

Thomas of Woodstock (cont.)
his uncle for a time & during his Scottish expedition created Thomas Duke of Gloucester 6 Aug. 1385,
granting him 1000 pounds a year from the exchequer by letters patent dated at Heselbrough in
Tewitdale. In Oct. parliament Richard confirmed this elevation & invested his uncle with this
dignity, girding him with a sword & placing a cap with a circlet of gold on his head (Sandford, p. 231)
To this parliament Thomas was summoned as Duke of Albemarle although neither he (nor his children)
ever again assumed that style & he was not given possession of Holderness which usually went
with it, until 1388 (Dugdale II 170) In elevating his 2 younger uncles, Thomas & Edmund (York)
Richard perhaps hope to sow fresh dissension between them & John, and to cover his promotion of
his humble-born minister, Michael de la Pole, to earldom of Suffolk. But Thomas, on John's
departure for Spain, placed himself openly at the head of opposition to Richard & was one of
the judges who condemned Suffolk in ~~1386~~ 1386 & a member of the commission to reform the
household & realm. Richard is alleged to have plotted his murder at dinner. Thomas forced
Richard to dismiss Suffolk by threatening him with fate of Edw. II. when Richard in Aug. 1387
procured a declaration from the judges that the authors of the commission were guilty of treason &
began to raise forces, Gloucester & friends swore on the Gospels before Bishop of London that
they were actuated by no personal motives but only by anxiety for Richard's own honor & interests.
Thomas refused to forego revenge on De Vere whom Richard had made Duke of Ireland. De Vere
had repudiated Thomas' niece for a Bohemian serving woman.

Failing to get support from Londoners against Gloucester (who had taken up arms with Arundel
& Warwick) Richard spoke them fair & affected to agree to impeachment of his favorites at parliament
to meet in Feb. 1388. But on his sending De Vere to raise an army in Cheshire & attempting to pack the
parliament, the three lords met at Huntingdon 12 Dec. 1387 & talked of deposing Richard. Joined by
earls of Derby & Nottingham they routed De Vere at Radcotbridge 20 Dec. 1387 & were admitted to
London Tower on 27 Dec., entering King's presence with linked arms. Thomas showed Richard their
forces on Tower Hill & "soothed his mind" by assurance that 10 times their number were ready to destroy
Richard; Thomas was no doubt chiefly responsible for vindictiveness of the merciless parliament. His
insistence on execution of Sir Simon Burley involved Thomas in heated quarrel with Derby.

Thomas held ^{reigns} ~~reigns~~ of power for 12 months but not without some attempt to justify their promises
of reform. However, he obtained enormous parliamentary grant of 20,000 pounds to reimburse him & friends
for their patriotic sacrifices. Thomas secured lordship of Holderness, castle, town & manor of Oattham,
Chester & North Wales (giving him a hold over a district attached to Richard by local loyalty) & office of chief justice of
re-summed the government, promising his subjects better government & leaving Thomas in disgrace. Through the good offices of
Earl of Northumberland & John of Gaunt (returned from Spain) peace was made. By 10 Dec. Thomas was back in council and
grants of money were given him also but he felt he had no real influence with the king, & this, combined with
emulation of his nephew Derby's recent achievements in Prussia, may have induced him to undertake in Sept. 1391 a
mission to the Master of the Teutonic Order. A storm drove him back along the coasts of Denmark, Norway & Scotland, on 2

narrowly escaping with his life, he landed at Tynemouth & returned home to Pleshey. (Foedera VIII 705-6 Walsingham II 202) During his absence the King had secured from parliament an admission that the proceedings of 1386-8 had in no way curtailed his prerogatives (Rot. Parl. III 286)

In early 1392 Thomas was appointed Lieutenant in Ireland only to be superseded suddenly in favor of Earl of March in July just as he was about to start 'par certeynes causes qui a ce nous mouvent' (King's Council in Ireland pp. 255-8) He was then holding an inquiry into a London riot, but this may not have been the sole cause of his supersession (Rot. Parl. III 324) Richard was seeking canonization of Edward II with whose fate Thomas threatened him by es. before (Issues p. 247)

The Cheshire men rose against Gloucester & Lancaster in spring 1393 while they were negotiating in Calais, in the belief that it was Richard's wish & Richard had to publish a disavowal (Annales p. 159 Foedera VII 746) Apparently the Earl of Arundel was trying to force a crisis. Gloucester gave up chief justiceship of Chester to Richard's henchman, Nottingham, but was consoled with a fresh grant of Holderness & Oakham & certain estates formerly belonging to de Vere (Rot. Rolls 17-18 Ric. II) Yet he was rendered uneasy by Richard's quiet attacks on the work of the Merciless Parliament & his serious breach with Arundel after the Queen's death in June 1394. (Rot. Parl. III 302, 316 Annales p. 424) He accompanied Richard to Ireland in Sept. But Richard sent him back in spring 1395 to obtain a grant from the new parliament. From Froissart's account it appears that Gloucester's relations with the court were getting strained during his visit to England in the summer 1395. Courtiers accused Thomas of malice & cunning & said he had a good head, but was

proud & wonderfully overbearing in his manners. His urging coercion to make the Gascons accept John of Gaunt as their duke was laid to his desire to be rid of John at home. He disapproved of the proposed French marriage & peace, & the negotiations were carried on through by others, though he was present (willingly or unwillingly) at the marriage festivities Oct. 1396 near Calais. In early 1397 mutual provocations followed swiftly one after another. Thomas may

have prompted Haxey's petition in Jan. 1397 parliament which Richard saw as an attempt to repeat 1386 (see Thomas Haxey) French writers favorable to Richard later alleged that Thomas, Arundel & Warwick conspired to imprison perpetually Richard & his 2 elder uncles. (Chronique de la Traison p. 3-7) But Richard did not try to bring any definite charges; he resolved to destroy

them & took them by surprise. He had intended to arrest them at a dinner to which he had invited them but Thomas, at Pleshey, excused himself on plea of illness. (Annales p. 201)

On 10 July 1397 Richard arrested Warwick & Arundel & accompanied trained bands from London to Pleshey, arriving next morning early. Thomas, perhaps really ill, came out to meet him at the head of a solemn procession of the priests & clerks of his newly founded college. (Ivesham p. 130-
Annales p. 203-
Hardyng p. 345) As he bent in obeisance Richard arrested him with his own hand, and,

leading the procession to the chapel (for mass), assured his "bel oncle" that all would turn out for the best. (Another version says Thomas knelt, begging for his life, & was told that he would have the same grace shown to Burley. (Eulogium III, 312)

After breakfast Richard left with ^{most of} his followers, leaving the Earl of Kent & Sir Thomas Percy to convey Thomas directly to Calais. (Statements that he was taken to the Tower are doubtful.) At Calais Thomas was held by its captain, Earl of Nottingham, partisan of the King. About the beginning of Sept. it was announced ("feust notifié") (implying more than mere report!) both in England & in Calais that he was dead - the date given as 25 Aug. 1397, the date entered on the escheat roll (Rot. Parl. III 431, 452, Gregory p. 96, Dugdale II, 112) It was therefore with intense surprise that Sir William Rickhill (q.v.), a justice of the common pleas, who by order of Richard accompanied Nottingham to Calais 7 Sept., heard on his arrival that he was to interview Gloucester & report all that he should say to him. Still more mysteriously, his orders were dated 3 week earlier, 17 Aug. There is no reason to doubt Rickhill's account of his interview with Thomas on 8 Sep. He took care to have witnesses and his story was fully accepted by the first parliament of the next reign. Richard obviously could not safely produce his uncle for trial at the following parliament - there was only a little less danger in meeting parliament with a bare announcement of Thomas' death. Rickhill was brought to ~~the King in his castle~~ ^{Thomas} early on morning of 8 Sept. and in the presence of 2 witnesses, begged ~~Richard~~ ^{Thomas} to put what he had to say into writing ~~for safekeeping~~ ^{and keep a copy.} Late in the evening Rickhill returned to Thomas, before the same witnesses, read a written confession in 9 articles which he then handed to Rickhill. He admitted verbally that he had threatened Richard with deposition in 1388 if the execution of Burley was not carried out. He requested Rickhill to return the next day in case he should have remembered any omission. This Rickhill did but Nottingham refused to let him see Thomas. (Rot. Parl. III 431-2)

Parliament met 17 Sep. and on 21 Sep. a writ was issued to Nottingham to bring Thomas before parliament. Three days later Nottingham replied that he could not do this because Thomas was dead! On the petition of the lords appellant and the commons, the peers declared Thomas guilty of treason as having levied arms against the King in 1387, and his estates consequently forfeited. His confession, which is in English, was read in Parliament next day, but omitting, as Rickhill afterwards declared, those articles which were "contrary to the intent & purpose" of the King. He admitted helping put the King under restraint in 1386, entering his presence armed, opening his letters, speaking of him in slanderous wise in audience of other folk, discussing the possibility of giving up their homage to him, & of deposition. But he declared that they had only thought of deposing him for two days ~~if~~ or three & then restoring him, and that if he had "done evil and against his Regalie" it had been in fear of his life, and "to do the best for his person & estate". Since renewing his oath of allegiance on God's body at Langley he had never been guilty of

fresh treason. He therefore besought the King "for the passion that God suffered for all mankind, and the compassion that He had of his mother on the cross and the pity that He had of Mary Magdalen" to grant him his mercy and grace. The Confession is printed in full in the Rolls of Parliament (iii. 378-9) from an original sealed copy, but an examination of the roll of the actual proceedings shows that the exculpatory clauses and the final appeal were omitted, and the date of Rickhill's interview carefully suppressed. All who were not in the secret would suppose it to have taken place between 17 Aug., the date of the commission, and 25 Aug., which had been given out as the date of Gloucester's death. There were obvious reasons for not disclosing the fact that he had been alive little more than a week before Parliament met. Why the murder - for the hypothesis of a natural death is practically excluded - was left to the eleventh hour we can only conjecture. Perhaps Nottingham shrunk from the deed (Eclogium iii. 373) perhaps Gloucester refused to make his confession earlier. The mutilated confession was published in every county in England. In the 1st Parliament of Henry IV a certain John Halle, a former servant of Nottingham, swore that Gloucester, under orders from the King, had been smothered beneath a feather bed in a house in Calais, called the Prince's Inn, by William Serle, a servant of Richard's chamber, & several esquires & valets of the Earls of Nottingham & Rutland in Sept. 1397 (Rot. Parl. iii, 452) Halle, who had kept the door, was executed, & though he was not publicly examined, there seems no strong reason to doubt the main features of his story. Serle, on falling into Henry's hands in 1400, suffered the same fate. In France Gloucester was thought to have been strangled. (St. Denys, ii 557; Froissart.)

Richard ordered Nottingham on 14 Oct. to deliver the body to Richard Maudelyn, to be given by him to the widow for burial in Westminster Abbey (Foedera viii, 20-21), but on 31 Oct. he ordered her to take it to the priory of Broomfield instead (ib. viii 24.) Froissart, who has been followed by Dugdale & later writers, says he was buried in Pleasley Church (which he had collegiate & endowed under a license obtained in 1393); but Adam of Urke (p. 38) expressly states that Richard buried him in Westminster Abbey, but in the south of the church (in the chapel of St. Edmund) quite away from the royal burial-place. It was removed to the chapel of the Kings near the shrine of St. Edward, the spot he had selected in his lifetime, by Henry IV in 1399 (cf. Nichol's Royal Wills, p. 177) His elaborate brass, in which there were some 20 figures, is engraved in Sandford (p. 237) but nothing save the matrices now remains.

Gloucester's proud, fierce, & intolerant nature, which provoked the lasting & fatal resentment of his nephew, may be seen in the portrait (from Coll. MS. Nero, D. vii) engraved in Doyle's "Official Baronage". It bears no resemblance to the alleged portrait engraved in Grose's "Antiquarian Repository" (ii 209) He composed about 1390 "L'ordonnance d'Angleterre pour le Camp à l'outrance, ou gize de bataille" (Chronique de la Traison, p. 124.); Antiquarian Repository, ii 210-19) a finely illuminated vellum copy of Wyclif's earlier version of his

translation of the Bible - now in the British Museum - was once Gloucester's property; his armorial shield appears in the border of the 1st page.

By his wife, Eleanor Bohun, he had one son and 3 or 4 daughters. His only son, Humphrey, born about 1381, was taken to Ireland by Richard in 1399, & on the news of Bolingbroke's landing, confined with his son (afterwards Henry V) in Trim Castle, recalled by Henry IV immediately after, he died on the road, some said by shipwreck, others more probably of the plague in Angelsey (Usk, p. 28; Leland Collectanea iii 384, cf. Archaeologia XX 173). He was buried at Walden Abbey in Essex. Three of his sisters were named respectively ANNE, JOAN & ISABEL. A fourth, Philippa, who died young, is mentioned by Sandford. Anne (1380-1438) married (1st) in 1392 Thomas, 3rd earl of Stafford, but she dying in that year, she became in 1398 the wife of his brother, Edmund, 5th earl of Stafford (by whom she was mother of Humphrey Stafford) 1st Duke of Buckingham. (q.v.); on his death she took a 3rd husband (1404) William Bouchier, Count of Eu, to whom she bore Henry, earl of Essex, ^{Thomas 1405-1486} Archbishop Bouchier, ^{* John (Lord Berners)} & ^{other sons}; she died 16 Oct. 1438 (Royal wills, p. 278) Joan (+1400) was betrothed to Gilbert, Lord Talbot, elder brother of the 1st earl of Shrewsbury, but she died unmarried on 16 Aug. 1400 (Dugdale i, 172, cf. Sandford p. 234) Isabel (b. 1384) became a nun in the Minories outside Aldgate London.

Gloucester's widow made her will at Plehey 9 Aug. 1399 & died of grief at the loss of her son, it is said, at the Minories on 30 Oct. 1399 (Royal wills p. 177; Annals p. 321) she lies buried close to the 1st resting place of her husband in the Abbey under a fine brass, which is engraved by Sandford (p. 230) He is no doubt mistaken in asserting that she died in the Abbey of Barking where she had become a nun.

(Rotuli Parliamentorum; Issues of the Exchequer, ed. Devon; Calendar, Patent Rolls 1895-7; Rymer's Foedera, Records & original edits.; Ordinances of the Privy Council, ed. Nicolas; Walsingham's Historia Anglicana, Annales Ricardi II (with Tricelowe), Knighton, the Eulogium Historiarum, and the Roll of King's Council in Ireland, 1392-3) in Rolls Series; Chronique de la Traison et mort de Richard II, ed. Eng. Hist. Soc.; Chron. of the monks of Evesham, ed. Hearne; Adam of Usk, ed. Maunde Thompson; Froissart, ed. Luce & Kervyn de Lettenhove, Chronique de Religieux de St. Denys, ed. Ballaguet; Dugdale's Baronage; Sandford's Genealogical History of the Kings of England, ed. 1677; Gough's History of Plehey; Newcourt's Repertorium Ecclesiasticum Parochiale Londonense, ii 469 (for his college) G.E. Cokayne's Complete Baronage; Doyle's Official Baronage; Wallon's Richard II (James Tait, auth.)

