

my life?" This speech was much noted of the hearers, especially by one sir Piers¹ of Exton. This knight left the court, and, with eight persons more, went suddenly to Pontefract-castle; whither being come, he called before him the squire who was accustomed to wait on Richard at table, giving him a charge "that the king should eat as much as he would,² for that now he should not long eat." King Richard being set at dinner was served negligently, and without the usual ceremony of tasting the dishes before he commenced his meal. Marvelling at this sudden change, he asked the reason, and was told that new orders had been given by king Henry to that effect. "The devil take Henry of Lancaster and thee together!"³ exclaimed the king in a passion, striking the man with a carving-knife. "On that word, in rushed sir Piers Exton with eight tall men, every man having a weapon in his hand. Richard, perceiving them, put the table back from him, and stepping up to the man next him, wrung the weapon out of his hand, (a brown-bill,) and therewith right valiantly defended himself; so that, in conclusion, four of them he slew outright. Sir Piers, amazed thereat, leaped upon the chair where king Richard usually sat, (some authorities say it was a curiously carved stone-chair); while the king was fiercely striving for conquest with the four surviving ruffians, and chasing them round the chamber, he passed near to the chair whereon sir Piers had gotten, who with a pole-axe smote him on the back of the head, and, withal, ridded him of his life in an instant."

Thus, battling like a champion of proof, in the full exercise of mighty energies awakened by despair, fell the son of the Black Prince, at the early age of thirty-two: he died. in-

¹ There was a lord mayor, one of Richard's opposers, called sir Thomas Exton.

² This observation shows that his food had been circumscribed.

³ The very words of Shakspeare, who has merely cast Fabyan's narrative into dialogue. Walsingham only mentions that Richard starved himself, and died on Valentine's-day, 1400. This author is a thorough Lancastrian partisan, while alderman Fabyan just wrote at that distance from the event in question when the truth has not passed from the memory of man, and yet can be spoken fearlessly. Fabyan lived in the reign of Henry IV.'s grandson. As for guining an actual exposure of a royal murder from an *immediate* contemporary, it is not to be expected. Let the reader notice the ominous silence of Froissart on this subject. His words point at murder strongly, but they speak it not.