

the thought that he should succeed to the throne. But the birth of a young prince, and Henry's restoration to health shattered the Duke of York's hopes; at last he decided to maintain his rights

by war. Thus arose a series of wars between the two rival houses of York and Lancaster for the kingship. They lasted with brief intermissions for thirty years, and are called the Wars of the Roses, because the badge of Lancaster was the red rose, and that of York the white rose. As the struggle was waged chiefly between the nobles, it did much less damage than might have been expected.

The commerce and progress of the country were scarcely interrupted. The people as a whole did not care very much which royal house held the throne, but they were tired of a weak government and they desired a king with sufficient force to rule his kingdom.

The first battle of the Wars of the Roses was fought at St. Albans in 1455, and the Yorkists were victorious. Five years later, at Northampton, Queen Margaret, the recognized leader of the Lancastrians, who was fighting for the rights of her young son, was defeated and forced to flee. She quickly raised another army and in turn routed the Yorkists at Wakefield. In this battle the Duke of York was killed; but his son, Edward, at once put himself at the head of the Yorkist forces, defeated the queen at Mortimer's Cross, and marching on London,

