

EDWARD WOODVILLE—KNIGHT-ERRANT;

A STUDY OF THE RELATIONS OF ENGLAND AND SPAIN IN THE LATTER
PART OF THE FIFTEENTH CENTURY.

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THE isolation of mediæval Spain is a platitude of European history. One may study this country from 900 to 1450 thoroughly, nay almost profoundly, without knowing anything at all about other continental nations. The important points of contact of Spain with the outside world during that long period may be counted on the fingers of one hand. A Castilian sovereign is candidate for the imperial throne in the last half of the thirteenth century, at the time of the Great Interregnum. One of the greatest of English kings, and one of the earliest of English dukes also, married into the royal house of Castile. Aragonese are to be found in Southern France in the early thirteenth century, involved both in the suppression and also in the defence of the Albigensian heresy. They gain a foothold in Sicily and Italy after the fall of the Hohenstaufen. Finally a distant eddy of the Hundred Years War between France and England carries us for a brief moment upon Spanish soil,—but that is practically all. In general we may say that Spain held herself aloof from the rest of Europe throughout the Middle Ages.

With the accession of Ferdinand and Isabella in the latter part of the fifteenth century, there comes a sudden and startling change. From her old position of oblivion and insignificance, Spain springs into the foremost place in Europe, where she remains for nearly a hundred years. United at home, by the expulsion of the Moors

from Granada and by the joining of the crowns of Castile and Aragon, she is the first to dispute with France the possession of Italy. Marriage alliances are arranged with other nations: one of them was destined in the near future to make the Spanish king Emperor and temporal head of Christendom. Especially close are the ties that now bind Spain to England,—the nation from which, of all others, she had been most widely separated in the preceding centuries.

It is to a few of the causes and aspects of this momentous entanglement of Spanish and English affairs that I wish to invite your attention today; and then to say a few words about the life of a man, unknown and obscure, whose adventurous career was not without influence in hastening the *rapprochement* of the two nations.

The first and most obvious general cause of this sudden and remarkable fusion of the interests of Spain and England lies in the striking similarity of the condition of the two realms in the latter half of the fifteenth century, and of the aims and ambitions of their respective sovereigns. To the English Wars of the Roses corresponds almost exactly, both in time and in character, the baronial anarchy of the miserable reign of Henry the Impotent of Castile: the wild, stormy, restless rule of John II. in Aragon is but another aspect of the same picture. To devastating civil war succeeds in both kingdoms a period of internal peace and of absolute monarchy. Both Henry VII. and Ferdinand and Isabella elevate the kingship to an impregnable position on the ruins of every other institution that had ever been its rival. Both thrones are unsuccessfully claimed by pretenders. To Lambert Simnel, Perkin Warbeck, and Edmund de la Pole, Earl of Suffolk in England, correspond la Beltraneja of doubtful paternity and her host of Portuguese adherents in Spain. Constitutionally and institutionally too, we find the same striking similarity. The advent of the legists in the

principal organ of Castilian government, the *Concejo*, has its counterpart in England in the rise to political prominence of Empson and Dudley and their crowd of low-born adherents. In both countries the old nobility of birth, the hereditary foe of the monarchy, is elbowed aside; its place in the government is taken by the self-made man, who recommends himself by his ability as a statesman, or his subserviency to the interests of the crown. It is possible that the judicial reforms of the Catholic Kings may have suggested to Henry VII. the idea of reorganizing and legalizing the Star Chamber as a means of centralizing the government, and bringing order out of the chaos that had hitherto reigned supreme. It is a significant fact that we find instituted in both countries at the same time a system of criminal procedure, by which the king's officer became at once prosecutor and judge. It is perhaps unnecessary to add that such a device was so foreign to the spirit of English law that it could not long survive. The act of 1495 that brought it into being was repealed in 1509, when Henry VII. was succeeded by his more popular and at first liberal-minded son. Still, horrible as such a law may seem to us today, there can be little doubt that it was both expedient and necessary then, as a means of re-establishing order and as a safeguard against baronial revolt. At any rate the watchword of the sovereigns of both countries at home was centralization, and the similarity of the methods they used to secure it, is as striking as that of the situation of the realms which rendered it necessary.

The internal conditions of the two countries might have been essentially alike, and yet they might never have come into contact, had not the foreign policy of their respective sovereigns been guided by the same principles. But here too the similarity is as striking as before. Neither country was perfectly friendly to France; both had great issues at stake in the struggle that was

going on in the extreme northwest of that country, where the Duke of Brittany, the last of the great French feudatories, was making a desperate effort to maintain his independence, and preserve his duchy from absorption by the French crown. The reason why this struggle for the maintenance of Breton independence interested so profoundly the sovereigns of Spain and England was briefly as follows. Both rulers were imbued with the idea of strengthening the position of their respective dynasties by advantageous foreign marriages: it was natural that an alliance between them should take place. But the position of the Spanish sovereigns, at the time of which we are speaking, was by far the stronger, owing principally to the fact that they gained their throne six years before the English king gained his; and it was therefore as a suppliant that Henry VII. had to approach them, when in the spring of 1488 he made the first overtures for a marriage between Katharine, the youngest daughter of Ferdinand and Isabella, and his own oldest son Arthur. The Spanish sovereigns well knew their advantage: the price which they asked for the hand of their daughter was high. Their hearts' desire at that moment was to regain for themselves two rich provinces in the south of France, by name Cerdagne and Roussillon: these provinces had of old belonged to Spain, but had been ceded to France in return for military aid in the civil wars of a quarter of a century before. To regain them, Ferdinand and Isabella needed to keep the French king, the hare-brained Charles VIII., occupied and embarrassed in the north. They knew that the Duke of Brittany, unaided, was too weak to do this: they therefore determined to ask Henry VII. to aid him:—to win Cerdagne and Roussillon for them from France, by embarrassing Charles VIII. and prolonging the struggle in Brittany; such was the price they asked for their daughter's hand. The payment of that price involved tremendous sacrifices for Henry VII. Ever since

his accession in 1485, he had painfully and wearily endeavored, in the face of violent opposition from the mass of his people, and of a tradition of two hundred years' standing, to follow a policy of peace with France. The Spanish demands involved an immediate and complete abandonment of that policy, and other scarcely less unwelcome changes. Yet the advantages of the Spanish match seemed so great in his eyes that Henry resolved to pay the price. We thus see that it is in Spain that we must look for the explanation of the desultory half-hearted struggle which England in alliance with Brittany waged with France during the next few years, and which was finally brought to a close by the treaty of Etaples in November, 1492.

In the midst of these stirring scenes was lived the most important part of the life of an Englishman, a sort of knight-errant, whose cosmopolitan career was probably instrumental in knitting more closely the ties that united England to Spain and Spain to England in these crucial years of the development of Europe. Edward Woodville was one of fourteen children of Richard Woodville, country gentleman, and Jacquetta of Luxembourg, widow of that Duke of Bedford who was brother to the Lancastrian King Henry V.; Edward was probably the fourth of five surviving sons of this marriage, all of whom attained considerable prominence in the Wars of the Roses.¹ By far the most distinguished member of the family however was his elder sister Elizabeth, who chose as her first husband a private gentleman by the name of Grey, but who, on his death, had the good fortune to attract the attention of the Yorkist king Edward IV., and was finally married to him in 1471.

This union naturally tended to bring the Woodville family into great prominence at court—favors, pensions

¹ Dict. Natl. Biog., Vol. LXII., p. 416.

and titles of nobility were showered on them in great profusion. The marriage of Elizabeth Woodville also effaced any earlier loyalty which her family may have evinced towards the House of Lancaster on account of her mother's first marriage: they became thenceforward staunch supporters of the House of York. Of the earlier years of our hero, who was probably born about the year 1448, not one single authentic record has come down to us. The first event in his life of which we can be absolutely certain is that he was one of a great number of lords and gentlemen who escorted the corpse of Edward IV. through the streets of London, in the funeral procession to its last resting-place, April 17, 1483. As he is there mentioned as Sir Edward Woodville, we infer that he had been knighted some time before.¹

Though a staunch Yorkist and above all a loyal supporter of Edward IV., Edward Woodville shared to the full the hatred and fear which the rest of his family felt towards the brother of the late king, Richard, Duke of Gloucester and York, that monster of cruelty and wickedness, who a few months later was to cap the climax of a long series of crimes by murdering his two nephews, the lawful heirs to the throne, and by seizing the crown himself. When the Woodvilles perceived what direction the ambition of this man was taking, they made every effort to thwart him. Among other things they fitted out a fleet, which was intended to breed trouble for the usurper on the high seas; and of this fleet we know that our hero was given the chief command. On the 14th of May, 1483, *i. e.* just twenty-seven days after the funeral of Edward IV., a royal commission was made out to "Edward Brampton, John Wellis and Thomas Grey to go to the see with shippes to take Ser Edward Wodevile."² The

¹ Letters and Papers of the reigns of Richard III. and Henry VII.: ed. Gairdner Vol. I., p. 6.

² Nichols, Grants of Edward V.: p. 3.

fleet was not captured indeed, but for all that the plots of the Woodvilles came to naught, and those who had remained in England were for the most part executed as traitors. Sir Edward however was more fortunate; in July, 1483, he and his company had landed in Brittany. This is proved by a letter of instruction given by Richard to a certain Dr. Hutton, who is therein commanded to go to Brittany, to assure its duke of the good-will of the king of England and especially to "fele and understand the mynde and disposicion of the duc anempst Sir Edward Wodevile and his reteignue, practizing by all meanes to him possible to enserche and knowe if ther be entended eny enterprise out of land upon any part of this realme."¹

It is more than a year before we hear of Sir Edward Woodville again: and in the interim it is obvious that he had joined his fortunes to another foe of Richard III., far more formidable than himself, Henry, Earl of Richmond, the future Henry VII., who since 1471 had been in hiding in Brittany. Richmond was of course as strongly Lancastrian in his sympathies as Woodville was Yorkist: but the two men, both exiles in a foreign land, were drawn close together by a common detestation of Richard III. In May, 1484, we find Richmond making preparations to leave Brittany and flee to France: for the long-deferred struggle between these two powers was at last coming to a head, and the Duke of Brittany, forced by political necessity to seek aid from Richard III. could ill afford to harbor within his domains any enemies of the king of England. Richmond was therefore obliged to escape secretly to the court of Charles VIII.; he left behind him however a large company of his retainers, probably with the idea of deceiving the Duke of Brittany in regard to his own intentions. Among that company, we are told, on the authority of the chronicler Edward Hall, was our

¹ Letters and Papers of the reigns of Richard III. and Henry VII.: ed. Gairdner, Vol. I., pp. 22, 23.

hero Sir Edward Woodville: and the story goes on to say that the Duke of Brittany, who, though forced by political necessity to side with Richard III., was personally friendly to Richmond, took pains to send Woodville and his companions after the earl into France, and that the latter subsequently took occasion cordially to thank him for his kindness.¹

Again there intervenes a long period, during which we have not a single historic notice of our hero: in fact the next time we hear of him he is found in the armies of Ferdinand and Isabella before Granada in May, 1486. It is not difficult to guess what his career had been in the interim. We know that in 1484 he had joined his fortunes to those of Henry of Richmond, there can be little doubt that he accompanied the latter from France on his final and successful attempt on England in August, 1485; he probably fought at Henry's side at Bosworth Field, and satisfied his hatred of Richard III. in the sight of the latter's bloody death and burial. But we may well believe that Woodville, who though a personal enemy of Richard III. was also (as we must not forget) Yorkist in sympathy, soon tired of the peaceful and essentially Lancastrian court of the first Tudor king, and longing to return to that restless, warlike career which had become a second nature to him, went abroad in search of adventure—possibly at the suggestion of Henry VII. himself. The eyes of all Christendom were at that moment turned on Granada, where the Moors were making their last desperate stand in Western Europe against the armies of the Catholic Kings. Thither Woodville turned his steps, intent on bearing a hand in the capture of this last stronghold of the infidel.

Two contemporary accounts—the one in Spanish by Andrez Bernaldez, chaplain of the archbishop of Seville,

Hall, pp. 403-405.

the other in Latin by Peter Martyr d'Angleria, the Italian courtier and historian, both eye-witnesses of the scenes they describe—record the tale of Woodville's adventures in Spain. Bernaldez tells us that one day in the month of May in the year 1486, the King Don Fernando, with a mighty host, and many Castilian nobles, left Cordova and encamped near the town of Loja: and there came with him an English lord, a relative of the English Queen, who called himself Lord Scales.¹ [This man was certainly no other than our friend Sir Edward Woodville, who apparently was not above the then common practice of appropriating appellations not strictly his own. The title of Lord Scales belonged indeed to his elder brother Anthony in right of his wife Elizabeth, daughter and heiress of Thomas, 7th Baron Scales; but Sir Edward Woodville himself had no claim to it whatsoever. Apparently, however, he had presented himself at the Spanish court under this title, doubtless with the idea of impressing the Spaniards, with his power and importance; and it is certain that he was known under no other name during his sojourn there.] Bernaldez goes on to tell us that this noble lord came to Spain to serve God and make war on the Moors, with three hundred valiant soldiers and archers in his train. The Moors issued forth from Loja in large numbers, to prevent the Christian camp from being pitched before the town, and a vigorous action with arrows and small ordnance ensued between them and the Castilians and the followers of Lord Scales. The latter, seeing that the encounter had begun, desired leave to fight after the manner of his country; and, dismounting from his horse, and armed with sword and battle-axe, he charged forward at the Moorish host before them all, with a small company of his men, armed like himself, slashing and hacking with brave and manly hearts, killing and dis-

¹ Or perhaps more precisely Count of the Scales—"Conde de las Escalas" is the Spanish phrase.

mounting right and left. The Castilians, seeing this charge, rushed on to support it, following on the heels of the Englishmen with such valor that the Moors turned tail and fled, the Christians chasing them into the suburbs of Loja, which they captured and did not lose again. Many Moors were killed in this encounter, and some Christians as well, and the English lord was struck with a stone which broke his teeth, and three or four of his men were slain.¹ And Peter Martyr, taking up the tale where Bernaldez leaves off, tells us further that Lord Scales was brought back senseless to his tent, where his life was saved by the extraordinary skill of the surgeons, though it was found impossible to replace his broken teeth. As soon as he was permitted to leave his tent, he went to pay his homage to the Queen, who testified her sympathy for his misfortune. But the youth spoke lightly of his wound. "Christ, who reared this whole fabric," said he, "has merely opened a window, in order more easily to discern what goes on within." A witty response, concludes Martyr, which so pleased the Spanish sovereigns that shortly afterwards they sent him home to his native land in England, laden with many splendid gifts.²

There is little to be added to these accounts save an enumeration of the splendid gifts, of which Peter Martyr speaks. They apparently included twelve Andalusian horses of the finest breed, two couches with richly wrought hangings and coverings of cloth of gold, a quantity of fine linen, and sumptuous pavilions for Woodville and all his suite. It seems reasonably certain then that our hero made a most favorable impression on the Spanish sovereigns, who were not wont to be as liberal as this: it is also highly probable that he came home greatly impressed with their power and might. All contemporary accounts agree in regard to the splendor of their cavalcade before Granada,

¹ Bernaldez, *Reyes Catolices*, Vol. I., pp. 216, 217.

² Peter Martyr, *Opus Epistolarum*. Lib. I.; Epist. LXII.

in which not only England, but also all the other great continental nations were represented. It is even possible that Woodville may have met there Christopher Columbus, who was probably at that time a suppliant for royal aid on his famous voyage of discovery—a link between the old world and the new.¹ Altogether there can be little doubt that our hero returned to England with a great idea of the strength and glory of Spain, a fact which has an interesting bearing on what follows.

Again an interval of nearly two years elapses before we come upon another historic record of Sir Edward Woodville, and this next one is the last. As a knowledge of his final venture and death is indispensable to a correct understanding of his experience in Spain and its bearing on what followed, we had better pass on to this last authentic notice of him at once, and draw our deductions afterward. It has come down to us from two sources—one a letter of William Paston to Sir John Paston dated May 13th, 1488;² the other, the contemporary, or nearly contemporary chronicle of Edward Hall. The latter is the more complete; and the following quotation from it gives by far the best account of the last adventure in which our hero was concerned. The date at which the first events recorded took place may be fixed as early in May, 1488; the last act of the tragedy occurs on the 27th of the following July. The scene is laid once more in Brittany, where the struggle of the duke to maintain his independence of the French crown had at last come to a crisis.

“Syr Edward, lord Wooduile³ vncle to the Quene, a valyaunt Capitayne, and a bolde Chāpion,” so runs the story, “either abhorryng ease and ydlenes, or inflamed with ardent loue and affeccio toward the duke of Britayne,

¹ Winsor, *Christopher Columbus*, pp. 157–ff.

² *Paston Letters*: ed. Gairdner, Vol. III., p. 344.

³ “*Lord Wooduile*” is almost certainly a mistake of Hall’s. We have no record that our hero was ever raised to the peerage; and we can be reasonably sure that he died as he had lived, plain Sir Edward Woodville.

desyred very earnestly of kynge Henry, y^t if it were hys will and pleasure, that he with a conuenient number of good men of warre woulde transport hym selfe into Brit-eine, for y^e aide and defence of duke Fraunces, the kynges assured and proued frende. And least it should sowe or kyndle any dissenciō or ingratitude betwene the Frenche kyng and him, he sayde that he woulde steale priuely ouer, and without any licence or pasporte, as though no man shoulde thinke or doubt but he were fled, & abandoned the realme without any fraude or male engyn. But the kyng, which had a firme confidence, that peace should be made by the polletique prouision and wyse inuencion of hys elected Ambassadors, woulde in nowise geue the brydle to hys hote, hasty and wilde desire, but streyghtly prohibited hym to attempte anye suche strategeme or enterpryce, thinkynge that it stode not with hys honor to offende the Frenche kyng, to whome he woulde shewe as muche amitie and humanitie as he might, for suche a matter that coulde neither greatly profite the Bryttones, nor yet cause hym to surceasse of his appoynted inuasion and pretended enterpryce. Yet this lord Wooduile hauyng playne repulse and denyall of the kynge, could not thus rest, determind to worke hys busynes secretly without any knowlege of y^e kyng, and went streyght into the Isle of wight, wherof he was made ruler and capitayne, and there gathered together a crewe of tall & hardye personages, to the number of iiij. C. and with prosperous wynde and wether arryued in Briteyne, and ioyned hym selfe with the Brytons agaynst the Frenche power and nacion. The rumor of this doying was sone blowen into the courte of Fraūce, whiche made the Ambassadors of Englande not smally abashed, which knowing perfighty y^e Frenche hartes to be prone and ready at all tymes to reuenge and do outrage to suche as displeased them, were sodainly afraied least the commō people coulde not withoolde their hādes from quereling or fraiyng, albeit the lawe of armēs, and the treuth it selfe did defende and preserue them from iniury. But whiles the oratoures were in this perplexite and fear of daungier, and whiles the Frenchmen suspected this facte to be done by a cautell of kyng Henry, there came other new messengers from him to the French kyng, to purdge hymself to his frend of the suspected ingratitude,

certefying hym and declaring (by most euident tokens & apparant argumentes) that the lord Wooduile without his knowlege or consent, was sayled ouer into Britayne with so small a number of men, which smal handful, neither it becomed a prince to sende or set forward, neither yet coulede do to the Brytaynes any great aide or succoure: To the which message and excuse, albeit the Frenche kynge adhibited but small credence, yet he some what mitigate of his angre and furious agony, dissimuled the matter (accordyng to the Frēch nature) with a flatteryng countenance. So the Ambassadors renewyng a league and amitie bewene their kyng and hym for. xii. monethes, returned into Englande againe, and shewed the kyng al such thinges that they had either heard or sene there. The kyng of England well perceyued by the report of hys newly returned Oratoures, that the Frenche kynge wrought all hys feates by subtyll craft and cloked collusion, treatyng and mocionyng peace and concorde, when he desyred nothing so much as discorde and warre, and that purpose he auauanced and set forwarde with sayle & ower, to the vttermost poynt of his habilitie. Wherefore kyng Henry beyng assured of all the French kynges actes and cogitaciōs, determined now with all celerite to set forth out of hand al such thinges as here before had cōcluded, cōcerning the warre of Britayne, as you haue heard. Wherefore he called his high courte of Parliament, and there fyrst consulted with the peres and cōmynaltie of hys realme, for the aiding of the duke of Britayne. Then for the maintenaunce of the warres, diuers summes of money were graūted and geuen, beside certayne decrees & actes made for the vtilite of the common wealth. And assone as the Parliament was ended, he caused mustres to be had in certayne places of hys realme, and souldiours mete for the warre to be put in a redynes. Yet least peraduenture he might seme willingly to breake the amitie, which was betwene the Frenche kynge and hym, he sente diuers notable Ambassadors into Fraunce to certefye the Frenche kynge, that of late he hadde kepte a solempne Parliamente, in the whiche it was condiscended and agreed by the lordes temporall and spirituall, and knyghtes of counties, and magistrates of cities, and boroughes of his realme not onely consideryng the relief, comforte and aide that he had

receyued at the dukes hande, bothe for the sauegard of his lyfe, and for the recoueryng of hys enheritaunce and kyngdome, but also remembryng that Brytayne of auncient tyme was subject & vassal to the realme of Englande, which countrey also hath been frendly, and aiders to the English nacion when it was vexed, bothe with foreyne powers and domesticall sedicion, to aide, comforte and assist the Brytische nacion with all their strength, might and habilite againste all their enemyes, frendly admonishyng hym that he should either desist from hys warre in Brytayne newly incepted, or els not be greued if he did agre (as reason woulde) to the myndes, judgement and determinacion of the princes and prelates of hys realme, assuryng hym in the woorde of a kyng, that hys armye should onely discende in the duchy of Brytayne, not to inuade or make warre in the Frenche kynges realme or territoryes, but onely to defend the duchy of Britayne, and to profligate and expell all the intrudors & inuasours of the French nacion, whiche injustly occupied and inuaded the Brytannicall tytles and seignories. With these commaundemētes the English Ambassadors departed, and declared to the Frenche king all the mynde and will of their Kyng and souereigne lord. Whiche message he dissimuled as litle to regarde as the bytyng of a flee, as though the Englishmen in the battaile, whiche he knewe to be at hande, coulde do no enterpryce (as it happened in dede) either necessary to be feared or worthy to be remembred. The cause of hys so sayng was thys, he knowynge that hys army was puissaunt and stronge in Britayne, and that the Britaynes had but a few Englishmen with the lorde Wooduile, of whome he passed litle, and seyng that Englād had not yet sent any army thether for the dukes succour, judged surely that hys army woulde do some great exployte (as they did in dede) before either the duke shoulde be purueyed or any aide ministred. And as he imagened so it folowed, for the Frenchmen sore oppressed the countrey of Britayne and brent and destroyed cities, and beseged the toune of Fōgeres so that the duke of Britayne was encouraged by the duke of Orliance, and other rebelles of the Frenche kyng, manfully to fight and geue battaile to the Frēch army. And so the XXV. daye of Iuly they set forward, & came to a toune

whiche the Frenchmen had gotten, called saint Aulbyne. The Frenchmen were not ignoraunt of their commyng, but put them selves in a redynes. Of whiche armye was Capytaines, The lorde Lewes of Treuoyle, vyscount of Thonars, a Gascoyn, Adryan lorde of Mountfalcoyse. On the Brytones parte were cheuetaynes, Lewes duke of Orliaunce and the prynce of Orange, whiche because they and other of the Frenchmen were all on horsebacke, were mistrusted of the Brytones, least they woulde at their moost nede flye.

“Wherfore they discended on fote, and the duke and the prince put thē selves in the battaile of the Almaynes: The Marshal of Rieux was appoynted to the vauntgarde. The middle warde was deliyered to the lord Dalebret, and the rereward to the lorde Chateaw Bryand, and to make the Frenchemen beleue that they had a great number of Englishmen (notwithstandyng there were but foure hundreth with the lorde Wooduile) they appareled a thousand and seuen hundred Brytons in cotes with red crosses after the English fasshion. Whenbothe the armyes were approchyng to the other, the ordinaunce shot so terribly and with suche a violence, that it sore dammaged and encombred bothe the parties. When the shot was finished, bothe the vantgardes ioyned together with suche a force that it was maruell to beholde. The Englishmen shot so fast, that the Frēchmen in the forward, were fayne to recule to the battaile where their horsemen were. The rereward of the Frenchmen, seyng thys fyrst discōfiture began to flye, but the Capitaynes retired their men together agayn, & the horsemē set fiercely on the Brytaines, and slewe the moost parte of the fotemē. When the forward of the Brytones perceaued that their horsemē nor the Almaines came not forward they prouided for thē selves & fled, some here, and some there, where they thought to haue refuge or succour. So that in conclusiō the Frenchmē obtayned the victory, & slew all such as ware red crosses, supposyng thē all to be Englishmē. In thys cōflict were slayn almost all the Englishmen, & six. M. Brytones, Emōgest whome were founde dead the lorde Wooduile, & the lord Iames Galeas borne in Napels. And of the Brytones there were slayne the lord of Leon, the lorde Mountfort, the lorde Pontlabbe & many noble & notable persones of the British

nacion. Of the French naciō were slayne: xii. C. persones. The prynce of Orange, & the duke of Orliance were taken prysoners, which duke (although he were next heyre apparaut to the crowne of Fraūce) should haue lost hys head, if lady Iane his wyfe which was syster to Charles the Frēch king had not obtained pardō & remissiō of his trespasse & offence. Howbeit he was lōg after kept prysoner in the great Toure at Bourges in Berry. This infortunate metyng chauced to the Britaynes on a mōday, beyng the. xxvii. day of Iuly, in the yere of our rēdepciō. M. cccc. lxxxviij. & in the iii. yere of kyng Henry the. vii." ¹

Here then we have the bare facts. Sir Edward Woodville sails in May to aid in the maintenance of Breton independence, directly against the wishes of Henry VII., who at that time wished to remain at peace with France. Then the English king, about a month later, and apparently without any very sufficient cause (Hall fails to assign sufficient grounds for his action) turns straight around and declares war on France in alliance with Brittany. Then comes the final tragedy, the sudden invasion of French armies into the duchy, before the English king could send aid to Woodville (of whose rash venture of two months before he must now have begun heartily to approve); and lastly the overthrow of Breton independence and the death of our hero at the battle of St. Aubin-du-Cormier on the 27th of July, 1488. These are the facts; we have now to discover some motives for this mad adventure of Woodville and still more for the subsequent change of front of Henry VII.—some motives more plausible than those given by Hall—and finally to draw our deductions and assign to the whole affair its proper place in the course of European history.

There was probably a far closer connection between Woodville's experience in Spain, and his final venture and death in Brittany than would at first appear. It was on March 10th, 1488 (*i. e.* probably a year or more after

¹ Hall, pp. 439-441.

Woodville's return from Spain, and two months before his departure to aid Brittany against the king's will) that Henry sent a formal embassy to Ferdinand and Isabella to sue for the hand of their daughter Katharine for his son Arthur;¹ and sometime in the first two weeks of May, that is at precisely the time that Woodville left for Brittany, the English king received a reply, which, though leaving all details to future arrangement, was distinctly favorable in tone.² The first meeting of plenipotentiaries for settlement of details began in London, July 7th,³ that is, just three weeks before the battle of St. Aubin-du-Cormier, in which Woodville was slain. It is highly probable that it was at this meeting that Henry first learned what the price of the Spanish match would be—I have already indicated it—aid to the duke of Brittany in the maintenance of his independence, so as to embarrass France in the north, and force her to cede to Ferdinand and Isabella the coveted provinces of Cerdagne and Roussillon in the south. It was probably this knowledge that led Henry to make the sudden change from friendship to enmity with France which Hall describes, but for which he fails to assign either adequate cause or date—a change which, however, may be taken to have occurred a week or so before the battle of St. Aubin, so short a time before it in fact, that, as we have already seen, Henry had been unable to send aid to Woodville and preserve the independence of the duchy.

It is of course exceedingly dangerous to construct historic theories on insufficient data, but it is a noteworthy fact that all the evidence we have points to the conclusion that Woodville was instrumental in persuading Henry to seek this Spanish match, and also to pay the price of its accomplishment. That the similarity of the aims of the Spanish and English sovereigns, both at home and abroad,

¹ Rymer, *Fœdera*, XII., pp. 336-7.

² Bergenroth, *Calendar of Spanish Despatches*, I.: No. 15. ³ *Ibid.*, I., Nos. 20, 21.

and of the conditions of their respective countries was in itself an excellent groundwork for a treaty of alliance is undeniable; still some definite cause for bringing matters to a head was needed; and we may well believe that Woodville, who had the ear of the king, and who returned from Spain in 1486 or 1487, deeply impressed with the power and importance of the Spanish sovereigns, had a large share in persuading Henry to make the first move, *i. e.* to send the embassy of March 10th, 1488. Certainly it is difficult to assign any other definite cause for the departure of the ambassadors at this precise juncture. The later career of Woodville, moreover, confirms this theory. Although of a Yorkist family and therefore hostile to France, the "ardent loue and affeccio" with which, according to Hall, he was "inflamed" for the Duke of Brittany, is scarcely in itself a sufficient cause to explain his bold venture of May, 1488, in the teeth of the royal opposition. Is it not possible that having been in Spain, and close in touch with the Spanish sovereigns, he foresaw what price they were likely to ask for the hand of their daughter, and being himself deeply interested in the success of the scheme, started off with the idea of forcing Henry into an abandonment of his old friendship with France, an abandonment which actually took place six weeks after his departure? Looked at in this light, the career of this obscure knight-errant assumes considerable importance as one of a number of causes that led up to the completion of a marriage which was destined to have results of incalculable importance for Europe and for Christendom; to be the first of a chain of events that paved the way for the English Reformation, the defeat of the Spanish Armada, the transference of the sovereignty of the seas from Spain to England, and for the conflicts of these two great powers in the New World.

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