

The White Rose of York

Or the Remembrances of
Sir James Tyrrell

Henry Burns Ironside

May God grant to the living, grace,
To the departed rest,
To the Church and the world peace and
concord,
And to us sinners, eternal life.

Prayer on the walls of Westminster Abbey.

The White Rose of York

H. B. Ironside

ISBN: 9789403804194

Henry Burns Ironside

Cover Design: A Wakeley AS

Cover image History Threads

Published via Bookmundo by Compass Books (Rolsen AS)

Published in Europe for sale all over the world in 2025

Copyright Henry Burns Ironside ad infinitum. No part of this work may be copied, sold, store in a retrieval system, or any other activity not allowed under copyright law, without permission of the author, publisher, or his successors according to the law so long as his line endures. Any such activity is an infringement of copyright law. Copyright under British Law.

Compass Books is a trade name of Rolsen AS

To Edward V and Richard Duke of York
May they rest in peace and light everlasting.



Edward V of England

Chapter 1

The Earl's Son

It was a dank, dark November afternoon. Listen to me. The thickening mist clung to the woods and copses like a mourner's veil, hiding the dips and hollows of the rolling English landscape in an impenetrable smog. The whirling draught of the freezing wind eddied about the tops of the bare oak trees bereft of their leaves, their branches clawing at the leaden sky above them, whistling and moaning a dismal elegy.

Yes, it was a dim and doleful day I tell you, but not as dark an autumn as dwelt in my soul as I stood in the depths of the copse yonder, my thick woollen cloak wrapped about my face to keep out the biting wind.

My fingers gripped the cold metal of the pistol as I fumbled for my flint and steel. No, I did not wish to live, any longer.

What was the aim or purpose of this miserable existence, the everlasting circle of the years, and the continual abuse that mankind had submitted me to. Was there an afterlife at all? If so, it could not be harder and more unbearable than the dismal road that the sons of men travel to the grave upon. I struck the flint and the sparks leapt from it to the cord and amid a pother of smoke, the glow of the smouldering rope told that the pistol was ready. With sudden energy I pushed the pistol to my head, and with trembling hand I hastened to pull the trigger. Nothing. Impatiently I looked over the weapon and shook more foul-smelling gunpowder into the tray. Feverishly I once again pulled the trigger. At that moment, a gust of freezing wind extinguished the glowing embers of the smouldering match. Cursing under my breath I relit. "If I fail this time", I muttered, I shall know that Providence holds something great for me. I lifted the pistol again, but alas! In my haste, and with the shaking of my hands the powder spilled from the open tray, and my third attempt at suicide was stalled by an invisible hand. I stood for several minutes in the damp and fog, a fearsome battle raging in my mind. Finally, I placed the pistol in my belt

once more and wrapping my cloak more closely about my shoulders, with slow, but deliberate steps, I walked towards my horse, which foraging peacefully amid the fallen leaves showed no sign of disturbance.

Mounting up I moved out into the sodden and miry road.

The year was 1483, and England was a troubled land. Years of civil war had left the country weak, divided, and corrupt. The house of York had grappled with the house of Lancaster once more and had won a decisive victory at the Battle of Tewksbury. Since that fatal day, Edward the IV had reigned supreme, and the country had settled down for some time. But ever under the threat of uprising, as greedy and warlike lords schemed and strove for ever increasing power and prestige. The House of Lancaster was weak now, with only Henry Tudor as a real threat, but even he was in exile in France. Edward IV had married Elizabeth Woodville in 1464, and this union had produced several children, that secured the succession of the throne. This had not been without dispute however, as the Queen came from middle class stock, and not from nobility. But the dust it seemed had now settled, and there had been no talk of revolt since the Earl of

Warwick had been overthrown. All this unrest however, made travelling dangerous, especially in winter when the roads became deep in mud, and highway men lurked on every hand. I made my way northwards through the late afternoon light, my horse trudging through the flooded cart tracks, watching the mist as it billowed over the tangled hedges and ditches and through the banks of ancient woodland the oak trees branches hanging low with the weight of the raindrops. I met very few travellers, only one or two lone farm-labourers, their hose covered in mud and straw and a billhook or scythe in hand, tramping homeward to their farmhouses where they would find a warm fire awaiting them.

In the dismal November evening I had plenty of time for contemplation. Persecuted by my family as an illegitimate son and having served several years in the Yorkist army only to have my wages squandered, I had finally run away, desperate to escape my tyrannical father William Tyrrell Earl of Gipping, and intent on self-destruction. but now this unexpected turn of events found me strangely calm. A warm feeling of good will to all men rose in my breast, and I felt the depths of despair slowly ebbing away from me as I watched

the pale yellow of the wintry sunset spill over the Herefordshire horizon.

The distant bells of Leominster priory could be heard, ringing out through the deepening dusk with their throaty clangour, calling the monks to evensong, from their work in the fields or their almsgiving in the surrounding villages. Peering down into the valley, I could see the steeple poking up out of the swirling mist, a pale beam of sunlight, sweeping across it from the sinking sun. The sound of the bells, and the distant low of cattle and the remains of the dying day, that gilt the edges of the mist, put fresh hope into my young heart, and I spurred my horse onwards toward the town. I could not have foreseen what happened next, however.

Chapter 2

Bandits

The track – but really, despite its rutted, puddle riddled, and muddy surface was really the main road– wound onwards, and upwards. The darkness was coming on, and the pale gold of the recent sunset receded and a deep, and dusky blue had taken over the skyline. The mist was slowly rising up from off the land, leaving soggy, dripping fields and wet woodland. My horse tramped forward, toward the town of Leominster, where I would seek for sanctuary for the night at the Priory. From there I would travel to Ludlow Castle, the stronghold of Edward IV, and where the Queen and the Prince of Wales were in residence. There I would seek the help of the lords to find an appointment in the service of...

Suddenly my thoughts were cut off, as I rounded a sharp bend, and came face to face with a terrible sight.

Two fine and elegant warhorses bearing the coat of arms of the Duke of Gloucester, were drawn up prancing and snorting in the middle of the road, riderless, and held at the halter by two men, clad in rough peasants' clothes, each with a sword in their belts balanced by a knife. A third knelt in the mud by two men who lay prostrate and still as corpses in a ditch at the side of the track. They were clad in thick fur buskins, and their hose was made of rich material, and their doublets of jewelled cloth. The third man was stripping them of their swords and purses and crowing to his two cronies.

"Marry, there's rich pickings here!

A hundred ginueas, and a goodly sword!"

I instinctively backed up my horse.

Highwaymen.

In a matter of seconds, I had made up my mind, here were two lords in dire trouble, and my honour would not allow me to leave them unaided. I drew my sword and spurred my horse into action. There was no need, though, the rogues had seen me.

I rushed down upon them. An angry cry went up,

“Disturber of the peace!”

“Knock the tarnished fellow from off his horse!”

The thieves made a rush at me, one stumbled in the dusk and fell the second received a slashing blow from the edge of my sword. He crashed to the ground quite dead.

The third grabbed me by the leg and began hauling with all his strength. The first having picked himself up charged into the fray. I drew back my sword with all my might and was about to bring it crashing down on the head of the enemy, when my horse reared in fright throwing me from the saddle to the ground. I sprang up immediately, winded, but otherwise unharmed, and turned on my assaulters. My sword flew right and left, the highwaymen sprawled in all directions, one fled, whilst the other fell to the ground like a dead man. Thus, delivered of so determined a foe, I turned to the fallen gentlemen. Both were still breathing, though they were evidently unconscious having sustained severe blows to their temples.

I felt for my leather bottle which contained a little wine, that I had managed to take from the cellar of my father's mansion before my flight, and uncorked it, and put it to the older noble's lips.

He sat up staring bewildered about him. "Who are you?" The question was sharp, and to the point.

"I am James Tyrrell," I replied. "You were attacked by bandits."

"You saved my life." replied the noble, still looking like moonshine.

"I simply did the duty of a subject my lord," quoth I turning to the other gentleman, "Come are you otherwise unharmed?"

"Indeed," replied the nobleman, staggering to his feet. "I am Richard, Duke of Gloucester, this my companion is Lord Buckingham, we travel south towards Berkeley."

So saying, the Duke took hold of his horse, which had been driven into the thicket of the hedge during the combat, and drew him out. "Place my lord Buckingham upon his horse," he ordered. "Odds my life, my head reels.

We must make all speed to the priory."

We set out. My lord Buckingham was evidently made of weaker stuff than Richard of Gloucester, or his wounds were more serious, and I was obliged to carry him upon my horse. It was quite dark now, and there were no lights to guide us

save a few stars that shimmered overhead, and the distant twinkle of the town of Leominster. But with the horses jogging steadily, it was not long before time brought us up to the walls of the priory.

The bells were ringing out the hour as we reigned up the horses outside the noble building. Built of sturdy stonework, the thick and solid construction from the time of the Normans, towered up into the velvet sky, the hollow bells rang around the cloisters, and from the open heavy oaken doors came the haunting and prayerful sound of slow Gregorian chanting. I entered the lobby and motioned to a monk who sat clad in the black woollen cowl of the Benedictine order, with its cream linen inner lining, dozing on a rough oaken bench with a wooden tankard of mead next to him. "Rouse you, holy brother!" cried I, "and prepare a bed and lodging for his excellency the Duke of Gloucester, and my lord Buckingham!"

The monk sprang to his feet.

"Wait here!" he cried "whilst I fetch here Prior Mancini." He hurried into the main building his cowl flapping behind him. A minute later a fat and jovial monk with a face that spoke clearly of

a warm man given to alms, came through the heavy oaken doors.

“Salutationes in nomine Iesu Christi!” he cried. “Welcome to the priory of St Peter and St Paul!” With a flick of his hand he summoned a train of monks who led the lords away to the apothecary to have their wounds dressed and another group to prepare beds.

Suddenly I felt very bewildered and tired. I had just a few hours ago been at the point of suicidal despair, and now I had rescued two lords from certain death. I sank down onto the bench the monk had been sitting on.

“It was indeed lucky that I came when I did,” I said to the Prior.

“Ah no, my young friend!” he replied, “it was the hand of God. There is no such thing as luck. He smiled. We should be very thankful, that all events are ordered by the Father, which is in heaven, and not down to pure chance.”

I nodded slowly. I had been brought up to subscribe to the Catholic faith, but my troubled childhood, had left me with little desire to bother with the tyrannical god who my father worshipped. Whatever, I was not going to bother arguing with the Prior.

At that moment, a monk entered the room.
“Master Tyrrell,” he said respectfully. “The Duke
of Gloucester wishes to see you in his room.”

Chapter 3

Ludlow Castle

Ludlow Castle stands on a high cliff overlooking a large meander in the green and murky River Teme. This stronghold, stern and spreading, poking its rough bulwarks from out of the browning autumn trees, was built after the Norman Conquest by Walter de Lacy, who came over with that most controversial of kings William the Conqueror. It is Norman in the very sense and essence of the word – it's thick walls, strong towers, and plain curves, devoid of the elaborate finery of the later castles and cathedrals of Medieval England.

However, these defects were there for good reason – the Normans had a job on their hands, that of keeping the discontented and patriotic followers of John Bull from wreaking a bloody and fantastic revenge on the Romanesque imposters. The delicate ornaments of the Gothic era would never do to protect a descendent of Rollo from the roughened hands of a determined Saxon. Whatever the architecture, Ludlow castle had certainly withstood the test of time, having

stood since the Conquest to the present troubled day, untaken by any foe and a formidable symbol of the authority and royalty of the house of York. The town of Ludlow, which spread about the foot of the stronghold made its name and fame as a market town, for to the Castle Square the farmers apothecaries' monks and artisans would come to trade. The profit of this was significant, for the town was graced by a most excellent parish Church, that of St Laurence, built in the 11th century, and plainly speaking of the prosperity that God had blessed the inhabitants withal.

It is indeed a thing to be commended, when the people set aside from the rewards of their own endeavours some token of gratitude to the One who has so blessed them, it would be well if we who are so much more advanced in knowledge and skill, and so fat and rich also, should follow the example of the poor numbskulls of the eleven hundreds.

It was in this strong tower, that King Edward IV, had determined that his son should spend his early years. Despite many vices – no human is without those – the King held a great love for his son and saw to it that only the best upbringing was given him. His servants were carefully picked, for the King had given stern order, that

no man was to be permitted to come to the presence of the Prince of Wales, who was a "swearer, brawler, backbiter, common hazarder, adulterer, or user of words of ribaldry". These were noble aims, for the King evidently knew his own faults – or at least those of his contemporaries, for what turned many a battle during the Wars of the Roses, was the cry of "Treachery!" His attempts at shielding his son from the wickedness of many noblemen had evidently had a good effect, for young Edward was very fond of books and showed the prospects of a fine mind. Not that this made him any less active than other children – he loved to shoot and to ride, and his scholarly achievements were balanced by a gentle but merry humour.

*

It was a damp and greasy autumn day, that momentous Year of our Lord one thousand four hundred and eighty-three. Ludlow Castle was steeped in a low-lying cloud, which was rising from the river beneath it, the armoured guards that stood on the bulwarks, dripping with the moisture of the flying mist.

Down in the palace grounds the 12-year-old Prince of Wales, and his 10-year-old brother the

Duke of York, were engaged in a lively sword fight, their attendants standing at a respectful distance from the combat.

“Surrender at once!” cried Edward, dodging a blow from his opponent’s rapier.

“No way!” came the robust reply, “I’m king.”

“No, you’re not!” “I am!”

A fearsome tussle ensued.

“Neither of us are!” shouted the prince, as he allowed himself to be knocked over onto the damp turf.

“That’s not true! Someone has to be! I knocked you down. I must be king!”

“True, my lord, I give in!”

The small duke stood back as his brother scrambled to his feet. “Veni, Vidi, Vici!” he said with a good-natured smile.

“You’ll be my servant forever?”

“No way! I’m not a servant! I’m king! Prepare to defend yourself, Sir Richard!”

“You backsliding coward!” cried the duke aghast, and the fight began again. Most healthy boys

want to copy what grown-ups do, and after all for the last 28 years grown men had been fighting each other, over who was dignified with the title of King.

“Flee the battlefield imposter!”

Richard dutifully kicked up his heels as Edward chased him round the grounds around the round chapel, and up to the drawbridge where the Duke of York was driven into a corner and pushed up against the wall.

“Pax?” he suggested.

“Pax.” agreed the Prince of Wales graciously, putting down his sword. “I am sorely out of breath.”

The two boys leant on the draw-bridge railing watching their reflections in the water and poking at them with their sword tips.

“Your lower parry is a bit sluggish today, sir,” said the duke. “You read too many books. I had to wait fifteen minutes before Uncle Anthony allowed me to fetch you. Make him let you come outside more. It would do you good and give me someone to play with.”

“Maybe, but doesn’t your governor say that you do not study hard enough? You need to read more books, Richard my son!”

The duke chose to ignore this brotherly admonition. “Come, let us go up on the ramparts” he said. They climbed the steps up onto the top of the wide walls. Servants bustled hither and thither, pages went passed with their arms full of wares some for the kitchens where the evening meal would be being prepared by the royal cooks. The two boys stopped to watch a page rolling a barrel about full of sand and chain mail. If this were not regularly done, the mail would rust and become unusable.

“Whose mail is that?” asked Edward. The page stopped turning and bowed. No ones, your Highness” replied the page respectfully “This mail is new, it will become the young squires who is to be knighted tomorrow” I am making sure it is as clean as possible for the ceremony.

“You do a good work, my friend” said Edward kindly.

“I thank you, your highness!”

They continued down the wall stopping to look through the turrets down at the mist enclosed

town that lay below them. Crows called in the damp woodland down beneath them, and in the distance the spire of St. Laurence's Church poked out of the mist. A flock of starlings flew overhead, chattering noisily. Down beneath the castle walls the dirt road into the centre of the town twisted. From this lofty perch they could see everything that went by. A farmer on his cart pulling a load of potatoes, a group of Augustinian monks on a pilgrimage, into the town, and...

"What's that crowd up to?" asked Richard.

"Where?"

"Moving up through those trees. Hidden by mist now. There they are!"

"They're leading prisoners!" cried the prince.

A group of armed officials were moving along the road, clad in half armour, and leading two men laden with chains, and wearing bloodstained clothes. Behind came some soldiers, and after them a raucous crowd hooting and catcalling and throwing rubbish.

"Hang them! Hang them!"

At that moment the boys' uncle, Lord Anthony Woodville, the Queen's brother, and Edward's

guardian, joined them at the turret. He was a tall and handsome gentleman, with dark hair, and clean-shaven, with a scholarly face that told of a man given to learning. In fact, his translation of the *'Dictes and Sayings of the Philosophers'* had been the one of the first books printed by William Caxton in England.

"What is happening?" asked Edward "What have they done?"

"Your highness, these men are bandits, they attacked two dukes as they travelled northwards last night," replied the earl. "They were only saved when a young soldier arrived on the scene."

The prince nodded. "Will they hang?"

"Indeed, they shall, and it is what they deserve."

The boys looked after the mob in curiosity. What would make men so debased and devoid of chivalry, to commit such a crime, in the face of knowing what their fate would be if caught?

"Come, your highness," said the Earl, "His majesty the king is not well. He wishes to speak with you."

The Prince of Wales looked grave suddenly. "Is he no better?"

Chapter 4

The Dark Secret

A grey cloud passed over the noble face of the Earl Rivers. "Your Highness," he said, "The physicians are doing all they can, but His Majesty is very weak." He led his nephews down the wide stone steps from the ramparts to the gently sloping lawns of the castle grounds, and towards the inmost keep. "We must pray God, that he will spare him yet."

They walked passed the round chapel and up to the iron portcullis which rattled upwards as they approached as if some magic force drew it, passed the sentries that stood by, like grotesque machines in their sparkling armour, each baring their gaudy coats of arms upon the breast of their tunics, and holding their halberds in a ceremonial present arms as the princes passed. Tallow lamps smouldered above them in the gloom, supported by grim iron gargoyles, and flickering in the hollow draught that murmured around the great stone walls.

The Earl led them through the Great Hall, where the servants roasted meat around the enormous fireplace, the fire barking up the chimney in a roaring inferno, whilst pages their faces daubed in the scarlet colours of heat, turned the meat upon the fire. The assembled servants sprang back from the path of the Governor, and the Prince of Wales, with murmurs of “Your Highness” as they entered a corridor and ascended a winding flight of steps to the antechamber to the appartements of his majesty the King.

These were filled with whispering courtiers, and servants in their fine hose and breeches, and fur lined coats over their doublets of jewelled brocade. The whispering immediately stopped as the princes entered the room, like a breath of wind, that suddenly gives way to complete calm. A servant in the livery of the King, swung the doors open, and they entered the Kings chambers.

The room was full of physicians and servants who surrounded a heavy oaken four poster bed, which was slung with rich satin curtains twilled with gold and tied back with glittering tassels. Upon the walls hung the shield and swords of his majesty hanging as though they were finished

with, and a large mahogany table stood in the middle of the room covered in bottles of strange and unseemly potions, designed for the king's health and well-being. Ornate candles lit the room and made the dusky world outside seem darker.

The servants stood aside, and the Princes could now see a frail form lying back in the bed his face pinched, and bloated with excess and corpulence, and now white, and flabby, the limpid dark locks of his head damp with sweat and scattered upon the copious pillows his head rested upon. It was their father – the sovereign of all England, King Edward the fourth.

On a little table beside the bed stood several bottles of emetics – the potion that had been the king's downfall.

Edward's eyes widened, a cold shock went through his body as he looked on the frail form of his father. He had seen the King ill before, but never like this.

The king seemed not to notice the dire condition he was in as he lifted his head with difficulty and motioned to his son.

“Come...to...me...my boy!”

Silently the prince of Wales, made his way up to the bedside, and made obeisance.

“There...that is well.” The king turned towards the servants and physicians. “Out!” he ordered. Bowing, the servants filed towards the door, leaving the king and the princes alone. Upon a gesture from the king, the Duke of York, sat down on a divan, before the diamond paned window, whilst the Prince of Wales settled on a little footstool by the head of the king’s bed.

“Are you better, your Majesty?” asked Edward anxiously.

“Yes, my son, I am better – soon I shall be in another world...” The king trailed off. After a moment he spoke again.

“You, Edward shall be king.”

The prince nodded.

“You will be plunged into a very dangerous position, upon my death,” the king continued,

“You are yet a boy, and there are many men – mark me, many men, which would see you overthrown. I am a man – I ascended to the throne as a man, but still I found this to be too true myself. But you are yet a child, and if you

are to survive upon this throne, other men must rule for you till you reach your majority. Make sure that no one man is able to wield supreme power over you. I appoint your uncle, Anthony, Lord Rivers and his brother to be your protectors. Do not trust any man though – the most well-meaning lord upon this earth, can turn traitor once he gets a glimpse of power. You must rely upon your own judgement. I have commanded that you be crowned as soon as possible to avoid insurrection. But beware, be very ware, of that fox my brother, Richard Plantagenet – and whatever happens,” Here the king dropped his voice to a hoarse whisper, “Do not let anyone get hold of these” and from under his pillow he produced a pile of parchments. “Before I married your mother, I was betrothed to another woman – though we never met, Lady Eleanor Butler. There are men, who would use this to overthrow you – Take them, (I am soon to die) and keep them hidden. But should my worst fears befall you make haste for...” The king trailed off his breath spent. “My mind is weak, I have forgotten what I was about to say.”

Prince Edward took the parchments and slipped them up his shirt. The king continued.

“I wish with all my heart that I could live longer to see you fully grown and, in a position, to rule. But that is not to be. It remains to me to commit you and this country into the hand of Almighty God.”

Suddenly the king raised himself up in his bed and lifted his voice to almost full strength, a fire burned within his sunken eyes, and a colour spread across his ashen face. He burst out:

“May you rule with a rod of iron! May the white rose of York ride forth triumphant over all its enemies! Yea! And may all that oppose you perish and fall slain! May your feet be dipped in the red blood of the rose of Lancaster! May God crown you with the palms of eternal victory!”

The king sank back in his bed exhausted. His erratic breathing was the only sound heard for a few moments.

“Leave me, my sons” he whispered, “Let me take my rest.”

Silently and their faces heavy with sadness, and the shock of the king’s revelations, and the violence with which he had cursed his enemies – their enemies, the princes left the room and made their way towards the chapel for evensong.

It had never occurred to Edward, sheltered as he had been since birth from the evils of the world, that there might be people in the country- no in the very court, who did not love him and adore him as their Prince, and future King. The secret weighed heavily on his heart, and he began to look with a new interest at the salaaming courtiers as they passed towards the chapel. It was quite dark outside, and the monks had lit candles in the simple building, built in a round circle with alcoves all round the interior where one could sit hidden away and soak in the prayerful atmosphere, or say a few words to the Father which sees in secret.

The prince's Chaplain stood before the altar, a few monks beside him, holding a book of prayers. On either side, stood the rows of monks who were to sing the service, their heads bowed in reverence, as the princes entered, whilst a luteist quietly preluded from an obscure corner of the building.

They took their seats in their accustomed corner, and the Earl Rivers sat down next to them. The priest began to read in Latin, a portion from the book of Job, which language, whilst the common people could not understand, was a tongue in