

The Battle of Tewkesbury

CECILIA COOPER

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TO J. E. DOWDESWELL, Esq. AND JOHN MARTIN, Esq.

MEMBERS IN PARLIAMENT FOR THE BOROUGH OF Tewkesbury.

GENTLEMEN,

THE principal action, and main scenes, of the following Poem, having taken place in this Town and its Environs, it appeared more immediately to require the honour of your Names, on its introduction to the world.

Impressed with a lively sense of your indulgent kindness, in permitting me to Dedicate this, my first attempt, to you, I return you my most grateful acknowledgments for the same; and for the honour you have conferred on,

GENTLEMEN,

Your most obliged and obedient humble Servant, *Cecilia Cooper*.

TEWKESBURY, May 4, 1820.

PREFACE.

WHEN a man is born into the world, however exalted by birth, he enters, at the same time, into all the vicissitudes of life; Nature having united existence and suffering so closely, that she hath, as it were, rendered them inseparable: but, among all sufferers, none feel their misfortunes more keenly than those who have been most indebted to Fortune for the distinctions of high birth, and dignities, and have adorned their exalted stations with the greatest honour; but, by a reverse of Fate, and the dispensations of an all-wise Providence, have afterwards endured the greatest calamity and misery! Hence, persons of every rank, even of the lowest condition in life, may learn to bear their own difficulties and misfortunes with the greater patience and resignation, when they see to what extreme distresses, even the most noble, and the great, are likewise subject. Some illustrious examples of these truths may be found in the following Poem, THE BATTLE OF TEWKESBURY. It may, indeed, by some, be thought presumptuous, in a young and unlettered female, attempting to write on so great an Historical Event, as the subject of this Poem; but my residence

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commanding a View of the Intrenchments of Queen MARGARET, and the Ground on which this dreadful conflict took place, first presented the idea of this little work, without a thought of ever having it ushered into the world.

Aware of its many imperfections, I leave it to the candour of my generous Patrons and Subscribers, and the well known liberality of an impartial Public.

Cecilia Cooper

TEWKESBURY, May 4, 1820.

THE BATTLE OF TEWKESBURY

On this sad Spot—the royal MARGARET chose,
With her BRAVE Son to wait her coming Foes!

Yon sacred Pile, in awful grandeur stood,
As if to turn their thoughts—to Peace—from Blood.
Could some bless'd shade have whisper'd—from the tomb,
To warn her of her noble Child's dire doom;

Ev'n the ambitious fire of MARGARET's mind
Would have sunk down and been to Fate resign'd!
But, no! it could not be! Fate had decreed,
That here the Noble and the Base should bleed!
Here the WHITE ROSE triumphant rear'd it's head,
Here the sweet Blossom of the RED one bled!
Imagination traces out the Scene,
Where the young EDWARD stood, erect in mien,
Encouraging his Soldiers for the Fight,
With his fine form incas'd in armour bright!
From right to left, he turns his piercing eye,
And all seem eager, at command, to fly

To meet this Tyrant, who'd usurp'd the Crown
From their lov'd King, for piety renown'd!

But, list! He speaks! and, with resistless force,
Employs his eloquence t' inspire the Host!
"The hour is come that calls you to the Fight,
"And leads me forth, to re-assert my right;
"Your King, my Father, from a prison calls
"On us, his Subjects, to assist his Cause:
"His Royal Rights you nobly will support,
"We trust to Britons-native 'Hearts of Oak.'

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"His Grace of SOMERSET will lead our van;
"Courage, my Soldiers! Firm, unto a man!
"Let Honour beam upon your crest a ray,
"That may recorded be, some future day!
"Supported by the Lord of WENLOCK, we
"Upon his Throne, the rightful King may see:
"And DEVONSHIRE, a stout and valiant knight,
"This day will show his prowess in the Fight.
"Then, come, my Friends, let Vict'ry mark our way,
"And proud York's Legions put to flight this day!
"But, see, our Messenger is coming on
"My souls on fire Oh, GOD! Thy will be done!"

The trumpet's blasts now shook th' encircling hills,
And his bold Warriors' breasts with hopes of Vict'ry fills;
Transported with the trumpet's martial sounds,
Each steel clad Hero's manly heart rebounds.

"Long live King HENRY, and his gallant Son!"
Resounded through the valley, loud and long.
"Prepare, my Lords, the Enemy's at hand!
"YORK, and stern GLO'STER, now lead on their band,"
Their banners wave majestic round the land!

Then, " Let's to horse, my Lords!" was EDWARD's cry
And, like great Mars, with tow'ring plumes on high,

He mounts his charger, grasps his shining lance,
And waits the signal for them to advance.

Now, front to front, in Battle's dread array
The Armies stand; a vale between them lay:
GLO'STER, in ambush, plac'd his chosen men
Within a wood, that tower'd o'er the glen.

The "Shout of Battle" now was heard afar,
The Warriors plumes wav'd graceful in the air!
The trumpets sound, the dreadful fray begins,
Th' artill'ry thunders with a deaf'ning din;
GLO'STER's bright arrows deal destruction round,
And the brave fall, expiring, to the ground.
And now bold Warriors feel a stern delight,
They stand with firmness in the bloody Fight;
With horrid slaughter, foe on foe now turns,
And, with a vengeful fury each man burns!

Resolv'd on conquest, Britons on Britons fall,
(Oh! horrid scene! which might the brave appal!)
High mettled steeds close on each other bear,
And, like their riders, fearless brave the war!

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The solemn roll of drums, the clash of arms,
Might have struck breasts, less firm, with wild alarms,
On this ensanguin'd field lay bath'd in gore,
The noble LERMOUTH, DELVES, and LUCKENOR.

By neither side, advantage yet was gain'd,
But, with great valour, each their Cause maintain'd;
'Till GLO'STER's cunning made a feign'd retreat;
And, off their guard, in the dread Battle's heat,
They quickly follow'd up, without debate,
Nor saw their error till it was too late!

With haste pursuing, down the hill they fly,
'Till GLO'STER saw them in a valley nigh;

Where, press'd by foes, the Queen's brave soldiers stood,
Which valley since is call'd "THE FIELD of BLOOD!"
Oh, rightly nam'd! for from it ran a stream,
Which made SABRINA's waters blush with shame;
That her pure flood, should to OLD OCEAN tell,
That here the Father, Son, and Brother, fell.

Great SOMERSET, with agony, beheld
His Warriors slain, his Prince by few upheld;
The dastard WENLOCK wav'ring in his faith,
Standing quite neuter by; with eager haste,
Sent a command, for him, to quick advance,
And aid the Queen, in this unlucky chance!

The wretch refus'd! Burning with mighty ire,
His noble eyes flashing, indignant fire,
He spurr'd his courser o'er the bleeding dead,
And, coming near him, thus, reviling, said:
"Detested coward! miscreant, villain, slave,
"Dost thou think, here, thy worthless life to save ?
"Thy trait'rous blood, myself will quickly spill;
"How dar'st thou use King HENRY's Cause so ill?"

With Herculean strength, he aim'd a blow,
Which, like the dreaded bolt of Heav'n, soon laid the traitor low!
And here, his body lay, besmear'd with blood,
Unfit to mingle with the brave and good.

Still, like a lion, on, enrag'd he goes;
And cuts his way through all who dare oppose;
And with the Lords St. JOHN and DEVONSHIRE,
A slaughter dire they make, and without fear
Bore on proud YORK; and in this mighty strife,
The noble ROWYS fell, depriv'd of life.

Yet, all this magnanimity did not avail,

The Battle of Tewkesbury

A POW'R SUPREME! saw fit that it should fail!
(Nor must we ask, why this, or that, should be;
Thy great designs, O God! no eye can see!)

The troops give way, for safety each man strove;
The Prince, in agony, rode deep in blood; .
And try'd to cheer his weary, drooping troops,
And thus address'd them, though with little hopes:
"Support my Mother! rally round your Queen!"
"Oh! spare her suff 'ring more, in this dread Scene!"
"Nought, but her life, I now can hope to save,
"To preserve that, my follow'rs, still be brave!"

They cut their way, o'er dying and the dead,
And to her banner made but she was fled!
Had dar'd the SEVERN's stream, worse fate to fly,
And on two holy Fathers did rely;
Her steed safe guiding to the friendly shore,
But here they left her! they could do no more!

Her glitt'ring breast-plate on the ground she cast,
The Gen'ral's falchion, (in despair! at last,)
Which, in twelve Battles, she did boldly wield,
She now resign'd, with her bright burnish'd shield;
And, all alone, with woes unfelt till now,
The wretched Wife and Mother t' Heav'n doth bow,
For that relief, which God alone can give!
And rais'd a pray'r, her peerless Son might live!

The YORKISTS, now, with a victorious shout,
Put COURTNEY's noble Squadrons to the rout;
He, like great Hector, look'd undaunted round,
And, with his sword, fell'd numbers to the ground!
Till, overpower'd; then, nobly did resign,
His hopes and life for the Sixth HENRY's line.
Like hungry tigers, following up their prey,
The foes press on, no mercy marks their way!

To AVON's banks, whose soft and silent flood
Impedes their way; here they a moment stood,
Pursu'd by swords, unglutted, yet, with gore
Then in they plung'd, alas! to rise no more!
Thou, gentle AVON stopp'd their panting breath,
And all their warring passions hush'd in Death!

Some for the Town, some for the Church now make,
And, in their flight, many the Victors take.

Oh! what a Scene did this sad Field present!
What near, dear ties, by cruel warfare rent;

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Dead bodies, intermix'd with sword and gun,
And here lay, useless, now, the noisy drum.
The demon, fell, of war, stood hov'ring here,
Exulting in the slaughter'd thousands near.

To hide from sight the horrors of the fray,
Huge graves they make, and close together lay
Their mangled bodies, now in peaceful state;
Their discord over, and at rest their hate!
No party spirit, now, their souls to jar,
No passions rude, no cause for CIVIL WAR.
To close the dreadful Scene, the Curfew Bell
Tolls out, for rest, its solemn, heavy, knell!
These Fields, this morning, bore the flow'rs of May,
Where children, from the Town, were wont to play
In sportive gambols; the sweet cowslips cropt
Off Nature's carpet, now, by horrors stopt! .

Their tender minds, long in remembrance bore
The heart-appalling sound of the dread Battle's roar!

A high reward is for the Prince proclaim'd,
Who, by KING EDWARD, was a Traitor nam'd;
The mercenary CROFT, a wretched slave
To that vile passion that ne'er haunts the brave,
Took the young Prince, in filial love so great!
Alas! too soon, to meet his cruel fate!

The Royal Brothers, now, with Vict'ry crown'd,
Came to partake a Banquet in the Town:

But, still, impatient to reproach their Foe,
(Who, unlike them, scorn'd a revenge so low,)
"Bring forth your Pris'ner!" cry'd the King, aloud;
To this command, Sir RICHARD lowly bow'd.

The Prince appear'd, in youthful virtue firm,
Before the Conq'ror, whose fierce anger burnt;
And, as he stood erect, in dauntless pride,
Surrounded by the guards, on either side;
His manly form, adorn'd with martial grace,
And the mild beauty of his godlike face,
Irradiated with majestic fire,
Unus'd to bow to any but his Sire;
His Foe felt Admiration's potent charm
Awaken'd, for this rival Chief in arms;
But, soon it vanish'd; and again return'd
The rankling hatred, which before had burn'd

In his dark breast, tow'rds this unhappy Man,
And, with a clouded brow, he thus began:

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"Undaunted Rebel! say, how couldst thou dare
"To raise thy banner; make rebellious war
"In this my Kingdom! Bend thy haughty knee,
"And, with submission, Traitor! bow to me."

The noble Youth, with high unconquer'd heart,
Gave this Reply which made e'en GLO'STER start:

"My royal Father's sacred rights to claim,
"And my own birth-right, justly, to maintain.
"With my great Father's voice, I speak to thee,
"Usurping Tyrant! Bow thy knee to me!"

He heard no more; but, with an action base,
His gauntlet struck in the young Hero's face!

GLO'STER the signal saw; he, apt at bloody part,
Struck his sharp poignard to his guileless heart!
And, with a hollow voice, and brow severe,
Cry'd, "Down below, and seek a kingdom there!"
And now, fierce CLARENCE, DORSET, and the rest,
Hid their insatiate daggers in his breast!
The reeking blood descends, in floods, around;
They see their hapless victim on the ground.
"May Heaven forgive you," cry'd th' expiring man,
"My royal Father! Mother! Oh! my ANNE!"

Quick, to his dying thoughts, great WARWICK rose,
He saw his Child to mighty ills expos'd:
But could he, in that moment, have foreseen
That his lov'd Wife, would have been RICHARD's Queen;
And, that his ANNE, his murd'rer would have wed,
And took that hand by which her EDWARD bled!
His bleeding heart, oppress'd with woes severe,
Would, for her fate, have felt redoubled fear.

And now, the colour of the ROSE gave place,
A heav'nly smile play'd on his death-clad face.
Relentless murd'lers ! This, most bloody act,
Avenging JUSTICE soon return'd you back;
And, your untimely deaths, did after show,
That Retribution visits here below.

Oh, EDWARD! a Father's feelings should have led
Thy soul to mercy to HENRY's prison fled!
His paternal feelings made thy own,
Thought on his sighs, and heard his piteous groan.

His mangled body to the Church was borne,

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To the good Monks, who inward grieve and mourn,
To think such passions sway'd the Kingly breast.
Which, they felt sure, depriv'd his heart of rest!
To see the Hope and Flower of the Land
Thus rudely pluck'd by an unfeeling hand;
And, like his beauteous, emblematic Flow'r,
Untimely cropt by the o'ercharging show'r;
But, thus cut off, its sweetness still remains,
Though its blanch'd leaves Imagination pains!
Within their HOLY WALLS, without parade,
The last sad relics of the Prince were laid
No sculptued marble pointed out the spot,
But his fair fame will never be forgot!

And, now, in solemn state, King EDWARD came,
To return Thanks for this great Vict'ry gain'd!
And here, he rais'd his voice to, HEAVEN's HIGH THRONE,
Where MERCY dwells! though he'd refus'd his own;
Forgot, amidst his thanks and praises giv'n,
Mercy to shew! sweet attribute of Heav'n!
Through their hard hearts no stream of Pity runs;
BRITANNIA mourn'd her immolated Sons!

The Pris'ners, then, were left to GLO'STER's rage,
Who had erected, at the CROSS, a Stage:

Where, as High Constable of ALBION's ISLE,
He sat, surrounded by his Minions vile;
And judg'd to Death with unrelenting heart,
All, who against the WHITE ROSE bore a part.
Their conq'ring swords, so deeply stain'd before,
Wept purple drops; and still felt thirst for more!

When Heathen Kings a Victory had gain'd,
And Altars rais'd, with blood of bullocks stain'd:
Content with beasts, they thought the off 'ring good,
Their Gods to please, and their own pride to prove;
But HUMAN sacrifice this Vict'ry claims!
And ENGLAND lost the bravest of her Names!

Now, SOMERSET, thy patriotic breast,
Felt for thy King and Country, sore oppress'd!
For, well he knew, What HENRY's gentle mind
Felt for his Subjects, and all human kind!

And, that his heart, with pitying Mercy bless'd,
Was, by these bloody acts, depriv'd of rest;
His gentle away had told, in language plain,
His people's good was still his greatest aim!
And when unto the fatal scaffold brought,
First, unto HEAVEN, he rais'd his pious thoughts;

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His soul to God commands, for pardon prays
Nor felt a wish to lengthen out his days;
For his lov'd Sov'reign all his hopes were fled,
Now his brave Son the valiant Prince was dead.
"God save King HENRY, for his people's sake!"
Were the last words this gallant Leader spake.
Upon the block he firmly laid his head,
And, to their rage; another victim bled.

Here, noble CLIFTON, TRESSAM, ROSS, and GOWER,
Lost their brave heads, with HAVARE, CAR, and FLORE;

Young DELVES, his father's fate had scarcely known,
Ere he was summon'd to receive his own!
And many others on the scaffold die,
Oh, pitying Angels! guard their souls on high!

Queen MARGARET, in her wand'ring, was pursu'd,
To TEWKESBURY brought, with spirits quite subdu'd;
Her ruthless destiny, not yet complete,
Till she had heard, that, by Duke RICHARD's hate,
Her hapless Husband, in an evil hour,
Was murder'd, by this monster in the Tow'r.

She drank the dregs of mis'ry's bitter cup,
And all her hopes, in this sad world, gave up.

Her Father, fifty thousand crowns advanc'd;
And she was ransom'd to return to France.

Secluded from the world, she humbly pray'd
For resignation, while on earth she stay'd;

But look'd, with fervent hope, for peace and rest
To that bright Sphere where all she'd lost were bless'd.

The bloody Quarrels of these HOUSES, show
What horrid scenes from Civil Discord flow.

May no contending Parties, here, again
Stain this fair Land with blood of Subjects slain;
But, may the SUBJECTS' LOVE the THRONE secure
To BRUNSWICK's Line, 'till Time shall be no more.
The lengthen'd reign of GEORGE the THIRD, has prov'd
A MONARCH's Safeguard is his People's Love!