

THE LAST OF THE BARONS - VOLUME 7.

EDWARD BULWER-LYTTON*

BOOK VII.

THE POPULAR REBELLION.

CHAPTER I.

THE WHITE LION OF MARCH SHAKES HIS MANE.

"And what news?" asked Hastings, as he found himself amidst the king's squires; while yet was heard the laugh of the tymbesteres, and yet gliding through the trees might be seen the retreating form of Sibyll.

"My lord, the king needs you instantly. A courier has just arrived from the North. The Lords St. John, Rivers, De Fulke, and Scales are already with his highness."

"Where?"

"In the great council chamber."

To that memorable room [it was from this room that Hastings was hurried to execution, June 13, 1483] in the White Tower, in which the visitor, on entrance, is first reminded of the name and fate of Hastings, strode the unprophetic lord.

He found Edward not reclining on cushions and carpets, not womanlike in loose robes, not with his lazy smile upon his sleek beauty. The king had doffed his gown, and stood erect in the tight tunic, which gave in full perfection the splendid proportions of a frame unsurpassed in activity and strength. Before him, on the long table, lay two or three open letters, beside the dagger with which Edward had cut the silk that bound them. Around him gravely sat Lord Rivers, Anthony Woodville, Lord St. John, Raoul de Fulke, the young and valiant D'Eyncourt, and many other of the principal lords. Hastings saw at once that something of pith and moment had occurred; and by the fire in the king's eye, the dilation of his nostril, the cheerful and

*PDF created by pdfbooks.co.za

almost joyous pride of his mien and brow, the experienced courtier read the signs of WAR.

"Welcome, brave Hastings," said Edward, in a voice wholly changed from its wonted soft affectation,—loud, clear, and thrilling as it went through the marrow and heart of all who heard its stirring and trumpet accent,—"welcome now to the field as ever to the banquet! We have news from the North that bids us brace on the burgonet and buckle-to the brand,—a revolt that requires a king's arm to quell. In Yorkshire fifteen thousand men are in arms, under a leader they call Robin of Redesdale,—the pretext, a thrave of corn demanded by the Hospital of St. Leonard's, the true design that of treason to our realm. At the same time, we hear from our brother of Gloucester, now on the Border, that the Scotch have lifted the Lancaster Rose. There is peril if these two armies meet. No time to lose,—they are saddling our war-steeds; we hasten to the van of our royal force. We shall have warm work, my lords. But who is worthy of a throne that cannot guard it?"

"This is sad tidings indeed, sire," said Hastings, gravely.

"Sad! Say it not, Hastings! War is the chase of kings! Sir Raoul de Fulke, why lookest thou so brooding and sorrowful?"

"Sire, I but thought that had Earl Warwick been in England, this—"

"Ha!" interrupted Edward, haughtily and hastily, "and is Warwick the sun of heaven that no cloud can darken where his face may shine? The rebels shall need no foe, my realm no regent, while I, the heir of the Plantagenets, have the sword for one, the sceptre for the other. We depart this evening ere the sun be set."

"My liege," said the Lord St. John, gravely, "on what forces do you count to meet so formidable an array?"

"All England, Lord of St. John!"

"Alack! my liege, may you not deceive yourself! But in this crisis it is right that your leal and trusty subjects should speak out, and plainly. It seems that these insurgents clamour not against yourself, but against the queen's relations,—yes, my Lord Rivers, against you and your House,—and I fear me that the hearts of England are with them here."

"It is true, sire," put in Raoul de Fulke, boldly; "and if these—new men are to head your armies, the warriors of Towton will stand aloof,—Raoul de Fulke serves no Woodville's banner. Frown not, Lord de Scales! it is the griping avarice of you and yours that has brought this evil on the king. For you the commons have been pillaged; for you the daughters of peers have been forced into monstrous marriages,

at war with birth and with nature herself; for you, the princely Warwick, near to the throne in blood, and front and pillar of our time-honoured order of seigneur and of knight, has been thrust from our suzerain's favour. And if now ye are to march at the van of war, –you to be avengers of the strife of which ye are the cause, –I say that the soldiers will lack heart, and the provinces ye pass through will be the country of a foe!”

”Vain man!” began Anthony Woodville, when Hastings laid his hand on his arm, while Edward, amazed at this outburst from two of the supporters on whom he principally counted, had the prudence to suppress his resentment, and remained silent, –but with the aspect of one resolved to command obedience, when he once deemed it right to interfere.

”Hold, Sir Anthony!” said Hastings, who, the moment he found himself with men, woke to all the manly spirit and profound wisdom that had rendered his name illustrious –”hold, and let me have the word; my Lords St. John and De Fulke, your charges are more against me than against these gentlemen, for I am a new man, –a squire by birth, and proud to derive mine honours from the same origin as all true nobility, –I mean the grace of a noble liege and the happy fortune of a soldier's sword. It may be” (and here the artful favourite, the most beloved of the whole court, inclined himself meekly) –”it may be that I have not borne those honours so mildly as to disarm blame. In the war to be, let me atone. My liege, hear your servant: give me no command, –let me be a simple soldier, fighting by your side. My example who will not follow? –proud to ride but as a man of arms along the track which the sword of his sovereign shall cut through the ranks of battle! Not you, Lord de Scales, redoubtable and invincible with lance and axe; let us new men soothe envy by our deeds; and you, Lords St. John and De Fulke, you shall teach us how your fathers led warriors who did not fight more gallantly than we will. And when rebellion is at rest, when we meet again in our suzerain's hall, accuse us new men, if you can find us faulty, and we will answer you as we best may.”

This address, which could have come from no man with such effect as from Hastings, touched all present. And though the Woodvilles, father and son, saw in it much to gall their pride, and half believed it a snare for their humiliation, they made no opposition. Raoul de Fulke, ever generous as fiery, stretched forth his hand, and said, –

”Lord Hastings, you have spoken well. Be it as the king wills.”

”My lords,” returned Edward, gayly, ”my will is that ye be friends while a foe is in the field. Hasten, then, I beseech you, one and all, to raise your vassals, and join our standard at Fotheringay. I will find ye posts that shall content the bravest.”

The king made a sign to break up the conference, and dismissing even the Woodvilles, was left alone with Hastings.

"Thou hast served me at need, Will;" said the king. "But I shall remember" (and his eye flashed a tiger's fire) "the mouthing of those mock-pieces of the lords at Runnymede. I am no John, to be bearded by my vassals. Enough of them now. Think you Warwick can have abetted this revolt?"

"A revolt of peasants and yeomen! No, sire. If he did so, farewell forever to the love the barons bear him."

"Um! and yet Montagu, whom I dismissed ten days since to the Borders, hearing of disaffection, hath done nought to check it. But come what may, his must be a bold lance that shivers against a king's mail. And now one kiss of my lady Bessee, one cup of the bright canary, and then God and Saint George for the White Rose!"

CHAPTER II.

THE CAMP AT OLNEY.

It was some weeks after the citizens of London had seen their gallant king, at the head of such forces as were collected in haste in the metropolis, depart from their walls to the encounter of the rebels. Surprising and disastrous had been the tidings in the interim. At first, indeed, there were hopes that the insurrection had been put down by Montagu, who had defeated the troops of Robin of Redesdale, near the city of York, and was said to have beheaded their leader. But the spirit of discontent was only fanned by an adverse wind. The popular hatred to the Woodvilles was so great, that in proportion as Edward advanced to the scene of action, the country rose in arms, as Raoul de Fulke had predicted. Leaders of lordly birth now headed the rebellion; the sons of the Lords Latimer and Fitzhugh (near kinsmen of the House of Nevile) lent their names to the cause and Sir John Coniers, an experienced soldier, whose claims had been disregarded by Edward, gave to the insurgents the aid of a formidable capacity for war. In every mouth was the story of the Duchess of Bedford's witchcraft; and the waxen figure of the earl did more to rouse the people than perhaps the earl himself could have done in person. [See "Parliamentary Rolls," vi. 232, for the accusation of witchcraft, and the fabrication of a necromantic image of Lord Warwick, circulated against the Duchess of Bedford. She herself quotes and complains of them.] As yet, however, language of the insurgents was tempered with all personal respect to the king; they declared in their manifestoes that they desired only the banishment of the Woodvilles and the recall

of Warwick, whose name they used unscrupulously, and whom they declared they were on their way to meet. As soon as it was known that the kinsmen of the beloved earl were in the revolt, and naturally supposed that the earl himself must countenance the enterprise, the tumultuous camp swelled every hour, while knight after knight, veteran after veteran, abandoned the royal standard. The Lord d'Eyncourt (one of the few lords of the highest birth and greatest following over whom the Nevilles had no influence, and who bore the Woodvilles no grudge) had, in his way to Lincolnshire,—where his personal aid was necessary to rouse his vassals, infected by the common sedition,—been attacked and wounded by a body of marauders, and thus Edward's camp lost one of its greatest leaders. Fierce dispute broke out in the king's councils; and when the witch Jacquetta's practices against the earl travelled from the hostile into the royal camp, Raoul de Fulke, St. John, and others, seized with pious horror, positively declared they would throw down their arms and retire to their castles, unless the Woodvilles were dismissed from the camp and the Earl of Warwick was recalled to England. To the first demand the king was constrained to yield; with the second he temporized. He marched from Fotheringay to Newark; but the signs of disaffection, though they could not dismay him as a soldier, altered his plans as a captain of singular military acuteness; he fell back on Nottingham, and despatched, with his own hands, letters to Clarence, the Archbishop of York, and Warwick. To the last he wrote touchingly.

"We do not believe" (said the letter) "that ye should be of any such disposition towards us as the rumour here runneth, considering the trust and affection we bear you,—and cousin, we think ye shall be to us welcome." [Paston Letters, ccxcviii. (Knight's edition), vol. ii. p. 59. See also Lingard, vol. iii. p. 522 (4to edition), note 43, for the proper date to be assigned to Edward's letter to Warwick, etc.]

But ere these letters reached their destination, the crown seemed well-nigh lost. At Edgecote the Earl of Pembroke was defeated and slain, and five thousand royalists were left on the field. Earl Rivers and his son, Sir John Woodville, [This Sir John Woodville was the most obnoxious of the queen's brothers, and infamous for the avarice which had led him to marry the old Duchess of Norfolk, an act which according to the old laws of chivalry would have disabled him from entering the lists of knighthood, for the ancient code disqualified and degraded any knight who should marry any old woman for her money! Lord Rivers was the more odious to the people at the time of the insurrection because, in his capacity of treasurer, he had lately tampered with the coin and circulation.] who in obedience to the royal order had retired to the earl's country seat of Grafton, were taken prisoners, and beheaded by the vengeance of the insurgents. The same lamentable fate befell the Lord Stafford, on whom Edward relied as one of his most puissant leaders; and London heard with dismay that the king, with but a handful of troops, and those lukewarm and disaffected, was begirt on all sides by hostile and marching

thousands.

From Nottingham, however, Edward made good his retreat to a village called Olney, which chanced at that time to be partially fortified with a wall and a strong gate. Here the rebels pursued him; and Edward, hearing that Sir Anthony Woodville, who conceived that the fate of his father and brother cancelled all motive for longer absence from the contest, was busy in collecting a force in the neighbourhood of Coventry, while other assistance might be daily expected from London, strengthened the fortifications as well as the time would permit, and awaited the assault of the insurgents.

It was at this crisis, and while throughout all England reigned terror and commotion, that one day, towards the end of July, a small troop of horsemen were seen riding rapidly towards the neighbourhood of Olney. As the village came in view of the cavalcade, with the spire of its church and its gray stone gateway, so also they beheld, on the pastures that stretched around wide and far, a moving forest of pikes and plumes.

"Holy Mother!" said one of the foremost riders, "good the knight and strong man though Edward be, it were sharp work to cut his way from that hamlet through yonder fields! Brother, we were more welcome, had we brought more bills and bows at our backs!"

"Archbishop," answered the stately personage thus addressed, "we bring what alone raises armies and disbands them,—a NAME that a People honours! From the moment the White Bear is seen on yonder archway side by side with the king's banner, that army will vanish as smoke before the wind."

"Heaven grant it, Warwick!" said the Duke of Clarence; for though Edward hath used us sorely, it chafes me as Plantagenet and as prince to see how peasants and varlets can hem round a king."

"Peasants and varlets are pawns in the chessboard, cousin George," said the prelate; "and knight and bishop find them mighty useful when pushing forward to an attack. Now knight and bishop appear themselves and take up the game. Warwick," added the prelate, in a whisper, unheard by Clarence, "forget not, while appeasing rebellion, that the king is in your power."

"For shame, George! I think not now of the unkind king; I think only of the brave boy I dandled on my knee, and whose sword I girded on at Towton. How his lion heart must chafe, condemned to see a foe whom his skill as captain tells him it were madness to confront!"

"Ay, Richard Nevile, ay," said the prelate, with a slight sneer, "play the Paladin, and become the dupe; release the prince, and betray the people!"

"No! I can be true to both. Tush! brother, your craft is slight to the plain wisdom of bold honesty. You slacken your steeds, sirs; on! on! see the march of the rebels! On, for an Edward and a Warwick!" and, spurring to full speed, the little company arrived at the gates. The loud bugle of the new comers was answered by the cheerful note of the joyous warder, while dark, slow, and solemn over the meadows crept on the mighty crowd of the rebel army.

"We have forestalled the insurgents!" said the earl, throwing himself from his black steed. "Marmaduke Nevile, advance our banner; heralds, announce the Duke of Clarence, the Archbishop of York, and the Earl of Salisbury and Warwick."

Through the anxious town, along the crowded walls and housetops, into the hall of an old mansion (that then adjoined the church), where the king, in complete armour, stood at bay, with stubborn and disaffected officers, rolled the thunder cry, "A Warwick! a Warwick! all saved! a Warwick!"

Sharply, as he heard the clamour, the king turned upon his startled council. "Lords and captains!" said he, with that inexpressible majesty which he could command in his happier hours, "God and our Patron Saint have sent us at least one man who has the heart to fight fifty times the odds of yon miscreant rabble, by his king's side, and for the honour of loyalty and knighthood!"

"And who says, sire," answered Raoul de Fulke, "that we, your lords and captains, would not risk blood and life for our king and our knighthood in a just cause? But we will not butcher our countrymen for echoing our own complaint, and praying your Grace that a grasping and ambitious family which you have raised to power may no longer degrade your nobles and oppress your commons. We shall see if the Earl of Warwick blame us or approve."

"And I answer," said Edward, loftily, "that whether Warwick approve or blame, come as friend or foe, I will sooner ride alone through yonder archway, and carve out a soldier's grave amongst the ranks of rebellious war, than be the puppet of my subjects, and serve their will by compulsion. Free am I—free ever will I be, while the crown of the Plantagenet is mine, to raise those whom I love, to defy the threats of those sworn to obey me. And were I but Earl of March, instead of king of England, this hall should have swum with the blood of those who have insulted the friends of my youth, the wife of my bosom. Off, Hastings!—I need no mediator with my servants. Nor here, nor anywhere in broad England, have I my equal, and the king forgives or scorns—construe it as ye will, my lords—what the simple gentleman would avenge."

It were in vain to describe the sensation that this speech produced.

There is ever something in courage and in will that awes numbers, though brave themselves. And what with the unquestioned valour of Edward; what with the effect of his splendid person, towering above all present by the head, and moving lightly, with each impulse, through the mass of a mail that few there could have borne unsinking, this assertion of absolute power in the midst of mutiny—an army marching to the gates—imposed an unwilling reverence and sullen silence mixed with anger, that, while it chafed, admired. They who in peace had despised the voluptuous monarch, feasting in his palace, and reclining on the lap of harlot-beauty, felt that in war all Mars seemed living in his person. Then, indeed, he was a king; and had the foe, now darkening the landscape, been the noblest chivalry of France, not a man there but had died for a smile from that haughty lip. But the barons were knit heart in heart with the popular outbreak, and to put down the revolt seemed to them but to raise the Woodvilles. The silence was still unbroken, save where the persuasive whisper of Lord Hastings might be faintly heard in remonstrance with the more powerful or the more stubborn of the chiefs, when the tread of steps resounded without, and, unarmed, bareheaded, the only form in Christendom grander and statelier than the king's strode into the hall.

Edward, as yet unaware what course Warwick would pursue, and half doubtful whether a revolt that had borrowed his name and was led by his kinsmen might not originate in his consent, surrounded by those to whom the earl was especially dear, and aware that if Warwick were against him all was lost, still relaxed not the dignity of his mien; and leaning on his large two-handed sword, with such inward resolves as brave kings and gallant gentlemen form, if the worst should befall, he watched the majestic strides of his great kinsman, and said, as the earl approached, and the mutinous captains louted low,—

”Cousin, you are welcome! for truly do I know that when you have aught whereof to complain, you take not the moment of danger and disaster. And whatever has chanced to alienate your heart from me, the sound of the rebel's trumpet chases all difference, and marries your faith to mine.”

”Oh, Edward, my king, why did you so misjudge me in the prosperous hour!” said Warwick, simply, but with affecting earnestness: ”since in the adverse hour you arede me well?”

As he spoke, he bowed his head, and, bending his knee, kissed the hand held out to him.

Edward's face grew radiant, and, raising the earl, he glanced proudly at the barons, who stood round, surprised and mute.

”Yes, my lords and sirs, see,—it is not the Earl of Warwick, next to our royal brethren the nearest subject to the throne, who would desert me in the day of peril!”

"Nor do we, sire," retorted Raoul de Fulke; "you wrong us before our mighty comrade if you so misthink us. We will fight for the king, but not for the queen's kindred; and this alone brings on us your anger."

"The gates shall be opened to ye. Go! Warwick and I are men enough for the rabble yonder."

The earl's quick eye and profound experience of his time saw at once the dissension and its causes. Nor, however generous, was he willing to forego the present occasion for permanently destroying an influence which he knew hostile to himself and hurtful to the realm. His was not the generosity of a boy, but of a statesman. Accordingly, as Raoul de Fulke ceased, he took up the word.

"My liege, we have yet an hour good ere the foe can reach the gates. Your brother and mine accompany me. See, they enter! Please you, a few minutes to confer with them; and suffer me, meanwhile, to reason with these noble captains."

Edward paused; but before the open brow of the earl fled whatever suspicion might have crossed the king's mind.

"Be it so, cousin; but remember this,—to councillors who can menace me with desertion at such an hour, I concede nothing."

Turning hastily away, he met Clarence and the prelate midway in the hall, threw his arm caressingly over his brother's shoulder, and, taking the archbishop by the hand, walked with them towards the battlements.

"Well, my friends," said Warwick, "and what would you of the king?"

"The dismissal of all the Woodvilles, except the queen; the revocation of the grants and land accorded to them, to the despoiling the ancient noble; and, but for your presence, we had demanded your recall."

"And, failing these, what your resolve?"

"To depart, and leave Edward to his fate. These granted, we doubt little but that the insurgents will disband. These not granted, we but waste our lives against a multitude whose cause we must approve."

"The cause! But ye know not the real cause," answered Warwick. "I know it; for the sons of the North are familiar to me, and their rising hath deeper meaning than ye deem. What! have they not decoyed to their head my kinsmen, the heirs of Latimer and Fitzhugh, and bold Coniers, whose steel calque should have circled a wiser brain? Have they not taken my name as their battle-cry? And do ye think this

falsehood veils nothing but the simple truth of just complaint?"

"Was their rising, then," asked St. John, in evident surprise, "wholly unauthorized by you?"

"So help me Heaven! if I would resort to arms to redress a wrong, think not that I myself would be absent from the field! No, my lords, friends, and captains, time presses; a few words must suffice to explain what as yet may be dark to you. I have letters from Montagu and others, which reached me the same day as the king's, and which clear up the purpose of our misguided countrymen. Ye know well that ever in England, but especially since the reign of Edward III., strange, wild notions of some kind of liberty other than that we enjoy have floated loose through the land. Among the commons, a half-conscious recollection that the nobles are a different race from themselves feeds a secret rancour and dislike, which, at any fair occasion for riot, shows itself bitter and ruthless,—as in the outbreak of Cade and others. And if the harvest fail, or a tax gall, there are never wanting men to turn the popular distress to the ends of private ambition or state design. Such a man has been the true head and front of this commotion."

"Speak you of Robin of Redesdale, now dead?" asked one of the captains.

"He is not dead. [The fate of Robin of Redesdale has been as obscure as most of the incidents in this most perplexed part of English history. While some of the chroniclers finish his career according to the report mentioned in the text, Fabyan not only more charitably prolongs his life, but rewards him with the king's pardon; and according to the annals of his ancient and distinguished family (who will pardon, we trust, a license with one of their ancestry equally allowed by history and romance), as referred to in Wotton's "English Baronetage" (Art. "Hilyard"), and which probably rests upon the authority of the life of Richard III., in Stowe's "Annals," he is represented as still living in the reign of that king. But the whole account of this famous demagogue in Wotton is, it must be owned, full of historical mistakes.] Montagu informs me that the report was false. He was defeated off York, and retired for some days into the woods; but it is he who has enticed the sons of Latimer and Fitzhugh into the revolt, and resigned his own command to the martial cunning of Sir John Coniers. This Robin of Redesdale is no common man. He hath had a clerky education, he hath travelled among the Free Towns of Italy, he hath deep purpose in all he doth; and among his projects is the destruction of the nobles here, as it was whilome effected in Florence, the depriving us of all offices and posts, with other changes, wild to think of and long to name."

"And we would have suffered this man to triumph!" exclaimed De Fulke: "we have been to blame."

"Under fair pretence he has gathered numbers, and now wields an army. I have reason to know that, had he succeeded in estranging ye from Edward, and had the king fallen, dead or alive, into his hands, his object would have been to restore Henry of Windsor, but on conditions that would have left king and baron little more than pageants in the state. I knew this man years ago. I have watched him since; and, strange though it may seem to you, he hath much in him that I admire as a subject and should fear were I a king. Brief, thus runs my counsel: For our sake and the realm's safety, we must see this armed multitude disbanded; that done, we must see the grievances they with truth complain of fairly redressed. Think not, my lords, I avenge my own wrongs alone, when I go with you in your resolve to banish from the king's councils the baleful influence of the queen's kin. Till that be compassed, no peace for England. As a leprosy, their avarice crawls over the nobler parts of the state, and devours while it sullies. Leave this to me; and, though we will redress ourselves, let us now assist our king!"

With one voice the unruly officers clamoured their assent to all the earl urged, and expressed their readiness to sally at once from the gates, and attack the rebels.

"But," observed an old veteran, "what are we amongst so many? Here a handful—there an army!"

"Fear not, reverend sir," answered Warwick, with an assured smile; "is not this army in part gathered from my own province of Yorkshire? Is it not formed of men who have eaten of my bread and drunk of my cup? Let me see the man who will discharge one arrow at the walls which contain Richard Nevile of Warwick. Now each to your posts,—I to the king."

Like the pouring of new blood into a decrepit body seemed the arrival, at that feeble garrison, of the Earl of Warwick. From despair into the certainty of triumph leaped every heart. Already at the sight of his banner floating by the side of Edward's, the gunner had repaired to his bombard, the archer had taken up his bow; the village itself, before disaffected, poured all its scanty population—women, and age, and children—to the walls. And when the earl joined the king upon the ramparts, he found that able general sanguine and elated, and pointing out to Clarence the natural defences of the place. Meanwhile, the rebels, no doubt apprised by their scouts of the new aid, had already halted in their march, and the dark swarm might be seen indistinctly undulating, as bees ere they settle, amidst the verdure of the plain.

"Well, cousin," said the king, "have ye brought these Hotspurs to their allegiance?"

"Sire, yes," said Warwick, gravely; "but we have here no force to resist yon army."

"Bring you not succours?" said the king, astonished. "You must have passed through London. Have you left no troops upon the road?"

"I had no time, sire; and London is well-nigh palsied with dismay. Had I waited to collect troops, I might have found a king's head blackening over those gates."

"Well," returned Edward, carelessly, "few or many, one gentleman is more worth than a hundred varlets. 'We are eno' for glory,' as Henry said at Agincourt."

"No, sire; you are too skilful and too wise to believe your boast. These men we cannot conquer,—we must disperse them."

"By what spell?"

"By their king's word to redress their complaints."

"And banish my queen?"

"Heaven forbid that man should part those whom God has joined," returned Warwick. "Not my lady, your queen, but my lady's kindred."

"Rivers is dead, and gallant John," said Edward, sadly; "is not that enough for revenge?"

"It is not revenge that we require, but pledges for the land's safety," answered Warwick. "And to be plain, without such a promise these walls may be your tomb."

Edward walked apart, strongly debating within himself. In his character were great contrasts: no man was more frank in common, no man more false when it suited; no man had more levity in wanton love, or more firm affection for those he once thoroughly took to his heart. He was the reverse of grateful for service yielded, yet he was warm in protecting those on whom service was conferred. He was resolved not to give up the Woodvilles, and after a short self-commune, he equally determined not to risk his crown and life by persevering in resistance to the demand for their downfall. Inly obstinate, outwardly yielding, he concealed his falsehood with his usual soldierly grace.

"Warwick," he said, returning to the earl's side, "you cannot advise me to what is misbeseeming, and therefore in this strait I resign my conduct to your hands. I will not unsay to yon mutinous gentlemen what I have already said; but what you judge it right to promise in my name to them or to the insurgents, I will not suppose that mine honour will refuse to concede. But go not hence, O noblest friend that ever

stood by a king's throne!—go not hence till the grasp of your hand assures me that all past unkindness is gone and buried; yea, and by this hand, and while its pressure is warm in mine, bear not too hard on thy king's affection for his lady's kindred.”

”Sire,” said Warwick, though his generous nature well-nigh melted into weakness, and it was with an effort that he adhered to his purpose,—”sire, if dismissed for a while, they shall not be degraded. And if it be, on consideration, wise to recall from the family of Woodville your grants of lands and lordships, take from your Warwick—who, rich in his king's love, hath eno' to spare—take the double of what you would recall. Oh, be frank with me, be true, be steadfast, Edward, and dispose of my lands, whenever you would content a favourite.”

”Not to impoverish thee, my Warwick,” answered Edward, smiling, ”did I call thee to my aid; for the rest, my revenues as Duke of York are at least mine to bestow. Go now to the hostile camp,—go as sole minister and captain-general of this realm; go with all powers and honours a king can give; and when these districts are at peace, depart to our Welsh provinces, as chief justiciary of that principality. Pembroke's mournful death leaves that high post in my gift. It cannot add to your greatness, but it proves to England your sovereign's trust.”

”And while that trust is given,” said Warwick, with tears in his eyes, ”may Heaven strengthen my arm in battle, and sharpen my brain in council! But I play the laggard. The sun wanes westward; it should not go down while a hostile army menaces the son of Richard of York.”

The earl rode rapidly away, reached the broad space where his followers still stood, dismounted, but beside their steeds,—

”Trumpets advance, pursuivants and heralds go before! Marmaduke, mount! The rest I need not. We ride to the insurgent camp.”

CHAPTER III.

THE CAMP OF THE REBELS.

The rebels had halted about a mile from the town, and were already pitching their tents for the night. It was a tumultuous, clamorous, but not altogether undisciplined array; for Coniers was a leader of singular practice in reducing men into the machinery of war, and where his skill might have failed, the prodigious influence and energy of Robin of Redesdale ruled the passions and united the discordant elements. This last was, indeed, in much worthy the respect in which

Warwick held his name. In times more ripe for him, he would have been a mighty demagogue and a successful regenerator. His birth was known but to few; his education and imperious temper made him vulgarly supposed of noble origin; but had he descended from a king's loins, Robert Hilyard had still been the son of the Saxon people. Warwick overrated, perhaps, Hilyard's wisdom; for, despite his Italian experience, his ideas were far from embracing any clear and definite system of democracy. He had much of the frantic levelism and jacquerie of his age and land, and could probably not have explained to himself all the changes he desired to effect; but, coupled with his hatred to the nobles, his deep and passionate sympathy with the poor, his heated and fanatical chimeras of a republic, half-political and half-religious, he had, with no uncommon inconsistency, linked the cause of a dethroned king. For as the Covenanters linked with the Stuarts against the succeeding and more tolerant dynasty, never relinquishing their own anti-monarchic theories; as in our time, the extreme party on the popular side has leagued with the extreme of the aristocratic, in order to crush the medium policy, as a common foe,—so the bold leveller united with his zeal for Margaret the very cause which the House of Lancaster might be supposed the least to favour. He expected to obtain from a sovereign dependent upon a popular reaction for restoration, great popular privileges. And as the Church had deserted the Red Rose for the White, he sought to persuade many of the Lollards, ever ready to show their discontent, that Margaret (in revenge on the hierarchy) would extend the protection they had never found in the previous sway of her husband and Henry V. Possessed of extraordinary craft, and even cunning in secular intrigues, energetic, versatile, bold, indefatigable, and, above all, marvellously gifted with the arts that inflame, stir up, and guide the physical force of masses, Robert Hilyard had been, indeed, the soul and life of the present revolt; and his prudent moderation in resigning the nominal command to those whose military skill and high birth raised a riot into the dignity of rebellion, had given that consistency and method to the rising which popular movements never attain without aristocratic aid.

In the principal tent of the encampment the leaders of the insurrection were assembled.

There was Sir John Coniers, who had married one of the Nevilles, the daughter of Fauconberg, Lord High Admiral, but who had profited little by this remote connection with Warwick; for, with all his merit, he was a greedy, grasping man, and he had angered the hot earl in pressing his claims too imperiously. This renowned knight was a tall, gaunt man, whose iron frame sixty winters had not bowed. There were the young heirs of Latimer and Fitzhugh, in gay gilded armour and scarlet mantelines; and there, in a plain cuirass, trebly welded, and of immense weight, but the lower limbs left free and unincumbered in thick leathern hose, stood Robin of Redesdale. Other captains there were, whom different motives had led to the common confederacy. There

might be seen the secret Lollard, hating either Rose, stern and sour, and acknowledging no leader but Hilyard, whom he knew as a Lollard's son; there might be seen the ruined spendthrift, discontented with fortune, and regarding civil war as the cast of a die,—death for the forfeiture, lordships for the gain; there, the sturdy Saxon squire, oppressed by the little baron of his province, and rather hopeful to abase a neighbour than dethrone a king of whom he knew little, and for whom he cared still less; and there, chiefly distinguished from the rest by grizzled beard, upturned mustache, erect mien, and grave, not thoughtful aspect, were the men of a former period,—the soldiers who had fought against the Maid of Are,—now without place, station, or hope in peaceful times, already half robbers by profession, and decoyed to any standard that promised action, pay, or plunder.

The conclave were in high and warm debate.

"If this be true," said Coniers, who stood at the head of the table, his helmet, axe, truncheon, and a rough map of the walls of Olney before him—"if this be true, if our scouts are not deceived, if the Earl of Warwick is in the village, and if his banner float beside King Edward's,—I say, bluntly, as soldiers should speak, that I have been deceived and juggled!"

"And by whom, Sir Knight and cousin?" said the heir of Fitzhugh, reddening.

"By you, young kinsman, and this hot-mouthed dare-devil, Robin of Redesdale! Ye assured me, both, that the earl approved the rising; that he permitted the levying yon troops in his name; that he knew well the time was come to declare against the Woodvilles, and that no sooner was an army mustered than he would place himself at its head; and I say, if this be not true, you have brought these gray hairs into dishonour!"

"And what, Sir John Coniers," exclaimed Robin, rudely, "what honour had your gray hairs till the steel cap covered them? What honour, I say, under lewd Edward and his lusty revellers? You were thrown aside, like a broken scythe, Sir John Coniers! You were forsaken in your rust! Warwick himself, your wife's great kinsman, could do nought in your favour! You stand now, leader of thousands, lord of life and death, master of Edward and the throne! We have done this for you, and you reproach us!"

"And," began the heir of Fitzhugh, encouraged by the boldness of Hilyard, "we had all reason to believe my noble uncle, the Earl of Warwick, approved our emprise. When this brave fellow (pointing to Robin) came to inform me that, with his own eyes, he had seen the waxen effigies of my great kinsman, the hellish misdeed of the queen's witch-dam, I repaired to my Lord Montagu; and though that prudent courtier refused to declare openly, he let me see that war with the

Woodvilles was not unwelcome to him.”

”Yet this same Montagu,” observed one of the ringleaders, ”when Hilyard was well-nigh at the gates of York, sallied out and defeated him, sans ruth, sans ceremony.”

”Yes, but he spared my life, and beheaded the dead body of poor Hugh Withers in my stead: for John Nevile is cunning, and he picks his nuts from the brennen without lesing his own paw. It was not the hour for him to join us, so he beat us civilly, and with discretion. But what hath he done since? He stands aloof while our army swells, while the bull of the Neviles and the ragged staff of the earl are the ensigns of our war, and while Edward gnaws out his fierce heart in yon walls of Olney. How say ye, then, that Warwick, even if now in person with the king, is in heart against us? Nay, he may have entered Olney but to capture the tyrant.”

”If so,” said Coniers, ”all is as it should be: but if Earl Warwick, who, though he hath treated me ill, is a stour carle, and to be feared if not loved, join the king, I break this wand, and ye will seek out another captain.”

”And a captain shall be found!” cried Robin. ”Are we so poor in valour, that when one man leaves us we are headless and undone? What if Warwick so betray us and himself,—he brings no forces. And never, by God’s blessing, should we separate till we have redressed the wrongs of our countrymen!”

”Good!” said the Saxon squire, winking, and looking wise,—”not till we have burned to the ground the Baron of Bullstock’s castle!”

”Not,” said a Lollard, sternly, ”till we have shortened the purple gown of the churchman; not till abbot and bishop have felt on their backs the whip wherewith they have scourged the godly believer and the humble saint.”

”Not,” added Robin, ”till we have assured bread to the poor man, and the filling of the flesh-pot, and the law to the weak, and the scaffold to the evil-doer.”

”All this is mighty well,” said, bluntly, Sir Geoffrey Gates, the leader of the mercenaries, a skilful soldier, but a predatory and lawless bravo; ”but who is to pay me and my tall fellows?”

At this pertinent question, there was a general hush of displeasure and disgust.

”For, look you, my masters,” continued Sir Geoffrey, ”as long as I and my comrades here believed that the rich earl, who hath half England for his provant, was at the head or the tail of this matter, we were

contented to wait a while; but devil a groat hath yet gone into my gipsire; and as for pillage, what is a farm or a homestead? an' it were a church or a castle there might be pickings."

"There is much plate of silver, and a sack or so of marks and royals, in the stronghold of the Baron of Bullstock," quoth the Saxon squire, doggedly hounding on to his revenge.

"You see, my friends," said Coniers, with a smile, and shrugging his shoulders, "that men cannot gird a kingdom with ropes of sand. Suppose we conquer and take captive—nay, or slay—King Edward, what then?"

"The Duke of Clarence, male heir to the throne," said the heir of Latimer, "is Lord Warwick's son-in-law, and therefore akin to you, Sir John."

"That is true," observed Coniers, musingly.

"Not ill thought of, sir," said Sir Geoffrey Gates; "and my advice is to proclaim Clarence king and Warwick lord protector. We have some chance of the angels then."

"Besides," said the heir of Fitzhugh, "our purpose once made clear, it will be hard either for Warwick or Clarence to go against us,—harder still for the country not to believe them with us. Bold measures are our wisest councillors."

"Um!" said the Lollard, "Lord Warwick is a good man, and has never, though his brother be a bishop, abetted the Church tyrannies. But as for George of Clarence—"

"As for Clarence," said Hilyard, who saw with dismay and alarm that the rebellion he designed to turn at the fitting hour to the service of Lancaster, might now only help to shift from one shoulder to the other the hated dynasty of York—"as for Clarence, he hath Edward's vices without his manhood." He paused, and seeing that the crisis had ripened the hour for declaring himself, his bold temper pushed at once to its object. "No!" he continued, folding his arms, raising his head, and comprehending the whole council in his keen and steady gaze,—no! lords and gentlemen, since speak I must in this emergency, hear me calmly. Nothing has prospered in England since we abandoned our lawful king. If we rid ourselves of Edward, let it not be to sink from a harlot-monger to a drunkard. In the Tower pines our true lord, already honoured as a saint. Hear me, I say,—hear me out! On the frontiers an army that keeps Gloucester at bay hath declared for Henry and Margaret. Let us, after seizing Olney, march thither at once, and unite forces. Margaret is already prepared to embark for England. I have friends in London who will attack the Tower, and deliver Henry. To you, Sir John Coniers, in the queen's name, I promise an earldom

and the garter; to you, the heirs of Latimer and Fitzhugh, the high posts that beseem your birth; to all of you, knights and captains, just share and allotment in the confiscated lands of the Woodvilles and the Yorkists; to you, brethren," and addressing the Lollards, his voice softened into a meaning accent that, compelled to worship in secret, they yet understood, "shelter from your foes and mild laws; and to you, brave soldiers, that pay which a king's coffers alone can supply. Wherefore I say, down with all subject-banners! up with the Red Rose and the Antelope, and long live Henry the Sixth!"

This address, however subtle in its adaptation to the various passions of those assembled, however aided by the voice, spirit, and energy of the speaker, took too much by surprise those present to produce at once its effect.

The Lollards remembered the fires lighted for their martyrs by the House of Lancaster; and though blindly confident in Hilyard, were not yet prepared to respond to his call. The young heir of Fitzhugh, who had, in truth, but taken arms to avenge the supposed wrongs of Warwick, whom he idolized, saw no object gained in the rise of Warwick's enemy, Queen Margaret. The mercenaries called to mind the woful state of Henry's exchequer in the former time. The Saxon squire muttered to himself, "And what the devil is to become of the castle of Bullstock?" But Sir Henry Nevile (Lord Latimer's son), who belonged to that branch of his House which had espoused the Lancaster cause, and who was in the secret councils of Hilyard, caught up the cry, and said, "Hilyard doth not exceed his powers; and he who strikes for the Red Rose shall carve out his own lordship from the manors of every Yorkist that he slays." Sir John Coniers hesitated: poor, long neglected, ever enterprising and ambitious, he was dazzled by the proffered bribe; but age is slow to act, and he expressed himself with the measured caution of gray hairs.

"A king's name," said he, "is a tower of strength, especially when marching against a king; but this is a matter for general assent and grave forethought."

Before any other (for ideas did not rush at once to words in those days) found his tongue, a mighty uproar was heard without. It did not syllable itself into distinct sound; it uttered no name; it was such a shout as numbers alone could raise; and to such a shout would some martial leader have rejoiced to charge to battle, so full of depth and fervour, and enthusiasm and good heart, it seemed, leaping from rank to rank, from breast to breast, from earth to heaven. With one accord the startled captains made to the entrance of the tent, and there they saw, in the broad space before them, inclosed by the tents which were grouped in a wide semicircle,—for the mass of the hardy rebel army slept in the open air, and the tents were but for leaders,—they saw, we say, in that broad space, a multitude kneeling, and in the midst, upon his good steed Saladin, bending graciously down, the martial

countenance, the lofty stature, of the Earl of Warwick. Those among the captains who knew him not personally recognized him by the popular description,—by the black war-horse, whose legendary fame had been hymned by every minstrel; by the sensation his appearance had created; by the armourial insignia of his heralds, grouped behind him, and whose gorgeous tabards blazed with his cognizance and quarterings in azure, or, and argent. The sun was slowly setting, and poured its rays upon the bare head of the mighty noble, gathering round it in the hazy atmosphere like a halo. The homage of the crowd to that single form, unarmed, and scarce attended, struck a death-knell to the hopes of Hilyard,—struck awe into all his comrades! The presence of that one man seemed to ravish from them, as by magic, a vast army; power, and state, and command left them suddenly to be absorbed in HIM! Captains, they were troopless,—the wielder of men's hearts was amongst them, and from his barb assumed reign, as from his throne!

"Gads my life!" said Coniers, turning to his comrades, "we have now, with a truth, the earl amongst us; but unless he come to lead us on to Olney, I would as lief see the king's provost at my shoulder."

"The crowd separates, he rides this way!" said the heir of Fitzhugh. "Shall we go forth to meet him?"

"Not so!" exclaimed Hilyard, "we are still the leaders of this army; let him find us deliberating on the siege of Olney!"

"Right!" said Coniers; "and if there come dispute, let not the rabble hear it."

The captains re-entered the tent, and in grave silence awaited the earl's coming; nor was this suspense long. Warwick, leaving the multitude in the rear, and taking only one of the subaltern officers in the rebel camp as his guide and usher, arrived at the tent, and was admitted into the council.

The captains, Hilyard alone excepted, bowed with great reverence as the earl entered.

"Welcome, puissant sir and illustrious kinsman!" said Coniers, who had decided on the line to be adopted; "you are come at last to take the command of the troops raised in your name, and into your hands I resign this truncheon."

"I accept it, Sir John Coniers," answered Warwick, taking the place of dignity; "and since you thus constitute me your commander, I proceed at once to my stern duties. How happens it, knights and gentlemen, that in my absence ye have dared to make my name the pretext of rebellion? Speak thou, my sister's son!"

"Cousin and lord," said the heir of Fitzhugh, reddening but not

abashed, "we could not believe but what you would smile on those who have risen to assert your wrongs and defend your life." And he then briefly related the tale of the Duchess of Bedford's waxen effigies, and pointed to Hilyard as the eye-witness.

"And," began Sir Henry Nevile, "you, meanwhile, were banished, seemingly, from the king's court; the dissensions between you and Edward sufficiently the land's talk, the king's vices the land's shame!

"Nor did we act without at least revealing our intentions to my uncle and your brother, the Lord Montagu," added the heir of Fitzhugh.

"Meanwhile," said Robin of Redesdale, "the commons were oppressed, the people discontented, the Woodvilles plundering its, and the king wasting our substance on concubines and minions. We have had cause eno' for our rising!" The earl listened to each speaker in stern silence.

"For all this," he said at last, "you have, without my leave or sanction, levied armed men in my name, and would have made Richard Nevile seem to Europe a traitor, without the courage to be a rebel! Your lives are in my power, and those lives are forfeit to the laws."

"If we have incurred your disfavour from our over-zeal for you," said the son of Lord Fitzhugh, touchingly, "take our lives, for they are of little worth." And the young nobleman unbuckled his sword, and laid it on the table.

"But," resumed Warwick, not seeming to heed his nephew's humility, "I, who have ever loved the people of England, and before king and parliament have ever pleaded their cause,—I, as captain-general and first officer of these realms, here declare, that whatever motives of ambition or interest may have misled men of mark and birth, I believe that the commons at least never rise in arms without some excuse for their error. Speak out then, you, their leaders; and, putting aside all that relates to me as the one man, say what are the grievances of which the many would complain."

And now there was silence, for the knights and gentlemen knew little of the complaints of the populace; the Lollards did not dare to expose their oppressed faith, and the squires and franklins were too uneducated to detail the grievances they had felt. But then the immense superiority of the man of the people at once asserted itself; and Hilyard, whose eye the earl had hitherto shunned, lifted his deep voice. With clear precision, in indignant but not declamatory eloquence, he painted the disorders of the time,—the insolent exactions of the hospitals and abbeys, the lawless violence of each petty baron, the weakness of the royal authority in restraining oppression, its terrible power in aiding the oppressor. He

accumulated instance on instance of misrule; he showed the insecurity of property, the adulteration of the coin, the burden of the imposts; he spoke of wives and maidens violated, of industry defrauded, of houses forcibly entered, of barns and granaries despoiled, of the impunity of all offenders, if high-born, of the punishment of all complaints, if poor and lowly. "Tell us not," he said, "that this is the necessary evil of the times, the hard condition of mankind. It was otherwise, Lord Warwick, when Edward first swayed; for you then made yourself dear to the people by your justice. Still men talk, hereabouts, of the golden rule of Earl Warwick; but since you have been, though great in office, powerless in deed, absent in Calais, or idle at Middleham, England hath been but the plaything of the Woodvilles, and the king's ears have been stuffed with flattery as with wool. And," continued Hilyard, warming with his subject, and, to the surprise of the Lollards, entering boldly on their master-grievance—"and this is not all. When Edward ascended the throne, there was, if not justice, at least repose, for the persecuted believers who hold that God's word was given to man to read, study, and digest into godly deeds. I speak plainly. I speak of that faith which your great father Salisbury and many of the House of York were believed to favour,—that faith which is called the Lollard, and the oppression of which, more than aught else, lost to Lancaster the hearts of England. But of late, the Church, assuming the power it ever grasps the most under the most licentious kings (for the sinner prince hath ever the tyrant priest!), hath put in vigour old laws for the wronging man's thought and conscience; [The Lollards had greatly contributed to seat Edward on the throne; and much of the subsequent discontent, no doubt, arose from their disappointment, when, as Sharon Turner well expresses it, "his indolence allied him to the Church," and he became "hereticorum severissimus hostis."—CROYL., p. 564.] and we sit at our doors under the shade, not of the vine-tree, but the gibbet. For all these things we have drawn the sword; and if now, you, taking advantage of the love borne to you by the sons of England, push that sword back into the sheath, you, generous, great, and princely though you be, well deserve the fate that I foresee and can foretell. Yes!" cried the speaker, extending his arms, and gazing fixedly on the proud face of the earl, which was not inexpressive of emotion—"yes! I see you, having deserted the people, deserted by them also in your need; I see you, the dupe of an ungrateful king, stripped of power and honour, an exile and an outlaw; and when you call in vain upon the people, in whose hearts you now reign, remember, O fallen star, son of the morning! that in the hour of their might you struck down the people's right arm, and paralyzed their power. And now, if you will, let your friends and England's champions glut the scaffolds of your woman-king!"

He ceased. A murmur went round the conclave; every breast breathed hard, every eye turned to Warwick. That mighty statesman mastered the effect which the thrilling voice of the popular pleader produced on him; but at that moment he had need of all his frank and honourable

loyalty to remind him that he was there but to fulfil a promise and discharge a trust,—that he was the king’s delegate, not the king’s judge.

”You have spoken, bold men,” said he, ”as, in an hour when the rights of princes are weighed in one scale, the subject’s sword in the other, I, were I king, would wish free men to speak. And now you, Robert Hilyard, and you, gentlemen, hear me, as envoy to King Edward IV. To all of you I promise complete amnesty and entire pardon. His highness believes you misled, not criminal, and your late deeds will not be remembered in your future services. So much for the leaders. Now for the commons. My liege the king is pleased to recall me to the high powers I once exercised, and to increase rather than to lessen them. In his name, I pledge myself to full and strict inquiry into all the grievances Robin of Redesdale hath set forth, with a view to speedy and complete redress. Nor is this all. His highness, laying aside his purpose of war with France, will have less need of impost on his subjects, and the burdens and taxes will be reduced. Lastly, his grace, ever anxious to content his people, hath most benignly empowered me to promise that, whether or not ye rightly judge the queen’s kindred, they will no longer have part or weight in the king’s councils. The Duchess of Bedford, as beseems a lady so sorrowfully widowed, will retire to her own home; and the Lord Scales will fulfil a mission to the court of Spain. Thus, then, assenting to all reasonable demands, promising to heal all true grievances, proffering you gracious pardon, I discharge my duty to king and to people. I pray that these unhappy sores may be healed evermore, under the blessing of God and our patron saint; and in the name of Edward IV., Lord Suzerain of England and of France, I break up this truncheon and disband this army!”

Among those present, this moderate and wise address produced a general sensation of relief; for the earl’s disavowal of the revolt took away all hope of its success. But the common approbation was not shared by Hilyard. He sprang upon the table, and, seizing the broken fragments of the truncheon, which the earl had snapped as a willow twig, exclaimed, ”And thus, in the name of the people, I seize the command that ye unworthily resign! Oh, yes, what fools were yonder drudges of the hard hand and the grimed brow and the leathern jerkin, to expect succour from knight and noble!”

So saying, he bounded from the tent, and rushed towards the multitude at the distance.

”Ye knights and lords, men of blood and birth, were but the tools of a manlier and wiser Cade!” said Warwick, calmly. ”Follow me.”

The earl strode from the tent, sprang upon his steed, and was in the midst of the troops with his heralds by his side, ere Hilyard had been enabled to begin the harangue he had intended. Warwick’s trumpets

sounded to silence; and the earl himself, in his loud clear voice, briefly addressed the immense audience. Master, scarcely less than Hilyard, of the popular kind of eloquence, which—short, plain, generous, and simple—cuts its way at once through the feelings to the policy, Warwick briefly but forcibly recapitulated to the commons the promises he had made to the captains; and as soon as they heard of taxes removed, the coinage reformed, the corn thrave abolished, the Woodvilles dismissed, and the earl recalled to power, the rebellion was at an end. They answered with a joyous shout his order to disperse and retire to their homes forthwith. But the indomitable Hilyard, ascending a small eminence, began his counter-agitation. The earl saw his robust form and waving hand, he saw the crowd sway towards him; and too well acquainted with mankind to suffer his address, he spurred to the spot, and turning to Marmaduke, said, in a loud voice, "Marmaduke Nevile, arrest that man in the king's name!"

Marmaduke sprang from his steed, and laid his hand on Hilyard's shoulder. Not one of the multitude stirred on behalf of their demagogue. As before the sun recede the stars, all lesser lights had died in the blaze of Warwick's beloved name. Hilyard griped his dagger, and struggled an instant; but when he saw the awe and apathy of the armed mob, a withering expression of disdain passed over his hardy face.

"Do ye suffer this?" he said. "Do ye suffer me, who have placed swords in your hands, to go forth in bonds, and to the death?"

"The stout earl wrongs no man," said a single voice, and the populace echoed the word.

"Sir, then, I care not for life, since liberty is gone. I yield myself your prisoner."

"A horse for my captive!" said Warwick, laughing; "and hear me promise you, that he shall go unscathed in goods and in limbs. God wot, when Warwick and the people meet, no victim should be sacrificed! Hurrah for King Edward and fair England!"

He waved his plumed cap as he spoke, and within the walls of Olney was heard the shout that answered.

Slowly the earl and his scanty troop turned the rein; as he receded, the multitude broke up rapidly, and when the moon rose, that camp was a solitude. [The dispersion of the rebels at Olney is forcibly narrated by a few sentences, graphic from their brief simplicity, in the "Pictorial History of England," Book V, p. 104. "They (Warwick, etc.) repaired in a very friendly manner to Olney, where they found Edward in a most unhappy condition; his friends were dead or scattered, flying for their lives, or hiding themselves in remote places: the insurgents were almost upon him. A word from Warwick sent

the insurgents quietly back to the North.”]

Such—for our nature is ever grander in the individual than the mass—
such is the power of man above mankind!

CHAPTER IV.

THE NORMAN EARL AND THE SAXON DEMAGOGUE CONFER.

On leaving the camp, Warwick rode in advance of his train, and his countenance was serious and full of thought. At length, as a turn in the road hid the little band from the view of the rebels, the earl motioned to Marmaduke to advance with his prisoner. The young Nevile then fell back, and Robin and Warwick rode breast to breast out of hearing of the rest.

”Master Hilyard, I am well content that my brother, when you fell into his hands, spared your life out of gratitude for the favour you once showed to mine.”

”Your noble brother, my lord,” answered Robin, dryly, ”is, perhaps, not aware of the service I once rendered you. Methinks he spared me rather, because, without me, an enterprise which has shaken the Woodvilles from their roots around the throne, and given back England to the Neviles, had been nipped in the bud!—Your brother is a deep thinker!”

”I grieve to hear thee speak thus of the Lord Montagu. I know that he hath wilier devices than become, in my eyes, a well-born knight and a sincere man; but he loves his king, and his ends are juster than his means. Master Hilyard, enough of the past evil. Some months after the field of Hexham, I chanced to fall, when alone, amongst a band of roving and fierce Lancastrian outlaws. Thou, their leader, recognizing the crest on my helm, and mindful of some slight indulgence once shown to thy strange notions of republican liberty, didst save me from the swords of thy followers: from that time I have sought in vain to mend thy fortunes. Thou hast rejected all mine offers, and I know well that thou hast lent thy service to the fatal cause of Lancaster. Many a time I might have given thee to the law; but gratitude for thy aid in the needful strait, and to speak sooth, my disdain of all individual efforts to restore a fallen House, made me turn my eyes from transgressions which, once made known to the king, had placed thee beyond pardon. I see now that thou art a man of head and arm to bring great danger upon nations; and though this time Warwick bids thee escape and live, if once more thou offend, know me only as the king’s minister. The debt between us is now cancelled.

Yonder lies the path that conducts to the forest. Farewell. Yet stay!—poverty may have led thee into treason?”

”Poverty,” interrupted Hilyard,—”poverty, Lord Warwick, leads men to sympathize with the poor, and therefore I have done with riches.” He paused, and his breast heaved. ”Yet,” he added sadly, ”now that I have seen the cowardice and ingratitude of men, my calling seems over, and my spirit crushed.”

”Alas!” said Warwick, ”whether man be rich or poor, ingratitude is the vice of men; and you, who have felt it from the mob, menace me with it from the king. But each must carve out his own way through this earth, without over care for applause or blame; and the tomb is the sole judge of mortal memory.”

Robin looked hard at the earl’s face, which was dark and gloomy, as he thus spoke, and approaching nearer, he said, ”Lord Warwick, I take from you liberty and life the more willingly, because a voice I cannot mistake tells me, and hath long told, that, sooner or later, time will bind us to each other. Unlike other nobles, you have owed your power not so much to lordship, land, and birth, and a king’s smile, as to the love you have nobly won; you alone, true knight and princely Christian,—you alone, in war, have spared the humble; you alone, stalwart and resistless champion, have directed your lance against your equals, and your order hath gone forth to the fierce of heart, ’Never smite the commons!’ In peace, you alone have stood up in your haughty parliament for just law or for gentle mercy; your castle hath had a board for the hungry and a shelter for the houseless; your pride, which hath bearded kings and humbled upstarts, hath never had a taunt for the lowly; and therefore I—son of the people—in the people’s name, bless you living, and sigh to ask whether a people’s gratitude will mourn you dead! Beware Edward’s false smile, beware Clarence’s fickle faith, beware Gloucester’s inscrutable wile! Mark, the sun sets!—and while we speak, yon dark cloud gathers over your plumed head.”

He pointed to the heavens as he ceased, and a low roll of gathering thunder seemed to answer his ominous warning. Without tarrying for the earl’s answer, Hilyard shook the reins of his steed, and disappeared in the winding of the lane through which he took his way.

CHAPTER V.

WHAT FAITH EDWARD IV. PURPOSETH TO KEEP WITH EARL AND PEOPLE.

Edward received his triumphant envoy with open arms and profuse expressions of gratitude. He exerted himself to the utmost in the banquet that crowned the day, not only to conciliate the illustrious new comers, but to remove from the minds of Raoul de Fulke and his officers all memory of their past disaffection. No gift is rarer or more successful in the intrigues of life than that which Edward eminently possessed,—namely, the hypocrisy of frankness. Dissimulation is often humble, often polished, often grave, sleek, smooth, decorous; but it is rarely gay and jovial, a hearty laughter, a merry, cordial, boon companion. Such, however, was the felicitous craft of Edward IV.; and, indeed, his spirits were naturally so high, his good humour so flowing, that this joyous hypocrisy cost him no effort. Elated at the dispersion of his foes, at the prospect of his return to his ordinary life of pleasure, there was something so kindly and so winning in his mirth, that he subjugated entirely the fiery temper of Raoul de Fulke and the steadier suspicions of the more thoughtful St. John. Clarence, wholly reconciled to Edward, gazed on him with eyes swimming with affection, and soon drank himself into uproarious joviality. The archbishop, more reserved, still animated the society by the dry and epigrammatic wit not uncommon to his learned and subtle mind. But Warwick in vain endeavoured to shake off an uneasy, ominous gloom. He was not satisfied with Edward's avoidance of discussion upon the grave matters involved in the earl's promise to the insurgents, and his masculine spirit regarded with some disdain, and more suspicion, a levity that he considered ill-suited to the emergence.

The banquet was over, and Edward, having dismissed his other attendants, was in his chamber with Lord Hastings, whose office always admitted him to the wardrobe of the king.

Edward's smile had now left his lip; he paced the room with a hasty stride, and then suddenly opening the casement, pointed to the landscape without, which lay calm and suffused in moonlight.

"Hastings," said he, abruptly, "a few hours since and the earth grew spears! Behold the landscape now!"

"So vanish all the king's enemies!"

"Ay, man, ay,—if at the king's word, or before the king's battle-axe; but at a subject's command—No, I am not a king while another scatters armies in my realm at his bare will. 'Fore Heaven, this shall not last!"

Hastings regarded the countenance of Edward, changed from affable beauty into terrible fierceness, with reflections suggested by his profound and mournful wisdom. "How little a man's virtues profit him in the eyes of men!" thought he. "The subject saves the crown, and the crown's wearer never pardons the presumption!"

"You do not speak, sir!" exclaimed Edward, irritated and impatient. "Why gaze you thus on me?"

"Beau sire," returned the favourite, calmly, "I was seeking to discover if your pride spoke, or your nobler nature."

"Tush!" said the king, petulantly, "the noblest part of a king's nature is his pride as king!" Again he strode the chamber, and again halted. "But the earl hath fallen into his own snare,—he hath promised in my name what I will not perform. Let the people learn that their idol hath deceived them. He asks me to dismiss from the court the queen's mother and kindred!"

Hastings, who in this went thoroughly with the earl and the popular feeling, and whose only enemies in England were the Woodvilles, replied simply,—

"These are cheap terms, sire, for a king's life and the crown of England."

Edward started, and his eyes flashed that cold, cruel fire, which makes eyes of a light colouring so far more expressive of terrible passions than the quicker and warmer heat of dark orbs. "Think you so, sir? By God's blood, he who proffered them shall repent it in every vein of his body! Hark ye, William Hastings de Hastings, I know you to be a deep and ambitious man; but better for you had you covered that learned brain under the cowl of a mendicant friar than lent one thought to the counsels of the Earl of Warwick."

Hastings, who felt even to fondness the affection which Edward generally inspired in those about his person, and who, far from sympathizing, except in hate of the Woodvilles, with the earl, saw that beneath that mighty tree no new plants could push into their fullest foliage, reddened with anger at this imperious menace.

"My liege," said he, with becoming dignity and spirit, "if you can thus address your most tried confidant and your lealest friend, your most dangerous enemy is yourself."

"Stay, man," said the king, softening. "I was over warm, but the wild beast within me is chafed. Would Gloucester were here!"

"I can tell you what would be the counsels of that wise young prince, for I know his mind," answered Hastings.

"Ay, he and you love each other well. Speak out."

"Prince Richard is a great reader of Italian lere. He saith that those small States are treasuries of all experience. From that lere

Prince Richard would say to you, 'Where a subject is so great as to be feared, and too much beloved to be destroyed, the king must remember how Tarpeia was crushed.'

"I remember naught of Tarpeia, and I detest parables."

"Tarpeia, sire (it is a story of old Rome), was crushed under the weight of presents. Oh, my liege," continued Hastings, warming with that interest which an able man feels in his own superior art, "were I king for a year, by the end of it Warwick should be the most unpopular (and therefore the weakest) lord in England!"

"And how, O wise in thine own conceit?"

"Beau sire," resumed Hastings, not heeding the rebuke—and strangely enough he proceeded to point out, as the means of destroying the earl's influence, the very method that the archbishop had detailed to Montagu as that which would make the influence irresistible and permanent—"Beau sire," resumed Hastings, "Lord Warwick is beloved by the people, because they consider him maltreated; he is esteemed by the people, because they consider him above all bribe; he is venerated by the people, because they believe that in all their complaints and struggles he is independent (he alone) of the king. Instead of love, I would raise envy; for instead of cold countenance I would heap him with grace. Instead of esteem and veneration I would raise suspicion; for I would so knit him to your House, that he could not stir hand or foot against you; I would make his heirs your brothers. The Duke of Clarence hath married one daughter,—wed the other to Lord Richard. Betroth your young princess to Montagu's son, the representative of all the Nevilles. The earl's immense possessions must thus ultimately pass to your own kindred. The earl himself will be no longer a power apart from the throne, but a part of it. The barons will chafe against one who half ceases to be of their order, and yet monopolizes their dignities; the people will no longer see in the earl their champion, but a king's favourite and deputy. Neither barons nor people will flock to his banner."

"All this is well and wise," said Edward, musing; "but meanwhile my queen's blood? Am I to reign in a solitude?—for look you, Hastings, you know well that, uxorious as fools have deemed me, I had purpose and design in the elevation of new families; I wished to raise a fresh nobility to counteract the pride of the old, and only upon new nobles can a new dynasty rely."

"My Lord, I will not anger you again; but still, for a while, the queen's relations will do well to retire."

"Good night, Hastings," interrupted Edward, abruptly, "my pillow in this shall be my counsellor."

Whatever the purpose solitude and reflection might ripen in the king's mind, he was saved from immediate decision by news, the next morning, of fresh outbreaks. The commons had risen in Lincolnshire and the county of Warwick; and Anthony Woodville wrote word that, if the king would but show himself among the forces he had raised near Coventry, all the gentry around would rise against the rebellious rabble. Seizing advantage of these tidings, borne to him by his own couriers, and eager to escape from the uncertain soldiery quartered at Olney, Edward, without waiting to consult even with the earl, sprang to horse, and his trumpets were the first signal of departure that he deigned to any one.

This want of ceremony displeased the pride of Warwick; but he made no complaint, and took his place by the king's side, when Edward said shortly,–

”Dear cousin, this is a time that needs all our energies. I ride towards Coventry, to give head and heart to the raw recruits I shall find there; but I pray you and the archbishop to use all means, in this immediate district, to raise fresh troops; for at your name armed men spring up from pasture and glebe, dyke and hedge. Join what troops you can collect in three days with mine at Coventry, and, ere the sickle is in the harvest, England shall be at peace. God speed you! Ho! there, gentlemen, away!–a franc etrier!”

Without pausing for reply,–for he wished to avoid all questioning, lest Warwick might discover that it was to a Woodville that he was bound,–the king put spurs to his horse, and, while his men were yet hurrying to and fro, rode on almost alone, and was a good mile out of the town before the force led by St. John and Raoul de Fulke, and followed by Hastings, who held no command, overtook him.

”I misthink the king,” said Warwick, gloomily; ”but my word is pledged to the people, and it shall be kept.”

”A man's word is best kept when his arm is the strongest,” said the sententious archbishop; ”yesterday, you dispersed an army; to-day, raise one!”

Warwick answered not, but, after a moment's thought, beckoned to Marmaduke.

”Kinsman,” said he, ”spur on, with ten of my little company, to join the king. Report to me if any of the Woodvilles be in his camp near Coventry.”

”Whither shall I send the report?”

”To my castle of Warwick.”

Marmaduke bowed his head, and, accustomed to the brevity of the earl's speech, proceeded to the task enjoined him. Warwick next summoned his second squire.

"My lady and her children," said he, "are on their way to Middleham. This paper will instruct you of their progress. Join them with all the rest of my troop, except my heralds and trumpeters; and say that I shall meet them ere long at Middleham."

"It is a strange way to raise an army," said the archbishop, dryly, "to begin by getting rid of all the force one possesses!"

"Brother," answered the earl, "I would fain show my son-in-law, who may be the father of a line of kings, that a general may be helpless at the head of thousands, but that a man may stand alone who has the love of a nation."

"May Clarence profit by the lesson! Where is he all this while?"

"Abed," said the stout earl, with a slight accent of disdain; and then, in a softer voice, he added, "youth is ever luxurious. Better the slow man than the false one."

Leaving Warwick to discharge the duty enjoined him, we follow the dissimulating king.

CHAPTER VI.

WHAT BEFALLS KING EDWARD ON HIS ESCAPE FROM OLNEY.

As soon as Edward was out of sight of the spire of Olney, he slackened his speed, and beckoned Hastings to his side.

"Dear Will," said the king, "I have thought over thy counsel, and will find the occasion to make experiment thereof. But, methinks, thou wilt agree with me that concessions come best from a king who has an army of his own. 'Fore Heaven, in the camp of a Warwick I have less power than a lieutenant! Now mark me. I go to head some recruits raised in haste near Coventry. The scene of contest must be in the northern counties. Wilt thou, for love of me, ride night and day, thorough brake, thorough briar, to Gloucester on the Borders? Bid him march, if the Scot will let him, back to York; and if he cannot himself quit the Borders, let him send what men can be spared under thy banner. Failing this, raise through Yorkshire all the men-at-arms thou canst collect. But, above all, see Montagu. Him and his army secure at all hazards. If he demur, tell him his son shall marry his

king's daughter, and wear the coronal of a duke. Ha, ha! a large bait for so large a fish! I see this is no casual outbreak, but a general convulsion of the realm; and the Earl of Warwick must not be the only man to smile or to frown back the angry elements."

"In this, beau sire," answered Hastings, "you speak as a king and a warrior should, and I will do my best to assert your royal motto,—'Modus et ordo.' If I can but promise that your Highness has for a while dismissed the Woodville lords, rely upon it that ere two months I will place under your truncheon an army worthy of the liege lord of hardy England."

"Go, dear Hastings, I trust all to thee!" answered the king. The nobleman kissed his sovereign's extended hand, closed his visor, and, motioning to his body-squire to follow him, disappeared down a green lane, avoiding such broader thoroughfares as might bring him in contact with the officers left at Olney.

In a small village near Coventry Sir Anthony Woodville had collected about two thousand men, chiefly composed of the tenants and vassals of the new nobility, who regarded the brilliant Anthony as their head. The leaders were gallant and ambitious gentlemen, as they who arrive at fortunes above their birth mostly are; but their vassals were little to be trusted. For in that day clanship was still strong, and these followers had been bred in allegiance to Lancastrian lords, whose confiscated estates were granted to the Yorkist favourites. The shout that welcomed the arrival of the king was therefore feeble and lukewarm; and, disconcerted by so chilling a reception, he dismounted, in less elevated spirits than those in which he had left Olney, at the pavilion of his brother-in-law.

The mourning-dress of Anthony, his countenance saddened by the barbarous execution of his father and brother, did not tend to cheer the king.

But Woodville's account of the queen's grief and horror at the afflictions of her House, and of Jacquetta's indignation at the foul language which the report of her practices put into the popular mouth, served to endear to the king's mind the family that he considered unduly persecuted. Even in the coldest breasts affection is fanned by opposition, and the more the queen's kindred were assailed, the more obstinately Edward clung to them. By suiting his humour, by winking at his gallantries, by a submissive sweetness of temper, which soothed his own hasty moods, and contrasted with the rough pride of Warwick and the peevish fickleness of Clarence, Elizabeth had completely wound herself into the king's heart. And the charming graces, the elegant accomplishments, of Anthony Woodville were too harmonious with the character of Edward, who in all—except truth and honour—was the perfect model of the gay gentilhomme of the time, not to have become almost a necessary companionship. Indolent natures may be easily

ruled, but they grow stubborn when their comforts and habits are interfered with. And the whole current of Edward's merry, easy life seemed to him to lose flow and sparkle if the faces he loved best were banished, or even clouded.

He was yet conversing with Woodville, and yet assuring him that, however he might temporize, he would never abandon the interests of his queen's kindred, when a gentleman entered aghast, to report that the Lords St. John and de Fulke, on hearing that Sir Anthony Woodville was in command of the forces, had, without even dismounting, left the camp, and carried with them their retainers, amounting to more than half of the little troop that rode from Olney.

"Let them go," said Edward, frowning; "a day shall dawn upon their headless trunks!"

"Oh, my king," said Anthony, now Earl of Rivers,—who, by far the least selfish of his House, was struck with remorse at the penalty Edward paid for his love marriage,—"now that your Highness can relieve me of my command, let me retire from the camp. I would fain go a pilgrim to the shrine of Compostella to pray for my father's sins and my sovereign's weal."

"Let us first see what forces arrive from London," answered the king. "Richard ere long will be on the march from the frontiers, and whatever Warwick resolves, Montagu, whose heart I hold in my hand, will bring his army to my side. Let us wait."

But the next day brought no reinforcements, nor the next; and the king retired betimes to his tent, in much irritation and perplexity; when at the dead of the night he was startled from slumber by the tramp of horses, the sound of horns, the challenge of the sentinels, and, as he sprang from his couch, and hurried on his armour in alarm, the Earl of Warwick abruptly entered. The earl's face was stern, but calm and sad; and Edward's brave heart beat loud as he gazed on his formidable subject.

"King Edward," said Warwick, slowly and mournfully, "you have deceived me! I promised to the commons the banishment of the Woodvilles, and to a Woodville you have flown."

"Your promise was given to rebels, with whom no faith can be held; and I passed from a den of mutiny to the camp of a loyal soldier."

"We will not now waste words, king," answered Warwick. "Please you to mount and ride northward. The Scotch have gained great advantages on the marches. The Duke of Gloucester is driven backwards. All the Lancastrians in the North have risen. Margaret of Anjou is on the coast of Normandy, [at this time Margaret was at Harfleur—Will. Wyre] ready to set sail at the first decisive victory of her adherents."

"I am with you," answered Edward; "and I rejoice to think that at last I may meet a foe. Hitherto it seems as if I had been chased by shadows. Now may I hope to grasp the form and substance of danger and of battle."

"A steed prepared for your Grace awaits you."

"Whither ride we first?"

"To my castle of Warwick, hard by. At noon to-morrow all will be ready for our northward march."

Edward, by this time having armed himself, strode from the tent into the open air. The scene was striking: the moon was extremely bright and the sky serene, but around the tent stood a troop of torch-bearers, and the red glare shone luridly upon the steel of the serried horsemen and the banners of the earl, in which the grim white bear was wrought upon an ebon ground, quartered with the dun bull, and crested in gold with the eagle of the Monthermers. Far as the king's eye could reach, he saw but the spears of Warwick; while a confused hum in his own encampment told that the troops Anthony Woodville had collected were not yet marshalled into order. Edward drew back.

"And the Lord Anthony of Scales and Rivers?" said he, hesitatingly.

"Choose, king, between the Lord Anthony of Scales and Rivers and Richard Neville!" answered Warwick, in a stern whisper.

Edward paused, and at that moment Anthony himself emerged from his tent (which adjoined the king's) in company with the Archbishop of York, who had rode thither in Warwick's train.

"My liege," said that gallant knight, putting his knee to the ground, "I have heard from the archbishop the new perils that await your Highness, and I grieve sorely that, in this strait, your councillors deem it meet to forbid me the glory of fighting or falling by your side! I know too well the unhappy odium attached to my House and name in the northern parts, to dispute the policy which ordains my absence from your armies. Till these feuds are over, I crave your royal leave to quit England, and perform my pilgrimage to the sainted shrine of Compostella."

A burning flush passed over the king's face as he raised his brother-in-law, and clasped him to his bosom.

"Go or stay, as you will, Anthony!" said he; "but let these proud men know that neither time nor absence can tear you from your king's heart. But envy must have its hour Lord Warwick, I attend you; but it

seems rather as your prisoner than your liege.”

Warwick made no answer: the king mounted, and waved his hand to Anthony. The torches tossed to and fro, the horns sounded, and in a silence moody and resentful on either part Edward and his terrible subject rode on to the towers of Warwick.

The next day the king beheld with astonishment the immense force that, in a time so brief, the earl had collected round his standard.

From his casement, which commanded that lovely slope on which so many a tourist now gazes with an eye that seeks to call back the stormy and chivalric past, Edward beheld the earl on his renowned black charger, reviewing the thousands that, file on file and rank on rank, lifted pike and lance in the cloudless sun.

”After all,” muttered the king, ”I can never make a new noble a great baron! And if in peace a great baron overshadows the throne, in time of war a great baron is a throne’s bulwark! Gramercy, I had been mad to cast away such an army,—an army fit for a king to lead! They serve Warwick now; but Warwick is less skilful in the martial art than I, and soldiers, like hounds, love best the most dexterous huntsman!”

CHAPTER VII.

HOW KING EDWARD ARRIVES AT THE CASTLE OF MIDDLEHAM.

On the ramparts of feudal Middleham, in the same place where Anne had confessed to Isabel the romance of her childish love, again the sisters stood, awaiting the coming of their father and the king. They had only, with their mother, reached Middleham two days before, and the preceding night an advanced guard had arrived at the castle to announce the approach of the earl with his royal comrade and visitor. From the heights, already they beheld the long array winding in glorious order towards the mighty pile.

”Look!” exclaimed Isabel, ”look! already methinks I see the white steed of Clarence. Yes! it is he! it is my George, my husband! The banner borne before shows his device.”

”Ah, happy Isabel!” said Anne, sighing; ”what rapture to await the coming of him one loves!”

”My sweet Anne,” returned Isabel, passing her arm tenderly round her sister’s slender waist, ”when thou hast conquered the vain folly of thy childhood, thou wilt find a Clarence of thine own. And yet,”

added the young duchess, smiling, "it must be the opposite of a Clarence to be to thy heart what a Clarence is to mine. I love George's gay humour,—thou lovest a melancholy brow. I love that charming weakness which supple to my woman will,—thou lovest a proud nature that may command thine own. I do not respect George less, because I know my mind stronger than his own; but thou (like my gentle mother) wouldst have thy mate lord and chief in all things, and live from his life as the shadow from the sun. But where left you our mother?"

"In the oratory, at prayer."

"She has been sad of late."

"The dark times darken her; and she ever fears the king's falseness or caprice will stir the earl up to some rash emprise. My father's letter, brought last night to her, contains something that made her couch sleepless."

"Ha!" exclaimed the duchess, eagerly, "my mother confides in thee more than me. Saw you the letter?"

"No."

"Edward will make himself unfit to reign," said Isabel, abruptly. "The barons will call on him to resign; and then—and then, Anne—sister Anne,—Warwick's daughters cannot be born to be simple subjects!"

"Isabel, God temper your ambition! Oh, curb it, crush it down! Abuse not your influence with Clarence. Let not the brother aspire to the brother's crown."

"Sister, a king's diadem covers all the sins schemed in the head that wins it!"

As the duchess spoke, her eyes flashed and her form dilated. Her beauty seemed almost terrible.

The gentle Anne gazed and shuddered; but ere she found words to rebuke, the lovely shape of the countess-mother was seen moving slowly towards them. She was dressed in her robes of state to receive her kingly guest; the vest fitting high to the throat, where it joined the ermine tippet, and thickly sown with jewels; the sleeves tight, with the second or over sleeves, that, loose and large, hung pendent and sweeping even to the ground; and the gown, velvet of cramosin, trimmed with ermine,—made a costume not less graceful than magnificent, and which, where compressed, set off the exquisite symmetry of a form still youthful, and where flowing added majesty to a beauty naturally rather soft and feminine than proud and stately.

As she approached her children, she looked rather like their sister than their mother, as if Time, at least, shrunk from visiting harshly one for whom such sorrows were reserved.

The face of the countess was so sad in its aspect of calm and sweet resignation that even the proud Isabel was touched; and kissing her mother's hand, she asked if any ill tidings preceded her father's coming.

"Alas, my Isabel, the times themselves are bad tidings! Your youth scarcely remembers the days when brother fought against brother, and the son's sword rose against the father's breast. But I, recalling them, tremble to hear the faintest murmur that threatens a civil war." She paused, and forcing a smile to her lips, added, "Our woman fears must not, however, sadden our lords with an unwelcome countenance; for men returning to their hearths have a right to a wife's smile; and so, Isabel, thou and I, wives both, must forget the morrow in to-day. Hark! the trumpets sound near and nearer! let us to the hall."

Before, however, they had reached the castle, a shrill blast rang at the outer gate. The portcullis was raised; the young Duke of Clarence, with a bridegroom's impatience, spurred alone through the gloomy arch, and Isabel, catching sight of his countenance lifted towards the ramparts, uttered a cry, and waved her hand. Clarence beard and saw, leaped from his steed, and had clasped Isabel to his breast, almost before Anne or the countess had recognized the new comer.

Isabel, however, always stately, recovered in an instant from the joy she felt at her lord's return, and gently escaping his embrace, she glanced with a blush towards the battlements crowded with retainers; Clarence caught and interpreted the look.

"Well, belle mere," he said, turning to the countess, "and if you faithful followers do witness with what glee a fair bride inspires a returning bridegroom, is there cause for shame in this cheek of damascene?"

"Is the king still with my father?" asked Isabel, hastily, and interrupting the countess's reply.

"Surely, yes; and hard at hand. And pardon me that I forgot, dear lady, to say that my royal brother has announced his intention of addressing the principal officers of the army in Middleham Hall. This news gave me fair excuse for hastening to you and Isabel."

"All is prepared for his highness," said the countess, "save our own homage. We must quicken our steps; come, Anne." The countess took the arm of the younger sister, while the duchess made a sign to Clarence. He lingered behind, and Isabel, drawing him aside, asked,

"Is my father reconciled to Edward?"

"No,—nor Edward to him."

"Good! The king has no soldiers of his own amidst yon armed train?"

"Save a few of Anthony Woodville's recruits, none. Raoul de Fulke and St. John have retired to their towers in sullen dudgeon. But have you no softer questions for my return, bella mia?"

"Pardon me, many—my king."

"King!"

"What other name should the successor of Edward IV. bear?"

"Isabel," said Clarence, in great emotion, "what is it you would tempt me to? Edward IV. spares the life of Henry VI., and shall Edward IV.'s brother conspire against his own?"

"Saints forefend!" exclaimed Isabel; "can you so wrong my honest meaning? O George! can you conceive that your wife—Warwick's daughter—harbours the thought of murder? No! surely the career before you seems plain and spotless! Can Edward reign? Deserted by the barons, and wearing away even my father's long-credulous love; odious! except in luxurious and unwarlike London, to all the commons—how reign? What other choice left? none,—save Henry of Lancaster or George of York."

"Were it so!" said the weak duke; and yet he added falteringly, "believe me, Warwick meditates no such changes in my favour."

"Time is a rapid ripener," answered Isabel; "but hark! they are lowering the drawbridge for our guests."

CHAPTER VIII.

THE ANCIENTS RIGHTLY GAVE TO THE GODDESS OF ELOQUENCE A CROWN.

The lady of Warwick stood at the threshold of the porch, which, in the inner side of the broad quadrangle, admitted to the apartments used by the family; and, heading the mighty train that, line after line, emerged through the grim jaws of the arch, came the earl on his black destrier, and the young king.

Even where she stood, the anxious chatelaine beheld the moody and gloomy air with which Edward glanced around the strong walls of the fortress, and up to the battlements that bristled with the pikes and sallets of armed men, who looked on the pomp below, in the silence of military discipline.

"Oh, Anne!" she whispered to her youngest daughter, who stood beside her, "what are women worth in the strife of men? Would that our smiles could heal the wounds which a taunt can make in a proud man's heart!"

Anne, affected and interested by her mother's words, and with a secret curiosity to gaze upon the man who ruled on the throne of the prince she loved, came nearer and more in front; and suddenly, as he turned his head, the king's regard rested upon her intent eyes and blooming face.

"Who is that fair donzell, cousin of Warwick?" he asked.

"My daughter, sire."

"Ah, your youngest!—I have not seen her since she was a child."

Edward reined in his charger, and the earl threw himself from his selle, and held the king's stirrup to dismount. But he did so with a haughty and unsmiling visage. "I would be the first, sire," said he, with a slight emphasis, and as if excusing to himself his condescension, "to welcome to Middleham the son of Duke Richard."

"And your suzerain, my lord earl," added Edward, with no less proud a meaning, and leaning his hand lightly on Warwick's shoulder, he dismounted slowly. "Rise, lady," he said, raising the countess, who knelt at the porch, "and you too, fair demoiselle. Pardieu, we envy the knee that hath knelt to you." So saying, with royal graciousness, he took the countess's hand, and they entered the hall as the musicians, in the gallery raised above, rolled forth their stormy welcome.

The archbishop, who had followed close to Warwick and the king, whispered now to his brother,

"Why would Edward address the captains?"

"I know not."

"He hath made himself familiar with many in the march."

"Familiarity with a steel casque better becomes a king than waisall with a greasy flat-cap."

"You do not fear lest he seduce from the White Bear its retainers?"

"As well fear that he can call the stars from their courses around the sun."

While these words were interchanged, the countess conducted the king to a throne-chair raised upon the dais, by the side of which were placed two seats of state, and, from the dais, at the same time, advanced the Duke and Duchess of Clarence. The king prevented their kneeling, and kissed Isabel slightly and gravely on the forehead. "Thus, noble lady, I greet the entrance of the Duchess of Clarence into the royalty of England."

Without pausing for reply, he passed on and seated himself on the throne, while Isabel and her husband took possession of the state chairs on either hand. At a gesture of the king's the countess and Anne placed themselves on seats less raised, but still upon the dais. But now as Edward sat, the hall grew gradually full of lords and knights who commanded in Warwick's train, while the earl and the archbishop stood mute in the centre, the one armed cap-a-pie, leaning on his sword, the other with his arms folded in his long robes.

The king's eye, clear, steady, and majestic, roved round that martial audience, worthy to be a monarch's war-council, and not one of whom marched under a monarch's banner! Their silence, their discipline, the splendour of their arms, the greater splendour of their noble names, contrasted painfully with the little mutinous camp of Olney, and the surly, untried recruits of Anthony Woodville. But Edward, whose step, whose form, whose aspect, proclaimed the man conscious of his rights to be lord of all, betrayed not to those around him the kingly pride, the lofty grief, that swelled within his heart. Still seated, he raised his left hand to command silence; with the right he replaced his plumed cap upon his brow.

"Lords and gentlemen," he said (arrogating to himself at once, as a thing of course, that gorgeous following), "we have craved leave of our host to address to you some words,—words which it pleases a king to utter, and which may not be harsh to the ears of a loyal subject. Nor will we, at this great current of unsteady fortune, make excuse, noble ladies, to you, that we speak of war to knighthood, which is ever the sworn defender of the daughter and the wife,—the daughters and the wife of our cousin Warwick have too much of hero-blood in their blue veins to grow pale at the sight of heroes. Comrades in arms! thus far towards our foe upon the frontier we have marched, without a sword drawn or an arrow launched from an archer's bow. We believe that a blessing settles on the head of a true king, and that the trumpet of a good angel goes before his path, announcing the victory which awaits him. Here, in the hall of the Earl of Warwick, our captain-general, we thank you for your cheerful countenance and

your loyal service; and here, as befits a king, we promise to you those honours a king alone worthily can bestow." He paused, and his keen eye glanced from chief to chief as he resumed: "We are informed that certain misguided and traitor lords have joined the Rose of Lancaster. Whoever so doth is attainted, life and line, evermore! His lands and dignities are forfeit to enrich and to ennoble the men who strike for me. Heaven grant I may have foes eno' to reward all my friends! To every baron who owns Edward IV. king (ay, and not king in name, king in banquet and in bower, but leader and captain in the war), I trust to give a new barony, to every knight a new knight's fee, to every yeoman a hyde of land, to every soldier a year's pay. What more I can do, let it be free for any one to suggest,—for my domains of York are broad, and my heart is larger still!"

A murmur of applause and reverence went round. Vowed, as those warriors were, to the earl, they felt that A MONARCH was amongst them.

"What say you, then? We are ripe for glory. Three days will we halt at Middleham, guest to our noble subject."

"Three days, sire!" repeated Warwick, in a voice of surprise.

"Yes; and this, fair cousin, and ye, lords and gentlemen, is my reason for the delay. I have despatched Sir William, Lord de Hastings, to the Duke of Gloucester, with command to join us here (the archbishop started, but instantly resumed his earnest, placid aspect); to the Lord Montagu, Earl of Northumberland, to muster all the vassals of our shire of York. As three streams that dash into the ocean, shall our triple army meet and rush to the war. Not even, gentlemen, not even to the great Earl of Warwick will Edward IV. be so beholden for roiaulme and renown, as to march but a companion to the conquest. If ye were raised in Warwick's name, not mine,—why, be it so! I envy him such friends; but I will have an army of mine own, to show mine English soldiery how a Plantagenet battles for his crown. Gentlemen, ye are dismissed to your repose. In three days we march! and if any of you know in these fair realms the man, be he of York or of Lancaster, more fit to command brave subjects than he who now addresses you, I say to that man, turn rein, and leave us! Let tyrants and cowards enforce reluctant service,—my crown was won by the hearts of my people! Girded by those hearts, let me reign, or, mourned by them, let me fall! So God and Saint George favour me as I speak the truth!"

And as the king ceased, he uncovered his head, and kissed the cross of his sword. A thrill went through the audience. Many were there, disaffected to his person, and whom Warwick's influence alone could have roused to arms; but at the close of an address spirited and loyal in itself, and borrowing thousand-fold effect by the voice and mien of the speaker, no feeling but that of enthusiastic loyalty, of almost tearful admiration, was left in those steel-clad breasts.

As the king lifted on high the cross of his sword, every blade leaped from its scabbard, and glittered in the air; and the dusty banners in the hall waved, as to a mighty blast, when, amidst the rattle of armour, burst forth the universal cry, "Long live Edward IV.! Long live the king!"

The sweet countess, even amidst the excitement, kept her eyes anxiously fixed on Warwick, whose countenance, however shaded by the black plumes of his casque, though the visor was raised, revealed nothing of his mind. Her daughters were more powerfully affected; for Isabel's intellect was not so blinded by her ambition but that the kingliness of Edward forced itself upon her with a might and solemn weight, which crushed, for the moment, her aspiring hopes.

Was this the man unfit to reign? This the man voluntarily to resign a crown? This the man whom George of Clarence, without fratricide, could succeed? No!—there spoke the soul of the First and the Third Edward! There shook the mane and there glowed the eye of the indomitable lion of the august Plantagenets! And the same conviction, rousing softer and holier sorrow, sat on the heart of Anne; she saw, as for the first time, clearly before her the awful foe with whom her ill-omened and beloved prince had to struggle for his throne. In contrast beside that form, in the prime of manly youth—a giant in its strength, a god in its beauty—rose the delicate shape of the melancholy boy who, afar in exile, coupled in his dreams, the sceptre and the bride! By one of those mysteries which magnetism seeks to explain, in the strong intensity of her emotions, in the tremor of her shaken nerves, fear seemed to grow prophetic. A stream as of blood rose up from the dizzy floors. The image of her young prince, bound and friendless, stood before the throne of that warrior-king. In the waving glitter of the countless swords raised on high, she saw the murderous blade against the boy-heir of Lancaster descend—descend! Her passion, her terror, at the spectre which fancy thus evoked, seized and overcame her; and ere the last hurrah sent its hollow echo to the rafters of the roof, she sank from her chair to the ground, hueless and insensible as the dead.

The king had not without design permitted the unwonted presence of the women in this warlike audience,—partly because he was not unaware of the ambitious spirit of Isabel, partly because he counted on the affection shown to his boyhood by the countess, who was said to have singular influence over her lord, but principally because in such a presence he trusted to avoid all discussion and all questioning, and to leave the effect of his eloquence, in which he excelled all his contemporaries, Gloucester alone excepted, single and unimpaired; and therefore, as he rose, and returned with a majestic bend the acclamation of the warriors, his eye now turned towards the chairs where the ladies sat, and he was the first to perceive the swoon of the fair Anne.

With the tender grace that always characterized his service to women, he descended promptly from his throne, and raised the lifeless form in his stalwart arms; and Anne, as he bent over her, looked so strangely lovely in her marble stillness, that even in that hour a sudden thrill shot through a heart always susceptible to beauty as the harp-string to the breeze.

"It is but the heat, lady," said he, to the alarmed countess, "and let me hope that interest which my fair kinswoman may take in the fortunes of Warwick and of York, hitherto linked together—"

"May they ever be so!" said Warwick, who, on seeing his daughter's state, had advanced hastily to the dais; and, moved by the king's words, his late speech, the evils that surrounded his throne, the gentleness shown to the beloved Anne, forgetting resentment and ceremony alike, he held out his mailed hand. The king, as he resigned Anne to her mother's arms, grasped with soldierly frankness, and with the ready wit of the cold intellect which reigned beneath the warm manner, the hand thus extended, and holding still that iron gauntlet in his own ungloved and jewelled fingers, he advanced to the verge of the dais, to which, in the confusion occasioned by Anne's swoon, the principal officers had crowded, and cried aloud,—

"Behold! Warwick and Edward thus hand in hand, as they stood when the clarions sounded the charge at Towton! and that link what swords forged on a mortal's anvil can rend or sever?"

In an instant every knee there knelt; and Edward exultingly beheld that what before had been allegiance to the earl was now only homage to the king.

CHAPTER IX.

WEDDED CONFIDENCE AND LOVE—THE EARL AND THE PRELATE—
THE PRELATE AND
THE KING—SCHEMES—WILES—AND THE BIRTH OF A DARK THOUGHT
DESTINED TO
ECLIPSE A SUN.

While, preparatory to the banquet, Edward, as was then the daily classic custom, relaxed his fatigues, mental or bodily, in the hospitable bath, the archbishop sought the closet of the earl.

"Brother," said he, throwing himself with some petulance into the only chair the room, otherwise splendid, contained, "when you left me to

seek Edward in the camp of Anthony Woodville, what was the understanding between us?"

"I know of none," answered the earl, who having doffed his armour, and dismissed his squires, leaned thoughtfully against the wall, dressed for the banquet, with the exception of the short surcoat, which lay glittering on the tabouret.

"You know of none? Reflect! Have you brought hither Edward as a guest or as a prisoner?"

The earl knit his brows—"A prisoner, archbishop?"

The prelate regarded him with a cold smile.

"Warwick, you, who would deceive no other man, now seek to deceive yourself." The earl drew back, and his hardy countenance grew a shade paler. The prelate resumed: "You have carried Edward from his camp, and severed him from his troops; you have placed him in the midst of your own followers; you have led him, chafing and resentful all the way, to this impregnable keep; and you now pause, amazed by the grandeur of your captive,—a man who leads to his home a tiger, a spider who has entangled a hornet in its web!"

"Nay, reverend brother," said the earl, calmly, "ye churchmen never know what passes in the hearts of those who feel and do not scheme. When I learned that the king had fled to the Woodvilles, that he was bent upon violating the pledge given in his name to the insurgent commons, I vowed that he should redeem my honour and his own, or that forever I would quit his service. And here, within these walls which sheltered his childhood, I trusted, and trust still, to make one last appeal to his better reason."

"For all that, men now, and history hereafter, will consider Edward as your captive."

"To living men my words and deeds can clear themselves; and as for history, let clerks and scholars fool themselves in the lies of parchment! He who has acted history, despises the gownsmen who sit in cloistered ease, and write about what they know not." The earl paused, and then continued: "I confess, however, that I have had a scheme. I have wished to convince the king how little his mushroom lords can bestead him in the storm; and that he holds his crown only from his barons and his people."

"That is, from the Lord Warwick!"

"Perhaps I am the personation of both seignorie and people; but I design this solely for his welfare. Ah, the gallant prince—how well he bore himself to-day!"

"Ay, when stealing all hearts from thee to him."

"And, Vive Dieu, I never loved him so well as when he did! Methinks it was for a day like this that I reared his youth and achieved his crown. Oh, priest, priest, thou mistakest me. I am rash, hot, haughty, hasty; and I love not to bow my knees to a man because they call him king, if his life be vicious and his word be false. But could Edward be ever as to-day, then indeed should I hail a sovereign whom a baron may reverence and a soldier serve!"

Before the archbishop could reply, the door gently opened, and the countess appeared. Warwick seemed glad of the interruption; he turned quickly—"And how fares my child?"

"Recovered from her strange swoon, and ready to smile at thy return. Oh, Warwick, thou art reconciled to the king?"

"That glads thee, sister?" said the archbishop.

"Surely. Is it not for my lord's honour?"

"May he find it so!" said the prelate, and he left the room.

"My priest-brother is chafed," said the earl, smiling. "Pity he was not born a trader, he would have made a shrewd hard bargain. Verily, our priests burn the Jews out of envy! Ah, m'amie, how fair thou art to-day! Methinks even Isabel's cheek less blooming." And the warrior drew the lady towards him, and smoothed her hair, and tenderly kissed her brow. "My letter vexed thee, I know, for thou lovest Edward, and blamest me not for my love to him. It is true that he hath paltered with me, and that I had stern resolves, not against his crown, but to leave him to his fate, and in these halls to resign my charge. But while he spoke, and while he looked, methought I saw his mother's face, and heard his dear father's tone, and the past rushed over me, and all wrath was gone. Sonless myself, why would he not be my son?" The earl's voice trembled, and the tears stood in his dark eyes.

"Speak thus, dear lord, to Isabel, for I fear her overvaulting spirit—"

"Ah, had Isabel been his wife!" he paused and moved away. Then, as if impatient to escape the thoughts that tended to an ungracious recollection, he added, "And now, sweetheart, these slight fingers have oftentimes buckled on my mail; let them place on my breast this badge of St. George's chivalry; and, if angry thoughts return, it shall remind me that the day on which I wore it first, Richard of York said to his young Edward, 'Look to that star, boy, if ever, in cloud and trouble, thou wouldst learn what safety dwells in the heart which never knew deceit.'"

During the banquet, the king, at whose table sat only the Duke of Clarence and the earl's family, was gracious as day to all, but especially to the Lady Anne, attributing her sudden illness to some cause not unflattering to himself; her beauty, which somewhat resembled that of the queen, save that it had more advantage of expression and of youth, was precisely of the character he most admired. Even her timidity, and the reserve with which she answered him, had their charms; for, like many men, themselves of imperious nature and fiery will, he preferred even imbecility in a woman to whatever was energetic or determined; and hence perhaps his indifference to the more dazzling beauty of Isabel. After the feast, the numerous demoiselles, high-born and fair, who swelled the more than regal train of the countess, were assembled in the long gallery, which was placed in the third story of the castle and served for the principal state apartment. The dance began; but Isabel excused herself from the pavon, and the king led out the reluctant and melancholy Anne. The proud Isabel, who had never forgiven Edward's slight to herself, resented deeply his evident admiration of her sister, and conversed apart with the archbishop, whose subtle craft easily drew from her lips confessions of an ambition higher even than his own. He neither encouraged nor dissuaded; he thought there were things more impossible than the accession of Clarence to the throne, but he was one who never plotted,—save for himself and for the Church.

As the revel waned, the prelate approached the earl, who, with that remarkable courtesy which charmed those below his rank and contrasted with his haughtiness to his peers, had well played amongst his knights the part of host, and said, in a whisper, "Edward is in a happy mood—let us lose it not. Will you trust me to settle all differences ere he sleep? Two proud men never can agree without a third of a gentler temper."

"You are right," said Warwick, smiling; "yet the danger is that I should rather concede too much than be too stubborn. But look you, all I demand is satisfaction to mine own honour and faith to the army I disbanded in the king's name."

"All!" muttered the archbishop, as he turned away, "but that call is everything to provoke quarrel for you, and nothing to bring power to me!"

The earl and the archbishop attended the king to his chamber, and after Edward was served with the parting refection, or livery, the earl said, with his most open smile, "Sire, there are yet affairs between us; whom will you confer with,—me or the archbishop?"

"Oh, the archbishop, by all means, fair cousin," cried Edward, no less frankly; "for if you and I are left alone, the Saints help both of us!—when flint and steel meet, fire flies, and the house may burn."

The earl half smiled at the candour, half sighed at the levity, of the royal answer, and silently left the room. The king, drawing round him his loose dressing-robe, threw himself upon the gorgeous coverlid of the bed, and lying at lazy length, motioned to the prelate to seat himself at the foot. The archbishop obeyed. Edward raised himself on his elbow, and, by the light of seven gigantic tapers, set in sconces of massive silver, the priest and the king gravely gazed on each other without speaking.

At last Edward, bursting into his hale, clear, silvery laugh, said, "Confess, dear sir and cousin,—confess that we are like two skilful masters of Italian fence, each fearing to lay himself open by commencing the attack."

"Certes," quoth the archbishop, "your Grace over-estimates my vanity, in opining that I deemed myself equal to so grand a duello. If there were dispute between us, I should only win by baring my bosom."

The king's bow-like lip curved with a slight sneer, quickly replaced by a serious and earnest expression. "Let us leave word-making, and to the point, George. Warwick is displeased because I will not abandon my wife's kindred; you, with more reason, because I have taken from your hands the chancellor's great seal—"

"For myself, I humbly answer that your Grace errs. I never coveted other honours than those of the Church."

"Ay," said Edward, keenly examining the young prelate's smooth face, "is it so? Yes, now I begin to comprehend thee. What offence have I given to the Church? Have I suffered the law too much to sleep against the Lollards. If so, blame Warwick."

"On the contrary, sire, unlike other priests, I have ever deemed that persecution heals no schism. Blow not dying embers. Rather do I think of late that too much severity hath helped to aid, by Lollard bows and pikes, the late rising. My lady, the queen's mother, unjustly accused of witchcraft, hath sought to clear herself, and perhaps too zealously, in exciting your Grace against that invisible giant yclept heresy."

"Pass on," said Edward. "It is not then indifference to the ecclesia that you complain of. Is it neglect of the ecclesiastic? Ha, ha! you and I, though young, know the colours that make up the patchwork world. Archbishop, I love an easy life; if your brother and his friends will but give me that, let them take all else. Again, I say, to the point,—I cannot banish my lady's kindred, but I will bind your House still more to mine. I have a daughter, failing male issue, the heiress to my crown. I will betroth her to your nephew, my beloved Montagu's son. They are children yet, but their ages not unsuited."

And when I return to London, young Nevile shall be Duke of Bedford, a title hitherto reserved to the royal race. [And indeed there was but one Yorkist duke then in England out of the royal family,—namely, the young boy Buckingham, who afterwards vainly sought to bend the Ulysses bow of Warwick against Richard III.] Let that be a pledge of peace between the queen's mother, bearing the same honours, and the House of Nevile, to which they pass."

The cheek of the archbishop flushed with proud pleasure; he bowed his head, and Edward, ere he could answer, went on: "Warwick is already so high that, pardie, I have no other step to give him, save my throne itself, and, God's truth, I would rather be Lord Warwick than King of England! But for you—listen—our only English cardinal is old and sickly; whenever he pass to Abraham's bosom, who but you should have the suffrage of the holy college? Thou knowest that I am somewhat in the good favour of the sovereign pontiff. Command me to the utmost. Now, George, are we friends?" The archbishop kissed the gracious hand extended to him, and, surprised to find, as by magic, all his schemes frustrated by sudden acquiescence in the objects of them all, his voice faltered with real emotion as he gave vent to his gratitude. But abruptly he checked himself, his brow lowered, and with a bitter remembrance of his brother's plain, blunt sense of honour, he said, "Yet, alas! my liege, in all this there is nought to satisfy our stubborn host."

"By dear Saint George and my father's head!" exclaimed Edward, reddening, and starting to his feet, "what would the man have?"

"You know," answered the archbishop, "that Warwick's pride is only roused when he deems his honour harmed. Unhappily, as he thinks, by your Grace's full consent, he pledged himself to the insurgents of Olney to the honourable dismissal of the lords of the Woodville race. And unless this be conceded, I fear me that all else he will reject, and the love between ye can be but hollow!"

Edward took but three strides across the chamber, and then halted opposite the archbishop, and lay both hands on his shoulders, as, looking him full in the face, he said, "Answer me frankly, am I a prisoner in these towers or not?"

"Not, sire."

"You palter with me, priest. I have been led hither against my will. I am almost without an armed retinue. I am at the earl's mercy. This chamber might be my grave, and this couch my bed of death."

"Holy Mother! Can you think so of Warwick? Sire, you freeze my blood."

"Well, then, if I refuse to satisfy Warwick's pride, and disdain to

give up loyal servants to rebel insolence, what will Warwick do? Speak out, archbishop."

"I fear me, sire, that he will resign all office, whether of peace or war. I fear me that the goodly army now at sleep within and around these walls will vanish into air, and that your Highness will stand alone amidst new men, and against the disaffection of the whole land!"

Edward's firm hand trembled. The prelate continued, with a dry, caustic smile,—

"Sire, Sir Anthony Woodville, now Lord Rivers, has relieved you of all embarrassment; no doubt, my Lord Dorset and his kinsmen will be chevaliers enough to do the same. The Duchess of Bedford will but suit the decorous usage to retire a while into privacy, to mourn her widowhood. And when a year is told, if these noble persons reappear at court, your word and the earl's will at least have been kept."

"I understand thee," said the king, half laughing; "but I have my pride as well as Warwick. To concede this point is to humble the conceiver."

"I have thought how to soothe all things, and without humbling either party. Your Grace's mother is dearly beloved by Warwick and revered by all. Since your marriage she hath lived secluded from all state affairs. As so nearly akin to Warwick, so deeply interested in your Grace, she is a fitting mediator in all disputes. Be they left to her to arbitrate."

"Ah, cunning prelate, thou knowest how my proud mother hates the Woodvilles; thou knowest how her judgment will decide."

"Perhaps so; but at least your Grace will be spared all pain and all abasement."

"Will Warwick consent to this?"

"I trust so."

"Learn, and report to me. Enough for to-night's conference." Edward was left alone, and his mind ran rapidly over the field of action open to him.

"I have half won the earl's army," he thought; "but it would be to lose all hold in their hearts again, if they knew that these unhappy Woodvilles were the cause of a second breach between us. Certes, the Lancastrians are making strong head! Certes, the times must be played with and appeased! And yet these poor gentlemen love me after my own fashion, and not with the bear's hug of that intolerable earl. How came the grim man by so fair a daughter? Sweet Anne! I caught her

eye often fixed on me, and with a soft fear which my heart beat loud to read aright. Verily, this is the fourth week I have passed without hearing a woman's sigh! What marvel that so fair a face enamours me! Would that Warwick made her his ambassador; and yet it were all over with the Woodvilles if he did! These men know not how to manage me, and well-a-day, that task is easy eno' to women!" He laughed gayly to himself as he thus concluded his soliloquy, and extinguished the tapers. But rest did not come to his pillow; and after tossing to and fro for some time in vain search for sleep, he rose and opened his casement to cool the air which the tapers had overheated. In a single casement, in a broad turret, projecting from an angle in the building, below the tower in which his chamber was placed, the king saw a solitary light burning steadily. A sight so unusual at such an hour surprised him. "Peradventure, the wily prelate," thought he. "Cunning never sleeps." But a second look showed him the very form that chased his slumbers. Beside the casement, which was partially open, he saw the soft profile of the Lady Anne; it was bent downwards; and what with the clear moonlight, and the lamp within her chamber, he could see distinctly that she was weeping. "Ah, Anne," muttered the amorous king, "would that I were by to kiss away those tears!" While yet the unholy wish murmured on his lips, the lady rose. The fair hand, that seemed almost transparent in the moonlight, closed the casement; and though the light lingered for some minutes ere it left the dark walls of the castle without other sign of life than the step of the sentry, Anne was visible no more.

"Madness! madness! madness!" again murmured the king. "These Neviles are fatal to me in all ways,—in hatred or in love!"