LITERARY REFERENCES IN THE PASTON LETTERS TO THE CHARACTERS IN SHAKESPEARE'S KING HENRY VI, PART II

by

ROWENA ROSS

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### TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PURPOSE</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>METHOD OF STUDY</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>THE PASTON FAMILY</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>THE WAR OF THE ROSES</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>THE LORD PROTECTOR FACTION</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Humphrey, Duke of Gloucester</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Earl of Warwick</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QUEEN MARGARET'S FACTION</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Queen Margaret</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Duke of Suffolk</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Duke of Somerset</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cardinal Henry Beaufort</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OPPORTUNIST FACTION</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Duke of York</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AMBIGUOUS FACTION</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Henry VI</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CONCLUSIONS</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACKNOWLEDGMENT</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BIBLIOGRAPHY</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
PURPOSE

No researcher can curb the genius of a great writer long enough to study it in detail. About the best that can be done is to study carefully what the genius had to work with and what he did with the material that he had at hand. We know, for example, that Shakespeare leaned pretty heavily upon the chronicle histories of Hall, Holinshed, and Grafton for the material utilized in his King Henry VI plays; it can not always be determined why he did what he did.

An equally interesting and perhaps equally profitable question concerns Shakespeare's dependability as a historian. Through a series of at least nine chronicle plays—King Richard II, King Henry IV, Parts I and II, King Henry V, King Henry VI, Parts I, II, and III, King Richard III, and King Henry VIII, not to mention King Lear, Macbeth, and Cymbeline—Shakespeare concerned himself with considerable blocks of English history. To what extent can Shakespeare be trusted as a historian? Does he show the proper respect for historical accuracy, or does he omit facts that might be prejudicial to the dramatic effects which he wished to produce? Does he ever willfully misquote history in order to achieve a dramatic effect?
In answering these questions, *The Paston Letters* furnish considerable pertinent data. *The Paston Letters* is a series of more than 1,000 pieces of correspondence between various members of the Paston family and their friends, over a period of eighty-six years, from 1417 to 1503. This correspondence, covering in all, four sizable volumes, is one of the most important original sources for the study of English history during the medieval period.

It is the purpose in this paper to study all of the references in *The Paston Letters* to the principal characters of *King Henry VI, Part II*, in order to test Shakespeare's historical accuracy in the very first chronicle play at which he tried his hand. It is generally admitted that the King Henry VI plays were Shakespeare's initial attempt at English chronicle history, perhaps the earliest of all his plays, and it is further generally admitted that *King Henry VI, Part II*, was written before *King Henry VI, Part I*.

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METHOD OF STUDY

In the present paper the same organization of the opposing factions as is presented in Shakespeare's *King Henry VI, Part II*, is followed; that is, personalities dealt with belonged either to Queen Margaret's party or to the party of the Lord Protector, Humphrey, Duke of Gloucester. The Queen's party— for varying motives—consisted of the Duke of Suffolk, the Duke of Somerset, and Cardinal Beaufort. The Lord Protector's party consisted essentially of the Earl of Salisbury and the Earl of Warwick. King Henry VI, because of his vacillating character, sometimes sided with the Queen, sometimes with the Lord Protector. The Duke of York, on the basis of political expediency, sometimes sided with the Lord Protector, sometimes with the Queen. Shakespeare aligns the Jack Cade rebellion with the York faction, although there is no mention of any such association in *The Paston Letters*.

The method in this study has been first to tabulate all the references throughout *The Paston Letters* to any of the principal characters in Shakespeare's *King Henry VI, Part II*, to determine how these characters were regarded by their contemporaries. Having determined the salient traits of each of the characters according to this original source, the contemporary portraits were compared with the portraits of the same characters as given by Shakespeare in order to determine Shakespeare's method of dealing with historical subject matter. In this manner it was sought to determine Shakespeare's dependability as a historian.
THE PASTON FAMILY

Before going to a study of The Paston Letters proper, at least a few words on the Paston family itself seem to be in order. Who were the Pastons? Were they reputable people? Were they in a position to know personally or by reputation the important figures mentioned by Shakespeare in King Henry VI, Part II, and were they capable of passing judgment upon important public figures and important political issues of their day? In a word, are The Paston Letters worth anything as an original historical record?

At the time the family and their doings become best known, their social position was merely that of small gentry. William Paston, however, was a justice of the Common Pleas in the reign of Henry VI, whose uprightness of conduct caused him to be commonly spoken of by the name of "the Good Judge". He had a son, John, brought up to the law, who became executor to the old soldier and statesman, Sir John Fastolf. This John Paston had a considerable family, of whom the two eldest sons, strange to say, both bore the same Christian name as their father. They were also both soldiers, and each, in his time, attained the dignity of knighthood. Sir John Paston attended and did military service to Henry VI and also spent some little time as a member of King Edward's household. The second son, John, was placed in the service of the Duke of Norfolk. The letters of these two sons form a considerable part of the Paston correspondence.
Following the reign of Henry VI the fortunes of the Paston family prospered, and the descendants earned golden opinions of Henry VIII and Queen Elizabeth. Opinions were not always so golden, however. Here is a contemporary account of Clement Paston and of his son, William, the old judge in the days of Henry VI:

First, there was one Clement Paston dwelling in Paston, and he was a good, plain husband, and lived upon his land that he had in Paston, and kept thereon a plough all times in the year, and sometimes in barlysall two ploughs...Other livelode nor manors had he none there, (save five or six score acres of land) nor in none other place.

Also, the said Clement had a son William, which that he set to school, and often he borrowed money to find him to school; and after that he yede (went) to court with the help of Geoffrey Somerton, his uncle, and learned the law, and there begat he much good; and then he was made a serjeant, and afterwards made a justice, and a right cunning man in the law. And he purchased much land in Paston, and also he purchased the moiety of the fifth part of the manor of Bakton, called either Latymer’s, or Styward’s, or Huntingfield, which moiety stretched into Paston; and so with it, and with another part of the said five parts he hath seignory in Paston, but no manor place; and thereby would John Paston, son to the said William, make himself a lordship there, to the Duke of Lancaster’s great hurt.2

William Paston left a name behind him of such repute that he was included by Fuller in his Worthies of England. It was not Fuller’s usual practice to notice a lawyer in this work. The genealogy of the Paston family during the time covered by this research is given in the following chart.

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2 James Gairdner, The Paston Letters, "Introduction", p. xxxv, Vol. IV. Hereafter, when reference is given to the four volumes of The Paston Letters, it will be designated in the footnotes by the number of the letter or "Introduction", page, and the volume number.
GENEALOGY
of
PASTON FAMILY

JUDGE WILLIAM PASTON--AGNES BERRY (In 1420)
(Died August 14, 1444.)

Wm.--Lady Anne Beaufort

Clement

John--Margaret

Elizabeth--Robert Poynings

Walter

John--Margery Brews

Sir John

Clement

Anne--Wm. Yelverton

Edmund--Catherine Clippesby

(Continued)

Margery--Richard Calle

Wm.

(Born 1470, youngest)

(Priest, (One of two eldest
died 1479) sons, married 1477)
THE WAR OF THE ROSES

Before The Paston Letters can be seen in their proper perspective a broad general outline of the War of the Roses should first be examined. The War of the Roses was not really a war between two rival houses, as is generally supposed, but a war between two factions of the same house. All of the claimants to the throne were descendants of one or another of the seven sons of Edward III.

Richard II was such a weakling that the people of England were more than ready to follow Henry Bolingbroke (Henry IV) even though they knew he was in part a usurper. As a son of John of Gaunt, Duke of Lancaster, fourth son of Edward III, Henry IV had stepped in ahead of Edmund Mortimer, Earl of March, third son. During the brilliant and forceful reigns of Henry IV and Henry V England was not particularly concerned about the niceties of the succession, but as soon as it became evident to everyone that the weak Henry VI was incapable of governing, his doubtful right to the throne seemed to be the easiest way of bringing about a change.

Political order was a true and wholesome feeling in fifteenth century England, but under a king incapable of governing, this feeling bred a curse, not a blessing. The great lords who should have preserved order under the king fell out among themselves. In spite of the loyalty of the age, the greatest subjects almost of necessity became king-makers.

The time was ripe for taking what one could, for one by one the fruits of Henry V's brilliant conquests in France were lost. England was left in the hands of the boy, Henry VI, with Humphrey, Duke of Gloucester, as
Protector. However, Duke Humphrey was cut down by intrigue, and the boy who was unable to punish his uncle's death became king. Mated to the inordinately ambitious Margaret of Anjou, he became the simple victim to her jealous intrigues. Pride, Jealousy, ambition, avarice, and hatred surrounded the throne while Henry VI moralized on nature.

Long had rancored the thwarted claim to the throne of the Yorkists, and Parliament compromised to right the royal succession and achieve a strong government. The House of Commons decreed that Henry VI should retain the right to occupy the throne during his lifetime, but at his death, succession should pass to the house of York.

Political intrigue still held sway, and the Duke of York was ordered to Ireland. Whether for his own protection at court or simply to satisfy ambitions, the Duke of York raised an army as he went.

While the Duke of York was in Ireland the Commons were demanding a change. Calling himself John Mortimer, cousin of the Duke of York, Jack Cade marched with his rabble into London, forcing Henry VI to flee for his life. The rebel was required to disguise himself, for he had been obliged to abjure the kingdom for murder. Historically there seems to be no justification for identifying York with the Cade Rebellion. After this incident many similar insurrections broke out in the land.

Upon York's return he marched to the royal presence in arms. Finally only war could be the result. York's forces took the field and were successful at the first battle of St. Alban's.

This outbreak could surely have been averted had Henry VI augmented the power and glory of his father, Henry V, who died at his height of greatness. Henry VI was cold in great affairs, and his supreme saintliness
consisted of remaining totally blameless whatever might befall his
country or advisers. For fear of doing what was wrong, he shrunk from
doing what was right.

What was Shakespeare's knowledge of this period with its controversial
claims, dynamic lords, and weak king? In King Henry VI, Part II, Act II,
scene ii, lines 9-22, the playwright demonstrated his learning when York says:

Then thus:
Edward the Third, my lords, had seven sons:
The first, Edward the Black Prince, Prince of Wales;
The second, William of Hatfield; and the third,
Lionel, Duke of Clarence; next to whom
Was John of Gaunt, the Duke of Lancaster;
The fifth was Edmund Langley, Duke of York;
The sixth was Thomas of Woodstock, Duke of Gloucester;
William of Windsor was the seventh and last.
Edward the Black Prince died before his father,
And left behind him Richard, his only son;
Who after Edward the Third's death, reign'd as king;
Till Henry Bolingbroke, Duke of Lancaster,
The eldest son and heir of John of Gaunt,
Crown'd by the name of Henry the Fourth,
Seiz'd on the realm, depos'd the rightful king,
Sent his poor queen to France, from whence she came,
And him to Pomfret; where as all you know,
Harmless Richard was murder'd traitorously.3

These lines of Shakespeare summarize the background for the War of
the Roses between the so-called houses of York and Lancaster. By this means
the era of authority of Henry IV and Henry V became turmoil in the reign
of Henry VI.

3 The line of succession in The First Part of the Contention is badly garbled
and historically inaccurate, but it was straightened out in the Quarto of
1619. However, Shakespeare again falls into an error in King Henry IV,
Part I, concerning Edmund Mortimer, Earl of March.
It must be noted that William of Hatfield died without an heir. The third son, Duke of Clarence, had a daughter who married Edmund Mortimer, Earl of March. They had issue Roger, Earl of March, and thence descended Edmund, Anne, and Eleanor. The son, Edmund, laid claim to the crown, but he was kept in captivity until he died. Anne married Richard, Earl of Cambridge, who was son to Edmund Langley, Edward the Third's fifth son. Through her Richard Plantagenet, the Duke of York, laid claim to the throne.

This claim may have seemed a bold step, but it was a course of action suggested by the results of past experience. After ten miserable years of fluctuating policy, the Yorkists were in power for the fourth time (after the first battle of St. Albans York was in power, and he was Protector during the King's illnesses in 1453 and 1455), but again they might be set aside and proclaimed traitors.

Admittedly Henry IV was a usurper, but his family had been in possession of the throne for three generations, so York's claim to set aside this family was questionable in some minds. Few of the lords at first appeared to regard it with favor. When it was presented in the Parliament, many stayed away. The Duke's counsel insisted upon an answer, and King Henry VI left it to the justices. The justices refused to commit themselves. The King's serjeants and attorney were then applied to but would give no answer. At length the lords brought to the floor of the House a compromise that the King should be allowed to retain his crown for life, and the succession would then revert to the
Duke of York and heirs. Margaret and her followers, however, would recognize nothing of what had transpired in Parliament. The Duke of York was once more to be Protector and have the actual government.

The Duke of York and the Earl of Salisbury went north to put down the rebellion of the Queen in 1461. The disastrous battle of Wakefield was fought and the Yorkists were defeated, the Duke and the Earl of Salisbury being slain in the field.

Within little more than two months after the battle of Wakefield, the son of the slain Duke was proclaimed Edward IV in London. He brought the Yorkists to the throne for a prolonged length of time from 1461-70 and again from 1472 to 1483. The leaders of the powerful Yorkist party included Humphrey, Duke of Gloucester, because he opposed the Queen, the Duke of York, the Earl of Warwick, the Earl of Salisbury, and later the son of York, Edward IV.

With leadership divided among those strong enough to seize it, the result could only be conflict. The claim to the throne, which is held to be the primary cause of the War of Roses, is explained in the diagram following.
GENEALOGY OF EDWARD III

As Given

by

Shakespeare

EDWARD III

Edward Wm. of Hatfield
the Black Prince,
(Died before father)

Lionel, John of Gaunt
Duke of Clarence

Edmund Langley,
Duke of York

Thomas of
Woodstock,
Duke of Gloucester

Wm. of Windsor

Richard II
No heir

Phillippe--
Edmund Mortimer,
Earl of March

Henry Bolingbroke,
Duke of Lancaster,
Henry IV

Richard,
Earl of Cambridge

Roger, Earl of March

Henry V
(Humphrey,
Duke of Gloucester)

Edmund
(Kept in Richard,
captivity) Earle of Cambridge

Anne--

Eleanor

Richard Plantagenet,
Duke of York

Henry VI
THE LORD PROTECTOR FACTION
Humphrey, Duke of Gloucester

Heading the "Duke Humphrey Faction", Gloucester was practically the protagonist of the "tragical historical" chronicle, King Henry VI, Part II. Queen Margaret, of course, would be the antagonist.

In the play also the good Duke Humphrey was sharply contrasted with the King. His goodness was of more genuine quality, but he had a like defect of energy. He lamented the base forfeiture of national honor, which never gave the King concern, yet he did nothing worthy of his position to save it. He seemed incapable of coping with the Cardinal or of ruling or saving his wife. Yet he was more of a realist than Henry VI, for he saw through the "miracle" of healing of the imposter Simpcox and his wife. Humphrey unmasked the rogue and had him whipped to the anguish of the King.

Whether the concept was in his mind, or for dramatic reasons, Shakespeare thought of the Earl of Salisbury and Duke Humphrey as Elder Statesmen, and he thought of the Earl of Warwick as a romantic, daring, devil-may-care type of hero. However, in The Paston Letters the "Duke Humphrey Faction" did not always hold such exalted positions.

In both the play and the Paston correspondence Humphrey is shown as a man who would walk out on a conference to which he could not conscientiously subscribe. Shakespeare ignored one facet of the Duke's character, omitting all reference to the Lord Protector's relations with Jacqueline of Hainault and Eleanor Cobham. If the playwright had
included this evidence, he would have lost much of the sympathy for
the Duke of Gloucester, so he erred by omission to build a stronger play.

Before proceeding to the references of the Duke of Gloucester's
marriages in *The Paston Letters*, it must be noted that evidently
none of the Pastons ever knew him personally. On the other hand, William
Paston seemed to be under the influence of Cardinal Beaufort. The trial
of the validity of Humphrey's marriage with Jacqueline of Hainault on
the grounds that her former marriage was void by consanguinity is
mentioned in one of William Paston's letters:

I have, after the advys of your lettre, deon dewely examyned
the instrument of the wysest I coude fynde here, and in especial
by on Maister Robert Sutton, a courtezane of the Court of Rome,
the which is the chief and most chier man with my Lord of Gloucester,
and his matier in the said court for my lady, his wyff (Jacqueline
of Hainault, whom Humphrey, Duke of Gloucester, married,
pretending that her former marriage with John, Duke of Brabant, was
void by consanguinity. The question which of the two marriages was
valid, was at this time before the Pope.); and here aunswere is that
all this processe, though it were in deede proceded as the instrument
specifieth, is not suffisant in the lawe of Holy Cheche, and that
hom semyth, by the sight of the instrument and by the defautes
(that) ye espied in the same and other, and in maner by the knowelege
of the notarie, that the processe, in gret part ther of, is fal(se)
(and un)trewe. I have taken advys of...and cha(uncellor) of my
Lord of Wynchestre (Henry Beaufort, afterwards Cardinal)... 4

The above letter seems to have been prompted by curiosity about a matter,
which, no doubt, the English people were talking about. In *The Paston
Letters* Eleanor Cobham, first the mistress and afterwards the wife of
Humphrey, is also mentioned. 5

5 Note to letter 92, p. 72, Vol. I.
During the time of Henry VI the Pastons applied to nobles whom they knew for assistance in legal matters. There was no evidence of such applications to the Duke of Gloucester, so the conclusion is that they had no influence with him or did not know him.

Shakespeare and The Paston Letters seemed to agree that the Duke of Gloucester did not always agree with the King and the lords. In the play he spoke against the King's marriage with Margaret of Anjou and the giving of a dowry to her. This disagreement with the marriage was not indicated in the Paston correspondence, but a similar matter was pointed out. Being the brother of Henry V, Humphrey resented any action sacrificing ground or men to the French. His attitude is shown in the following excerpt:

Salvete, etc. Tytyngs, the Duk of Orlyawnee (Charles, Duke of Orleans, who was taken prisoner at the battle of Agincourt in 1415, and had never since been released) hath made his oath and upon the Sacrement, and usyd it, never for to bere armes ayenst England, in the presence of the Kyng and all the Lordes, except my Lord of Gloucestre. And proving my sayd Lord of Gloucestre agreeyd never to hyg delyveraunce, quan the masse began he toke his barge, etc.

From the evidence the reader can assume that Shakespeare ignored the marriages of the Duke of Gloucester to portray him as the "Good Duke". The play and The Paston Letters portray him as a competent Protector who would stand alone for what he believed, and in public life "Did bear him like a noble gentleman".

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EARL OF WARWICK

The times made strange bed-fellows in the party of the "Good Duke". These men were brought together to "bridle and suppress the pride of Suffolk and the cardinal" and to "cherish Duke Humphrey's deeds", while they tended the profit of the land. Thus, Shakespeare explained the bringing together of this political party. These two men, Duke Humphrey and the Earl of Warwick, were very popular with the people. Aside from that trait, Shakespeare drew a sharp contrast between them. As previously pointed out, Duke Humphrey was the Elder Statesman, Warwick the starry-eyed, romantic hero.

This observation draws a question of dramatic technique. Could the Earl of Warwick be a first draft of Hotspur in King Henry IV? Could Shakespeare have been experimenting with a hero who showed a stubborn love of justice to place the rightful heir on the throne with brilliant generalship? Both characters also had powerful fathers to help in the enterprise. The Earl of Warwick lacked the complete portrayal given Hotspur later. Examination of the two characters leads the researcher to believe this first draft to be a very strong possibility.

In King Henry VI, Part II, the Earl of Warwick is praised by his father, the Earl of Salisbury, as being famous for his deeds, plainness, and housekeeping. He mentioned, too, his generalship in France and his regency there where he enjoyed great popularity.

Letters in the Faston correspondence tend to point up these traits of the Earl of Warwick, showing him to be doubly ambitious, popular, and
successful, and not so much Shakespeare's devil-may-care hero. These traits made him famous as the "King-maker", after succeeding to the earldom in 1449.

The *Paston Letters* indicate that a "King-maker" or any lord had to be diplomatic and powerful to live during Henry VI's troubled reign. During the turmoil of 1450 Warwick took four hundred men with him at the convening of Parliament, obviously for protection.7

The blame for the first battle of St. Alban's was deflected by Warwick away from himself to Cromwell, possibly showing his diplomacy and ambition:

Amonges other mervell, i.j. days afores the writyng of this letter, there was language betwens my Lordes of Warrewikke and Cromwell afores the Kyng, in somuch as the Lord Cromwell wold have excused hym self of all the steryng or moovynge of the male journey of Seynt Albones; of the whiche excuse makynge, my Lord Warrewikke had knolage, and in hast wasse with the Kyng, and sweare by his othe that the Lord Cromwell said not trouth, but that he was beginner of all that journey at Seynt Albones; and so betwens my said i.j. Lords of Warrewikke and Cromwell ther is at this day grete grugyng, in somoch as the Erle of Shrousebury hath loged hym at the hospitall of Seynt James, beside the Mewes, be the Lord Cromwells desire, for his sauf gard.8

Led by Warwick, the Yorkist lords wrote to the authorities in Norfolk a manifesto,9 stating their ambitions. By 1461 and 1462 Warwick's influence was predominant in the letters of the Pastons as to his whereabouts and activities:

The Lord Bourgher is with the Kyng, and my Lord Warwyk still in the North, etc.10

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Another reference:

As for tydyngs, my Lord of Warwyk yed forward in to Scotland as on Saturday (October 30) last past with xxm (20,000) men.\textsuperscript{11}

Also written to John Paston was the following:

Item, sir, if please such tydyngs as I her of, I send you word. My Lord of Warwyk hathe be in Skotland, an take a castell of the Skoots; and upon thys ther cam the Queene of Skoots, (Margaret, mother to James III, King of Scotland) with other Lords of her contre, as ye shall her the namys, in basetry (embassy) to my sayd Lord of Warwyk, and a tweys is take betwyx thys and Seynt Bertylmew Day in August. Thes is the last tydyngs that I knowe.*\textsuperscript{12}

Here is yet another:

As for tydyngs, the Eres of Warrewyk, of Essex, Lord Wenlok, Bysshop of Dereham, and other go in to Scotland of imbassat.\textsuperscript{13}

Warwick was ambitious, too, in negotiations for private land:

Has spoken with Warwyk and Stwkle for the place and lands in Arleham. Declined their offer of six d. an acre, they keeping the place in repair; but Stwkle has promised all the lands shall be purveyed for, as for this year. Warwyk this day offered my mother 7 d. an acre for the lands in Arleham, but I counselled her to hold out for a longer term.\textsuperscript{14}

Sometimes, however, he "negotiated" under questionable circumstances and was very practical:

Plese it you to undyrstande the grete necessyte of my wrytyng to you is this, that ther was made an exchange be the graunsyre of my hosbonds Mundeford, un hose sowle God have mercy, of the maner of Estlexham, the quych is parte of my junter, and my grauntfadyr Mundeford recoverdy the said maner of Estlexham be assaye (note) a guyne the amsetrys of Rows, and so madyt clere; and nowe have Edmund Roes claymyt the sayd maner of Estlexham be the verteu of a tayle (an entail), and hathe takyn possesseon, and made a feffement to

\textsuperscript{11}John Paston to John Paston, Sr., 463, p. 120, Vol. II, November 1, 1462.

\textsuperscript{12}J. Daubeney to John Paston, 452, p. 103, Vol. II, July 3, 1462.


\textsuperscript{14}Abstract, John Paston, Jr., to his father, John Paston, 545, p. 264, Vol. II.
my Lord of Warewyke (Richard Neville, Earl of Warwick) and Water George, and to Curde. And un Fryday be for Seynt Walentyne is Day Water George, and Curde enteryd and toke possessyon for my seyd Lord of Warewyke, and so bothe the forseyd manerys were ontayled, and at the tyme of the exchaunge made the tayles and avydsns of bothe for seyd manerys were deliyerald un to the partyes indaferently be the avyse of men lernyd. However, he also defended the rights of others:

And, sir, as for the place of Attylbrigge that my moder in lawe now duellith in, sir, you maistership shal right not (naught) attempte ther now in for my Lorde of Warwick (Richard Neville, Earl of Warwick) hath seen how the same place was yeven me by testament by Sir Roger Dallyng after the disease of my fader, whiche is redy to be shewed. And thereupon my Lorde of Warwik hath commaunded certeyn gentilmen to entere in the same place, and your maistership hadde be moved ther in or this, but for cause that ye love wel Ladynor, and that my moder in lawe is his sister; but I knowe wel hit woul cost CCCli., but that she shal be dispossedded of that place in short tyme. Like many of the other noblemen, he was forced to borrow money occasionally, as he wrote to Sir Thomas Todenham about 1449. This loan should occasion little surprise, for the great Earl of Warwick entertained lavishly in the style of the Middle Ages, and sometimes at his table the flesh of six entire oxen was consumed in a single meal. He entertained all chance comers who had any acquaintance with his household. Visitors were also allowed to carry off joints from his table, and the taverns in the neighborhood of Warwick's inn were actually full of his meat. Shakespeare and Warwick's contemporaries seemed to be in complete agreement as to his housekeeping.

Being such a popular man of business, he was made a patron in the founding of Fastolf's college. His influence was also important in other civil matters, and his former soldiers used the prestige of his name for assistance.

Right worshipfull and my especiall good maister, I recomaund me to yow with all my service, besechyng you hortily, at the reverence of God, to helpe me now in the grettest extremitie that I can at with my greet trobil with Ingham. It is not oute of your remembrance how Twyer in Norff(olk) vexith me bothe by noise and sorching myn house for me, so that theer I can not be in quyte; and all that, I am verily ascerhynd, is by heydens craft. And hear in the Kyngs house amenst Howard, wher I had hopid to a'relevid myself, I am supplanted and cast oute from hym by a clamour of all his servauntes at onys, and no war onely that his disposicion accordydyth not to my pouver concyte, which maketh me to gif leesse force, be cause I desire be used, elles by my trouth this unhappy unkynedness wold I trow a'killed me. I pray yow, at the reverence of Jesu Criste to enforrne my Lord of Warwyck of me. Fairde I haue hym service; I was with hym at Northampton, that all men knew; and now agayn at Seynt Albonys, that knowth James Ratcliffe; and ther lost I xxli wurth horse, hurneyys, and mony, and was hurte in diverse places. I pray yow to gete me his good Lordship, and that I may be toward hym in Norffolk in his Courte holdeynge, or elles, if ony thyng he haue to do; and that yu wole gete me a letter to Twyer to lute me to sit in rest.

As shown by history, Warwick was usually a man to defend his friends, but when he felt wronged, he did not hesitate to act, as when he sought to unseat Edward IV after a confidence was betrayed. Here was a man bold of speech and action. In 1460 he showed this boldness after the capture of Lord Rivers and son:

As for tydyngs, my Lord Ryvers was brougth to Caleys, and by for the Lords with viijXX (8 score) torches, and there my Lord of Salesbury reheted (rated) hym, callyng hym knaves son, that he schould be so rude to calle hym and these other Lords truytors, for they schall be found the Kyngs trewe lieuente men, when he schould be found a truytor, etc. And my Lord of Warrowyk rehetyd hym, and sayd that his fader was but a squier, and broute up with Kyng Harry the Yte and sethyn hymself made

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by maryage, and also made Lord, and that it was not his parte to
have swyche langage of Lords, boyng of the Kyngs blood. And my
Lord of Marche reheted hym in lyke wyse. And Sir Antony (Lord
Scales) was reheted for his langage of all iiij Lords in lyke wyse.\textsuperscript{22}

This very boldness was evidently one of the qualities to win the
hearts of the people, for he was obviously popular whether he was in or
out of favor with the Throne. After the dispersion of York's army near
Ludlow in October, commissions were granted to persons to arrest and
punish his adherents. Here is one reaction:

A lawde (illiterate) doctor of Ludgate perchid on Sonesday fourtenyts
at Pawlyn, charryng the peple that no man schuld pruyen for these
Lord traytorys, etc. (Earls of March, Warwick, Salisbury)\textsuperscript{23}

In 1460 other correspondence followed to show his remaining popularity:

Ther is gret talkyng in thyse contre of the desyir of my Lorde of
York. (His claim to the throne). The pepyll reports full worcepfully
of my Lord of Warwyk.\textsuperscript{24}

A further comment:

God safe our good Lords, Warwik, alle hise brother, Salisbury, etc.,
Tor al fals covetyse and favour of extorcyon, as they wil fle uttyr
scheme and confusyon. God save hem, and preserve fre treson and poysen;
leste hem be war her of for the pite of God; for yf owt come to my
Lord Warwik but good, far weel ze, far weel I, and al our frends, for
be the wyse of my scowe, this lond wer utterly on done, as God forbede.\textsuperscript{25}

The following excerpts need no other explanation, for the people
"lovyth and drethy hym (Norfolk) more than any other lord except the Kyng
and my Lord of Warwyk, etc".\textsuperscript{26} "And it is seyd that the Kyng shuld be at
London as on Saturdy or Sonday long past, and men deme that he wold to
Caleype hym selfe; for the soudyors are so wyld there, that they wyll not

\textsuperscript{23}Friar Brackley to John Paston, 341, p. 497, latter part of 1459, Vol. I.
\textsuperscript{24}Margaret Paston to John, 361, p. 532, Vol. I, October 21, 1460.
\textsuperscript{25}Friar Brackley to John Paston, 355, pp. 521-2, Vol. I, October, 1460.
\textsuperscript{26}Margaret Paston to John, 534, p. 252, Vol. II, October 27, 1465.
lette in ony man but the Kyng or my Lord Warwyk."27

The cause of York and Warwick was joined, and both enhanced the
popularity of the other:

Ye may tell my Lorde of Yorke that it is open in every manmys mouth in
this contre the language that my Lorde of Yorke and my Lord of Warwil
had to my Lorde of Norfolk in the Kings chambre; and that my Lorde of
Yorke saide, rathe then the londe shulde soo soo, he wolde com dwell
ther hym selff. Ye wolde materile what harts my Lords hath gotten and
how this language put people in comforte.28

Warwick, too, was a favorite of Edward IV. In 1462 there was
evidence in the correspondence of an invitation for an audience with the
King,29 and again in 1469.30 He was also with the King in 1470.31

His popularity with royalty or commoners may have partly accounted
for his success, but one of the most important factors was his military
strategy, as at the battle of St. Alban's:32

Thys day, the fore seyde Lord Glyfford kepy strongly the barrers that
the seyde Duke of York myght not in ony wise, with all the power that he
haddo, entre ne brok into the town. The Erle of Warrewyk, knowyng ther
offe, toke and gadered his men to gedere and ferocly brake in by the
gardyne sydes betwene the signe of the keye and the sygne of the
Chekkere in Holwell strete; and anoyn as they wer wyth inne the toon,
sodeynly the blew up trumpette, and sette a cry with asshout and a
great voyce, 'A Warrewyk! A Warrewyk! A Warrewyk!' and into that tyme
the Duke of York myght neveyre have entre into the toon; and they with
strong hond kepy yt, and myghtyly fought to gedere, and anoyn, forth
with after the brekyng in, they sette on them manfully.

Shakespeare gave the glory for winning the first battle at St. Alban's
to the Duke of York. Men of that day, however, gave the credit to the Earl
of Warwick. Both King Henry VI, Part II, and The Paston Letters declare that

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principal changes were made following the battle of St. Alban's. In a letter to John Paston the changes are mentioned, "My Lord of Yorke, Constabil of Englande; my Lord of Warweke is made captayn of Calyes; my Lord Burgchier is made Treasurer of Englande; and as yit other tydinges have I none".  

When the Earl of Warwick was given charge of the seas, he was not always successful; however, he was still a favorite with the people. He was beaten by the Spanish during a battle in 1458. Six years before this battle his ship had also suffered damage.

All of the enemies were not foreign, as John Paston, the youngest, wrote:

Item, my brother is redy(n) to Yarmowth for the lotte brybers that wold a robbed a ship undyr color of my Lord of Warwyk, and longe nothying to hem ward.

And some of the enemies were other noblemen, jealous of the sea power of Warwick. The Lord of Exeester was particularly displeased.

In a letter of 1462 his success is shown to stem partly from his conscientious attitude while in command:

My Lord of Warwyk lythe at the castyll of Warcorthe, but iiij myle out of Alnewyk, and he rydeth dayly to all thes castelys for the overse the segys; and if they want vatselys, or any othyr thyng, he is redy to pervey it for them to his power.

In spite of the factors which made him popular and successful by siding with York, he made himself unpopular with the opposing Lancastrians, as illustrated in these two letters:

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The Earls of Warwyk, Richemond (Edmund Tudor, King's half brother), and Pembroke (half brother to the King) comen with the Duke of Yorke, as it is seide, everych of thyem with a godely feliship. And natheles the erle of Warwyk wolde have M\(^4\) men sauvyng on hym beside the feliship that cometh with hym, as ferre as I can knowe. And as Geffrey Poole seith the Kynges brétherne bën like to be arrested at their comyng to Londone, yf thei come.\(^{39}\)

The other letter refers also to military planning:

I schuld go to Castre, and a man of my Lordes Norfolk told here he came fro London, and there he had commonly vosed that the Duke of Norfolk schuld be the Kynges comandement kep heise Estére at Castre for seve gard of the cuntre ayens Warwyk and other swich of the Kynges enmyes which may lytely be lyklynesse arvye at Waxham, etc.\(^{40}\)

For strategy military or political the times demanded clever men, and there seemed to be few. Richard Neville was not only diplomatic and clever but popular and successful. According to the Paston correspondence he was successful militarily, politically, and financially. As in King Henry VI, Part II, he was famous for his deeds, plainness, and housekeeping.

It was more than a romantic, daring hero, however, who in 1470 governed for a half-year in the name of the King whom he was a principal agent in deposing ten years before. The lack of complete character portrayal for Warwick on Shakespeare's part may have been due to experimentation. It must be reiterated that probably Warwick was the first draft of Hotspur.

In closing, the reader may judge the Earl of Warwick for himself, as Warwick wrote in his own forthright manner:

Worshipfull and my right trusty and welbeloved frende, I grete you well, and forasmuch as I have purchased of the worshipfull and my welbeloved frende, Friar of Walsyngham, iij maners in Lityl Snoryng, with the appurtenants, in the Counte of Norffolk, which manors be eloped Bowles and Walcotes,—I desir and hertily praye yow, that ye well shewe to me, and my feoffes in my name, your good will and favour, so that I may by your frendship the more peasably rejoy my forsaid purchase.\(^{41}\)

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QUEEN MARGARET'S FACTION

Queen Margaret

Historically, the Lancastrians were in the role of defenders. They had the throne, whether rightly or wrongly, and they imprisoned or murdered all other aspirants. They kept Edmund, son of Roger the Earl of March, in prison. Henry V executed the father of the Duke of York for treason. Margaret of Anjou, wife of Henry VI, was the primary Lancastrian leader for the sake of her son. She even went into the field to command troops. For her aid she employed the Duke of Suffolk, and at his death, the Duke of Somerset.

The final outcome was that with the death of Henry VI's son hope was lost for his line. Henry VI was murdered; and the Queen was driven back to her homeland by Edward IV.

In *King Henry VI, Part II*, Shakespeare painted her as energetic, violent, thoroughly unfeminine, and passionate. He always gave his heroines some saving grace, but obviously there was only one for her, and that was her mother love. Shakespeare makes her an adulteress, which seems reasonable in the light of her character. Dynamic and forceful as she was, she still was not heroic and gets little or no respect and sympathy from the reader.

Just as the Earl of Warwick might be a first draft of Hotspur, so Queen Margaret might be a first draft for Lady Macbeth. She was a strong woman, married to a weak husband, who saw that if she were to have a successor to follow in the footsteps of his father, he must be made in truth a real king. Yet Margaret did not have the majesty of Lady Macbeth, but she could be a pattern perfected later by Shakespeare for his great
tragedy, Macbeth.

In The Paston Letters Margaret is portrayed no more flatteringly than in the play. She is shown to be an ambitious woman who would go to any length in order to rule—even to treason, a fact apparently unknown to Shakespeare and his immediate sources. Gairdner pointed out this treasonable event as of 1457:

Notwithstanding the commissions issued to keep watch upon the coasts, the French managed to surprise and plunder Sandwich. On Sunday, the 28th August, a large force under the command of Pierre de Breze, seneschal of Normandy, landed not far from the town, which they took and kept possession of during the entire day. A number of the inhabitants, on the first alarm, retreated on board some ships lying in the harbour, from whence they began presently to shoot at the enemy. But De Breze having warned them if they continued he would burn their ships, they found it prudent to leave off. Having killed the bailiffs and principal officers, the Frenchmen carried off a number of wealthy persons as prisoners, and returned to their ships in the evening, laden with valuable spoils from the town and neighbourhood.

The disaster must have been keenly felt; but if Englishmen had known the whole truth, it would have been felt more keenly still. Our own old historians were not aware of the fact, but an early French chronicler who lived at the time assures us that the attack had been purposely invited by Margaret of Anjou out of hatred to the Duke of York, in order to make a diversion, while the Scots should ravage England! It was well for her that the truth was not suspected. ¹

In the light of the above evidence how ironic that Henry VI obviously hoped to secure an honorable peace for both England and France when he married Margaret of Anjou, niece of the King of France's consort! The cost of the marriage—no dowry and the loss of Anjou and Maine—seems to suggest a policy of peace at any price. However, in promoting this union, the Duke of Suffolk was trying to ally the weak king with a woman of stronger will than Henry's own.

¹"Introduction", pp. excviii(ix), Vol. IV.
When Margaret first came to England, the people at large rejoiced, for she was beautiful and attractive, even if poor. The negotiator received the thanks of Parliament, and there was not a man in all the kingdom—at least in all Parliament—durst wag his tongue in censure. Some of that popularity remained, for she was often mentioned in the Paston correspondence.

Thus Margaret and Suffolk became the chief counsels for the indecisive king. Throughout her political career there was evidence of favoritism in the Court, and consequently favorites with King Henry VI. With the assassination of Suffolk, Somerset became her primary colleague, but throughout this period they were the powers of the Lancastrian party.

Obviously York was never a favorite of hers. She connived to keep York and the King separated in 1456, which may have been partly responsible for the civil strifes. Her procedure is mentioned below:

In consequence of the Duke of York's popularity in London, it was expedient to remove the king some distance from the capital. He appears to have been staying at Windsor during July and the beginning of August. In the middle of the latter month he took his departure northwards. By the dates of his Privy Seals we find him to have been at Wycombe on the 18th, at Kenilworth on the 24th, and at Lichfield on the 29th. In September he moved about between Lichfield, Coventry, and Leicester; but by the beginning of October the Court seems to have settled itself at Coventry, where a council was assembled on the 7th. To this council the Duke of York and his friends were regularly summoned, as well as the lords whom the queen intended to honor; but even before it met, changes had begun to be made in the principal officers of state.

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2“Introduction”, p. liv, Vol. IV.
4“Introduction”, p. cxxvi, Vol. IV.
Not only did she strive to influence her husband, Henry VI, in political matters, but she also had definite ideas about the private lives of her subjects:

As for tydyngs, the Quene come in to this town (The little town of Paston) on Tewysday last past after none, and abode here tyll itt was Thursday, iij. after none; and she sent after my cos. Elysabeth Clere by Sharynborn, to come to her; and she durst not dysabey her commandment, and come to her. And when she come in the Quenys presens, the Quene made rytght meche of her, and desyrid here to have an hosbond, the which ye shall know of here after. But as for that, he is never nerrer than he was befor.

The Quene was right well pleasid with her answer, and reportyht of her in the best wyse, and sayth, be her trouth, she say no jantylwoman syn she come into Norffolk that she lykit better than she doth her.5

In spite of the niceties of outward behavior it should not be forgotten that Queen Margaret could be cold-blooded in dealing with her enemies, as exemplified here:

And in Kent there as my wyfe dwellyd, they toke awey all oure godes moveably that we had, and there wolde have hongyd my wyfe and v. of my children, and lefte her no more gode but her kyrtyll, the Bysshopp Roffe spechyd me to the Quene, and so I was arustryd by the Quenes commoundment in to the Marchalesy, and there was in rytght grete durass, and fore of my lyf, and was threatenyd to have ben hongyd, drawen, and quarteryd; and so wold have made me to have pechyd my Maister Fastolf of treson.6

Intrigue, bribes, threats, and any manner of achieving one's ends were allowed in the government, and they were used by the Queen. "The Quene is a grete and stronge labourid woman, for she spareth noo payne to sue hire thinges to an intent and conclusion to hir power."7

Just about two weeks (February 25) after the above letter was written in 1456, the Lords relieved the Duke of York of his duties as Protector. King Henry VI was once again ruler in his own right. It must be noted, however, that the Queen had opposed the Duke of York being appointed Protector at all. In 1454 to gain control of the government during the King's illness she had presented a bill of articles in which she desired: (1) the whole rule of the land, (2) that she may make Chancellor and all other offices of the land, (3) that she might have bishopories of the land, and (4) sufficient livelihood for the King, Prince, and herself. 8

During the temporary reconciliation of opposite parties in 1458, a great council was held in London, and principal rivals walked hand in hand. The people rejoiced, for they believed, "All thing shall come to a good conclusion with God is grace, for the Kyng shall come hidre this weke, and the Quene also, some men sayn, and my Lord Buk, and Stafford with hire, and moche puple". 9

Hopes for peace were short-lived, however, and a letter of 1461 tells of the royal flight to Scotland:

Item, Kyng Harry, the Quen, the Prince, Duke of Somerset, Duke of Exeter, Lord Roos, be fledde in to Scotteland, and they be chased and folwed, etc. 10

And again in 1462:

Item, the Quen and Prince ben in Fraunce and ha mad moche wayes and gret peple to com to Scotland, and ther trust to have socour, and thens to com in to Inglond... 11

Margaret's cause was far from popular, and the Earl of Oxford was executed for treason, because he corresponded with her concerning the restoration of Henry VI. However, that she was not entirely without friends is shown in the loyalty of Lord Hungerford in 1461:

Ma dam, ferth (fear) you not, but be of gode comfort, and beware that ye aventure not your person, ne my Lord the Prynce (Edward, son of Henry VI), by the See, till ye have oder word from us, in less than your person cannot be sure there as ye are, (And) that extreme necessity dryfe you thens; and for God sake the Kyngs Highmes be advysed the same. For as we be enformed, Th'erll of March (Edward IV whom Lancastrians did not yet recognize as King) is into Wales by land, and hath sent his navy thider by see; and, Ma dame, thynketh verily, we shall not soner be delyvered, but that we well come streght to you, without deth take us by the way, the which we trust we well not, till we see the Kyng and you peissible ayene in your Reame; the which we beseech God soon to see, and to send you that your Highmes desireth.

Other accounts and movements of the Queen throughout the war are recorded in the correspondence, letters 386 and 668.

History records this brutal civil war and its cruelties. Lord Clifford was particularly vicious and murdered the Duke of York's son, the Earl of Rutland. Then he slew the Duke of York in battle with these words from the Paston volumes: "Madam, your war is done; here is your king's ransom".

The boast of Lord Clifford to Queen Margaret never proved true, for Edward IV was proclaimed king two months later. Henry VI never ruled again except for a few months in name only. And the son whom Margaret

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15 Sir John Paston to Margaret Paston, 668, p. 4, Vol. III, April 18, 1471.
16 "Introduction", pp. ccxx-i, Vol. IV.
had so perniciously fought for died before her, and the throne was lost to her forever.

The contrast of Margaret of Anjou and her enemies is given in the last reference to her in The Paston Letters:

As for any tydynes ther be noon hear, saffe that the Kyng hath kept a ryall Crystmesse; and now they says that hastelye he wolle northe, and some says that he wolle into Walys, and some says that he wolle into the West Contre. As ffor Queen Margrett, I understond that sche is remowyd from Eyndescor to Walyngforthe, nygh to Ewhelme, my Lady of Suffolke Place in Oxenforthe schyre. 17

Queen Margaret was much the same personality in King Henry VI, Part II, as she was in The Paston Letters. She was energetic, violent, passionate, and unfeminine in manners. One fact omitted by Shakespeare, and probably unknown to him, is that she committed treason in inviting the French to attack the English shore to divert the attention of the Duke of York. The possibility is very strong that Margaret of Anjou could be a first draft of Lady Macbeth without the latter's majesty, and both lived to see their ambitious plans crumble and their enemies succeed.

Duke of Suffolk

Shakespeare's William de la Pole, the Duke of Suffolk, seems to bear out history as to his character and death. He was ambitious, for he sought to discredit the Duke of York by withholding troops and supplies

in France, an action which really amounted to treason. When he negotiated the marriage of Henry VI, he sought Margaret of Anjou for himself, and in the play he wins her love. His policy of state was consistently unpopular with the lords, but he had the King's support. However, with the charge of treason for delivering Maine and Anjou to the French, the King retreated from the issue by banishing William de la Pole.

Much attention is given to the Duke of Suffolk in The Paston Letters for a reason to be seen later. Also shown is another facet of Suffolk not utilized by Shakespeare—that of a gentle, God-fearing man advising his son. As mentioned above, Suffolk was referred to frequently in the Paston correspondence, because he was known personally by the Paston family.

Popular as he may have seemed, the Duke of Suffolk was not mourned by the people when he was killed. Even his friends did not write mournfully of his death. The impeachment of Suffolk as presented to King Henry VI contained the following accusations: First: the Duke in London in the Ward of Faringdon purposed to destroy your most royal person and provoked the Earl of Dunois and other enemies of your lord, calling himself king of France. Being most trusted, the Duke of Suffolk purposed Charles should conquer and get power and sought to deliver Charles of Orleans from prison. Item: With the comfort and council of Suffolk, Charles has made open war against you. When the Duke of Suffolk was on an ambassadorship he undertook to deliver Maunce and Maine to your enemies.

Knowing the privacy of your council in France, he gave the purveyances of
arms, fortresses, seiges, etc. to the enemy. Ambassadors to Charles for peace have been ineffectual because he has been provoked by Suffolk. Item: Provision has been made for passage of arms, and he has passed them in favor and support of the enemy. Item: These actions have made the King of Arragon and Duke of Brittany enemies who once were friends. Of all these treasons and offences we Commons accuse and impeach William de la Pole. 18

Margaret Paston wrote of Suffolk's pardon by the King:

Wyllyam Rutt, the whiche is with Sir Jon Heavenyngham, kom hom from London yesterdy, and he seyd playnly to his master, and to many other folkes, that the Duke of Suffolk is pardonyd, and hath his men asen waytyng up on hym, and is rytz wel at ese and mery, and is in the Kynge gode grace, and in the gode conseyt of all the Lords, as well as ever he was. 19

Shakespeare witholds the one redeeming trait of the Duke of Suffolk in the play, but he may not have known of the letter to Suffolk's son, which follows:

My dere and only welbeloved son, I beseche oure Lord in Heven, the Maker of alle the world, to blesse you, and to sende you ever grace to love hym, and to drede hym; to the which, as ferre as a fader may charge his child, I both charge you, and prde you to sette alle spirites and wittes to do, and to knowe his holy lawes and commandments, by the which ye shall with his grete mercy passe alle the grete tempestes and troubles of this wrecched world. And that also wetyngly, ye do no thyng for love nor drede of any ethely creature that shuld desplesse hym. And there as any freelte maketh you to falls, be secheth hym mercy soone to calle you to hym agen with repentaunce, satisfaccion, and contricion of youre herte never more in will to offend hym.

Secondly, next hym, above alle erethaly thyng, to be trewe liege man in hert, in wille, in thought, in deed, unto the Kyng oure alder most high and drede sovereygne Lord, to whom bothe ye and I have been so moche bound to; chargynge you, as fader can and may, rather to die than to be the contrarye, or to knowe any thyng that were suyenste the welfare or prosperite of his most riall person, but that as ferre as your body and lyf may stretehe, ye lyve and die to defende it, and to lete his highnessse have knowlache thereof in alle the haste ye can.

Thirdly, in the same wyse, I charge you, my dere sone, alway, as ye be bounden by the commaundement of God to do, to love, to worshepe youre lady and moder, and also that ye obey alway hyr commaundements, and to believe hyr counseles and advises in alle youre werks, the which drede not, but shall be best and treuest to you. And yef any other body wold store you to the contrarie, to flee the counseil in any wyse, for ye shall fynde it nought and evyll.

Forth(more), as ferre as fader may and can, I charge you in any wyse to flee the company and counseal of proude men, of coveitouse men, and of flateryng men, the more especially and myghtily to withstande hem, and not to drawe, ne to modle with hem, with all youre power and myght. And to drawe to you and to your comp (any good) and vertuowse men, and such an ben of good conversacion, and of trouthe, and be them shal ye never be deseyved, nor repente you off. (Moreover never follow) youre owne witte in no wyse, but in alle youre werkes, of suche folks as I write of above, axeth youre advise (and counsel); and doyng thus, with the mercy of God, ye shall do right well, and lyve in right moche worship, and gret herts rest and ease. And I wyll be to you as good lord and fader as my hert can thynke.20

William Lomner, who may have known the Duke of Suffolk personally, showed him to be a brave man, insisting that Suffolk voluntarily went to the King on April 30, 1450, for arrest.21 Knowing the Duke wrote to his son on that day, the reader assumes that letter to be his parting advice to his heir. Lomner also told of forboding doom when he pointed out the Duke of Suffolk had his confessor with him.

After being exiled, Suffolk was murdered on the sea. His death is told of in the following letter:

First moost and especiall, that for vorray trowthe upon Saterday that last was, the Duke of Suffolk was taken in the see, and there he was byheded, and his body with the appurtenaunce sette at lande at Dover, and all the folks that he hand with hym were sette to lande, and haad noon harme.  

The Pastons' interest in William de la Pole is not a coincidence.

This letter explains the reason:

Item, where at Mighelmesse the yere passed the seid Paston sent his zone, a serveuant of my Lordis, and also Richard Calle, serveuant to the seid Paston put to hym by my Lordis fader (William de la Pole. It is a piece of information which we do not meet with elsewhere, that Richard Calle entered the service of the Pastons by this Duke's recommendation), to reseyve the profitez of the seid manor as thai had do many yeres before...

The servant, Richard Calle, was important in the Paston history, for it was he who caused a scandal by marrying Margery Paston, daughter of Margaret and John Paston. The couple was never completely forgiven by the Pastons.

Although the policy of the Duke of Suffolk was unpopular, he had great influence to which lesser lords and commoners appealed for the return of stolen goods or imprisoned men. Even popular at first was his arranging of Margaret's marriage to Henry VI. The Duke of Gloucester, his chief rival and opponent in Parliament, was the first to rise and recommend Suffolk for his services to the crown. Even the cession of Maine and Anjou at this time does not seem to be opposed.  

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27 "Introduction", liv, Vol. IV.
Duke Humphrey, despite many defects of character, had always been a popular favorite. With his mysterious death, suspicion fell upon Suffolk. There is no reason to suppose that Suffolk was guilty of intrigue or conspiracy, but he was suspected of procuring the good Duke's death. Therein started his downfall.

One item of interest in the life of Suffolk is that his lady was the granddaughter of Geoffrey Chaucer. After the assassination of her husband, the Duchess of Suffolk and Sir John Paston had some legal difficulty involving the manor of Cotton.

According to The Paston Letters, Suffolk was ambitious, for he was tried for treason; brave, for he came voluntarily to the King in great danger; genuine and sincere in his advice to the son; and not necessarily guilty of intrigue in the death of Gloucester. Along with these conclusions must be the realization that he was personally known by the Fastons or at least had done favors to some members of the family. However, not even this friendship caused them to write mournfully of his death.

The Duke of Suffolk appears much the same in King Henry VI, Part II, as in The Paston Letters with the exception of Suffolk's letter to his son. Shakespeare probably did not know of this correspondence, and he probably would not have used it had he known, for the message is not in keeping with William de la Pole's previous actions or attitudes.

30 Anonymous to Sir John, 591, p. 324, Vol. II.
Duke of Somerset

Shakespeare makes the Duke of Somerset an ambitious Lancastrian who conspired with the Queen against the Duke of York. In the play the Duke of Salisbury epitomizes Somerset as ambition itself.

Little was said of his personality in *The Paston Letters*, but it does seem obvious that Somerset's ambition was not just Shakespeare's doing. Finally to curb the Duke of Somerset's ambition the Duke of Norfolk presented a petition in the House of Lords, suggesting his conflict in France and England be made the subject of investigation by separate tribunals under each country's laws.31

Somerset's administration of the Duchy of Normandy was a mixture of dishonesty and indiscretion to the point of treason. He arranged a breach of truce in the capture of Fougeres and pocketed compensations which belonged to the people.32 His avarice and lack of honor nearly drove the English completely out of France.

Because of his surrender of Caen and the total loss of Normandy, Somerset was one of the most unpopular men in England. Representative letters of the Pastons refer indifferently to his whereabouts.33,34,35 This almost total lack of interest is significant when one realizes that Anne, the daughter of Edmund Beaufort, Duke of Somerset, married William

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34 John Paston, the younger, to Margaret Paston, 585, p. 319, Vol. II, July 8, 1468.
Paston, uncle of Sir John Paston. This relationship would make the Duke of Somerset the father of Sir John Paston's aunt.

In spite of the indifference toward the Duke of Somerset by the Pastons and other high standing families and the suspicion of the House of Lords, Somerset stood high in the King's favor through the intercession of the Queen. In 1451 while York was living in seclusion at his castle of Ludlow, Somerset used his influence with the King to instill distrust of York's fidelity toward King Henry VI. Jealousy of the Duke of York's success in France still rankled the pride of the Duke of Somerset.

At Blackheath in March, 1452, when the Duke of York demanded that the Duke of Somerset be placed in confinement, he was given a simple pledge by the King. It is said that many of the Lancastrians themselves were in favor of this move, for Somerset was unpopular even with the King's party. As history records, the King's promise was not kept, and it was York who was placed in custody, but he was too popular for the Queen's party to keep him in confinement.

The Duke of Norfolk's petition with charges of treason against Somerset had been presented in 1453 during Henry VI's illness. Upon the King's recovery the Duke of Somerset was released from prison and promoted to even greater honor.

36 Note to 642, p. 400, Vol. II.
37 "Introduction", p. cxv, Vol. IV.
Although Somerset labored for royal honor, he was not a popular favorite. He was ambitious and avaricious without the wise leadership needed during those troubled times. Not even the Pastons who were related by marriage mentioned him favorably, or in fact, mentioned him very much at all. The Duke of Somerset appears in *The Paston Letters*, as he appears in the Earl of Salisbury's speech in *King Henry VI*, Part II, Act I, scene i:

Pride went before, (Buckingham) ambition follows him (Somerset),
While these do labour for their own preferment,
Behoves it us to labour for the realm.

Cardinal Henry Beaufort

To continue the Earl of Salisbury's speech begun above:

Oft have I seen the haughty cardinal
More like a soldier than a man o' the church,
As stout and proud as he were lord of all,
Swear like a ruffian and demean himself
Unlike the ruler of a commonweal.

In the play Cardinal Beaufort rejoiced in the downfall of the popular Duke of Gloucester, in fact, aided in his murder. He encouraged the breach that led to war and acted the part of a political conspirator.

According to evidence in the *Letters*, the Cardinal seemed to enter into the matters of worldly goods more often than was customary for churchmen, but there was no substantiating proof for the charges presented in *King Henry VI*, Part II, but that would not positively
Indicate the Cardinal’s contemporaries thought him any more a religious churchman.

Cardinal Beaufort participated in an exchange of land between the King and William Paston in 1443. He also had a hand in the will of Sir John Fastolf.

No reference whatever was found in The Paston Letters to the boast of the Cardinal in the play that he should not die because he had so many riches. (*King Henry VI, Part II, Act III, Scene iii.*)

Of special interest is the fact that Cardinal Beaufort is mentioned only four times in the entire collection of Paston correspondence, and that mention refers to money matters—a peculiar position for a churchman.


39 Abstract, 974, p. 430, Vol. III.

40 Sir John Fastolf was not the beggarly man of the dramatist, and had a hand in many money matters. His correspondence in The Paston Letters consists of legal correspondence, abstracts, bills of sale, etc. He also had a wide knowledge of law.
OPPORTUNIST FACTION

In the play of *King Henry VI, Part II*, Shakespeare portrayed York as a covetous, ambitious man who laid plans and let the characters work their own doom. Then he opportunely stepped in with armed force and took the throne. He did not actively work for the death of the Duke of Gloucester, yet he did nothing to protect him. The Duke of York was the most capable ruler the period produced, uniting factions or leading opposing groups for the "House" of York.

From the evidence in *The Faston Letters* the reader will agree with Shakespeare that York did take advantage of his opportunities. However, there is no information proving that he made those opportunities with such men as Jack Cade, who posed as John Mortimer, cousin of York. In addition, Gairdner gave information showing that the Duke of York was forced to arm himself with followers to escape the plots of Somerset. Furthermore, it was evident that in acting in his own defense, he also acted in the defense of the common people. Here was a man who had rank, wealth, lineage, popularity, and well-proved ability as a general, administrator, and diplomat, but who could also be surprisingly gullible on occasion.

The Duke of York was interested in all matters concerning government, and *The Faston Letters* show his interest in the elections of the sheriffs. The year is uncertain, but it is believed to be October 16,
In 1450 another letter concerning politics from John Damme and James Gresham to John Paston said:

...It is said here that the Duke of York and the Duke of Norfolk shull not come here this vii nyght.

As touchyng shirefs, ther ar none choesyn ne named, and as men suppose, non shall be choesyn til my Lord of Yorks comyng, etc.

In spite of York's active part in all government matters, a faction about the King had taken care to keep him at a distance from the Court. During York's absence in Ireland his enemies were becoming increasingly unpopular with the people but increasingly influential with Henry VI until they threatened York's very safety and "it was no longer his duty to obey the orders of others".

He came over from Ireland, collected 4000 of his retainers upon the Welsh Marches and proceeded to London. Gairdner records there were bodies of Lord Grey of Ruthin's men lying in wait to interrupt his progress. Holinshed maintained that the Duke of York waited

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3"Introduction", p. xcii, Vol. IV.
4Ibid., p. xcii.
for a year after returning from Ireland before he proceeded to London and the King. Whether for unity of time or for other reasons, Shakespeare revamped the time to an immediate meeting of York and the King. Gairdner observes that the latter theory is probably correct.\(^5\)

If he came to the King's chamber in warlike array, his access must have been opposed to the last. In his first interview with Henry his petition was diplomatically presented and a reply given. Here is, in part, the petition, as recorded in Holinshed:\(^6\)

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Item, at such time as I was purposed for to have arrived at your haven of Beaumaris, for to have come to your noble presence to declare me your true man and subject, as my duty is, my landing was stopped and forebarred by Henry Norris, Thomas Norris, William Buckley, William Crust, and Bartholomew Bould, your officers in North Wales, that I should not land there, nor have victuals nor refreshing for me and my fellowship, as I have written to your Excellency here before; so far forth, that Henry Norris, deputy to the chamberlain of North Wales, said unto me that he had in commandment that I should in no wise have landing, refreshing, nor lodging, for men nor horse, nor other thing that might turn to my worship or ease; putting the blame upon Sir William Say, usher of your chamber, saying and affirming that I am against your intent and (held) as a traitor, as I am informed. And moreover, certain letters were made and delivered unto Chester, Shrewsbury, and to other places, for to let mine entry into the same.

Item, above all wrongs and injuries above said, done unto me of malice without any cause, I being in your land of Ireland in your honourable service, certain commissions were made and directed unto divers persons, which for the execution of the same set in certain places, and the juries impanelled and charged. Unto
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\(^5\)Ibid., p. xciii.

\(^6\)"Introduction", p. xciii, Vol. IV.
the which juries certain persons laboured instantly to have me indicted of treason, to the intent for to have undone me and mine issue, corrupted my blood, as it is openly published. Beseeching your Majesty royal of your righteousness to do examine these matters, and thereupon to do such justice in this behalf as the cause requireth; for mine intent is fully to pursue to your Highness for the conclusion of these matters.

In addition to using his diplomacy to defend his own rights before the King, York also defended the people's rights, as indicated in a letter of October 6, 1450:

Syr, and it please, I was in my Lord of Yorks howse, and I herde moche thyng, more thanne my mayster wrythyth un to yow of. I herde moche thyng in Fletestrede. But, Sir, my Lord was with the Kynge and he vesseged so the mater that alle the Kynge howshold was and is aferd rhyght sore; and my sayd Lord hayth putte a bille to the Kynge (that justice should be fairly administred against persons accused), and desyryd moche thyng, qwych is moche after the Comouns desyre, and all is up on justice, and to putte all thos that ben indyted underarest with owte suerte or maynpryce, and to be tryed be lawe as lawe wyll; in so moche that on Monday Sir William Oldhall was with the Kynge at Westminster more thanne to houres, and hadde of the Kynge good cher.7

Was York a friend of the commons in presenting a bill that justice should be fairly administered against persons accused? The following quotation is what he wrote to King Henry VI in presenting this bill:

Please it your Hyghnes tenderly to consider the grett grutchyng and romer that is universally in this your reams of that justice is nouth dewly ministred to such as trespas and offende a yens your lawes, and in special of them that ben endited of treason, and other beyng openly noysed of the same; wherfore for gret inconveniens that have fallen, and grett is lyke to fallen her after in your

7 William Wayte to John Paston, 113, p. 150, Vol. I.
said reame, which God defende, but if (unless) be your Hyghness provyson convenable be mad for dew reformatacion and punishment in this behalf; Wherfore I, your humble sugst and lyse men, Richard, Duke of York, willyng as effectually as I kan, and desiryn suerte and prosperite of your most roiall person, and welfare of this your noble reame, councel and advertyse your excellent, for the conversacion (conservation) of good tranquillite and pesable rewle among all trew sogetts, for to ordeyn and provyde that dewe justice be had a yenet all such that ben so endited or openly so noysed; wher inne I offre, and wol put me in devouer for to execute your commandements in thes premises of such offenders, and redresse of the said myrrewlers to my myth and power. And for the hasty execucion herof, lyke it your Hyghnes to dresse your letteres of prevy seale and writts to your officers and ministres to do take, and areste all such persons so noysed or endited, of what aetata, degre, or condicion so ever thei be, and them to comytte to your Tour of London, or to other your prisons, thare to abyde with enten bayle or maynprice on to the tyme that they be utterly tryed and declared, after the cours of your lawe.  

Although York was cognizant of the people's grievances, he was conscious that the laws of the land were then being administered by his rival, the Duke of Somerset, "such as trespas and offendre a yens your lawes, and in special of them that ben endited of treason".

The course of justice was not an easy one, and Richard Plantagenet had not succeeded in establishing the government upon a satisfactory basis. In those days of the judgment of the "Commons" an error in policy was nothing short of treason. Whoever took upon him to guide the king's counsels knew very well the danger of his task; and York (if his character is understood) was anxious, until he was driven desperate, never to assume more authority than he was distinctly warranted in doing. He could not but remember that his father had

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suffered death for conspiring to depose Henry V, and that his own high birth and descent from Edward III caused his acts to be all the more jealously watched by those who sought to estrange him from his sovereign. He therefore made it by no means his aim to establish for himself a marked ascendancy. He rather sought to show his moderation.9

For his own protection in 1452 he issued a manifesto of loyalty to dispel the suspicions instilled in the royal ear by the Duke of Somerset.10 At length York could no longer abide the advisers of the King who set out to undo him, and in March, 1452, Richard Plantagenet collected a host and took the field. On a pledge that Somerset would be placed in confinement, York gullibly dismissed his force. However, he had been deceived, and it was the Duke of York who became virtually a prisoner. Because of his popularity, no charges were brought against him. In 1453 York brought formal charges against Somerset, seeking to do what he had attempted by force. The accused was arrested and sent to the tower.11

Tension continued, as indicated by a newsletter of John Stodeley:

Item, the Duke of York wolde be a Londone justly on Fryday next comyng at night, as his owne men tellen for certain, and he wolde come with his household moynes, clenly besen and likly men. And Th'erce of Marche (afterwards Edward IV, his eldest son) cometh with hym, but he will have a nother feliship of gode men that shall be at Londone before hym...12

9"Introduction", p. xcil, Vol. IV.
10 Ibid., p. cxi.
11 Ibid., pp. cxix-cxxiii.
The tensions were further illustrated in a letter of another subject:

Also my Lord of Caunterbury Master Waltier Bl(a)kette will help forthe, if node be; and as to the remenant of the Lordes, if the case requir that ye may understand by your sysdum thei be displeased with me--as I trust to God thei be not.--I beseeche you to remembr that I have aforesyme b(en) accused unto the Kings Highnesses and the Quenes for owyn my pore gode will and service unto my Lord of York and other, etc...And within this ij yer we were in like wise laboured agoyns to the Quene, so that she wrote to my Lord to avoyde us, saiying that the King and she coude nor myght in no wyse be assured of hym and my Lady as long as we wer aboute hym...

Political loyalties were, indeed, a matter of life and death, but as early as 1450 financial prosperity seemed uncertain, too.

In the early 1450's many noblemen borrowed money to finance themselves. On December 18, 1452, the Duke of York committed himself to Sir John Fastolf for a loan of money with jewels being the security. This transaction was characteristic of Sir John Fastolf, who, unlike the dramatist's needy Falstaff, was always seeking to increase his wealth.

In May 21, 1455, the Duke of York and the Earls of Warwick and Salisbury drew up a memorial to Henry VI, which the Duke of Somerset and friends would not allow to be presented to the King:

Moste Cristen Kyng, ryght hygh and myghty Prince, and our mooste redoubted souverayn Lorde, we recomande ws as humlyye as we suffice unto your hygh excellence, where unto please it to

15 "Introduction", p. cxxxiii, Vol. IV.

Another instance of dramatic expediency with the character Falstaff was in making him a dramatic coward, a charge made during an engagement with the French against Fastolf, which was later disproved. However, Fastolf did not stand well with his fellow men.
wete that for so moche as we hyre and understand to our grettyst
sorowe erthylly that our ennemyes of approuved experience, such as
abyde and kepeth them sylf under the wyng of your Magestee
Royall, have thrown unto the same ryght stedyouslyly and
ryght fraudulentlye manye ambyguitees and doubtes of the fayth,
lygeaunce, and dewtee that, God knowyth, we bee unto
your Hyghnesse, and have put them yn as grete devoyr as they
coude to enstraunge ws from your mooste noble presence and from
the favour of your goode grace, whych goode grace to ws ye and
coude to be our singuler and mooste desyrd yoia and consolacion;
We at thys tyme be coming wyth grace as your true and humble Liege
men, toward your seyd Hygh Excellence to declare and shew
thereo at large our seyd fayth and ligeaunce, entendyng wyth the
mercye of Jesu yn the seyd comynge, to put ws yn as diligent
and hertye devoyr and dewtee as onye your lyge men on lyve to
that at may avance or preferre the honnour and wellfare off
the seyd Mageste Royalle and the seurte of the seyd most
notable person; the whych (we) beseeche our blessed creature
to prosper (in) as grete honnor, yole, and felicitees as ever
had onye prince erthylly, and to your said Hyghnesse so to
take, accept, and repute ws, and not to please to geve trust
or confidence unto the sinistroy, maliciouse, and fraudulent
labourer and rapportes of our said ennemyes unto our comynge
to your seyd moste noble presence; where unto we beseeche humblye
that we may be admitted as your liege men, to th' entent to show
us the same...16

Upon receipt of the King's refusal, the above quotation continues
with the advice of York to his lords:

The Kyng our sovereyne Lord will not be reformed at our
besechyng ne prayer, ne wylle not understonde the extent that we
be comen hedes and assembled fore and gathered at this tymeng
but only ys full purpose, and there noon other way but that
he wolde with all his power pursue us, and yf ben taken, to
gave us a shamefull deth, losyng our lyvelode and goodes, and
our heyres shamed for evere. (These threats were made by the
King.) And ther fore, sythe yt wolde be noon othere wyse but that
we shall otterly dye, better yt ys for us to dye in the feld than

cowardly to be put to a grete rebuke and assamefull deth; more over, consederyng yn what peryle Inglonde stondes inne at thys owre, therefore every men help to help power for the ryght thers offe, to redresse the myscheff that now regneth, and to quyte us lyke men in this querell; preyng to that Lord that ys Kyng of Glorye, that regneth in the Kyngdom celestyal, to kepe us and save us this day in our right, and thorugh the helpe of His holy grace we may be made strong to with stonde the grete abomynable and cruell malyse of them that purpose fully to destrye us with shameful deth. We thorefore, Lord, pray to The to be our confort and Defender, sayng the word afore seyde, Domine sit clipesus defensionis nostrae.

After appealing for an audience and the arrest of men they classed as traitors, the Yorkists took the field at St. Alban's. From the above evidence the Duke of York appeared a wronged leader who was forced to resort to arms, but who assumed them reluctantly. With his success at St. Alban's, however, he did not presume to the throne but pledged his loyalty to the King. He was forgiven by King Henry VI and became once again influential in the royal counsels.¹⁷ Evidence points to the existence of a strong enemy faction:

Hit was seyd, for sothe, that Harpers and i.j. other of the Kynges chamber were confedered to have steked the Douk York in the Kynges chamber; but hit was not so, for they have clered thaym therof.¹⁸

Although assassination was a very real danger for York, to many of the people the coming of York was like a shining star, for it meant leadership in government, as written in a letter by John Bocking:

And now suche tidinges as ar here, but fewe that ar straunge, excepte that this day my Lordes York and Warwik comen to the

Parliament in a good array, to the number of iiij (300) men, all jackdaw and in brigantions, and no lord elles, whereof many men marvelled. It was said on Saturday my Lord should have been discharged this same day. And this day was seid, but if he hadde come stronge, he shuld have bene distrussid; and no man knoweth or can sey that only prede may be hadde by whom, for men thinken verily there is no man able to any suche enterprise.

The Kyng, as it was tolde me by a grete man, wolde have hym chief and princepall counsellor, and soo to be called hise chief counsellor and lieutenant as longe as hit shuld lyke the Kyng; and hise patente to be made in that forme, and not soo large as it is by Parliament. But some men thinken it wil ner can otherwise bee; and men speke and devyne moche matters of the comynge this day in suche array to Westminster. And the Lordes spoken this day in the Parliament of a great gleymyng sterre that but late hathe be seen diverse tymes merveilous in apperyng. The resumpson, men truste, shall fortho, and my Lordes of Yorkes first power of protectorship stands, and elles not, etc. The Queene is a grete and stronge labourid woman, for she spereth no payne to sue hire thinges to an intent and conclusion to hir power.19

The powers of such strong willed individuals were sure to clash, and the dissension of the Queen and York is illustrated by the following letter:

And it is seid that my Lord of York hath be with the Kyng, and is departed agayn in right good conceyt with the Kyng, but not in gret conceyt with the Whene (Queen); and sum men sey, no hadde my Lord of Buks (Buckingham) not haue letted it, my Lord of York had be distrest in his departyng.20

Suspensions of the times kept the lords separated from the King and Queen, although some time was spent in trying to make peace between York and the Queen, which is evidently the meaning of the last line of the following quotation:

As for tidings, the Kyng is at Shone, the Quene at Chestre; the Duc of Buk was, as I comen hiderward, at Writall, the Erle of Warrewyke at Warrewyke, and the Lords Chanceller, Tresorier, and thi' Erle of Sar' (Salisbury) in London, and noo more Lords at the begynynge this day of the grete Counsai...My Lord York is at Sendall stille, and wayteth on the Quene and she up on hym. 21

During the compromises and "era of good feeling" in 1458 tensions had not greatly lessened, for the nobles brought large followings with them to London:

The Kyng came the last weke to Westminster, and the Duk of Yorke came to London with hys cume houscle onlys to the nombre of exl. hors, as it ys seyd; the Erle of Salyseburye with iiiij. (400) hors yn hys companye, fourscore knyghts and squyvers.

The Duke of Somerset came to London last day of Janyver with 200 hors, and leggyth wythoute Temple Barre, and the Duk of Excestre shalle be here thys weke with a grete felyshyp and strong, as it ys seyd. 22

To show a leadership trait and the command that York showed as protector of England during Henry VI's illness, he responded to James II of Scotland when that king was haughty toward England. York threatened to march against that king if he did not treat England with more respect. No armies were involved, and it was only an exchange of correspondence, but York had made a popular move against the Scotchman. However, Henry later absolved all connection with this correspondence and policy when he recovered and made it clear York had acted on his own initiative in the name of the king.

In spite of the Duke of York's leadership and his general popularity, as has been pointed out, he had strong enemies. In all the Paston

correspondence there is only one glimmer of York’s ambition for its own sake, and in a letter of 1460 Margaret Paston wrote:

There is gret talkyng in thys centre of the desyir of my Lorde of York. (The claim made by Richard, Duke of York, to the crown in Parliament on October 17, 1460.) The pepyll reporte full worcehfully of my Lord of Warwyk. They have no for her but that he and othyr scholde schewe to gret favor to hem that have be rewyllers of thys centre be for tymes.23

After the battle of Northampton the Yorkists issued a manifesto of policy, which again showed the firmness of Richard Plantagenet and his power of decision, whether used for the unity of England or his own ambitions. Although the death of the Duke of York came during the battle of Wakefield, and chaos came immediately after for the Yorkists,24 Edward IV, his son, became the King of England two months later. Edward had at the age of twelve his own household and was well trained by his father as a leader. Thus the early training of a boy by his powerful father set a king upon the throne.

Edward and Edmund wrote at the ages of twelve and eleven an insight into the character of their father, the Duke of York:

And where ye commande us by your said lettres to attende specialy to eoure lernyng in oure yong age that schulde cause us to grows to honour and worship in our elde age...Ryght hyeagh and myghty Prince, our most worschipfull and greatly redoubted lorde and Fader, We beseche almyghty God yewe yowe as good lyfe and longe as ycore owne Princely hert con best desire.25

24 Friar Brackley to (John Paston), 48, p. 71, January (?), 1461 (?), Vol. IV.
25 "Introduction", p. clxx, Vol. IV.
Such was the picture of the Duke of York as seen in The Paston Letters by the contemporary lords, lesser lords, commoners, and finally his sons. The Duke of York from the pens of these writers emerges as diplomatic, popular, wealthy although he borrowed money on occasion, gullible, affectionate to his sons, and a wise leader as protector of England.

Shakespeare and The Paston Letters agree York was diplomatic, in fact, the playwright portrayed him to the point of being an opportunist, which, no doubt, he was. The other traits are in agreement for the man who would "raise aloft the milk-white rose". In King Henry VI, Part II, his gullibility in accepting the King's word for the arrest of Somerset and then being taken prisoner himself is given emphasis. As to the motives of the Duke of York, he probably was forced to take arms for his own protection, and his birth, popularity, and leadership surged him forward. History demanded such a man to restore the York lineage to the throne. His purpose was given in the play, Act I, scene 1:

Then will I raise aloft the milk-white rose, With whose sweet smell the air shall be perfum'd, And in my standard bear the arms of York, To grapple with the house of Lancaster; And, force perforce, I'll make him yield the crown, Whose bookish rule hath pull'd fair England down.
Henry VI appeared in a separate section, not because of his strength as a ruler, but because his vacillating character makes it impossible to classify him as belonging to any faction or having any policy of his own. Shakespeare's Henry VI was a man who lived in constant terror lest his lords fly at each other's threats. His moralizing, however, did not stop their bandying of furious words. He would go to any length to avoid the use of force. He allowed the innocent Gloucester to be foully murdered and soothed his conscience with the knowledge that he was not responsible. It was the Earl of Warwick who sought revenge, but the King simply philosophized in the play, Act III, scene ii:

What stronger breastplate than a heart untainted!
Thrice is he arm'd that hath his quarrel just,
And he but naked, though lock'd up in steel,
Whose conscience with injustice is corrupted.

At the demands of the people he reluctantly arrested Suffolk, but again refused to judge him for five years. Henry VI was a tool of ambitious advisers, but he would not defend them later. Each nobleman consequently looked to his own defense and safety. King Henry VI's want of every spark of kingly or even manly spirit was excused by his thinking that he was saintly when, as a matter of fact, he lacked the energy to control even his own wife.

In the play, Henry VI clings to his wife as to something stronger than himself. Yet in his very mildness he rises above her and even,
in part, above the conflict of the civil war. A strong ruler could have prevented the war, but he dismissed troubles by moralizing or leaving decisions to others.

According to The Paston Letters there were many decisions to be made even to conflicts concerning estates and goods of individual citizens, as in letters 29 and 87. The people, too, had their own ideas of justice and how it should be meted out, but with the threat of treason charges, they seldom expressed themselves in writing unless they felt strongly about a decision, as in the following:

And he (Blake the baly of Swafham) yeade streyt to my lord Chaunceler and told my seyd lord that ye the Kyng pardoned sir Thomas Tudenharn and Heydon her issiwes that the shire of Suffolk wold paye no taxe; for what nedyth the kyng for to have the taxe of these pore puple whame he will not take these issues of thos rych extorsioners and oppressors of these puple. And also he told my seyd lord Chaunceler and many more lorde that ye the kyng pardone hym or granted any supersedeas, London shuld with inne short tyme have as moche for to do as they hadde for to kepe London Brygge whame the Capteyn (Jack Cade) cam thadir...  

During this time of English history, however, the people as a whole did not sit in juries or determine policy. To follow the above letter is an observation about that incident:

It is seyd her that the kyng shuld com in to this contra, and sir Thomas Todenham and Heydon arm well cheryeshid with hym.

1 Osbert Mundford to John Paston, 29, pp. 43-44, Vol. IV, February 9, 1452.  
2 Margaret Paston to John, 87, p. 143, Vol. IV, October 23, 1472 (?).  
More serious trouble than opinions of the lesser nobles was threatening in the 1450’s, and with the Memorial to Henry VI by the Duke of York and the Earl of Warwick came the battle of St. Alban’s. The battle possibly could have been avoided by discarding unpopular advisers, particularly Somerset, but the King refused in his answer to York:

I, Kyng Henry, charge and commaund that no maner persone, of what degre or state, or condicyon that evere he be, abyde not, but voyde the folde, and not be so hardy to make any resystans aseyne me in myn owne realme; for I shall knowe what traytor dar be so boldo to reysse aepull in myn owne lond, where though I am in grete desese and heynesse. And by the feth of Ingland, I shall destroye them every moder sone, and they be hanged, and drawn, and quartered, that may be taken afterward, of them to have ensample to alle such traytours to be war to make only such ryayng of peple withinne my lond, and so traytorly to abyde her Kyng and governour. And for a conclusyon, rather then they shall have any Lorde with me at this tymes, I shall this day, for her sake, and in this quarrell my sylff lyve or dye.

The Duke of York had not always been out of favor, for in 1454 when King Henry VI became ill, York was the Protector. The King did not recognize anyone during his illness, not even his baby son or realize that his heir had even been presented to him. Sharing the control of the government during this period were the Earls of Warwick and Salisbury. During his first recovery about Christmas of 1454, he learned of the birth of his son, “And he seith he is

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in charite with all the world, and so he wold all the Lords were.
And now he seith matynys of Our Lady and evensong, and herith his
Masse devoutly..."  

As for the war, when the King was mentioned, he was more of a
religious figurehead than a general. He was the weakest of the
Queen's party, and the Queen was nearly always in his company.  
Although it is almost impossible to determine which party was stronger
with the people, the Queen's or the Duke of Gloucester's faction;
the Queen's party did hold considerable sway, for the people believed because
the Lancastrians had ruled since Henry IV, they should continue.

The Duke of York ys at Debylyn (Dublin), strengthed with hiss
Erles and homagers, as ye shall see by a bille. God send the
Kyng victorie of hiss ennemyes, and rest and peace among hiss
Lorde.  

On the other hand, there seemed to be rejoicing at a stronger
hand over the realm when the Duke of York and later Edward IV ruled.  
Only a strong hand could keep the powerful noblemen of the age in
check, and as shown in King Henry VI, Part II, and The Paston Letters
the King could not offer that leadership. Throughout his rule were
murmurings of discontent. In the play the first signs of discontent

11 Sir Thomas Howes to John Paston, 440, p. 91, Vol. III.
were in the terms of Henry VI's marriage and the sacrifice of Maine and Anjou to the French as dowry. In the Paston correspondence there was a hint of such a possible discontent really existing:

...and I pray you to send me tydynggs\textsuperscript{15} from be yond see, for here thei arn a ferde to tell soche as be reported.\textsuperscript{16}

Consequently, the King who relied heavily upon advisers for the choice of a wife, as well as all state policy brought civil war among those counsellors. Suffolk met death for his policy, York was constantly in danger of being tried for treason, Somerset lost his life defending his king. The first blow, however, was the murder of Humphrey, Duke of Gloucester, and the man who sat on the throne had not the courage to punish his murderers. Yet King Henry showed himself yet more of a coward, for at the approach of Jack Cade and his rabble forces, he fled London even though loyal subjects swore to defend him.

Cowardly, powerless, indecisive, and dependent on his wife for government, Henry VI failed to keep the throne. To replace his weakness came the strength of the Yorkists.

Historical fact and dramatic characterization blend in \textit{King Henry VI, Part II}, for Shakespeare showed the King to be a weak-willed, introspective

\textsuperscript{15} These tidings relate to our foreign transactions, the giving up of Maine, Truces, etc, etc. on the King's marriage which had taken place in November.

\textsuperscript{16} Agnes Paston to Edmund Paston, 46, p. 58, Vol. I, February 1, 1445.
individual who escaped decisions by moralizing and who had not the
daring to lead a nation. Only when hard pressed did he decree the
Duke of Suffolk banished or challenged the Duke of York in his claims
to the throne, and the final decisions were usually forced by his
advisers. In the study of Henry VI it can be concluded that
Shakespeare and the Paston contemporaries of the King were in
agreement even to the possibility that there may have been dissension
about the dowry of Queen Margaret. Shakespeare with Henry VI was a
playwright and historian.

Conclusions

At the beginning of the present investigation two important
questions were posed for study:

1. Were the individuals who wrote The Paston Letters in a
position to know personally or by reputation the important
figures mentioned by Shakespeare in King Henry VI, Part II,
and were the Pastons capable of passing sound judgment upon the
important public figures and important political issues of
their day?

2. Upon the basis of the evidence brought to light, concerning
the principal characters in King Henry VI, Part II, to what
extent can Shakespeare be trusted as a historian?

With regard to the first question—Are The Paston Letters worth
anything as a historical record?—the answer is an unequivocal "yes".
The Paston Letters are an unusually full, important, and authentic contemporary account of events in medieval English history from 1417 to 1503.

Concerning the second question—Upon the basis of evidence in King Henry VI, Part II, is Shakespeare a dependable historian?—the answer is also in the affirmative, but with some significant reservations.

Up to the present the significance of The Paston Letters for Shakespearean criticism has not received the consideration that it would seem to merit. It is true that in Lancastrian times discretion was the better part of valor; as a result, the politque Pastons, in keeping with the letter-writing style of the period, were not inclined to commit controversial questions to writing. On the other hand, as the numerous quotations show, the correspondence was filled with "tydynges" and if there was "gret talkyng" or any other unauthantieated news, it would generally be so labeled by the correspondent himself. What should be especially noted is that the Paston evidence is not hearsay. The Pastons knew whereof they spoke. When the Pastons wrote of the Dukes of Suffolk, Somerset, or York, they were not writing merely of persons who were prominent in the government; they were writing about people to whom they were related or with whom they had intimate personal or professional relations. Fuller mentions William Paston as one of the "worthies" of England; Anne, daughter of the Duke of Somerset,
married the uncle of Sir John Paston, the Paston correspondence contains letters from the Duke of York to John Paston relative to sheriffs and knights of the shire; and the Earl of Suffolk introduced into the Paston household one Richard Calle, who, much to the chagrin of the Pastons, married Margery, daughter of Margaret and John Paston. It may safely be assumed that The Paston Letters are entirely dependable original sources historically.

It may also be safely assumed that if the principal characters in Shakespeare's King Henry VI, Part II, are consistent with the characters as delineated in The Paston Letters, then William Shakespeare was a dependable historian. James Gairdner, editor of The Paston Letters, author of The Houses of Lancaster and York, and a standard authority upon the subject, is of the opinion that Shakespeare was a dependable historian. Gairdner prefaced his book of Lancaster and York maintaining:

For the period of English history treated in this volume, we are fortunate in possessing an unrivalled interpreter in our great dramatic poet, Shakespeare. A regular sequence of historical plays exhibit to us not only the general character of each successive reign, but nearly the whole chain of leading events, from the days of Richard II to the death of Richard III at Bosworth.

It is the contention of the present writer that Gairdner's conclusion can be accepted only with some rather important reservations. It is true that in the larger aspects of character delineation and motives, Shakespeare is historically accurate. For example, Queen
Margaret was energetic, violent, passionate, and unfeminine in her ambition; Henry VI showed cowardice, indecision, and dependence; the Duke of Gloucester did not always agree with the King and lords, yet he was competent and popular with the people; the Duke of York was a strong leader, diplomatic, but sometimes gullible; the Duke of Suffolk proposed unpopular policies, but was the King's favorite until he had to be banished for treason; the Duke of Somerset was determined to bring about York's downfall; the Earl of Warwick entertained lavishly and was popular with the people; Cardinal Beaufort was interested in money matters. But in every single instance exception must be taken to Shakespeare's characterizations, for the sake of historical accuracy. Shakespeare's sins of omission and commission may be classified into four different categories:

1. Historical information that has come to light since Shakespeare's day, and that materially affects the character as Shakespeare conceived it.

2. Contemporary historical information that Shakespeare did not know about as that he deliberately suppressed as dramatically detrimental to the character as he wished to present him.

3. Deliberate misstatement of fact because of dramatic exigencies.

With regard to the first exception—data that has come to light since Shakespeare's day—neither Shakespeare nor any of his sources ever directly accused Queen Margaret of treason, yet she seemed to have been guilty of that offence in inviting French forces to attack the English coast in 1457 under the leadership of Pierre de Breze to divert the Duke of York. In justice to Shakespeare, it is only fair to observe that had he known this fact he would probably have used it.

Concerning the second exception—the deliberate suppression of historical information because of dramatic exigency—attention may be called to events in the lives of the Duke of Gloucester, the Duke of Suffolk, and the Earl of Warwick. Shakespeare undoubtedly knew of Gloucester's very questionable marriage with Jaqueline of Hainault and his disgraceful relations with Eleanor Cobham before his marriage to her, for both of these episodes are treated in detail in Shakespeare's sources, the chronicles of Hall and Holinshed. One is forced to assume, therefore, that Shakespeare suppressed the facts because they would have interfered with his desire to picture the Lord Protector as "the Good Duke Humphrey".

It was quite likely that Shakespeare was not aware of the very touching letter which the Duke of Suffolk wrote to his son upon the eve of the Duke's arrest and banishment for treason. But it seems equally likely—in the light of his treatment of Gloucester—that Shakespeare,
at this stage of his development, would have suppressed this information because he was interested in making Suffolk thoroughly despicable.

In making the Earl of Warwick a devil-may-care character, the playwright suppressed Warwick's practical traits. It was he who saved the day for the Yorkists at St. Alban's, and who was successful militarily, politically, and financially.

With regard to the third exception—deliberate misstatement of historical fact for dramatic purposes—one might mention that it was not the Duke of York who was responsible for the victory at the first battle of St. Alban's. Historically, a year elapsed between York's return from Ireland and his march to the King. For dramatic purposes Shakespeare has York proceed directly to the capital immediately after his return from Ireland. In *The Paston Letters* there is no evidence that the Duke of York had any connection with the Jack Cade rebellion. However, it was to Shakespeare's advantage, dramatically, in building up a following for the Duke of York, to indicate that even the Commons were opposed to the Lancastrian rule.

With regard to the last exception—honest mistakes—it appeared that Shakespeare, like all the rest of us, was human and occasionally fell into an honest error. The genealogy of Edward III is very badly garbled in Shakespeare's original source, *The First Part of the Contention*, and Shakespeare straightens out the difficulty in *King Henry VI, Part II*, only to fall into an equally bad error concerning the Earls of March in *King Henry IV, Part I*, where he confused father and son.
In the light of the foregoing exceptions, it would appear that Shakespeare's historical information was not always accurate. It would seem best, therefore, to conclude that on broad questions of characterization and motivation, Shakespeare was rarely at fault, but that for historical details he can not be depended upon.

During the course of the present study two additional bodies of evidence have come to light, which, for the benefit of future investigation of the field, ought to be mentioned here, although they lie slightly outside the current thesis. The first body of data concerns Sir John Fastolf, from whom it is generally supposed that Shakespeare took the name of the greatest comic hero of all time—Sir John Falstaff. The second body of data deals with possible character sketches in *King Henry VI, Part II*, which developed into full-length portraits in some of Shakespeare's later plays.

In establishing the limits of investigation of the present thesis, it seemed advisable to confine the study to those characters that were common to *The Paston Letters* and to Shakespeare's *King Henry VI, Part II*. Unfortunately, Sir John Fastolf did not appear in *King Henry VI, Part II*, although references to him in *The Paston Letters* were frequent, and scholars particularly interested in the characters of *King Henry VI, Part II*, were likely to be equally interested in Fastolf, even if he did not happen to appear in this particular Shakespearean play.
It is generally conceded that the original Falstaff was Sir John Oldcastle, father of Eleanor Cobham, disgraced wife of Humphrey, Duke of Gloucester. It is also generally conceded that the representatives of the Cobham family of Shakespeare's day took such serious objection to Shakespeare's use of the name Oldcastle that he changed the name of Oldcastle to Falstaff, and avowed that although there was such a person as Sir John Oldcastle, Falstaff "was not the man". In lighting upon the name Falstaff from Fastolf, Shakespeare's choice seems not to have been a particularly happy one. Sir John Fastolf was a shrewd and practical business man of considerable means and political influence—nothing of the delightful scholar and glorified buffoon of Shakespeare's Falstaff. Fastolf was accused of cowardice during one of the English military expeditions in France, but the charge was never proved. At his death, Sir John Fastolf left enough capital to endow a college.

Concerning Shakespeare's development of preliminary sketches into full-length portraits, mention was made in the first paragraph of the current study that it was impossible to detain genius long enough to make a detailed study of its creative processes. The evolution of Shakespeare's heroes and heroines—although tremendously important—lies quite outside the limits established for the current study. However, for the benefit of those readers who are interested in the total, not merely the purely historical, aspects of the Shakespeare character problem, pertinent data on certain characters of *King Henry VI, Part II*, may not be entirely out
of order here.

In reading King Henry VI, Part II, one can hardly escape the impression that the devil-may-care Earl of Warwick was the first draft of Hotspur of King Henry IV, Part I; that the ambitious Queen Margaret was the first draft of Lady Macbeth; and that the godly but indecisive Henry VI—although with Brutus in Julius Caesar intervening—might have been an extremely shadowy first draft of Hamlet. It may be assumed a priori that if a character in one of the plays caught the public fancy, Shakespeare, in response to public demand, would exploit more fully the same character or the same type of character in a later play. It is generally conceded that this is what happened to Falstaff in The Merry Wives of Windsor; and whatever may be the motive, it cannot be denied that Warwick had much in common with Hotspur, Queen Margaret with Lady Macbeth, and Henry VI with Hamlet. In each instance, of course, the latter characterization is by far the better. By this technique and artistry he was to make his later plays the greatest in the English language!
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BIBLIOGRAPHY


LITERARY REFERENCES IN THE PASTON LETTERS TO THE CHARACTERS IN SHAKESPEARE'S KING HENRY VI, PART II

by

ROWENA ROSS

AN ABSTRACT

MASTER OF SCIENCE

Department of English

KANSAS STATE COLLEGE
OF AGRICULTURE AND APPLIED SCIENCE

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PROBLEM

The present study concerns itself with two major questions:

1. Were the individuals who wrote *The Paston Letters* in a position to know personally or by reputation the important figures mentioned by Shakespeare in *King Henry VI, Part II*, and were the Pastons capable of passing sound judgment upon the important public figures and important political issues of their day?

2. Concerning the principal characters in *King Henry VI, Part II*, to what extent can we trust Shakespeare at the outset of his career as a historian?

METHOD

The more than 1000 Paston letters were read and tabulated, as they referred to the principal characters in Shakespeare's *King Henry VI, Part II*. Having determined the salient traits of each of the characters according to this original source, we then compared the contemporary portraits with those given by Shakespeare.

The history of the Paston family was given, showing them to be a dependable source, for William Paston was considered one of the "worthies" of England. When the Pastons wrote of the Dukes of Suffolk, Somerset, or York, they were writing about people to whom they were related or with whom they had intimate or professional relationships. The Paston evidence is not hearsay. If there is "gret talkyng" or any other
unauthenticated news, it will be so labeled. The correspondence is filled with "tydynges", which for the safety of the writer had to be facts. Also considered was the background of the War of the Roses, so the evidence could be seen in its proper perspective.

Content Material

Digressions in the characters of Shakespeare's play and The Paston Letters were considered. In the play Shakespeare ignored one facet of the Duke of Gloucester's character, omitting all reference to the Lord Protector's questionable marriages. In the same faction, the Earl of Warwick is presented as an impulsive, devil-may-care youth. To the Duke of York went the glory of winning the first battle of St. Alban's, but according to history, Warwick was the responsible general who won the day for York.

No reference was made in the play to the treason of Queen Margaret, but Gairdner presents evidence to prove she was ambitious to the point of betrayal. The Pastons included a letter from Suffolk to his son, showing him to be gentle and God-fearing, a trait of his character not presented in the play. The portrayal of Somerset is identical in King Henry VI, Part II, and The Paston Letters. King Henry VI is also similar in both sources.

Findings

In regard to the first question of the problem—Are The Paston Letters worth anything as a historical record?—the answer is yes.
As mentioned, William Paston was a "worthy" of England; Anne, daughter of the Duke of Somerset, married the uncle of Sir John Paston; the Paston correspondence contains letters from the Duke of York to John Paston relative to sheriffs and knights of the shire; and the Earl of Suffolk introduced into the Paston household one Richard Calle, who, much to the chagrin of the Pastons, married Margery, daughter of Margaret and John Paston.

Because of the position of the family, the letter-writing style of the period that controversial questions not be put to writing unless labeled "gret talkyng" or if authentic, "tydyngs", and because of their correspondence with the men concerned in this study, The Paston Letters are entirely dependable original sources historically.

As for the second question of the problem, James Gairdner, editor of The Paston Letters maintained that Shakespeare was a dependable historian. It is the contention of the present writer that Gairdner's conclusion can only be accepted with several reservations. Shakespeare was historically accurate in the larger aspects of character delineation and motives, but in every single instance, we have to take exception to Shakespeare's characters. His sins of omission and commission are fourfold:

1. Historical information that has come to light since Shakespeare's day, and that materially affects the character as Shakespeare conceived it.
2. Contemporary historical information that Shakespeare did not know about or that he deliberately suppressed as dramatically detrimental to a character as he wished to present him.

3. Deliberate misstatement of fact because of dramatic exigencies.


Regarding the first exception, neither Shakespeare nor any of his sources ever directly accused Queen Margaret of treason, yet she seems to have been guilty of that offence in inviting French forces to attack the English coast in 1457 under the leadership of Pierre de Breze to divert the Duke of York.

Concerning the second exception of the deliberate suppression of historical information because of dramatic exigency, attention may be called to the Duke of Gloucester, the Duke of Suffolk, and the Earl of Warwick. Shakespeare undoubtedly knew of Gloucester's very questionable marriage with Jaqueline of Hainault and his disgraceful relations with Eleanor Cobham before his marriage to her, for both of these episodes are treated in detail in Shakespeare's sources. These facts would have interfered with his "Good Duke Humphrey".

Although Shakespeare was probably not aware of Suffolk's touching letter to his son, he probably would have suppressed it, for he was interested in making Suffolk thoroughly despicable. In making the Earl of Warwick a devil-may-care character, the playwright suppressed Warwick's practical traits.
With regard to the deliberate misstatement of historical fact for dramatic purposes, one might mention that it was not the Duke of York who was responsible for the victory at the first battle of St. Alban's. According to The Paston Letters York was not connected with the Jack Cade rebellion. However, dramatically it was to Shakespeare's advantage to build up a following for York among the commons.

An honest mistake concerned the Earl of March, which was straightened out in King Henry VI, Part II, from The First Part of the Contention, and confused again in King Henry IV, Part I. The identity of the father and son was mistaken.

In the light of the foregoing exceptions, it would appear that Shakespeare's historical information is not always accurate. On broad questions of character and motivation, Shakespeare is rarely at fault, but that for historical details he cannot always be depended upon.

During the course of the present study two additional bodies of evidence have come to light, which ought to be mentioned here. The first body of data concerns Sir John Fastolf. Shakespeare changed the name of his delightful scholar and glorified buffoon to Falstaff, but in some ways he was a sharp contrast to Sir John Fastolf. According to the Pastons, Fastolf was a practical man of business, leaving enough capital at his death to endow a college. He was once accused of cowardice, like Falstaff, but the charge was never proved.
Other data lying outside this study but of interest is the development of preliminary sketches into full-length portraits. In reading *King Henry VI, Part II*, one can hardly escape the impression that the devil-may-care Earl of Warwick is the first draft of Hotspur in *King Henry IV, Part I*; that the ambitious Queen Margaret is the first draft of Lady Macbeth; and that the indecisive Henry VI may be a shadowy first draft of Hamlet. In each instance, of course, the latter character is by far the better.