

## Edward IV, England's Forgotten Warrior King: His Life, His People, and His Legacy

**Anthony Corbet**

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*By providing an impassioned account of Edward IV's reign, Corbet makes English history exciting and his thesis convincing.*

Anthony Corbet presents a thorough account of the life of Edward IV and his lasting influence on the generations of rulers who followed him, in the book *Edward IV, England's Forgotten Warrior King*.

Edward IV's status as a "forgotten" king rises not from his own faults, but because there's so much drama that comes *after* his death. Richard III, Edward IV's eventual successor, has become a larger-than-life historical figure, with continuing debate about whether he was directly responsible for the deaths of the two young heirs to Edward IV's throne, and whether his own claim to the throne was valid.

Corbet, a medical doctor by profession, comes down firmly against Richard III and his supporters, both fifteenth-century and modern-day. With exacting detail, he cites the laws of inheritance at the time of Edward's death and shows that Richard III should rightly be considered a usurper, despite the surge of modern-day reconsiderations of his brief rule. Corbet also shows that despite Richard III's well-considered reforms to the law during his reign, his role in the murders of the two princes in the tower is undeniable.

Though Corbet spends considerable time discussing what followed Edward IV's death, the first part of the book tells of Edward's twenty-two-year rule, and the many challenges he confronted during that time. The king foiled plots and quelled revolts, while developing a reputation as a fierce warrior who led his men in battle from the front lines. Corbet reveals Edward's human weakness in the form of various infidelities, but he also shows the king's substantial willingness to forgive, particularly his brother George, the Duke of Clarence, who repeatedly attempts to take Edward's place on the throne.

History books must aim to be impartial, but they're often more interesting if there's a strong point of view beyond the dry delivery of facts. This is both the strength and flaw of Corbet's book: he makes no attempt to hide his admiration for King Edward IV, and despite his thorough research, he perhaps strays too far from the "historian" mark at times. But it is this same impassioned quality that makes Corbet's complicated account of dozens of conspiring nobles mostly enjoyable to read. Corbet points out that Shakespeare himself saw little excitement in Edward IV's reign:

*One protracted series of disasters, in the case of Henry VI, or one short huge disaster, in the case of Richard III, obviously made for better dramatic plays than Edward's solid mercantile activity, with steady creation of national wealth and prosperity. King Edward IV's reputation deserves to be restored to reflect something nearer the truth.*

That last sentence could be seen as something of a mission statement for Corbet's book.

Corbet is guilty of repetition, sometimes repeating the same point several times, but it's with an eye toward thoroughness, as he attacks what he sees as inaccurate interpretations of English inheritance law and probes the

mystery of the princes in the tower. *Edward IV, England's Forgotten Warrior King* should interest novices to English history, as well as those already immersed in it.

PETER DABBENE (July 10, 2015)

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