitus dissertated quite originally on the inhabitants of Britain. They were all barbarians to him. He really could not tell whether they were aboriginals or immigrants, but, since the Caledonians had reddish hair and large limbs, there was a suggestion of a German origin. The swarthy faces and curly hair of the Silures of South Wales, coupled with their presumed proximity with Spain, hinted at a Spanish origin. However, Tacitus finally decided that, since the Britons' language, rituals and religion bore a great similarity to the Gauls', it was likely that many of them were of Gaulish stock. Yet, this did not prevent him from saying that the natural ability of the Britons was considered superior to and more useful than the trained skill of the Gauls. This led him to give a picture of chiefs' sons being trained in the liberal arts and of ordinary Britons eager to learn the Latin language; to adopt the Roman dress, with the result that "the toga was everywhere to be seen"; and to indulge in the agreeable luxuries like baths, banquets, temples and mansions. His description of Ireland as "lying between Britain and Spain", added little to earlier ideas, although it was a change from Mela's island lying above Britain.(1) If for no other reason, Tacitus's account of Britain is very important because it spotlighted Britain's natural richness, in both agricultural and mineral terms, and it initiated the idea that Britons had an unusual facility for learning. These themes were to reappear in Renaissance times.

In 150 A.D. when Claudius Ptolemy of Alexandria published his Geographia, he produced a picture of Britain that had a greater accuracy than Strabo's. His contribution was to describe the position and coast-line of present day England in some detail. He showed himself

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1. P. Cornelius Tacitus, Bks. 10, 11, 12, 21, 24.

familiar with most place and tribal names and pointed out all the promontories and estuaries of the west coast right up to the Solway and similarly the east coast to the Forth. The south coast, from Land's End to Exeter, and from Plymouth to Hastings and Kent, he correctly positioned in relation to the north coast of Gaul. However, there his usefulness ended because his description of Scotland showed a land twisting to the east with the actual north of the mainland as the most easterly point. This displaced other physical features with the result that the Galloway promontory was the most northern point of the mainland, while above it, to the north, lay Ireland and the Orkneys at a completely wrong latitude. Ptolemy's work as a whole may have had its uses, but in as much as it is a piece of mathematical formulation, it is dry and unproductive of any visual images of British life.(1)

In the first quarter of the third century A.D., the most important work to deal with Britain was the Roman History of Dio Cassius. It was important for its contemporary descriptions but even more so for its retrospective comments. Dio briefly described Caesar's invasions, remarked on Augustus's plans for one and scoffed at Caligula's pretended conquest of the island.(2) It was only with Claudius and his general Aulus Plautius that Roman soldiers were again urged to "carry on a campaign outside the limits of the known world." (3) The use of this phrase, coupled with his assertion that Agricola was "the first of the Romans whom we know to discover the fact that Britain is surrounded by water", emphasised that Britain was still a relatively unknown quantity to the Romans.(4) Strangely, it was in the speech

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1. Ptolemy, Bk.2.

2. Dio Cassius, Vol.III, Bk.39. 50, 51, 53; Vol.V, Bk.49.38; Vol.VII, Bk.59.21-25.

3. Ibid., Vol.VII, Bk. 60.19.1-5.

4. Ibid., Bk. 66.20.1.

that Dio put into the mouth of Queen Buduica, as she urged her fellow Britons against the Romans, that he explained this more fully. It was a Roman view-point that she was expressing when she said, "We inhabit so large an island, or rather a veritable world of our own and are so separated by the ocean from all the rest of mankind that we have been believed to dwell on a different earth and under a different sky." (1) Britain was a different world; it did exist under a sky different from Italy's. To a third century Roman citizen like Dio Britain was almost as much an unknown and untamable land of opportunity as it had been to Roman soldier-pioneers of the first century. One has only to look at the award of the title 'Britannicus' for conspicuous exploits in the island to see how Romans felt that there was always something there still to be conquered. Dio scoffed at Caligula's use of the style 'Britannicus' and said that it was undeserved. After Caesar's first British campaign the Senate had declared a twenty day period of thanksgiving simply because Britain had become accessible, but when Claudius did so much more they rewarded him with the title 'Britannicus'. To please him further they bestowed the same name on his son "and, in fact, Britannicus came in a way to be the boy's regular name." (2) Writing in the early fourth century, the imperial biographer Aelius Spartianus related how the Emperor Severus was given the Britannicus because, as the crowning glory of his reign, "he built a wall across the island of Britain from sea to sea (i.e. he renovated Hadrian's wall) and thus made the province secure." (3) A few decades later Commodus's biographer Aelius Lampridius scornfully remarked that this emperor "was called Britannicus by those who desired to flatter him." (4) It is evident from these few examples

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1. *Ibid.*, Vol.VIII. 62. 4. (2).

2. *Ibid.*, VII.59.25; Vol.III, Bk. 39.53; Vol.VII, Bk. 60. 22.1.

3. Aelius Spartianus, Vol.I, xviii.2, p.413.

4. Aelius Lampridius I, vii.4, p.285.



of the honoured use and despised misuse of the style 'Britannicus' that Britain was very much in some Romans' minds as challenging virgin-country where the brave could display their valour.

The occasions for this were not few: although there had been a certain degree of Romanisation from an early juncture, the Britons, products of their country, remained to a great extent savage, or not civilized in a Roman fashion. Dio admitted that Buduica was "possessed of a greater intelligence than often belongs to women", but he could not help remarking on her belligerent appearance and outlandish mode of dress. Her appearance was most terrifying and the look in her eye fierce; her voice was harsh; her impressively tall body was invariably clad in a tunic of divers colours, a thick cloak and a large gold necklace. Cascading over all, "a great mass of the tawniest hair fell to her hips."<sup>(1)</sup> There was, however, a cultured aspect to Buduica. A century and a half later Dio was aware that Britain contained people much more bizarrely savage. He knew of two distinct races of Britons, the Caledonians and the Maecitae, the former living to the north of the island's cross-wall, which divided them from the latter in the south. However, both seemed to "inhabit wild and waterless mountains and desolate swampy plains." His details about their domestic situations, their unrestricted polygamy and their neglect of natural resources were not original. Nor were his descriptions of their warlike traits new. The chariots, the small swift horses, the deliberate choice of warriors as rulers, the brave swift-running foot-soldiers and all their weapons were details borrowed by Dio from earlier writers. On the other hand, there was an atmosphere about his British savage that suggested that he had been refining his military techniques. He now had "a bronze apple

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1. Dio, Vol.VIII, Bk.62.2.3-4.



attached to the end of his spear-shaft so that when it was shaken it might clash and terrify the enemy." This may have been intended to confuse the Roman occupiers. Certainly their being inured to hunger, cold and any kind of hardship was something resulting from the extended kind of harassment that only the Romans could give. The natives would "plunge into swamps and exist there for many days with only their heads above the water"; they could support themselves in the forests on barks and roots or on some mysterious kind of food fabricated for campaigns.(1) In brief, neither deprivation or thirst worried them as much as it did the Romans. Yet, although there were these evident signs of a native adaptation to confront the invaders, to someone like Dio it was the savage Britons' environment that gave them their terrible appearance and rough attributes. Renaissance Italians might have seen a parallel with the "wild Irish" of their own day. Certainly, they regarded them with the same awed distaste.

Writing near the middle of the third century, Herodian of Antioch showed many signs of having used Dio's works to obtain a picture of Britain, but he embroidered over the basic image of the Britons. The further removed the writer was the more savage they appeared to be. Living in their marshy regions, incidentally preserved as such because of continual flooding by ocean tides, the natives were accustomed to wade about waist-deep in marshy pools. The muddying of their bodies did not disconcert them because they went about completely naked, except for ornaments of iron at the waist and throat. Like other barbarians, they apparently considered iron to be a symbol of wealth and valued it as gold. A glance again at Buduica's gold necklace would have told him that this was not generally true. However, Herodian was obsessed with the Britons' nudity. But he could only

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1. Ibid., Vol.IX, Bk.77.12.1-5.

discover a feeble reason for it: they did not want to conceal the tattoos of many-coloured designs of animals with which they decorated their bodies. Previously the story had been that woad had been painted on to create a more savage appearance in battle. That at least was the notion that survived. Herodian's ornamental warriors presented a more effete image. At the same time, he tried to condemn them as barbaric for wearing simply a belt for their swords as the only concession towards the concealment of their pictorial skins.(1)

There was really no doubt about the Britons' barbarity. Even by the reign of Hadrian the Romans had realised how irrepressible it was. Aelius Spartianus later recalled how Hadrian "was the first to construct a wall, eighty miles in length, which was to separate the barbarians from the Romans."(2) It was the same one that Severus took care to repair at the beginning of the third century. In the mid second century Antoninus Pius had seen his legate "build a second wall, one of turf, after driving back the barbarians."(3) It must have appeared to Julius Capitolinus as he wrote this in the first half of the fourth century that Severus's repair to Hadrian's wall was a retrograde step, an admission that at least the northern half of the British mainland was virtually lost to barbarism. Only walls, stone walls and not temporary ones of turf, could protect what civilization had sprung up in Britain. The importance of this for the Renaissance Italian reader was that he could derive some notion of a psychological dividing line between England and Scotland. There was to linger on an idea of wilder, less civilized northern and of more cultivated southerners protecting themselves by aggression. The Romans found this one of the weakest imperial boundaries; the later Medieval English

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1. Herodian, Bk.III, Ch.14. 2-8.

2. Aelius Spartianus, I, xi.2, p.35.

3. J. Capitolinus, I, Bk.v, Ch.4, p.111.

suffered from no more persistent and potentially dangerous enemy than the Scots.

Writing about the end of the fourth century, Ammianus Marcellinus let fall a few scraps of information about Britain at a time when it was being ravaged by "the savage tribes of the Picts and Scots, who had broken the peace that had been agreed upon and were laying waste the regions near the frontiers", and by the Saxons as they made plundering forays on the island's coasts.(1) Yet still one can infer, from a mention of German granaries' having to be rebuilt to store the grain that was regularly brought over from Britain, that the country was naturally rich and exploited enough to be the centre of a very large export business in grain.(2) Moreover, Marcellinus remarked that the Romans had learned in the East how to wear "armlets, necklaces and jewels, especially pearls", which could be acquired with difficulty in India and Persia. But the British sea also produced many pearls, though of an inferior quality(3), so even a troublesome province like Britain could partly justify the amount of money spent on its defence. It also justified its existence by being a usefully remote place where recalcitrant Romans could be sent into exile.(4) Yet still Britain fascinated the Romans. This was partly because it was unusual; it was different from the rest of Europe. It was this same fascination that made Marcellinus remark, long after Caesar had said so, that the British seas "rose and fell in a strange manner, being raised by violent tides and then again sinking to a perfect plain."(5) It still fascinated men of the Renaissance. Those travelling in Britain could say that they had

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1. Ammianus Marcellinus, Vol.II, Bk.xx.1.1; Vol.III, Bk.xxvii.8.1.
  2. Ibid., Vol.I, Bk.xxviii.2.3.
  3. Ibid., Vol.II, Bk.xxiii.6.88.
  4. Ibid., Bk.xxii.3.3; xxviii.1.21.
  5. Ibid., Bk.xxvii.8.6.

tasted of the same experiences as the ancient Romans. The sea was in some ways symbolic of the syndrome of fierce war alternating with prosperous peace that marked Roman rule in Britain and continued to exemplify the state of England at the time of the Italian Renaissance.

Early in the fifth century the western Classical world in effect died, suffocated under a blanket of barbarism. But, even before that, Constantinian Christianity had begun to corrode the literary and philosophic ideals of Antiquity. As K.J. Huysmans much later lushly put it, soon the Latin language "was rotten through and through and hung like a decaying corpse...spiced with the aromatics of the Church."<sup>(1)</sup> It was the sort of observation that a florid Renaissance writer might have made as a form of criticism. Even Bede, that English Latinist who wrote so much on England, though already well enough known not to need to be 'rediscovered' by Renaissance scholars, was too impregnated with these ecclesiastical spices to suit humanistic purists. He would never have been taken as part of the Classical world. If anything, he took from it as he used its comments on his own native land to supplement his own observations. One just has to look at the comments of an early fifteenth century humanist like Francesco da Fiano to realise just how unsympathetic this new genre of scholar was to Latin writers of the Christian Church after the fall of Rome.<sup>(2)</sup> However, this does leave one with a fairly neatly definable picture that existed in and more clearly formed at the backs of the minds of Renaissance Italians who in their own day felt moved to comment on Britain.<sup>(3)</sup>

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1. K.J. Huysmans: À Rebours, (Harmondsworth, 1959), pp.49, 50.

2. Cf. H. Baron: Crisis, p.284.

3. For dates of Renaissance 'discoveries' of Classical works refer to R.R.Bolgar: The Classical Heritage..., Appendices I and II, pp.455-541.

## Appendix II

### King Arthur and Chivalric Britain.

"As concerning this noble prince, for the marvelous force of his body and the invincible valiance of his mind, his posterity hath almost vaunted and divulged such gestes as in our memory among the Italians are commonly noised of Roland, the nephew of Charles the Great." Thus the anonymous English translator of Polydore Vergil's Anglica Historia spoke of King Arthur.<sup>(1)</sup> The original was written in the early sixteenth century when Vergil was in a good position to look back over four centuries and more of Italian literature, which in his day had received its ultimate elaboration in the works of Boiardo and Ariosto. Although the literary traditions of England, France and Spain had notably developed and expanded the theme of Arthur's life and times, Italy perhaps more than any created an extremely rich and complex literature that found a fictional setting in Gran Bretagna, not necessarily because of Italian authors' acquaintance with that country but because there was already in French and English literature a basis of good plot material set in Britain. "The truth was that, although Italians revelled in the trappings of chivalresque life, they had no moral equivalent of King Arthur and no Roland, chevalier sans peur et sans reproche." When one does find descriptive flashes about Britain and its peoples in these foreign romances, they are often the products of poetic imagination and seldom the result of scientific observation. As opposed to the rather forbidding image that the Ancients had of Britain, the Italian romancers conceived of a picture far more mellow and cultured. This is perhaps not surprising: the Classical writers were trying to convey a factual

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1. Vergil: AH(LT), p.121.



picture; the later Italians were writing about a largely fictional character, King Arthur, who, if he existed at all, certainly left no distinct traces of his existence and no material evidence of his life. Nevertheless, there were many Italian chroniclers and historiographers who attempted to treat of Arthur's life on a scientific basis but, without the romantic elements, their Arthurian accounts were thin and particularly arid.

Although the publication of Geoffrey of Monmouth's Historia Regnum Britanniae in the 1130s put a collated body of usable, pseudo-historical Arthurian material at the disposal of Italians, they were already familiar with Arthurian stories at the beginning of the twelfth century. This is shown by the Arthurian scene over the portals of the Porta della Pescheria of Modena Cathedral (Plate 21) or that over the door in the church of San Nicola at Bari, or even by the 'Rex Arturus' riding "une sorte de bouc enorme" in a mosaic pavement in Otranto Cathedral.<sup>(1)</sup> But in the thirteenth century literary references also began to appear. One of the first came in the Detto del Gatto Lupesco, the story of a wandering minstrel who encountered two knights of the court of King Arthur. As they explained to him, they had come to the mountain called Mongibello to find out the truth about their sire. In other words, after Arthur's victory over the rebel Mordred, the English had had to explain his disappearance. One theory, perhaps created by some Englishman at Frederick II's Sicilian court, was that he was residing under Mount Etna. But the mystery was not to be solved and the two knights were returning "in nostra terra, ne lo reame d'Inghilterra", an interestingly precise description at a time when the Arthurian story was more vaguely referred to as "la materia di Bretagna."<sup>(2)</sup>

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1. Cf. E.G.Gardner: The Arthurian Legend., pp.4-6, 11-12.
  2. Detto del Gatto Lupesco, in E. Monaci, p.449.



Perhaps the first Italian to write a full length Arthurian romance was Rustichello da Pisa in the late thirteenth century. This work, entitled Meliadus de Leonnoys after the name of Tristan's father, was set mainly in the region of Camelot. It also explored Meliadus's romantic involvement with a queen of Scotland, "one of the marvellous beauties of the world", and explained how the king of Scotland was revenged upon the lovers. However, overall Rustichello gave little information about Britain, although he did describe some of the grandeur of Arthur's court. At Camelot there were "companions of the Round Table like King Cavadoc, King Yon of Ireland, the king of the Right March, the king of North Wales, the king of Gallone beyond the sea, the king of the Franks and others, altogether fourteen kings." While this impressive company was at dinner once there appeared "a gigantic knight leading a girl dressed in rich cloth-of-gold and a gold crown and her palfrey was covered in rich vermillion samite to its hooves." It is a vivid picture of great colour and richness. Yet one cannot but think that it would more aptly have described the luxury of a thirteenth century continental court rather than the dress and company of the early sixth century establishment of the king of Longres, as Rustichello always called Arthur.(1)

About the same time there was produced in Italy an anonymous prose romance about Tristan, Il Tristano Riccardiano. However, it is singularly bare of descriptions. Tintagel Castle, so picturesque in form and setting, was referred to as "uno castello, lo quale si si chiama Tintoil." Nor in the sentence, "The king, Mark, returned to his barons at Tintoil in Cornwall", is there any idea given of the appearance of Tintagel, not to mention of King Mark, his barons nor his kingdom of Cornwall. Similarly with the king of Scotland, references

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1. Rustichello da Pisa, pp.444-5, 424 et passim.

to him contained not even the slightest hint about his character or country. At an easy sea-crossing from the terra-firma of North Wales, the Castello di Proro on the Isola Lontana was only described as the lordship of Brunor. The romance only became vaguely descriptive when recalling the revenge wrought by Tristan for his father's murder on "the city called Bresia...He killed all the men and women and demolished the city and walls right down to the foundations."(1)

A piece of prose contemporaneous with this work was the Vita di Merlino, ascribed to Giorgio Delfin Zorzi of Venice. In its attempt to give the background to the series of Merlin's prophesies, it did say something about the state of affairs in, as it called them, "la insula d'Inghilterra" and "l'Isola di Scotia". One of the first impressions that it gave was that "when a woman was found in fornication or indeed in underhand adultery, at once she was stoned by the people and killed." Perhaps to thirteenth century Italians this seemed to be exceptionally severe but, with later notions of Queen Guinevere being sentenced to the stake for such an offence, it is hardly surprising that some Italians thought that this was common practice in Britain.(2) The Vita also contained the very distinct notion that British kings were elected by the barons, or so it would seem from the descriptions of the succession of Kings Moines, Utherpendragon and Arthur.(3) Moreover, with Utherpendragon there was a suggestion that a ceremony of kingly consecration took place: Uther was "sacrato Re ne la città di Londres." With Arthur there was an even more distinct suggestion of actual coronation in the sentence: "incoronato il nostro signor messer Artus di tutte il regno di Londres...per mano de l'episcopo."(4) However, with coronation, if not perhaps kingly election in the West

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1. Il Tristano Riccardano, pp.28, 3, 17.

2. Zorzi, Ch.6; Ch.31, p.67.

3. Ibid., Ch.31.

4. Ibid., Ch.120, 165.

coming little before the ninth century, one might assume again that this was a thirteenth century interpolation in a sixth century British story. As far as the geographic expression of Britain was concerned, the Vita said very little: the island was described as being divided into the almost contemporary sections of Scotland, Gaules, Liones and neighbouring Londres. It is only with the mention of a name like "la piccola Bertagna" (sic) that one can imagine the use of the name Gran Bretagna.(1)

About the beginning of the fourteenth century there was written a poem called Il Mare Amoro, in which one finds some slight Arthurian material among references to Olympian gods and other Ancients. The author referred to the impregnability of the walls of Morgan le Fay's mountain stronghold against the attacks of Lancelot and talked about the oarless, sail-less, land- and sea-riding boat that Merlin gave to the clever lady of Avalon:

"un barchetta

"Tal chon fu quella che dono Merlino

"A la valente donna d'Avalona,

"Ch'andassi senza remi e senza vela

"Altressi ben per terra chome per aqua."(2)

The story bore at least a superficial resemblance to one of the thirteenth century Cento Novelle Antiche. The Damsel of Shalott died for love of Lanceloto del Lac but, before she did so, she arranged that her body, noble arrayed, should be borne down to Camelot in a mysterious sail-less ship.(3) These were fabulous stories and there is no reason to imagine that Italians regarded them as anything other

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1. Ibid., pp.176, 250.

2. Il Mare Amoro, in E. Monaci, p.324.

3. Le Cento Novelle Antiche: Il Novellino, p.103, No.8.

than such.

"Ysidis ibat erum flavis fugi bundula tricis

"non minus eluso quam sit zelata marito

"per silvas totiens per pascua sola repleta

"qua simul heroes decertavere Britanni,

"Lanciloth et Lamiroth et nescio quis Palamedes,"(1)

So wrote Dante's contemporary, Giovanni del Virgilio in a poetic parenthesis. In this description of Isotta "wandering with yellow tresses, her husband eluding in measure as herself was longed for, time and again found alone among the glades and pastures," one finds again the sweetness and light of an idyllic situation. The glades and pastures are meant to be pleasant places where one could wander and the yellow tresses are the fulfilment of what for the Renaissance Italian was to be an ideal of feminine beauty. It is a femininity which Giovanni offset by the masculinity of Britannic heroes like Lancelot, Lamoracke and even Palamede. In a few lines, he managed to suggest the two contrasting key-notes of the Arthurian romance, the two that made it so acceptable to the Italians, love and adventure. How vividly too did Giovanni write a short poem about Isotta's taking refuge in Tintagel Castle from the pursuit of the ardent Palamede.

"Turris in amplexu laticum fabricata virentem

"despicit agrorum faciem....

".....tristi ridens patet area bello."

Now is Tintagel, "a tower built up from the surrounding embraces of the waters and looking down upon a verdant stretch of country whose smiling face lies exposed to miserable war", given a more realistic

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1. Giovanni del Vergilio: Carmen VI, pp.190-1.

and dramatic description, as in the Cornish landscape.(1)

Needless to say, Dante also alluded to Arthurian matters. He not only mentioned "some very beautiful, long stories of King Arthur" in his De Volgari Eloquentia and in his Convivio spoke of Lancelot(2), but also in his Divina Commedia, where, apart from Francesca da Rimini's confession that it was while reading of Lancelot and Guinevere's first kiss that she and Paolo fell in love, he mentioned Tristan along with Paris and the thousands more who died for their love.

"Vedi Paris, Tristano e più di mille

"ombre...ch'amor dimostra vite dispartille."(3)

But perhaps less romanticised was his reference to Mordred's freezing in Hell for his treason, after dying at Arthur's hand.

"e tutta la Caina

"potrai cercare, e non troverai ombra

"dega più d'esser fitta in gelattina:

"non quelli a cui fu rotto il petto e l'ombra

"con esso un colpo per la man d'Artù."(4)

Naturally Arthur himself was not to be found in the world of shadows: Dante would hardly even then have presumed that he had died.

Rustichello might well have referred to Meliadus's mistress, the queen of Scotland, as "one of the marvellous beauties of the world", but in the anonymous mid fourteenth century Tavola Ritonda it was his wife "who was a lady beyond measure beautiful in body." Apart from this and the odd reference to the "king of the realm of Longres", the only other point of interest was the discordant

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1. G. del Vergilio, poem on Iseult, in Gardner: Arthurian Legend..., p.218.

2. Dante Alighieri: De Volgari Eloquentia, X.12-19; Il Convivio, IV.28.59-62.

3. Dante Alighieri: Divina Comedia, Inf.v.127-138, 67-9.

4. Ibid., Inf.xxxii.58-62.

note sounded by an island called Gioghanti, where strangers were always made prisoner in the Castello di Proro.(1) Yet this says very little about England and Italians might well have regarded it as fanciful.

About this same time Giovanni Boccaccio wrote his Amorosa Visione, in which, in a procession of knights and lovers, he introduced such figures as Arthur, Percival and Galeotto, Lancelot and Guinevere, Amoraldo of Ireland, Palamede, Tristan and

"fair Isotta, side by side with him

"came; his hand pressed in hers

"and they gazed into each other's face."

But this was all rather unremarkable and soon the procession continued with Brunor and Orlando.(2) It was no more remarkable than Buoncompagno da Signa's equation of Isolta with Helen of Troy. They both were precious pearls and morning stars. Lilies twined, roses blushed and violets became purple in praise of their beauty but they told not a word about Isolta's country.(3)

About 1494 Boiardo took up the chivalresque theme and transposed it into the setting of Charlemagne's court, with Orlando as the hero. Previously Italians had enjoyed the tales of Charles and his nephew Roland, ardently fighting their holy wars. But Boiardo in his Orlando Innamorato <sup>also</sup> infused into them the fairly acceptable theme of love. Britain was renowned as a romantic setting for such exploits in that period.

1. Romanzo di Tristano o della Tavola Ritonda, in E. Monaci, p.339.
2. G. Boccaccio: Amorosa Visione, Canto XI, p.58.
3. Buoncampagno da Signa: Amicitia, xxxiii, p.71.



"Fo gloriosa Bretagna la grande  
 "Una stagion per l'arma e per l'amore,  
 "Onde ancora oggi il nome suo si spande  
 "Sì che al re Artuse fa portare onore,  
 "Quando e bon cavallieri a quelle bande  
 "Monstrarno in più battaglie il suo valore,  
 "Et or sua fama al nostro tempo dura."(1)

All that the Arthurian court had earned an enduring fame for was there: the season for arms and for love when the good knights showed their valour in battle and went on adventures with their ladies. Nevertheless, Boiardo was writing a poem about the French Roland (Rinaldo) and so, generally speaking, British matters were only touched upon en passant. King Salomone was mentioned once or twice as "the good king of Britain", while his son and regent found mention as Otto "who with him ruled the English (Anglesi)." The king of Scotland was there too, leading the sixth division in Charlemagne's army: "El re di Scozia giù mena la sesta"; but remained for the reader a faceless character.(2)

Ariosto, continuing where Boiardo left off, in his poem Orlando Furioso, published in 1516, made greater use of the British setting. Orlando was on his way as an envoy to England when he was overtaken by a storm, appropriate <sup>enough</sup> to British waters. The sea "rolled its heavy billows, white with foam.

"The wind, enraged that he opposed its will,  
 "Stirred up the waves; and, mid the gathering gloom,  
 "So loud the storm and tempest's fury grew  
 "That top-mast high the flashing waters flew."(3)

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1. Boiardo, II.xviii.1.

2. Ibid., II.xxiii.18; III.viii.20; II.xxix.60-61.

3. Ariosto, II.28.

Consequently he was driven onto the Scottish shore near "Berwick's neighbouring port." The Scottish scene was forbidding, with its "dusky coast" and seemingly endless forests, called the "Caledonian wood", with its "shadowy groves of ancient oak", its "dismal forest, dark and drear," and "woody coast".(1) But even here British valour was still to be found: for

"Through these roved many a famous cavalier

"Renowned for feats in arms of British strain."(2)

Ariosto also introduced an almost contemporary note by referring to Scotland's Border monasticism: for Rinaldo "guested in an abbey grey which spent much wealth in harbouring those who claimed its shelter, warlike knight or wandering dame." Afterwards, one is told, Rinaldo journeyed towards the walled city of St. Andrews to see the king.(3) From this one could infer that Ariosto thought of St. Andrews as the capital city, perhaps because it had so recently become the seat of the first Scottish archbishop. Meanwhile, Rinaldo learned about the "impious Scottish law severe and dread(that) wills that a woman, whether low or high her state, who takes a man into her bed, except her husband, for the offence shall die." This shocked Rinaldo, and presumably Ariosto too, although he cannot have been unaware of how his patron's ancestor, Niccolo d'Este, had beheaded his wife and son for a similar offence. It was, however, a sentence in keeping with Arthurian attitudes.<sup>(4)</sup> Within Ariosto's life-time there was to be a striking recurrence of this in England in Henry VIII's treatment of two reputedly adulterous wives. However, Rinaldo saved the lady of Ariosto's conception, a Scottish princess, who had been "sentenced

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1. Ibid., IV.53,54; IV.68.

2. Ibid., IV.52.

3. Ibid., IV.54; V.76, 78.

4. P.Rajna in his Le Fonti dell'Orlando Furioso, (Florence 1900), p.154, suggests that Ariosto took this idea from the Tristan romance, cf. E. Löseth, Le Roman en prose de Tristan, (Paris 1890), p.74.

to fire."(1) Then he took ship to

"where Thames' waters, waxing bitter, meet  
 "Salt ocean; wafted thence by tide of flood,  
 "Through a sure channel to fair London's seat."

There Rinaldo saw "Otto, Prince of Wales," occupying the vacant throne.(2) Although the idea of a prince of Wales as the king's heir was for this period anachronistic, this does show that Ariosto was familiar with the hierarchy of royalty in the England of his own day. Indeed, Ariosto showed that he erroneously thought of chivalric Britain as being then neatly divided up, as in the sixteenth century, into the principality of Wales and the kingdoms of Scotland, England and Ireland. However, this does throw a little light on Ariosto's image of Britain. In the end, when Rinaldo set sail for Ariosto's Ireland, he was afforded a last descriptive glance at England as the ship

"shaped her course towards the chalky strand  
 "Whence England's isle the name of Albion bore."(3)

When one comes to the serious historians' treatment of Arthurian material, one finds them less verbose, almost terse. For example, the mid twelfth century Godfrey of Viterbo would only say that, although one could read of British kings as being outstanding in virtue, excellence and wisdom, there is not much written about them until "in the days of Merlin, the prophet of the English, he found out many things written about them in England."(4)

Even Brunetto Latini in his encyclopaedic Li Livres dou Tresor dealt sparingly, though precisely and factually, with Arthurian

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1. Ibid., IV.59; IV.67.

2. Ibid., VIII.26ff.

3. Ibid., IX.16 et passim.

4. Godfreddo da Viterbo: Memoria Seculorum, p.102.

matters. He mentioned how the Trojan refugee Brutus came to England and gave his name to "Bretagne, which is now called England", and how "of his descendants was born the good King Arthur, of whom romance speaks, who was crowned king in 483 A.D. at a time when Zeno was emperor of Rome and he reigned for fifty years." Otherwise Latini added nothing more, except that Merlin, eternally the figure, with Aristotle, of a savant deceived by a woman, was prophetic about later German emperors.(1)

Similarly in the late thirteenth century Salimbene de Adam, in his Chronicon(2), and the Sicilian Guido delle Colonne, in his Historia Destructionis Troiae(3), only very briefly touched on, respectively, Merlin's existence and the Trojan origins of England. Later even the usually compendious writer Giovanni Villani only added a little more to this history. Relying, as he said, on "the romances of the Britons", he mentioned that from Brutus was descended "Utherpendragon for whom Merlin, the prophet and necromancer (born in 470), ordained the Round Table of Knights Errant....Afterwards the Round Table was restored by the good King Arthur, Uther's son, who was a lord of great power and valour, and more gracious and knightly than all other lords and he reigned a long time in happy state."(4)

Villani's contemporary Fazio degli Uberti dealt with the subject more subtly in his poem Il Dettamondo. This laid out Fazio's geographical observations in the form of a literary journey which he undertook with a friend, Solino. He enthusiastically praised Britain:

"Very rich and beautiful was the great island,

"Which outshone the others in Europe

"As does the Sun each other star."(5)

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1. Brunetto Latini, pp.43, 290.

2. Salimbene de Adam, pp.59, 349.

3. Guido delle Colonne, Bk.II, p.11.

4. G. Villani, II.4.

5. Fazio degli Uberti, Bk.IV, Ch.23, p.319.

Here he observed places and related them to Arthurian matters. "We were at London," he said, "and I saw the tower where Guinevere defended her honour and the river Thames which flowed nearby. I saw the beautiful castle which the frank Lancelot took by force...by acknowledged gallantry. I saw broken down and ruined Camelot... I saw the castle (Penevric) where Erec lay with Nida and the rock of Merlin...I saw the vale that Tristan acquired when he fought the giant to defend himself and killed him." (1) Fazio was taking a retrospective view of Arthurian Britain. He saw it in terms of the glory that had departed. Later he provided character sketches of the kings of England. He began with Utherpendragon, who, about 460 A.D., he thought, had gained control over all the island with Merlin's help. Following Uther came "his son Arthur, who was frank, great and temperate more than any other of his time. So much was he feared and respected that long after his death his return was awaited." (2) However, to Villani's account this added very little even of pseudo-historical importance.

It is strangely to a scholarly Boccaccio that one must turn for a rather learned, far from romantic treatment of Arthurian matters. His De Casibus Virorum Illustrium was written to show how all great men eventually fall. Arthur was no exception. Boccaccio depicted him as collecting laymen and clerics from Ireland, Dacia, Gotland, Norway and several other places opposite Gaul, and as creating the knightly company of the Round Table on the suggestion of Merlin, who laid down the elaborate rules for it. Then, to counteract opposition from the Roman consul, Lucius, Arthur went off to France, leaving behind as governor "Mordred, his son by a concubine..., young and bold towards all." Boccaccio elaborated the familiar story of

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1. Ibid., IV.23, pp.320-1.

2. Ibid., IV.24, p.323.

Mordred's treachery, his collecting of an army and his repulse and retreat into Cornwall. There he was killed and Arthur mortally wounded. Nor did Boccaccio forget the story about "peasant Britons" thinking that when (Arthur) had recovered from his wounds he would return."(1)

But all of these histories were dishes copied from Geoffrey of Monmouth but with a different literary sauce poured over them. It is interesting to note that in the first half of the fifteenth century a man like Flavio Biondo, who in his Decades was concerned to produce a scientific work of history, mentioned Saxon invasions and settlements of Britain about 517 but said not a word about Arthur.(2)

Finally, a century later another rather sceptical account of Arthur's life came from the pen of Polydore Vergil. However, not committing himself too much, he preferred to repeat commonly known facts about Arthur. "The common people," he wrote, "with wondrous admiration...extol Arthur unto the heavens, alleging that he daunted three captains of the Saxons in plain field; that he subdued Scotland with the isles adjoining; that in the territory of the Parisiens he manfully depopulated France; that finally he slew giants and appalled the hearts of stern and warlike men." Vergil said that Arthur was diverted from his purposed invasion of Rome when he had to return to Britain to counteract the threat of his treacherous nephew, Mordred, and in doing so "received a fatal stroke and baleful wound whereof he died."(3) Vergil's Anglica Historia was written in Latin for a learned cosmopolitan audience. It was certainly known in Italy. Yet, by then in the 1530s its Arthurian passages would have added little

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1. G. Boccaccio: De Casibus..., (1544) Bk.VIII, Ch.19, pp.230-2.

2. Flavio Biondo, pp.29-30.

3. Vergil: AH(ET), p.122.



except a note of scepticism to the already copious amounts of literature either on the romantic, quasi-fictional level or on the scholarly historical plain, both of which presented to Italians a rather vague picture of Arthurian Britain.

However, what some of these works that attempted to treat of Arthurian matters on a factual basis did do was to bridge the credibility-gap between a mythical fifth century Britain and the England at the outset of the Italian Renaissance. True, writers like Biondo ignored this connection and later Vergil would pour scorn on it. Yet, it remained striking how many of the Italian writers dealt with Arthurian matters very seriously and how many of them went on from the mythical point to tie it to contemporary history by sketching in or referring to incidents in English history in the intervening period. Villani filled in this historical gap; Salimbene de Adam added his own comments on this period; and Fazio degli Uberti in his Dettamondo forged a link between the hazy past and contemporary realities by versifying on the history of English kings up to Edward III's time. For many serious-minded Italians, therefore, there was a distinct, if rather distant, historicity about Arthurian matters. However, with many Italians before and during the Renaissance, there was no attempt made to look at Arthurian Britain as anything other than a setting for romantic fiction. Therefore, the chivalresque content in their literature generally remains quite distinctly separate from other literature dealing with British matters. If anything, it only adds a transparently thin coloured glaze to the general picture; it adds just a little extra depth and luminosity to basically brilliant colouring.

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