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The Hollow Crown

An Entertainment by and about the
Kings and Queens of England

Music, poetry, speeches, letters and other writings from the
Chronicles, from Plays, and in the Monarchs' own Words —
also Music concerning them and by them

Devised by John Barton

A SAMUEL FRENCH ACTING EDITION



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THE HOLLOW CROWN

First presented in its original version by the Royal Shakespeare Theatre at the Aldwych Theatre, London, on 19th March 1961 with the following cast:

Max Adrian
John Barton
Richard Johnson
Dorothy Tutin
Richard Golding (Bass)
Kevin Miller (Tenor)
Eric Shilling (Baritone)
James Walker (Harpsichord and piano)

PREFACE

The text of *The Hollow Crown* has varied greatly during its forty years life, and continues to do so. This is the version currently playing at the time of publication, and is very different from the ancient original.

John Barton

THE READERS

The various items are shared between four readers, one woman and three men. There is also a singer-guitarist.

SETTING

Five chairs are all that is required in the way of setting.

MUSIC

Sheet music for the songs in *The Hollow Crown* is available on hire from Samuel French Ltd.

THE HOLLOW CROWN

PART I

Prologue: *The Hollow Crown* (William Shakespeare)

The Death of Kings (from Stow and the Anglo-Saxon Chronicles)

WILLIAM I WILLIAM II HENRY I STEPHEN

Queen Eleanor's Confession (Anonymous)

HENRY II QUEEN ELEANOR

Sixteenth and Seventeenth Century Chroniclers

(Holinshed, Hall, Baker and Churchill)

HENRY II HENRY III RICHARD I

EDWARD I JOHN EDWARD II

Ballad by RICHARD I

King Richard II's Greyhound

from Froissart's Chronicles (Lord Berners)

From Jane Austen's *History of England*

HENRY IV HENRY V HENRY VI EDWARD IV EDWARD V

RICHARD III HENRY VII HENRY VIII EDWARD VI

MARY ELIZABETH JAMES I CHARLES I

Agincourt Song

HENRY VII Investigates a Possible Marriage

Song: *The King's Hunt*

KING HENRY VIII AND ANNE BOLEYN

A Ballad of QUEEN JANE SEYMOUR

From a Speech made in the Guildhall by MARY TUDOR

Poems
HENRY VI HENRY VIII ELIZABETH I CHARLES II

Song: *Here's a Health unto His Majesty*

PART II

A Counterblaste to Tobacco (JAMES I)

The Trial of CHARLES I

Ayre by CHARLES I

CHARLES II on his marriage

Halifax on CHARLES II

The Vicar of Bray
CHARLES II JAMES II WILLIAM AND MARY ANNE GEORGE I

The Death of QUEEN CAROLINE (Lord Hervey)

Horace Walpole attends the funeral of GEORGE II

Fanny Burney's Diary
GEORGE III

W. M. Thackeray on GEORGE IV

Scottish Medley

The Regency: The Madness of GEORGE III
(Marianne Thornton to E. M. Forster)

WILLIAM IV's Accession (The Greville Memoirs)

Song by PRINCE ALBERT

From QUEEN VICTORIA's Private Journals

The Morte d'Arthur (Sir Thomas Malory)

PART I

PROLOGUE THE HOLLOW CROWN

Man 3 For God's sake let us sit upon the ground,
And tell sad stories of the death of kings –
How some have been deposed, some slain in war,
Some haunted by the ghosts they have deposed,
Some poisoned by their wives, some sleeping killed;
All murdered – for within the Hollow Crown
That rounds the mortal temples of a king,
Keeps Death his court; and there the antic sits,
Scoffing his state and grinning at his pomp,
Allowing him a breath, a little scene,
To monarchies, be feared, and kill with looks,
Infusing him with self and vain conceit,
As if this flesh which walls about our life,
Were brass impregnable: and humoured thus,
Comes at last, and with a little pin
Bores through his castle wall, and farewell king!

THE DEATH OF KINGS

Man 2 (*announcing*) The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle ...

After the birth-tide of our Lord Jesus Christ one thousand seven and eighty winters, King William the Conqueror fell sick of the evil and died. Alas, how false and fleeting is the wealth of kings. He who was sometime a most high King and lord of lands had now from all his lands no greater measure than a little mould.

King William, the second of that name, was of person a square man, red-coloured, his forehead four-square like a window. He was changeable, inconstant, covetous and cruel, ever tormenting his people with taxes and with armies. Wherefore he was hateful to his people and loathed of God; to which his end bore witness, for it was an unhallowed end and sudden. For on the morning after Lammas day, hunting in the New Forest in Hampshire, he was struck by an arrow all unawares and fell down stark dead, and never spake word.

So after he was buried, his Council chose his brother Henry for to be King.

This Henry was a noble prince, and a merry. No man dared wrong another in his time, and whosoever would carry his load of gold and silver about the land no man dared venture anything but good to him.

Yet howsoever the King himself had gathered gold and silver, at the last it availed him but little, for King Stephen, that came after, lightly laid hands on his treasure and as lightly consumed it. And in this King's time there was nothing but strife and evil in the land. For when they perceived that he was a mild, soft and good man, and did no justice, the lords all wondered at it. Wherefore they built great castles for themselves, and held their castles boldly against the king, so that the land was full of castles.

Then seized they many a person, both men and women, and put them in their castles, and tortured them for gold and silver, and never were martyrs tortured so as they were. For they were hung by the feet and smoked with foul smoke or hung by the head with coats of mail hanging heavy upon their feet. Knotted cords were put about their heads and twisted till it went to the brain. And there was never seen such hanging.

And so it lasted for nineteen years while Stephen was King, till the land was all undone and darkened with such deeds, and men said openly that Christ and his angels slept.

QUEEN ELEANOR'S CONFESSION

Man 1 (*announcing*) A ballad poem concerning King Henry II and his wife, Queen Eleanor.

Queen Eleanor was a sick woman,
And afraid that she should die;
She sent for two friars of France,
For to speak with them speedily.

King Henry called his nobles all,
By one, by two, and by three;
"Earl Marshal, I'll go shrive the Queen
And thou shalt wend with me!"

"A boon, a boon," quoth Earl Marshal,
And fell on his bended knee,
"That whatso'er the Queen may say,
No harm thereof may be."

“I’ll pawn my living and my lands,
My sceptre and my crown,
That what e’er Queen Eleanor says,
I will not write it down.”

“Do you put on one friar’s coat,
And I’ll put on another,
And we’ll to Queen Eleanor go,
One friar like another.”

Thus both attiréd then they go;
When that they came to Whitehall,
The bells they did ring, and the quiristers sing,
And the torches did light them all.

When that they came before the Queen,
They fell on their bended knee:
“Are you two friars of France?” she said,
“Which I suppose you be.”

“We are two friars of France,” they said,
“As you suppose we be;
We have not been at any mass
Since we came from the sea.”

“The first vile thing that ere I did
To you I’ll not deny;
I made a box of poison strong,
To poison King Henry.”

“That is a vile sin,” then said the King,
“God may forgive it thee!”
“Amen! Amen!” quoth Earl Marshal,
“And I wish it so may be.”

“The next vile thing that ere I did
To you I will discover,
I poisoned Fair Rosamund,
All in fair Woodstock bower.”

“That is a vile sin,” then said the King,
“God may forgive it thee!”
“Amen! Amen!” quoth Earl Marshal,
“And I wish it so may be.”

"The next vile thing that ere I did
I will to you unfold;
Earl Marshal had my maidenhead,
Underneath this cloth of gold."

"That is a vile sin," then said the King,
"God may forgive it thee!"
"Amen! Amen!" quoth Earl Marshal,
With a heavy heart then spoke he.

"Do you see yonders little boy,
A tossing of that ball?
That is Earl Marshal's eldest son,
And I love him the best of all."

"Do you see yonders little boy,
A catching of the ball?
That is King Henry's son," she said,
"And I love him the worst of all."

"His head is like unto a bull,
His neck is like a boar."
"No matter for that," King Henry said,
"I love him the better therefore."

The King pull'd off his friar's coat
And appeared all in red;
She shriek'd and she cry'd, she wrung her hands,
And said she was betrayed.

The King looked o'er his left shoulder,
And a grim look looked he,
And said, "Earl Marshal, but for my oath,
Then hanged shouldst thou be."

FROM SIXTEENTH AND SEVENTEENTH CENTURY CHRONICLERS

Man 2 King Henry II himself was out of measure given to fleshly lust; living in all kinds of licentiousness, and – which is the worst kind of licentiousness – in carnal familiarities with a Turk.

Man 1 But he delighted most in the company of a pleasant damsel, whom he called the rose of the world (the common people named her Rosamund) being verily a rare and peerless piece in those days. He built her an house

at Woodstock in Oxfordshire, like a labyrinth, that no creature might find her, or come to her except were he instructed by the King.

Man 2 But the common report of the people is that the Queen found her out by a silken thread, which the King had drawn after him out of his mistress' chamber with his foot, and dealt with Rosamund in such cruel wise, that she lived not long thereafter

Man 1 She was buried at Godstow —

Man 2 — in an house of nuns.

Man 1 Richard I was big of stature, with a merry countenance, fair and comely; bountiful to his friends, to strangers a grievous enemy; so that not without cause he obtained the surname of Coeur de Lion.

Man 2 This Richard being dead, his brother John became king. He was somewhat fat, of a sour and angry countenance. He was all by fits, intemperate in his best temper, but when distempered with sickness most intemperate of all — as appeared at his last, when, being sick of a fever, he would needs be eating raw peaches and drinking sweet ale.

He most miserably departed this life.

Man 1 He was succeeded by his son, Henry III —

Man 2 — of stature but mean —

Man 1 — yet well-compacted —

Man 2 — of stomach rather noble, rather stout.

Man 1 His son, Edward I, was tall of stature and therefore called Longshank; swarthy, strong of body, his eyes in his anger sparkling like fire.

Man 2 Concerning his conditions, so he was in war peaceful, so in peace he was warlike.

Man 1 Yet he was not only valiant, but politic, labouring to bring this divided isle into one entire monarchy, which he was very near to have achieved.

But, alas, of four sons which he had, three who were worthy to have outlived him, died, and the fourth, Edward II of that name, survived him, who was worthy never to have been born.

For this prince lived not only to be overthrown by his indignant peers, but was eventually slain by one of them, and that in most cruel wise ...

Man 2 For calling to mind the king's sometime sodomies with Sir Piers of Gaveston, certain beastly traitors came privily to Berkley Castle where the King lay sleeping and laid a great table upon his belly. Then being at all four corners, they so presse down on his body that he lay grovelling. And so they took a horn —

Man 1 — some say a trumpet —

Man 2 — and others a plumber's instrument, and thrust it up into his fundament as far as they might, and then took a hot burning spit and so put it through the horn into his body. He was buried at Gloucester. 'Twas somewhat too rough a justice.

Man 1 Ay: when I consider the ending of these princes, I wonder not so much at their glories as at their miseries.

Man 3 For even King Richard the Lion Hearted languished for many months in a foul and foreign dungeon from whence, at the window of his cell, he would sing this doleful ballad which he himself had made, hoping some friend would hear his plaint and come to rescue him.

SONG BY RICHARD I

Singer No one will tell me the cause of my sorrow,
 Why they have made me a prisoner here
 Wherefore with dolour I now make my moan,
 Friends have I many, though they do me wrong.
 Shameful it is that they leave me to ransom.
 Imprisoned here two winters long.

KING RICHARD II'S GREYHOUND

Man 1 (*announcing*) King Richard II, like so many of his forebears, did not end happily. He was deposed by his cousin, Henry Bolingbroke, Duke of Lancaster, who took upon himself the Hollow Crown as Henry IV.

Man 3 In the mean season, while King Richard sat at dinner, who did eat but little (his heart was so full that he had no lust to eat), all the country about his castle was full of men of war. Then he demanded of his cousin, Henry Bolingbroke, Duke of Lancaster, what men they were that appeared so many in the fields.

"What would they have?" quoth the King. "They will have you," quoth the Duke, "and bring you to London and put you in the tower. Therefore, my liege, I see none other remedy, but to yield yourself as my prisoner and when they know that you are my prisoner, they will do you no hurt."

Then the King, who saw himself in a hard case, yielded himself prisoner to the Duke of Lancaster. Then many men of arms and archers entered the King's castle.

And as it was informed me, King Richard had a greyhound called Math, who always waited upon the King and would know no man else: yet as the King and the Duke of Lancaster talked together in the court, the greyhound, who was wont to leap upon the King, left the King and came to the Duke of Lancaster, and made to him the same friendly countenance and cheer as he was wont to do to the King. The Duke, who knew not the greyhound, demanded of the King what the greyhound would do.

"Cousin," quoth the King, "it is a great good token to you and an evil sign to me. The greyhound maketh you cheer this day as King of England,

as ye shall be, and I shall be deposed: the greyhound has this knowledge naturally. Therefore take him to you; he will follow you and forsake me.”

The Duke understood well those words and cherished the greyhound, who would never after follow King Richard, but followed Henry Bolingbroke, Duke of Lancaster.

FROM JANE AUSTEN'S HISTORY OF ENGLAND

Man 2 (*announcing*) A nineteenth-century historian, Jane Austen, at the age of fifteen, offers her opinions on:

Woman *The History of England*, by a Partial, Prejudiced and Ignorant Historian.

Henry IV, formerly known as Henry Bolingbroke, ascended the throne of England much to his own satisfaction in the year 1399, having prevailed on his cousin and predecessor Richard II to resign it to him, and to retire for the rest of his life to Pomfret Castle, where he happened to be murdered. Be this as it may, King Henry did not live for ever either; but falling ill, his son the Prince of Wales came and took away the crown; whereupon the King made a long speech, for which I must refer the Reader to Shakespeare's play.

Things being thus settled between them, the King died, and was succeeded by his son Henry V who grew quite reformed and amiable, forsaking all his dissipated companions. He even went to France, where he fought the famous Battle of Agincourt, and afterwards married the King's daughter Catherine, a very agreeable woman by Shakespeare's account. In spite of all this however he died, and was succeeded by his son, Henry VI.

I cannot say much for this monarch's sense. Nor would I if I could for he was a Lancastrian. I suppose you know all about the Wars of the Roses between him and the Duke of York, who was of the right side? If you do not, you had better read some other History, for in this I mean only to vent my spleen against and show my hatred to all those people whose parties and principles do not suit with mine, and not to give information. It was in this reign that Joan of Arc lived and made such a row among the English. They should not have burnt her — but they did.

Edward IV. This monarch was famous only for his beauty and his courage, and he showed his undaunted behaviour in marrying one woman while he was engaged to another. One of his mistresses was Jane Shore, who had a play written about her, but it is a tragedy and therefore not worth reading.

His Majesty was succeeded by his little son, Edward V, who was murdered in the Tower by his Uncle's contrivance, whose name was Richard III.

The character of this Prince has in general been very severely handled by Historians. But as he was a York, I am rather inclined to suppose him a very respectable man. However, innocent or guilty, he did not reign for long in peace, for Henry Tudor, Earl of Richmond, as great a villain as ever lived, made a great fuss about getting the Crown, and having killed the King at the Battle of Bosworth, he succeeded to it.

This monarch, Henry VII, had two sons and two daughters. His eldest daughter, however, was married to the King of Scotland, and had the happiness of being the grandmother to one of the first characters of the world, Mary Queen of Scots. But of her, I shall have occasion to speak more at large in future. His Majesty was succeeded by his son Henry VIII whose only merit was his not being quite so bad as his daughter, Queen Elizabeth.

The crimes and cruelties of Henry VIII are too numerous to be mentioned, and nothing can be said in his vindication, but that his abolishing Religious Houses and leaving them to the ruinous depredations of time has been of infinite use to the landscape of England in general.

Edward VI. As this prince was only nine years old at the time of his father's death, the Duke of Somerset was chosen Protector of the Realm during his minority. This man was on the whole a very amiable character, and is somewhat of a favourite with me. He was beheaded, of which he might with reason have been proud, had he known that such was the death of the Queen of Scotland.

Mary Tudor. I cannot pity the Kingdom for the misfortunes experienced during her Reign, since they fully deserved them, for having allowed her to succeed her Brother – which was a double piece of folly, since they might have foreseen that as she died without children, she would be succeeded by that disgrace to humanity, that pest to society, Elizabeth.

It was the peculiar misfortune of this woman to have had bad Ministers. I know that it has been asserted and believed that Lord Burleigh, Sir Francis Walsingham, and the rest were deserving, experienced, and able Ministers. But oh! how blinded such writers and such readers must be to true merit, if they can persist in such opinions when they reflect that these men, these boasted men, were such scandals to their country and to their sex as to allow and assist their Queen in confining for the space of nineteen years, a woman who had every reason to expect assistance and protection: and at length allow Elizabeth to bring this amiable woman to an untimely, unmerited, and scandalous death. She was executed in the Great Hall at Fotheringay Castle (sacred place) on Wednesday, the eighth of February 1586 – to the everlasting reproach of Elizabeth, her ministers, and of England in General.

James I. Though this King had some faults, on the whole I cannot help liking him. He was a Protestant, and as I am myself partial to the Roman Catholic religion, it is with infinite regret that I am obliged to blame the

behaviour of any member of it: yet Truth, being I think very excusable in a Historian, I am necessitated to say that in this reign, the Roman Catholics of England did not behave like Gentlemen to the Protestants.

Charles I. The events of this monarch's reign are too numerous for my pen, and indeed the recital of any events is uninteresting to me; my principle reasons for undertaking the History of England were to abuse Elizabeth, though I am rather fearful of having fallen off in the part of my schemes, and to prove the innocence of the Queen of Scotland, which I flatter myself with having effectually done.

AGINCOURT SONG

Man 3 (*announcing*) And now, a song in praise of King Henry V's famous victory at Agincourt.

Singer

Our King went forth to Normandy
With grace and might and chivalry;
The God for him wrought marvellously,
Whereof England may call and cry:

Deo gracias,
Deo gracias Anglia,
Redde pro victoria.

The gracious God now save our King,
His people and all his well-willing,
Give him good life and good ending
That we with mirth may safely sing:

Deo gracias,
Deo gracias Anglia,
Redde pro victoria.

HENRY VII INVESTIGATES A POSSIBLE MARRIAGE

Man 2 (*announcing*) From a fifteenth-century state paper. King Henry VII writes a secret memorandum to his special ambassador concerning a proposed marriage between himself and the young Queen of Naples.

Man 3 Instructions given by the King's Highness to his trusty and well-beloved ambassador, showing how he shall order himself when he shall come to the presence of the old Queen of Naples and the young Queen, her daughter.

First, he shall note and mark the young Queen's discretion, wisdom, and gravity in her communication and answer in every behalf.

Man 1 At our coming to the said Queens we kneeled down before them and kissed their hands. First, the old Queen answered for herself as a noble, wise woman: and after the young Queen, with a sad and noble countenance, uttered and spake such words as pleased her, not having many words, but full steadfast, and with no high speech. The old Queen had the like words, and many more.

Man 3 Item, specially to note the stature of the said young Queen, and the features of her body.

Man 1 As to this article, the stature of the said young Queen we cannot perfectly understand nor know, for commonly when that we came unto her presence her grace was sitting on a pillow. And as to the features of her body, forasmuch as that at all times that we have seen her grace ever, she had a great mantle of cloth on her, in such wise after the manner of that country, that a man shall not lightly perceive anything except only the visage, wherefore we could not be in certain of any features of her body.

Man 3 Item, specially to mark the favour of the young Queen's visage, whether she be painted or not, and whether it be fat or lean, sharp or round, and whether her countenance be cheerful and amiable, frowning or melancholy, steadfast or light, or blushing in communication.

Man 1 As to this article, as far as that we perceive or know the said Queen is not painted, and the favour of her visage is amiable, and somewhat round and fat, not frowning, but steadfast, and with a demure, womanly, shamefaced countenance, and of few words. And we think that she uttered the fewer words by cause the Queen her mother was present, which had all the sayings.

Man 3 Item, that he endeavour him to speak with the said young Queen fasting, and to approach as near to her mouth as he honestly may, to the intent that he may feel the conditions of her breath.

Man 1 To this article: we could never come unto the speech of the said Queen fasting. Yet at such other times as we have spoken to the said Queen, we have approached as nigh unto her visage as that conveniently we might do, and we think verily by the cleanness of her complexion and of her mouth that the said Queen is like for to be of a sweet savour, and well aired.

Man 3 Item, to mark well the fashion of her nose.

Man 1 As to this article, the fashion of her nose is a little rising in the midward and a little coming or bowing towards the end. And she is much nosed like unto her mother.

Man 3 Item, to mark whether there appear any hair above her lips or not.

Man 1 As to this article, as far as we can perceive and see the said Queen hath no hair appearing about her lips or mouth.

Man 3 Item, to mark her breasts and paps, whether they be big or small.

Man 1 As to this article, the said Queen's breasts be somewhat great and fully, inasmuch as that they were trussed somewhat high, after the manner

of the country; the which causeth her grace for to seem much the fullyer, and her neck to be the shorter.

Man 3 Item, the King's said servant shall also diligently inquire for some cunning painter to the intent that the said painter may draw a picture in perfect similitude and likeness of the said young Queen.

Man 2 There is no answer made to this article, and his Majesty did not marry the lady.

SONG: THE KING'S HUNT

Woman (*announcing*) His son, Henry VIII had six wives, always seeking a male heir. In his spare time, he loved hunting ...

Man 2 (*announcing*) The King's Hunt.

Singer

The hunt is up, the hunt is up,
And it is well nigh day;
And Harry our King is gone hunting
To bring his deer to bay.

The east is bright with morning light,
And darkness it is fled,
The merry horn wakes up the morn
To leave his idle bed.

The horses snort to be at the sport,
The dogs are running free,
The woods rejoice at the merry noise
Of hay-taranta-tee-ree.

The sun is glad to see us clad
All in our lusty green,
And smiles in the sky as he rideth high
To see and to be seen.

Awake all men, I say again
Be merry as you may:
For Harry our King is gone hunting
To bring his deer to bay.

KING HENRY VIII AND ANNE BOLEYN

Man 1 (*announcing*) Two letters. The first by Henry VIII proposing to one of his wives. And then — some years later — a letter from her to him.

Man 2 On turning over in my mind the contents of your last letters, I have

put myself into great agony, not knowing how to interpret them, whether to my disadvantage, as you show in some places, or to my advantage, as I understand them in some others: beseeching you earnestly to let me know expressly your whole mind as to the love between us two.

It is absolutely necessary for me to obtain this answer, having been for above a whole year stricken with the dart of love, and not yet sure whether I shall fail of finding a place in your heart and affection; which last point has prevented me for some time past from calling you my mistress. If you please to do the office of a true loyal mistress and friend, and to give yourself body and heart to me, I promise you that I will take you for my only mistress, casting off all others besides you out of my thoughts and affections, and serve you only.

I beseech you to give me an entire answer to this my rude letter, and appoint some place where I may have it by word of mouth, and I will go thither with all my heart. Written by the hand of him who would willingly remain yours, wishing myself (especially of an evening) in my sweetheart's arms, whose pretty duckies I trust shortly to kiss.

Henricus Rex.

Woman Sir,

Your Grace's displeasure, and my imprisonment are things so strange unto me, as what to write or what to excuse I am altogether ignorant. For to speak a truth, never a prince had a wife more loyal in all duty and in all true affection, than you have ever found in Anne Boleyn. If then you found me worthy of such honour with your grace, let not any light fancy or bad council of my enemies withdraw your princely favour from me. Try me, good King; but let me have a lawful trial, and let not my sworn enemies sit as my accusers and judges. Yes, let me receive an open trial, for my truth shall fear no open shame.

But if you have already determined of me, and that not only my death, but an infamous slander must bring you the joying of your desired happiness, then I desire of God, that he will pardon your great sin herein, and that he will not call you to a straight account for your unprincely and cruel usage of me. For at his general judgement seat, I doubt not, whatsoever the world may think of me, where both you and myself must shortly appear my innocence shall be known.

If I have ever found favour in your sight, if ever the name of Anne Boleyn hath been pleasing in your ears, let me obtain this last request. With my earnest prayer to the Trinity to have your grace in his good keeping and to direct your grace in all his actions. From my doleful prison in the Tower, the sixth of May.

Your most loyal and ever faithful wife,

Anne Boleyn.

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