THE LAST OF THE BARONS

By Edward Bulwer Lytton

BOOK I. THE ADVENTURES OF MASTER MARMADUKE NEVILE.

CHAPTER I. THE PASTIME-GROUND OF OLD COCKAIGNE.

Westward, beyond the still pleasant, but even then no longer solitary, hamlet of Charing, a broad space, broken here and there by scattered houses and venerable pollards, in the early spring of 1467, presented the rural scene for the sports and pastimes of the inhabitants of Westminster and London. Scarcely need we say that open spaces for the popular games and diversions were then numerous in the suburbs of the metropolis,—grateful to some the fresh pools of Islington; to others, the grass-bare fields of Finsbury; to all, the hedgeless plains of vast Mile-end. But the site to which we are now summoned was a new and maiden holiday-ground, lately bestowed upon the townsfolk of Westminster by the powerful Earl of Warwick.

Raised by a verdant slope above the low, marsh-grown soil of Westminster, the ground communicated to the left with the Brook-fields, through which stole the peaceful Ty-bourne, and commanded prospects, on all sides fair, and on each side varied. Behind, rose the twin green hills of Hampstead and Highgate, with the upland park and chase of Marybone,—its stately manor-house half hid in woods. In front might be seen the Convent of the Lepers, dedicated to Saint James, now a palace; then to the left, York House, [The residence of the Archbishops of York] now Whitehall; farther on, the spires of Westminster Abbey and the gloomy tower of the Sanctuary; next, the Palace, with its bulwark and vawmure, soaring from the river; while eastward, and nearer to the scene, stretched the long, bush-grown passage of the Strand, picturesquely varied with bridges, and flanked to the right by the embattled halls of feudal nobles, or the inns of the no less powerful prelates; while sombre and huge amidst hall and inn, loomed the gigantic ruins of the Savoy, demolished in the insurrection of Wat Tyler. Farther on, and farther yet, the eye wandered over tower and gate, and arch and spire, with frequent glimpses of the broad sunlit river, and the opposite shore crowned by the palace of Lambeth, and the Church of St. Mary Overies, till the indistinct cluster of battlements around the Fortress-Palatine bounded the curious gaze. As whatever is new is for a

while popular, so to this pastime-ground, on the day we treat of, flocked, not only the idlers of Westminster, but the lordly dwellers of Ludgate and the Flete, and the wealthy citizens of tumultuous Chepe.

The ground was well suited to the purpose to which it was devoted. About the outskirts, indeed, there were swamps and fish-pools; but a considerable plot towards the centre presented a level sward, already worn bare and brown by the feet of the multitude. From this, towards the left, extended alleys, some recently planted, intended to afford, in summer, cool and shady places for the favourite game of bowls; while scattered clumps, chiefly of old pollards, to the right broke the space agreeably enough into detached portions, each of which afforded its separate pastime or diversion. Around were ranged many carts, or wagons; horses of all sorts and value were led to and fro, while their owners were at sport. Tents, awnings, hostelries, temporary buildings, stages for showmen and jugglers, abounded, and gave the scene the appearance of a fair; but what particularly now demands our attention was a broad plot in the ground, dedicated to the noble diversion of archery. The reigning House of York owed much of its military success to the superiority of the bowmen under its banners, and the Londoners themselves were jealous of their reputation in this martial accomplishment. For the last fifty years, notwithstanding the warlike nature of the times, the practice of the bow, in the intervals of peace, had been more neglected than seemed wise to the rulers. Both the king and his loyal city had of late taken much pains to enforce the due exercise of "Goddes instrumente," [So called emphatically by Bishop Latimer, in his celebrated Sixth Sermon.] upon which an edict had declared that "the liberties and honour of England principally rested!"

And numerous now was the attendance, not only of the citizens, the burghers, and the idle populace, but of the gallant nobles who surrounded the court of Edward IV., then in the prime of his youth,—the handsomest, the gayest, and the bravest prince in Christendom.

The royal tournaments (which were, however, waning from their ancient lustre to kindle afresh, and to expire in the reigns of the succeeding Tudors), restricted to the amusements of knight and noble, no doubt presented more of pomp and splendour than the motley and mixed assembly of all ranks that now grouped around the competitors for the silver arrow, or listened to the itinerant jongleur, dissour, or minstrel, or, seated under the stunted shade of the old trees, indulged, with eager looks and hands often wandering to their dagger-hilts, in the absorbing passion of the dice; but no later and earlier scenes of revelry ever, perhaps, exhibited that heartiness of enjoyment, that universal holiday, which attended this mixture of every class, that established a rude equality for the hour between the knight and the retainer, the burgess and the courtier.

The revolution that placed Edward IV. upon the throne had, in fact, been a popular one. Not only had the valour and moderation of his father, Richard, Duke of York, bequeathed a heritage of affection to his brave and accomplished son; not only were the most beloved of the great barons the leaders of his party; but the king himself, partly from inclination, partly from policy, spared no pains to win the good graces of that slowly rising, but even then important part of the population,—the Middle Class. He was the first king who descended, without loss of dignity and respect, from the society of his peers and princes, to join familiarly in the feasts and diversions of the merchant and the trader. The lord mayor and council of London were admitted, on more than one solemn occasion, into the deliberations of the court; and Edward had not long since, on the coronation of his queen, much to the discontent of certain of his barons, conferred the Knighthood of the hath upon four of the citizens. On the other hand, though Edward's gallantries—the only vice which tended to diminish his popularity with the sober burgesses—were little worthy of his station, his frank, joyous familiarity with his inferiors was not debased by the buffooneries that had led to the reverses and the awful fate of two of his royal predecessors. There must have been a popular principle, indeed, as well as a popular fancy, involved in the steady and ardent adherence which the population of London in particular, and most of the great cities, exhibited to the person and the cause of Edward IV. There was a feeling that his reign was an advance in civilization upon the monastic virtues of Henry VI., and the stern ferocity which accompanied the great qualities of "The Foreign Woman," as

the people styled and regarded Henry's consort, Margaret of Anjou. While thus the gifts, the courtesy, and the policy of the young sovereign made him popular with the middle classes, he owed the allegiance of the more powerful barons and the favour of the rural population to a man who stood colossal amidst the iron images of the Age,—the greatest and the last of the old Norman chivalry, kinglier in pride, in state, in possessions, and in renown than the king himself, Richard Nevile, Earl of Salisbury and Warwick.

This princely personage, in the full vigour of his age, possessed all the attributes that endear the noble to the commons. His valour in the field was accompanied with a generosity rare in the captains of the time. He valued himself on sharing the perils and the hardships of his meanest soldier. His haughtiness to the great was not incompatible with frank affability to the lowly. His wealth was enormous, but it was equalled by his magnificence, and rendered popular by his lavish hospitality. No less than thirty thousand persons are said to have feasted daily at the open tables with which he allured to his countless castles the strong hands and grateful hearts of a martial and unsettled population. More haughty than ambitious, he was feared because he avenged all affront; and yet not envied, because he seemed above all favour.

The holiday on the archery-ground was more than usually gay, for the rumour had spread from the court to the city that Edward was about to increase his power abroad, and to repair what he had lost in the eyes of Europe through his marriage with Elizabeth Gray, by allying his sister Margaret with the brother of Louis XI., and that no less a person than the Earl of Warwick had been the day before selected as ambassador on the important occasion.

Various opinions were entertained upon the preference given to France in this alliance over the rival candidate for the hand of the princess,—namely, the Count de Charolois, afterwards Charles the Bold, Duke of Burgundy.

"By 'r Lady," said a stout citizen about the age of fifty, "but I am not over pleased with this French marriage-making! I would liefer the stout earl were going to France with bows and bills than sarcenets and satins. What will become of our trade with Flanders,—answer me that, Master Stokton? The House of York is a good House, and the king is a good king, but trade is trade. Every man must draw water to his own mill."

"Hush, Master Heyford!" said a small lean man in a light-gray surcoat. "The king loves not talk about what the king does. 'T is ill jesting with lions. Remember William Walker, hanged for saying his son should be heir to the crown."

"Troth," answered Master Heyford, nothing daunted, for he belonged to one of the most powerful corporations of London,—"it was but a scurvy Pepperer [old name for Grocer] who made that joke; but a joke from a worshipful goldsmith, who has moneys and influence, and a fair wife of his own, whom the king himself has been pleased to commend, is another guess sort of matter. But here is my grave-visaged headman, who always contrives to pick up the last gossip astir, and has a deep eye into millstones. Why, ho, there! Alwyn—I say, Nicholas Alwyn!—who would have thought to see thee with that bow, a good half-ell taller than thyself? Methought thou wert too sober and studious for such man-at-arms sort of devilry."

"An' it please you, Master Heyford," answered the person thus addressed,—a young man, pale and lean, though sinewy and large-boned, with a countenance of great intelligence, but a slow and somewhat formal manner of speech, and a strong provincial accent,—"an' it please you, King Edward's edict ordains every Englishman to have a bow of his own height; and he who neglects the shaft on a holiday forfeiteth one halfpenny and some honour. For the rest, methinks that the citizens of London will become of more worth and potency every year; and it shall not be my fault if I do not, though but a humble headman to your worshipful mastership, help to make them so."

"Why, that's well said, lad; but if the Londoners prosper, it is because they have nobles in their gipsires, [a kind of pouch worn at the girdle] not bows in their hands."

"Thinkest thou then, Master Heyford, that any king at a pinch would leave them the gipsire, if they could not protect it with the bow? That Age may have gold, let not Youth despise iron."

"Body o' me!" cried Master Heyford, "but thou hadst better curb in thy tongue. Though I have my jest,—as a rich man and a corpulent,—a lad who has his way to make good should be silent and—But he's gone."

"Where hooked you up that young jack fish?" said Master Stokton, the thin mercer, who had reminded the goldsmith of the fate of the grocer.

"Why, he was meant for the cowl, but his mother, a widow, at his own wish, let him make choice of the flat cap. He was the best 'prentice ever I had. By the blood of Saint Thomas, he will push his way in good time; he has a head, Master Stokton,—a head, and an ear; and a great big pair of eyes always looking out for something to his proper advantage."

In the mean while, the goldsmith's headman had walked leisurely up to the archery-ground; and even in his gait and walk, as he thus repaired to a pastime, there was something steady, staid, and business-like.

The youths of his class and calling were at that day very different from their equals in this. Many of them the sons of provincial retainers, some even of franklins and gentlemen, their childhood had made them familiar with the splendour and the sports of knighthood; they had learned to wrestle, to cudgel, to pitch the bar or the quoit, to draw the bow, and to practise the sword and buckler, before transplanted from the village green to the city stall. And even then, the constant broils and wars of the time, the example of their betters, the holiday spectacle of mimic strife, and, above all, the powerful and corporate association they formed amongst themselves, tended to make them as wild, as jovial, and as dissolute a set of young fellows as their posterity are now sober, careful, and discreet. And as Nicholas Alwyn, with a slight inclination of his head, passed by, two or three loud, swaggering, bold-looking groups of apprentices—their shaggy hair streaming over their shoulders, their caps on one side, their short cloaks of blue torn or patched, though still passably new, their bludgeons under their arms, and their whole appearance and manner not very dissimilar from the German collegians in the last century—notably contrasted Alwyn's prim dress, his precise walk, and the feline care with which he stepped aside from any patches of mire that might sully the soles of his square-toed shoes.

The idle apprentices winked and whispered, and lolled out their tongues at him as he passed. "Oh, but that must be as good as a May-Fair day,—sober Nick Alwyn's maiden flight of the shaft! Hollo, puissant archer, take care of the goslings yonder! Look this way when thou pull'st, and then woe to the other side!" Venting these and many similar specimens of the humour of Cockaigne, the apprentices, however, followed their quondam colleague, and elbowed their way into the crowd gathered around the competitors at the butt; and it was at this spot, commanding a view of the whole space, that the spectator might well have formed some notion of the vast following of the House of Nevile. For everywhere along the front lines, everywhere in the scattered groups, might be seen, glistening in the sunlight, the armourial badges of that mighty family. The Pied Bull, which was the proper cognizance [Pied Bull the cognizance, the Dun Bull's head the crest] of the Neviles, was principally borne by the numerous kinsmen of Earl Warwick, who rejoiced in the Nevile name. The Lord Montagu, Warwick's brother, to whom the king had granted the forfeit title and estates of the earls of Northumberland, distinguished his own retainers, however, by the special request of the ancient Montagus.—a Gryphon issuant from a ducal crown. But far more numerous than Bull or Gryphon (numerous as either seemed) were the badges worn by those who ranked themselves among the peculiar followers of the great Earl of Warwick. The cognizance of the Bear and Ragged Staff, which he assumed in right of the Beauchamps, whom he represented through his wife, the

heiress of the lords of Warwick, was worn in the hats of the more gentle and well-born clansmen and followers, while the Ragged Staff alone was worked front and back on the scarlet jackets of his more humble and personal retainers. It was a matter of popular notice and admiration that in those who wore these badges, as in the wearers of the hat and staff of the ancient Spartans, might be traced a grave loftiness of bearing, as if they belonged to another caste, another race, than the herd of men. Near the place where the rivals for the silver arrow were collected, a lordly party had reined in their palfreys, and conversed with each other, as the judges of the field were marshalling the competitors.

"Who," said one of these gallants, "who is that comely young fellow just below us, with the Nevile cognizance of the Bull on his hat? He has the air of one I should know."

"I never saw him before, my Lord of Northumberland," answered one of the gentlemen thus addressed; "but, pardieu, he who knows all the Neviles by eye must know half England." The Lord Montagu—for though at that moment invested with the titles of the Percy, by that name Earl Warwick's brother is known to history, and by that, his rightful name, he shall therefore be designated in these pages—the Lord Montagu smiled graciously at this remark, and a murmur through the crowd announced that the competition for the silver arrow was about to commence. The butts, formed of turf, with a small white mark fastened to the centre by a very minute peg, were placed apart, one at each end, at the distance of eleven score yards. At the extremity where the shooting commenced, the crowd assembled, taking care to keep clear from the opposite butt, as the warning word of "Fast" was thundered forth; but eager was the general murmur, and many were the wagers given and accepted, as some well-known archer tried his chance. Near the butt that now formed the target, stood the marker with his white wand; and the rapidity with which archer after archer discharged his shaft, and then, if it missed, hurried across the ground to pick it up (for arrows were dear enough not to be lightly lost), amidst the jeers and laughter of the bystanders, was highly animated and diverting. As yet, however, no marksman had hit the white, though many had gone close to it, when Nicholas Alwyn stepped forward; and there was something so unwarlike in his whole air, so prim in his gait, so careful in his deliberate survey of the shaft and his precise adjustment of the leathern gauntlet that protected the arm from the painful twang of the string, that a general burst of laughter from the bystanders attested their anticipation of a signal failure.

"'Fore Heaven!" said Montagu, "he handles his bow an' it were a yard-measure. One would think he were about to bargain for the bow-string, he eyes it so closely."

"And now," said Nicholas, slowly adjusting the arrow, "a shot for the honour of old Westmoreland!" And as he spoke, the arrow sprang gallantly forth, and quivered in the very heart of the white. There was a general movement of surprise among the spectators, as the marker thrice shook his wand over his head. But Alwyn, as indifferent to their respect as he had been to their ridicule, turned round and said, with a significant glance at the silent nobles, "We springals of London can take care of our own, if need be."

"These fellows wax insolent. Our good king spoils them," said Montagu, with a curl of his lip. "I wish some young squire of gentle blood would not disdain a shot for the Nevile against the craftsman. How say you, fair sir?" And with a princely courtesy of mien and smile, Lord Montagu turned to the young man he had noticed as wearing the cognizance of the First House in England. The bow was not the customary weapon of the well-born; but still, in youth, its exercise formed one of the accomplishments of the future knight; and even princes did not disdain, on a popular holiday, to match a shaft against the yeoman's cloth-yard. [At a later period, Henry VIII. was a match for the best bowman in his kingdom. His accomplishment was hereditary, and distinguished alike his wise father and his pious son.] The young man thus addressed, and whose honest, open, handsome, hardy face augured a frank and fearless nature, bowed his head in silence, and then slowly advancing to the umpires, craved permission to essay his skill, and to borrow the loan of a shaft and bow. Leave given and the weapons lent, as the young gentleman took his stand, his comely person, his dress, of a better quality than that of the competitors hitherto, and, above all, the Nevile badge worked in silver on his hat, diverted the general attention from Nicholas

Alwyn. A mob is usually inclined to aristocratic predilections, and a murmur of goodwill and expectation greeted him, when he put aside the gauntlet offered to him, and said, "In my youth I was taught so to brace the bow that the string should not touch the arm; and though eleven score yards be but a boy's distance, a good archer will lay his body into his bow ['My father taught me to lay my body in my bow,' etc.," said Latimer, in his well-known sermon before Edward VI.,—1549. The bishop also herein observes that "it is best to give the bow so much bending that the string need never touch the arm. This," he adds, "is practised by many good archers with whom I am acquainted, as much as if he were to hit the blanc four hundred yards away."

"A tall fellow this!" said Montagu; "and one I wot from the North," as the young gallant fitted the shaft to the bow. And graceful and artistic was the attitude he assumed,—the head slightly inclined, the feet firmly planted, the left a little in advance, and the stretched sinews of the bow-hand alone evincing that into that grasp was pressed the whole strength of the easy and careless frame. The public expectation was not disappointed,—the youth performed the feat considered of all the most dexterous; his arrow, disdaining the white mark, struck the small peg which fastened it to the butts, and which seemed literally invisible to the bystanders.

"Holy Saint Dunstan! there's but one man who can beat me in that sort that I know of," muttered Nicholas, "and I little expected to see him take a bite out of his own hip." With that he approached his successful rival.

"Well, Master Marmaduke," said he, "it is many a year since you showed me that trick at your father, Sir Guy's—God rest him! But I scarce take it kind in you to beat your own countryman!"

"Beshrew me!" cried the youth, and his cheerful features brightened into hearty and cordial pleasure, "but if I see in thee, as it seems to me, my old friend and foster-brother, Nick Alwyn, this is the happiest hour I have known for many a day. But stand back and let me look at thee, man. Thou! thou a tame London trader! Ha! ha! is it possible?"

"Hout, Master Marmaduke," answered Nicholas, "every crow thinks his own baird bonniest, as they say in the North. We will talk of this anon an' thou wilt honour me. I suspect the archery is over now. Few will think to mend that shot."

And here, indeed, the umpires advanced, and their chief—an old mercer, who had once borne arms, and indeed been a volunteer at the battle of Towton—declared that the contest was over,—"unless," he added, in the spirit of a lingering fellow-feeling with the Londoner, "this young fellow, whom I hope to see an alderman one of these days, will demand another shot, for as yet there hath been but one prick each at the butts."

"Nay, master," returned Alwyn, "I have met with my betters,—and, after all," he added indifferently, "the silver arrow, though a pretty bauble enough, is over light in its weight."

"Worshipful sir," said the young Nevile, with equal generosity, "I cannot accept the prize for a mere trick of the craft,—the blanc was already disposed of by Master Alwyn's arrow. Moreover; the contest was intended for the Londoners, and I am but an interloper, beholden to their courtesy for a practice of skill, and even the loan of a bow; wherefore the silver arrow be given to Nicholas Alwyn."

"That may not be, gentle sir," said the umpire, extending the prize. "Sith Alwyn vails of himself, it is thine, by might and by right."

The Lord Montagu had not been inattentive to this dialogue, and he now said, in a loud tone that silenced the crowd, "Young Badgeman, thy gallantry pleases me no less than thy skill. Take the arrow, for thou

hast won it; but as thou seemest a new comer, it is right thou shouldst pay thy tax upon entry,—this be my task. Come hither, I pray thee, good sir," and the nobleman graciously beckoned to the mercer; "be these five nobles the prize of whatever Londoner shall acquit himself best in the bold English combat of quarter-staff, and the prize be given in this young archer's name. Thy name, youth?"

"Marmaduke Nevile, good my lord."

Montagu smiled, and the umpire withdrew to make the announcement to the bystanders. The proclamation was received with a shout that traversed from group to group and line to line, more hearty from the love and honour attached to the name of Nevile than even from a sense of the gracious generosity of Earl Warwick's brother. One man alone, a sturdy, well-knit fellow, in a franklin's Lincoln broadcloth, and with a hood half-drawn over his features, did not join the popular applause. "These Yorkists," he muttered, "know well how to fool the people."

Meanwhile the young Nevile still stood by the gilded stirrup of the great noble who had thus honoured him, and contemplated him with that respect and interest which a youth's ambition ever feels for those who have won a name.

The Lord Montagu bore a very different character from his puissant brother. Though so skilful a captain that he had never been known to lose a battle, his fame as a warrior was, strange to say, below that of the great earl, whose prodigious strength had accomplished those personal feats that dazzled the populace, and revived the legendary renown of the earlier Norman knighthood. The caution and wariness, indeed, which Montagu displayed in battle probably caused his success as a general, and the injustice done to him (at least by the vulgar) as a soldier. Rarely had Lord Montagu, though his courage was indisputable, been known to mix personally in the affray. Like the captains of modern times, he contented himself with directing the manoeuvres of his men, and hence preserved that inestimable advantage of coolness and calculation, which was not always characteristic of the eager hardihood of his brother. The character of Montagu differed yet more from that of the earl in peace than in war. He was supposed to excel in all those supple arts of the courtier which Warwick neglected or despised; and if the last was on great occasions the adviser, the other in ordinary life was the companion of his sovereign. Warwick owed his popularity to his own large, open, daring, and lavish nature. The subtler Montagu sought to win, by care and pains, what the other obtained without an effort. He attended the various holiday meetings of the citizens, where Warwick was rarely seen. He was smooth-spoken and courteous to his equals, and generally affable, though with constraint, to his inferiors. He was a close observer, and not without that genius for intrigue, which in rude ages passes for the talent of a statesman. And yet in that thorough knowledge of the habits and tastes of the great mass, which gives wisdom to a ruler, he was far inferior to the earl. In common with his brother, he was gifted with the majesty of mien which imposes on the eye; and his port and countenance were such as became the prodigal expense of velvet, minever, gold, and jewels, by which the gorgeous magnates of the day communicated to their appearance the arrogant splendour of their power.

"Young gentleman," said the earl, after eying with some attention the comely archer, "I am pleased that you bear the name of Nevile. Vouchsafe to inform me to what scion of our House we are this day indebted for the credit with which you have upborne its cognizance?"

"I fear," answered the youth, with a slight but not ungraceful hesitation, "that my lord of Montagu and Northumberland will hardly forgive the presumption with which I have intruded upon this assembly a name borne by nobles so illustrious, especially if it belong to those less fortunate branches of his family which have taken a different side from himself in the late unhappy commotions. My father was Sir Guy Nevile, of Arsdale, in Westmoreland."

Lord Montagu's lip lost its gracious smile; he glanced quickly at the courtiers round him, and said gravely, "I grieve to hear it. Had I known this, certes my gipsire had still been five nobles the richer. It becomes not one fresh from the favour of King Edward IV. to show countenance to the son of a man, kinsman though he was, who bore arms for the usurpers of Lancaster. I pray thee, sir, to doff, henceforth, a badge dedicated only to the service of Royal York. No more, young man; we may not listen to the son of Sir Guy Nevile.—Sirs, shall we ride to see how the Londoners thrive at quarter-staff?"

With that, Montagu, deigning no further regard at Nevile, wheeled his, palfrey towards a distant part of the ground, to which the multitude was already pressing its turbulent and noisy way.

"Thou art hard on thy namesake, fair my lord," said a young noble, in whose dark-auburn hair, aquiline, haughty features, spare but powerful frame, and inexpressible air of authority and command, were found all the attributes of the purest and eldest Norman race,—the Patricians of the World.

"Dear Raoul de Fulke," returned Montagu, coldly, "when thou hast reached my age of thirty and four, thou wilt learn that no man's fortune casts so broad a shadow as to shelter from the storm the victims of a fallen cause."

"Not so would say thy bold brother," answered Raoul de Fulke, with a slight curl of his proud lip. "And I hold, with him, that no king is so sacred that we should render to his resentments our own kith and kin. God's wot, whosoever wears the badge and springs from the stem of Raoul de Fulke shall never find me question over much whether his father fought for York or Lancaster."

"Hush, rash babbler!" said Montagu, laughing gently; "what would King Edward say if this speech reached his ears? Our friend," added the courtier, turning to the rest, "in vain would bar the tide of change; and in this our New England, begirt with new men and new fashions, affect the feudal baronage of the worn-out Norman. But thou art a gallant knight, De Fulke, though a poor courtier."

"The saints keep me so!" returned De Fulke. "From overgluttony, from over wine-bibbing, from cringing to a king's leman, from quaking at a king's frown, from unbonneting to a greasy mob, from marrying an old crone for vile gold, may the saints ever keep Raoul de Fulke and his sons! Amen!" This speech, in which every sentence struck its stinging satire into one or other of the listeners, was succeeded by an awkward silence, which Montagu was the first to break.

"Pardieu!" he said, "when did Lord Hastings leave us, and what fair face can have lured the truant?"

"He left us suddenly on the archery-ground," answered the young Lovell. "But as well might we track the breeze to the rose as Lord William's sigh to maid or matron."

While thus conversed the cavaliers, and their plumes waved, and their mantles glittered along the broken ground, Marmaduke Nevile's eye pursued the horsemen with all that bitter feeling of wounded pride and impotent resentment with which Youth regards the first insult it receives from Power.

CHAPTER II. THE BROKEN GITTERN.

Rousing himself from his indignant revery, Marmaduke Nevile followed one of the smaller streams into which the crowd divided itself on dispersing from the archery-ground, and soon found himself in a part of

the holiday scene appropriated to diversions less manly, but no less characteristic of the period than those of the staff and arrow. Beneath an awning, under which an itinerant landlord dispensed cakes and ale, the humorous Bourdour (the most vulgar degree of minstrel, or rather tale-teller) collected his clownish audience; while seated by themselves—apart, but within hearing—two harpers, in the king's livery, consoled each other for the popularity of their ribald rival, by wise reflections on the base nature of common folk. Farther on, Marmaduke started to behold what seemed to him the heads of giants at least six yards high; but on a nearer approach these formidable apparitions resolved themselves to a company of dancers upon stilts. There, one joculator exhibited the antics of his well-tutored ape; there, another eclipsed the attractions of the baboon by a marvellous horse that beat a tabor with his forefeet; there, the more sombre Tregetour, before a table raised upon a lofty stage, promised to cut off and refix the head of a sad-faced little boy, who in the mean time was preparing his mortal frame for the operation by apparently larding himself with sharp knives and bodkins. Each of these wonder-dealers found his separate group of admirers, and great was the delight and loud the laughter in the pastime-ground of old Cockaigne.

While Marmaduke, bewildered by this various bustle, stared around him, his eye was caught by a young maiden, in evident distress, struggling in vain to extricate herself from a troop of timbrel-girls, or tymbesteres (as they were popularly called), who surrounded her with mocking gestures, striking their instruments to drown her remonstrances, and dancing about her in a ring at every effort towards escape. The girl was modestly attired as one of the humbler ranks, and her wimple in much concealed her countenance; but there was, despite her strange and undignified situation and evident alarm, a sort of quiet, earnest self-possession,—an effort to hide her terror, and to appeal to the better and more womanly feelings of her persecutors. In the intervals of silence from the clamour, her voice, though low, clear, well-tuned, and impressive, forcibly arrested the attention of young Nevile; for at that day, even more than this (sufficiently apparent as it now is), there was a marked distinction in the intonation, the accent, the modulation of voice, between the better bred and better educated and the inferior classes. But this difference, so ill according with her dress and position, only served to heighten more the bold insolence of the musical Bacchantes, who, indeed, in the eyes of the sober, formed the most immoral nuisance attendant on the sports of the time, and whose hardy license and peculiar sisterhood might tempt the antiquary to search for their origin amongst the relics of ancient Paganism. And now, to increase the girl's distress, some half-score of dissolute apprentices and journeymen suddenly broke into the ring of the Maenads, and were accosting her with yet more alarming insults, when Marmaduke, pushing them aside, strode to her assistance. "How now, ye lewd varlets! ye make me blush for my countrymen in the face of day! Are these the sports of merry England,—these your manly contests,—to strive which can best affront a poor maid? Out on ye, cullions and bezonians! Cling to me, gentle donzel, and fear not. Whither shall I lead thee?" The apprentices were not, however, so easily daunted. Two of them approached to the rescue, flourishing their bludgeons about their heads with formidable gestures. "Ho, ho!" cried one, "what right hast thou to step between the hunters and the doe? The young quean is too much honoured by a kiss from a bold 'prentice of London."

Marmaduke stepped back, and drew the small dagger which then formed the only habitual weapon of a gentleman. [Swords were not worn, in peace, at that period.] This movement, discomposing his mantle, brought the silver arrow he had won (which was placed in his girdle) in full view of the assailants. At the same time they caught sight of the badge on his hat. These intimidated their ardour more than the drawn poniard.

"A Nevile!" said one, retreating. "And the jolly marksman who beat Nick Alwyn," said the other, lowering his bludgeon, and doffing his cap. "Gentle sir, forgive us, we knew not your quality. But as for the girl—your gallantry misleads you."

"The Wizard's daughter! ha, ha! the Imp of Darkness!" screeched the timbrel-girls, tossing up their instruments, and catching them again on the points of their fingers. "She has enchanted him with her

glamour. Foul is fair! Foul fair thee, young springal, if thou go to the nets. Shadow and goblin to goblin and shadow! Flesh and blood to blood and flesh!"—and dancing round him, with wanton looks and bare arms, and gossamer robes that brushed him as they circled, they chanted,—

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"Come, kiss me, my darling,
   Warm kisses I trade for;
 Wine, music, and kisses
   What else was life made for?"
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With some difficulty, and with a disgust which was not altogether without a superstitious fear of the strange words and the outlandish appearance of these loathsome Delilahs, Marmaduke broke from the ring with his new charge; and in a few moments the Nevile and the maiden found themselves, unmolested and unpursued, in a deserted quarter of the ground; but still the scream of the timbrel-girls, as they hurried, wheeling and dancing, into the distance, was borne ominously to the young man's ear. "Ha, ha! the witch and her lover! Foul is fair! foul is fair! Shadow to goblin, goblin to shadow,—and the devil will have his own!"

"And what mischance, my poor girl," asked the Nevile, soothingly, "brought thee into such evil company?"

"I know not, fair sir," said the girl, slowly recovering her self; "but my father is poor, and I had heard that on these holiday occasions one who had some slight skill on the gittern might win a few groats from the courtesy of the bystanders. So I stole out with my serving-woman, and had already got more than I dared hope, when those wicked timbrel-players came round me, and accused me of taking the money from them. And then they called an officer of the ground, who asked me my name and holding; so when I answered, they called my father a wizard, and the man broke my poor gittern,—see!"—and she held it up, with innocent sorrow in her eyes, yet a half-smile on her lips,—"and they soon drove poor old Madge from my side, and I knew no more till you, worshipful sir, took pity on me."

"But why," asked the Nevile, "did they give to your father so unholy a name?"

"Alas, sir! he is a great scholar, who has spent his means in studying what he says will one day be of good to the people."

"Humph!" said Marmaduke, who had all the superstitions of his time, who looked upon a scholar, unless in the Church, with mingled awe and abhorrence, and who, therefore, was but ill-satisfied with the girl's artless answer,

"Humph! your father—but—" checking what he was about, perhaps harshly, to say, as he caught the bright eyes and arch, intelligent face lifted to his own—"but it is hard to punish the child for the father's errors."

"Errors, sir!" repeated the damsel, proudly, and with a slight disdain in her face and voice. "But yes, wisdom is ever, perhaps, the saddest error!"

This remark was of an order superior in intellect to those which had preceded it: it contrasted with the sternness of experience the simplicity of the child; and of such contrasts, indeed, was that character made up. For with a sweet, an infantine change of tone and countenance, she added, after a short pause, "They took the money! The gittern—see, they left that, when they had made it useless."

"I cannot mend the gittern, but I can refill the gipsire," said Marmaduke.

The girl coloured deeply. “Nay, sir, to earn is not to beg.” Marmaduke did not heed this answer; for as they were now passing by the stunted trees, under which sat several revellers, who looked up at him from their cups and tankards, some with sneering, some with grave looks, he began, more seriously than in his kindly impulse he had hitherto done, to consider the appearance it must have to be thus seen walking in public with a girl of inferior degree, and perhaps doubtful repute. Even in our own day such an exhibition would be, to say the least, suspicious; and in that day, when ranks and classes were divided with iron demarcations, a young gallant, whose dress bespoke him of gentle quality, with one of opposite sex, and belonging to the humbler orders, in broad day too, was far more open to censure. The blood mounted to his brow, and halting abruptly, he said, in a dry and altered voice: “My good damsel, you are now, I think, out of danger; it would ill beseem you, so young and so comely, to go farther with one not old enough to be your protector; so, in God’s name, depart quickly, and remember me when you buy your new gittern, poor child!” So saying, he attempted to place a piece of money in her hand. She put it back, and the coin fell on the ground. “Nay, this is foolish,” said he.

“Alas, sir!” said the girl, gravely, “I see well that you are ashamed of your goodness. But my father begs not. And once—but that matters not.”

“Once what?” persisted Marmaduke, interested in her manner, in spite of himself.

“Once,” said the girl, drawing herself up, and with an expression that altered the whole character of her face—“the beggar ate at my father’s gate. He is a born gentleman and a knight’s son.”

“And what reduced him thus?”

“I have said,” answered the girl, simply, yet with the same half-scorn on her lip that it had before betrayed; “he is a scholar, and thought more of others than himself.”

“I never saw any good come to a gentleman from those accursed books,” said the Nevile,—“fit only for monks and shavelings. But still, for your father’s sake, though I am ashamed of the poorness of the gift—”

“No; God be with you, sir, and reward you.” She stopped short, drew her wimple round her face, and was gone. Nevile felt an uncomfortable sensation of remorse and disapproval at having suffered her to quit him while there was yet any chance of molestation or annoyance, and his eye followed her till a group of trees veiled her from his view.

The young maiden slackened her pace as she found herself alone under the leafless boughs of the dreary pollards,—a desolate spot, made melancholy by dull swamps, half overgrown with rank verdure, through which forced its clogged way the shallow brook that now gives its name (though its waves are seen no more) to one of the main streets in the most polished quarters of the metropolis. Upon a mound formed by the gnarled roots of the dwarfed and gnome-like oak, she sat down and wept. In our earlier years, most of us may remember that there was one day which made an epoch in life,—that day that separated Childhood from Youth; for that day seems not to come gradually, but to be a sudden crisis, an abrupt revelation. The buds of the heart open to close no more. Such a day was this in that girl’s fate. But the day was not yet gone! That morning, when she dressed for her enterprise of filial love, perhaps for the first time Sibyll Warner felt that she was fair—who shall say whether some innocent, natural vanity had not blended with the deep, devoted earnestness, which saw no shame in the act by which the child could aid the father? Perhaps she might have smiled to listen to old Madge’s praises of her winsome face, old Madge’s predictions that the face and the gittern would not lack admirers on the gay ground; perhaps some indistinct, vague forethoughts of the Future to which the sex will deem itself to be born might have caused the cheek—no, not to blush, but to take a rosier hue, and the pulse to beat quicker, she knew not why. At all events, to that ground went the young Sibyll, cheerful, and almost happy, in her inexperience of actual

life, and sure, at least, that youth and innocence sufficed to protect from insult. And now she sat down under the leafless tree to weep; and in those bitter tears, childhood itself was laved from her soul forever.

“What ailest thou, maiden?” asked a deep voice; and she felt a hand laid lightly on her shoulder. She looked up in terror and confusion, but it was no form or face to inspire alarm that met her eye. It was a cavalier, holding by the rein a horse richly caparisoned; and though his dress was plainer and less exaggerated than that usually worn by men of rank, its materials were those which the sumptuary laws (constantly broken, indeed, as such laws ever must be) confined to nobles. Though his surcoat was but of cloth, and the colour dark and sober, it was woven in foreign looms,—an unpatriotic luxury, above the degree of knight,—and edged deep with the costliest sables. The hilt of the dagger, suspended round his breast, was but of ivory, curiously wrought, but the scabbard was sown with large pearls. For the rest, the stranger was of ordinary stature, well knit and active rather than powerful, and of that age (about thirty-five) which may be called the second prime of man. His face was far less handsome than Marmaduke Nevile’s, but infinitely more expressive, both of intelligence and command,—the features straight and sharp, the complexion clear and pale, and under the bright gray eyes a dark shade spoke either of dissipation or of thought.

“What ailest thou, maiden,—weepest thou some faithless lover? Tush! love renews itself in youth, as flower succeeds flower in spring.”

Sibyll made no reply; she rose and moved a few paces, then arrested her steps, and looked around her. She had lost all clew to her way homeward, and she saw with horror, in the distance, the hateful timbrel-girls, followed by the rabble, and weaving their strange dances towards the spot.

“Dost thou fear me, child? There is no cause,” said the stranger, following her. “Again I say, What ailest thou?” This time his voice was that of command, and the poor girl involuntarily obeyed it. She related her misfortunes, her persecution by the tymbesteres, her escape,—thanks to the Nevile’s courtesy,—her separation from her attendant, and her uncertainty as to the way she should pursue.

The nobleman listened with interest: he was a man sated and wearied by pleasure and the world, and the evident innocence of Sibyll was a novelty to his experience, while the contrast between her language and her dress moved his curiosity. “And,” said he, “thy protector left thee, his work half done; fie on his chivalry! But I, donzel, wear the spurs of knighthood, and to succour the distressed is a duty my oath will not let me swerve from. I will guide thee home, for I know well all the purlieus of this evil den of London. Thou hast but to name the suburb in which thy father dwells.”

Sibyll involuntarily raised her wimple, lifted her beautiful eyes to the stranger, in bewildered gratitude and surprise. Her childhood had passed in a court, her eye, accustomed to rank, at once perceived the high degree of the speaker. The contrast between this unexpected and delicate gallantry and the condescending tone and abrupt desertion of Marmaduke affected her again to tears.

“Ah, worshipful sir!” she said falteringly, “what can reward thee for this unlooked-for goodness?”

“One innocent smile, sweet virgin!—for such I’ll be sworn thou art.”

He did not offer her his hand, but hanging the gold-enamelled rein over his arm, walked by her side; and a few words sufficing for his guidance, led her across the ground, through the very midst of the throng. He felt none of the young shame, the ingenious scruples of Marmaduke, at the gaze he encountered, thus companioned. But Sibyll noted that ever and anon bonnet and cap were raised as they passed along, and the respectful murmur of the vulgar, who had so lately jeered her anguish, taught her the immeasurable distance in men’s esteem between poverty shielded by virtue, and poverty protected by power.

But suddenly a gaudy tinsel group broke through the crowd, and wheeling round their path, the foremost of them daringly approached the nobleman, and looking full into his disdainful face, exclaimed, “Tradest thou, too, for kisses? Ha, ha! life is short,—the witch is outwitched by thee! But witchcraft and death go together, as peradventure thou mayest learn at the last, sleek wooer.” Then darting off, and heading her painted, tawdry throng, the timbrel-girl sprang into the crowd and vanished.

This incident produced no effect upon the strong and cynical intellect of the stranger. Without allusion to it, he continued to converse with his young companion, and artfully to draw out her own singular but energetic and gifted mind. He grew more than interested,—he was both touched and surprised. His manner became yet more respectful, his voice more subdued and soft.

On what hazards turns our fate! On that day, a little, and Sibyll’s pure but sensitive heart had, perhaps, been given to the young Nevile. He had defended and saved her; he was fairer than the stranger, he was more of her own years and nearer to her in station; but in showing himself ashamed to be seen with her, he had galled her heart, and moved the bitter tears of her pride. What had the stranger done? Nothing but reconciled the wounded delicacy to itself; and suddenly he became to her one ever to be remembered, wondered at,—perhaps more. They reached an obscure suburb, and parted at the threshold of a large, gloomy, ruinous house, which Sibyll indicated as her father’s home.

The girl lingered before the porch; and the stranger gazed, with the passionless admiration which some fair object of art produces on one who has refined his taste, but who has survived enthusiasm, upon the downcast cheek that blushed beneath his gaze. “Farewell!” he said; and the girl looked up wistfully. He might, without vanity, have supposed that look to imply what the lip did not dare to say,—“And shall we meet no more?”

But he turned away, with formal though courteous salutation; and as he remounted his steed, and rode slowly towards the interior of the city, he muttered to himself, with a melancholy smile upon his lips, “Now might the grown infant make to himself a new toy; but an innocent heart is a brittle thing, and one false vow can break it. Pretty maiden! I like thee well eno’ not to love thee. So, as my young Scotch minstrel sings and plays,—

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‘Christ keep these birdis bright in bowers,
 Sic peril lies in paramours!’”
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[A Scotch poet, in Lord Hailes’s Collection, has the following lines in the very pretty poem called “Peril in Paramours:”—

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“Wherefore I pray, in termys short,
 Christ keep these birdis bright in bowers,
 Fra false lovers and their disport,
 Sic peril lies in paramours.”]
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We must now return to Marmaduke. On leaving Sibyll, and retracing his steps towards the more crowded quarter of the space, he was agreeably surprised by encountering Nicholas Alwyn, escorted in triumph by a legion of roaring apprentices from the victory he had just obtained over six competitors at the quarter-staff.

When the cortege came up to Marmaduke, Nicholas halted, and fronting his attendants, said, with the same cold and formal stiffness that had characterized him from the beginning, “I thank you, lads, for your kindness. It is your own triumph. All I cared for was to show that you London boys are able to keep up your credit in these days, when there’s little luck in a yard-measure, if the same hand cannot bend a bow, or handle cold steel. But the less we think of the strife when we are in the stall, the better for our pouches.

And so I hope we shall hear no more about it, until I get a ware of my own, when the more of ye that like to talk of such matters the better ye will be welcome,—always provided ye be civil customers, who pay on the nail, for as the saw saith, 'Ell and tell makes the crypt swell.' For the rest, thanks are due to this brave gentleman, Marmaduke Nevile, who, though the son of a knight-banneret who never furnished less to the battle-field than fifty men-at-arms, has condescended to take part and parcel in the sports of us peaceful London traders; and if ever you can do him a kind turn—for turn and turn is fair play—why, you will, I answer for it. And so one cheer for old London, and another for Marmaduke Nevile. Here goes! Hurrah, my lads!" And with this pithy address Nicholas Alwyn took off his cap and gave the signal for the shouts, which, being duly performed, he bowed stiffly to his companions, who departed with a hearty laugh, and coming to the side of Nevile, the two walked on to a neighbouring booth, where, under a rude awning, and over a flagon of clary, they were soon immersed in the confidential communications each had to give and receive.

CHAPTER III. THE TRADER AND THE GENTLE; OR, THE CHANGING GENERATION.

"No, my dear foster-brother," said the Nevile, "I do not yet comprehend the choice you have made. You were reared and brought up with such careful book-lere, not only to read and to write—the which, save the mark! I hold to be labour eno'—but chop Latin and logic and theology with Saint Aristotle (is not that his hard name?) into the bargain, and all because you had an uncle of high note in Holy Church. I cannot say I would be a shaveling myself; but surely a monk with the hope of preferment is a nobler calling to a lad of spirit and ambition than to stand out at a door and cry, 'Buy, buy,' 'What d'ye lack?' to spend youth as a Flat-cap, and drone out manhood in measuring cloth, hammering metals, or weighing out spices?"

"Fair and softly, Master Marmaduke," said Alwyn, "you will understand me better anon. My uncle, the sub-prior, died,—some say of austerities, others of ale,—that matters not; he was a learned man and a cunning. 'Nephew Nicholas,' said he on his death-bed, 'think twice before you tie yourself up to the cloister; it's ill leaping nowadays in a sackcloth bag. If a pious man be moved to the cowl by holy devotion, there is nothing to be said on the subject; but if he take to the Church as a calling, and wish to march ahead like his fellows, these times show him a prettier path to distinction. The nobles begin to get the best things for themselves; and a learned monk, if he is the son of a yeoman, cannot hope, without a specialty of grace, to become abbot or bishop. The king, whoever he be, must be so drained by his wars, that he has little land or gold to bestow on his favourites; but his gentry turn an eye to the temporalities of the Church, and the Church and the king wish to strengthen themselves by the gentry. This is not all; there are free opinions afloat. The House of Lancaster has lost ground, by its persecutions and burnings. Men dare not openly resist, but they treasure up recollections of a fried grandfather, or a roasted cousin,—recollections which have done much damage to the Henries, and will shake Holy Church itself one of these days. The Lollards lie hid, but Lollardism will never die. There is a new class rising amain, where a little learning goes a great way, if mixed with spirit and sense. Thou likest broad pieces and a creditable name,—go to London and be a trader. London begins to decide who shall wear the crown, and the traders to decide what king London shall befriend. Wherefore, cut thy trace from the cloister, and take thy road to the shop.' The next day my uncle gave up the ghost.—They had better clary than this at the convent, I must own; but every stone has its flaw."

"Yet," said Marmaduke, "if you took distaste to the cowl, from reasons that I pretend not to judge of, but which seem to my poor head very bad ones, seeing that the Church is as mighty as ever, and King Edward is no friend to the Lollards, and that your uncle himself was at least a sub-prior—"

"Had he been son to a baron, he had been a cardinal," interrupted Nicholas, "for his head was the longest that ever came out of the north country. But go on; you would say my father was a sturdy yeoman, and I might have followed his calling?"

"You hit the mark, Master Nicholas."

"Hout, man. I crave pardon of your rank, Master Nevile. But a yeoman is born a yeoman, and he dies a yeoman—I think it better to die Lord Mayor of London; and so I craved my mother's blessing and leave, and a part of the old hyde has been sold to pay for the first step to the red gown, which I need not say must be that of the Flat-cap. I have already taken my degrees, and no longer wear blue. I am headman to my master, and my master will be sheriff of London."

"It is a pity," said the Nevile, shaking his head; "you were ever a tall, brave lad, and would have made a very pretty soldier."

"Thank you, Master Marmaduke, but I leave cut and thrust to the gentles. I have seen eno' of the life of a retainer. He goes out on foot with his shield and his sword, or his bow and his quiver, while Sir Knight sits on horseback, armed from the crown to the toe, and the arrow slants off from rider and horse, as a stone from a tree. If the retainer is not sliced and carved into mincemeat, he comes home to a heap of ashes, and a handful of acres, harried and rivelled into a common; Sir Knight thanks him for his valour, but he does not build up his house; Sir Knight gets a grant from the king, or an heiress for his son, and Hob Yeoman turns gisarme and bill into ploughshares. Tut, tut, there's no liberty, no safety, no getting on, for a man who has no right to the gold spurs, but in the guild of his fellows; and London is the place for a born Saxon like Nicholas Alwyn."

As the young aspirant thus uttered the sentiments, which though others might not so plainly avow and shrewdly enforce them, tended towards that slow revolution, which, under all the stormy events that the superficial record we call HISTORY alone deigns to enumerate, was working that great change in the thoughts and habits of the people,—that impulsion of the provincial citywards, that gradual formation of a class between knight and vassal,—which became first constitutionally visible and distinct in the reign of Henry VII., Marmaduke Nevile, inly half-regretting and half-despising the reasonings of his foster-brother, was playing with his dagger, and glancing at his silver arrow.

"Yet you could still have eno' of the tall yeoman and the stout retainer about you to try for this bauble, and to break half a dozen thick heads with your quarter-staff!"

"True," said Nicholas; "you must recollect we are only, as yet, between the skin and the selle,—half-trader, half-retainer. The old leaven will out,—'Eith to learn the cat to the kirn,' as they say in the North. But that's not all; a man, to get on, must win respect from those who are to jostle him hereafter, and it's good policy to show those roystering youngsters that Nick Alwyn, stiff and steady though he be, has the old English metal in him, if it comes to a pinch; it's a lesson to yon lords too, save your quality, if they ever wish to ride roughshod over our guilds and companies. But eno' of me.—Drawer, another stoup of the clary—Now, gentle sir, may I make bold to ask news of yourself? I saw, though I spake not before of it, that my Lord Montagu showed a cold face to his kinsman. I know something of these great men, though I be but a small one,—a dog is no bad guide in the city he trots through."

"My dear foster-brother," said the Nevile, "you had ever more brains than myself, as is meet that you should have, since you lay by the steel casque,—which, I take it, is meant as a substitute for us gentlemen and soldiers who have not so many brains to spare; and I will willingly profit by your counsels. You must know," he said, drawing nearer to the table, and his frank, hardy face assuming a more earnest expression, "that though my father, Sir Guy, at the instigation of his chief, the Earl of Westmoreland, and of the Lord Nevile, bore arms at the first for King Henry—"

"Hush! hush! for Henry of Windsor!"

"Henry of Windsor!—so be it! yet being connected, like the nobles I have spoken of, with the blood of Warwick and Salisbury, it was ever with doubt and misgiving, and rather in the hope of ultimate compromise between both parties (which the Duke of York's moderation rendered probable) than of the extermination of either. But when, at the battle of York, Margaret of Anjou and her generals stained their victory by cruelties which could not fail to close the door on all conciliation; when the infant son of the duke himself was murdered, though a prisoner, in cold blood; when my father's kinsman, the Earl of Salisbury, was beheaded without trial; when the head of the brave and good duke, who had fallen in the field, was, against all knightly and king-like generosity, mockingly exposed, like a dishonoured robber, on the gates of York, my father, shocked and revolted, withdrew at once from the army, and slacked not bit or spur till he found himself in his hall at Arsdale. His death, caused partly by his travail and vexation of spirit, together with his timely withdrawal from the enemy, preserved his name from the attainder passed on the Lords Westmoreland and Nevile; and my eldest brother, Sir John, accepted the king's proffer of pardon, took the oaths of allegiance to Edward, and lives safe, if obscure, in his father's halls. Thou knowest, my friend, that a younger brother has but small honour at home. Peradventure, in calmer times, I might have bowed my pride to my calling, hunted my brother's dogs, flown his hawks, rented his keeper's lodge, and gone to my grave contented. But to a young man, who from his childhood had heard the stirring talk of knights and captains, who had seen valour and fortune make the way to distinction, and whose ears of late had been filled by the tales of wandering minstrels and dissours, with all the gay wonders of Edward's court, such a life soon grew distasteful. My father, on his death-bed (like thy uncle, the sub-prior), encouraged me little to follow his own footsteps. 'I see,' said he, 'that King Henry is too soft to rule his barons, and Margaret too fierce to conciliate the commons; the only hope of peace is in the settlement of the House of York. Wherefore, let not thy father's errors stand in the way of thy advancement;' and therewith he made his confessor—for he was no penman himself, the worthy old knight!—indite a letter to his great kinsman, the Earl of Warwick, commending me to his protection. He signed his mark, and set his seal to this missive, which I now have at mine hostelrie, and died the same day. My brother judged me too young then to quit his roof; and condemned me to bear his humours till, at the age of twenty-three, I could bear no more! So having sold him my scant share in the heritage, and turned, like thee, bad land into good nobles, I joined a party of horse in their journey to London, and arrived yesterday at Master Sackbut's hostelrie in Eastchepe. I went this morning to my Lord of Warwick; but he was gone to the king's, and hearing of the merry-makings here, I came hither for kill-time. A chance word of my Lord of Montagu—whom Saint Dunstan confound!—made me conceit that a feat of skill with the cloth-yard might not ill preface my letter to the great earl. But, pardie! it seems I reckoned without my host, and in seeking to make my fortunes too rashly, I have helped to mar them." Wherewith he related the particulars of his interview with Montagu.

Nicholas Alwyn listened to him with friendly and thoughtful interest, and, when he had done, spoke thus,—

"The Earl of Warwick is a generous man, and though hot, bears little malice, except against those whom he deems misthink or insult him; he is proud of being looked up to as a protector, especially by those of his own kith and name. Your father's letter will touch the right string, and you cannot do better than deliver it with a plain story. A young partisan like thee is not to be despised. Thou must trust to Lord Warwick to set matters right with his brother; and now, before I say further, let me ask thee, plainly, and without offence, Dost thou so love the House of York that no chance could ever make thee turn sword against it? Answer as I ask,—under thy breath; those drawers are parlous spies!"

And here, in justice to Marmaduke Nevile and to his betters, it is necessary to preface his reply by some brief remarks, to which we must crave the earnest attention of the reader. What we call PATRIOTISM, in the high and catholic acceptation of the word, was little if at all understood in days when passion, pride, and interest were motives little softened by reflection and education, and softened still less by the fusion

of classes that characterized the small States of old, and marks the civilization of a modern age. Though the right by descent of the House of York, if genealogy alone were consulted, was indisputably prior to that of Lancaster, yet the long exercise of power in the latter House, the genius of the Fourth Henry, and the victories of the Fifth, would no doubt have completely superseded the obsolete claims of the Yorkists, had Henry VI. possessed any of the qualities necessary for the time. As it was, men had got puzzled by genealogies and cavils; the sanctity attached to the king's name was weakened by his doubtful right to his throne, and the Wars of the rival Roses were at last (with two exceptions, presently to be noted) the mere contests of exasperated factions, in which public considerations were scarcely even made the blind to individual interest, prejudice, or passion.

Thus, instances of desertion, from the one to the other party, even by the highest nobles, and on the very eve of battle, had grown so common that little if any disgrace was attached to them; and any knight or captain held an affront to himself an amply sufficient cause for the transfer of his allegiance. It would be obviously absurd to expect in any of the actors of that age the more elevated doctrines of party faith and public honour, which clearer notions of national morality, and the salutary exercise of a large general opinion, free from the passions of single individuals, have brought into practice in our more enlightened days. The individual feelings of the individual MAN, strong in himself, became his guide, and he was free in much from the regular and thoughtful virtues, as well as from the mean and plausible vices, of those who act only in bodies and corporations. The two exceptions to this idiosyncrasy of motive and conduct were, first, in the general disposition of the rising middle class, especially in London, to connect great political interests with the more popular House of York. The commons in parliament had acted in opposition to Henry the Sixth, as the laws they wrung from him tended to show, and it was a popular and trading party that came, as it were, into power under King Edward. It is true that Edward was sufficiently arbitrary in himself; but a popular party will stretch as much as its antagonists in favour of despotism,—exercised, on its enemies. And Edward did his best to consult the interests of commerce, though the prejudices of the merchants interpreted those interests in a way opposite to that in which political economy now understands them. The second exception to the mere hostilities of individual chiefs and feudal factions has, not less than the former, been too much overlooked by historians. But this was a still more powerful element in the success of the House of York. The hostility against the Roman Church and the tenets of the Lollards were shared by an immense part of the population. In the previous century an ancient writer computes that one half the population were Lollards; and though the sect were diminished and silenced by fear, they still ceased not to exist, and their doctrines not only shook the Church under Henry VIII., but destroyed the throne by the strong arm of their children, the Puritans, under Charles I. It was impossible that these men should not have felt the deepest resentment at the fierce and steadfast persecution they endured under the House of Lancaster; and without pausing to consider how far they would benefit under the dynasty of York, they had all those motives of revenge which are mistaken so often for the counsels of policy, to rally round any standard raised against their oppressors. These two great exceptions to merely selfish policy, which it remains for the historian clearly and at length to enforce, these: and these alone will always, to a sagacious observer, elevate the Wars of the Roses above those bloody contests for badges which we are at first sight tempted to regard them. But these deeper motives animated very little the nobles and the knightly gentry; [Amongst many instances of the self-seeking of the time, not the least striking is the subservience of John Mowbray, the great Duke of Norfolk, to his old political enemy, the Earl of Oxford, the moment the last comes into power, during the brief restoration of Henry VI. John Paston, whose family had been sufficiently harassed by this great duke, says, with some glee, "The Duke and Duchess (of Norfolk) sue to him (Lord Oxford) as humbly as ever I did to them."—Paston Letters, cccii.] and with them the governing principles were, as we have just said, interest, ambition, and the zeal for the honour and advancement of Houses and chiefs.

"Truly," said Marmaduke, after a short and rather embarrassed pause, "I am little beholden as yet to the House of York. There where I see a noble benefactor, or a brave and wise leader, shall I think my sword and heart may best proffer allegiance."

"Wisely said," returned Alwyn, with a slight but half sarcastic smile; "I asked thee the question because—draw closer—there are wise men in our city who think the ties between Warwick and the king less strong than a ship's cable; and if thou attachest thyself to Warwick, he will be better pleased, it may be, with talk of devotion to himself than professions of exclusive loyalty to King Edward. He who has little silver in his pouch must have the more silk on his tongue. A word to a Westmoreland or a Yorkshire man is as good as a sermon to men not born so far north. One word more, and I have done. Thou art kind and affable and gentle, my dear foster-brother, but it will not do for thee to be seen again with the goldsmith's headman. If thou wantest me, send for me at nightfall; I shall be found at Master Heyford's, in the Chepe. And if," added Nicholas, with a prudent reminiscence, "thou succeedest at court, and canst recommend my master,—there is no better goldsmith,—it may serve me when I set up for myself, which I look to do shortly."

"But to send for thee, my own foster-brother, at nightfall, as if I were ashamed!"

"Hout, Master Marmaduke, if thou wert not ashamed of me, I should be ashamed to be seen with a gay springal like thee. Why, they would say in the Chepe that Nick Alwyn was going to ruin. No, no. Birds of a feather must keep shy of those that moult other colours; and so, my dear young master, this is my last shake of the hand. But hold: dost thou know thy way back?"

"Oh, yes,—never fear!" answered Marmaduke; "though I see not why so far, at least, we may not be companions."

"No, better as it is; after this day's work they will gossip about both of us, and we shall meet many who know my long visage on the way back. God keep thee; avise me how thou prosperest."

So saying, Nicholas Alwyn walked off, too delicate to propose to pay his share of the reckoning with a superior; but when he had gone a few paces he turned back, and accosting the Nevile, as the latter was rebuckling his mantle, said,—

"I have been thinking, Master Nevile, that these gold nobles, which it has been my luck to bear off, would be more useful in thy gipsire than mine. I have sure gains and small expenses; but a gentleman gains nothing, and his hand must be ever in his pouch, so—"

"Foster-brother," said Marmaduke, haughtily, "a gentleman never borrows,—except of the Jews, and with due interest. Moreover, I too have my calling; and as thy stall to thee, so to me my good sword. Saints keep thee! Be sure I will serve thee when I can."

"The devil's in these young strips of the herald's tree," muttered Alwyn, as he strode off; "as if it were dishonest to borrow a broad piece without cutting a throat for it! Howbeit, money is a prolific mother: and here is eno' to buy me a gold chain against I am alderman of London. Hout, thus goes the world,—the knight's baubles become the alderman's badges—so much the better!"

CHAPTER IV. ILL FARES THE COUNTRY MOUSE IN THE TRAPS OF TOWN.

We trust we shall not be deemed discourteous, either, on the one hand, to those who value themselves on their powers of reflection, or, on the other, to those who lay claim to what, in modern phrenological

jargon, is called the Organ of Locality, when we venture to surmise that the two are rarely found in combination; nay, that it seems to us a very evident truism, that in proportion to the general activity of the intellect upon subjects of pith and weight, the mind will be indifferent to those minute external objects by which a less contemplative understanding will note, and map out, and impress upon the memory, the chart of the road its owner has once taken. Master Marmaduke Nevile, a hardy and acute forester from childhood, possessed to perfection the useful faculty of looking well and closely before him as he walked the earth; and ordinarily, therefore, the path he had once taken, however intricate and obscure, he was tolerably sure to retrace with accuracy, even at no inconsiderable distance of time,—the outward senses of men are usually thus alert and attentive in the savage or the semi-civilized state. He had not, therefore, over-valued his general acuteness in the note and memory of localities, when he boasted of his power to refind his way to his hostelrie without the guidance of Alwyn. But it so happened that the events of this day, so memorable to him, withdrew his attention from external objects, to concentrate it within. And in marvelling and musing over the new course upon which his destiny had entered, he forgot to take heed of that which his feet should pursue; so that, after wandering unconsciously onward for some time, he suddenly halted in perplexity and amaze to find himself entangled in a labyrinth of scattered suburbs, presenting features wholly different from the road that had conducted him to the archery-ground in the forenoon. The darkness of the night had set in; but it was relieved by a somewhat faint and mist-clad moon, and some few and scattered stars, over which rolled, fleetly, thick clouds, portending rain. No lamps at that time cheered the steps of the belated wanderer; the houses were shut up, and their inmates, for the most part, already retired to rest, and the suburbs did not rejoice, as the city, in the round of the watchman with his drowsy call to the inhabitants, "Hang out your lights!" The passengers, who at first, in various small groups and parties, had enlivened the stranger's way, seemed to him, unconscious as he was of the lapse of time, to have suddenly vanished from the thoroughfares; and he found himself alone in places thoroughly unknown to him, waking to the displeasing recollection that the approaches to the city were said to be beset by brawlers and ruffians of desperate characters, whom the cessation of the civil wars had flung loose upon the skirts of society, to maintain themselves by deeds of rapine and plunder. As might naturally be expected, most of these had belonged to the defeated party, who had no claim to the good offices or charity of those in power. And although some of the Neviles had sided with the Lancastrians, yet the badge worn by Marmaduke was considered a pledge of devotion to the reigning House, and added a new danger to those which beset his path. Conscious of this—for he now called to mind the admonitions of his host in parting from the hostelrie—he deemed it but discreet to draw the hood of his mantle over the silver ornament; and while thus occupied, he heard not a step emerging from a lane at his rear, when suddenly a heavy hand was placed on his shoulder. He started, turned, and before him stood a man, whose aspect and dress betokened little to lessen the alarm of the uncourteous salutation. Marmaduke's dagger was bare on the instant.

"And what wouldst thou with me?" he asked.

"Thy purse and thy dagger!" answered the stranger.

"Come and take them," said the Nevile, unconscious that he uttered a reply famous in classic history, as he sprang backward a step or so, and threw himself into an attitude of defence. The stranger slowly raised a rude kind of mace, or rather club, with a ball of iron at the end, garnished with long spikes, as he replied, "Art thou mad eno' to fight for such trifles?"

"Art thou in the habit of meeting one Englishman who yields his goods without a blow to another?" retorted Marmaduke. "Go to! thy club does not daunt me." The stranger warily drew back a step, and applied a whistle to his mouth. The Nevile sprang at him, but the stranger warded off the thrust of the poniard with a light flourish of his heavy weapon; and had not the youth drawn back on the instant, it had been good-night and a long day to Marmaduke Nevile. Even as it was, his heart beat quick, as the whirl of the huge weapon sent the air like a strong wind against his face. Ere he had time to renew his attack, he was suddenly seized from behind, and found himself struggling in the arms of two men. From these he

broke, and his dagger glanced harmless against the tough jerkin of his first assailant. The next moment his right arm fell to his side, useless and deeply gashed. A heavy blow on the head—the moon, the stars reeled in his eyes—and then darkness,—he knew no more. His assailants very deliberately proceeded to rifle the inanimate body, when one of them, perceiving the silver badge, exclaimed, with an oath, "One of the rampant Neviles! This cock at least shall crow no more." And laying the young man's head across his lap, while he stretched back the throat with one hand, with the other he drew forth a long sharp knife, like those used by huntsmen in despatching the hart. Suddenly, and in the very moment when the blade was about to inflict the fatal gash, his hand was forcibly arrested, and a man, who had silently and unnoticed joined the ruffians, said in a stern whisper, "Rise and depart from thy brotherhood forever. We admit no murderer."

The ruffian looked up in bewilderment. "Robin—captain—thou here!" he said falteringly.

"I must needs be everywhere, I see, if I would keep such fellows as thou and these from the gallows. What is this?—a silver arrow—the young archer—Um."

"A Nevile!" growled the would-be murderer.

"And for that very reason his life should be safe. Knowest thou not that Richard of Warwick, the great Nevile, ever spares the commons? Begone! I say." The captain's low voice grew terrible as he uttered the last words. The savage rose, and without a word stalked away.

"Look you, my masters," said Robin, turning to the rest, "soldiers must plunder a hostile country. While York is on the throne, England is a hostile country to us Lancastrians. Rob, then, rifle, if ye will; but he who takes life shall lose it. Ye know me!" The robbers looked down, silent and abashed. Robin bent a moment over the youth. "He will live," he muttered. "So! he already begins to awaken. One of these houses will give him shelter. Off, fellows, and take care of your necks!"

When Marmaduke, a few minutes after this colloquy, began to revive, it was with a sensation of dizziness, pain, and extreme cold. He strove to lift himself from the ground, and at length succeeded. He was alone; the place where he had lain was damp and red with stiffening blood. He tottered on for several paces, and perceived from a lattice, at a little distance, a light still burning. Now reeling, now falling, he still dragged on his limbs as the instinct attracted him to that sign of refuge. He gained the doorway of a detached and gloomy house, and sank on the stone before it to cry aloud; but his voice soon sank into deep groans, and once more, as his efforts increased the rapid gush of the blood, became insensible. The man styled Robin, who had so opportunely saved his life, now approached from the shadow of a wall, beneath which he had watched Marmaduke's movements. He neared the door of the house, and cried, in a sharp, clear voice, "Open, for the love of Christ!"

A head was now thrust from the lattice, the light vanished; a minute more, the door opened; and Robin, as if satisfied, drew hastily back, and vanished, saying to himself, as he strode along, "A young man's life must needs be dear to him; yet had the lad been a lord, methinks I should have cared little to have saved for the people one tyrant more."

After a long interval, Marmaduke again recovered, and his eyes turned with pain from the glare of a light held to his face.

"He wakes, Father,—he will live!" cried a sweet voice. "Ay, he will live, child!" answered a deeper tone; and the young man muttered to himself, half audibly, as in a dream, "Holy Mother be blessed! it is sweet to live." The room in which the sufferer lay rather exhibited the remains of better fortunes than testified to the solid means of the present possessor. The ceiling was high and groined, and some tints of faded but once gaudy painting blazoned its compartments and hanging pendants. The walls had been rudely painted

(for arras [Mr. Hallam ("History of the Middle Ages," chap. ix. part 2) implies a doubt whether great houses were furnished with hangings so soon as the reign of Edward IV.; but there is abundant evidence to satisfy our learned historian upon that head. The Narrative of the "Lord of Grauthuse," edited by Sir F. Madden, specifies the hangings of cloth of gold in the apartments in which that lord was received by Edward IV.; also the hangings of white silk and linen in the chamber appropriated to himself at Windsor. But long before this period (to say nothing of the Bayeux Tapestry),—namely, in the reign of Edward III. (in 1344),—a writ was issued to inquire into the mystery of working tapestry; and in 1398 Mr. Britton observes that the celebrated arras hangings at Warwick Castle are mentioned. (See Britton's "Dictionary of Architecture and Archaelogy," art. "Tapestry.")] then was rare, even among the wealthiest); but the colours were half obliterated by time and damp. The bedstead on which the wounded man reclined was curiously carved, with a figure of the Virgin at the head, and adorned with draperies, in which were wrought huge figures from scriptural subjects, but in the dress of the date of Richard II.,—Solomon in pointed upturned shoes, and Goliath, in the armour of a crusader, frowning grimly upon the sufferer. By the bedside stood a personage, who, in reality, was but little past the middle age, but whose pale visage, intersected with deep furrows, whose long beard and hair, partially gray, gave him the appearance of advanced age: nevertheless there was something peculiarly striking in the aspect of the man. His forehead was singularly high and massive; but the back of the head was disproportionately small, as if the intellect too much preponderated over all the animal qualities for strength in character and success in life. The eyes were soft, dark, and brilliant, but dreamlike and vague; the features in youth must have been regular and beautiful, but their contour was now sharpened by the hollowness of the cheeks and temples. The form, in the upper part, was nobly shaped, sufficiently muscular, if not powerful, and with the long throat and falling shoulders which always gives something of grace and dignity to the carriage; but it was prematurely bent, and the lower limbs were thin and weak, as is common with men who have sparely used them; they seemed disproportioned to that broad chest, and still more to that magnificent and spacious brow. The dress of this personage corresponded with the aspect of his abode. The materials were those worn by the gentry, but they were old, threadbare, and discoloured with innumerable spots and stains. His hands were small and delicate, with large blue veins, that spoke of relaxed fibres; but their natural whiteness was smudged with smoke-stains, and his beard—a masculine ornament utterly out of fashion among the younger race in King Edward's reign, but when worn by the elder gentry carefully trimmed and perfumed—was dishevelled into all the spiral and tangled curls displayed in the sculptured head of some old Grecian sage or poet.

On the other side of the bed knelt a young girl of about sixteen, with a face exquisitely lovely in its delicacy and expression. She seemed about the middle stature, and her arms and neck, as displayed by the close-fitting vest, had already the smooth and rounded contour of dawning womanhood, while the face had still the softness, innocence, and inexpressible bloom of a child. There was a strong likeness between her and her father (for such the relationship, despite the difference of sex and years),—the same beautiful form of lip and brow, the same rare colour of the eyes, dark-blue, with black fringing lashes; and perhaps the common expression, at that moment, of gentle pity and benevolent anxiety contributed to render the resemblance stronger.

"Father, he sinks again!" said the girl.

"Sibyll," answered the man, putting his finger upon a line in a manuscript book that he held, "the authority saith, that a patient so contused should lose blood, and then the arm must be tightly bandaged. Verily we lack the wherewithal."

"Not so, Father!" said the girl, and blushing, she turned aside, and took off the partelet of lawn, upon which holiday finery her young eyes perhaps that morning had turned with pleasure, and white as snow was the neck which was thus displayed; "this will suffice to bind his arm."

"But the book," said the father, in great perplexity—"the book telleth us not how the lancet should be applied. It is easy to say, 'Do this and do that;' but to do it once, it should have been done before. This is not among my experiments."

Luckily, perhaps, for Marmaduke, at this moment there entered an old woman, the solitary servant of the house, whose life, in those warlike times, had made her pretty well acquainted with the simpler modes of dealing with a wounded arm and a broken head. She treated with great disdain the learned authority referred to by her master; she bound the arm, plastered the head, and taking upon herself the responsibility to promise a rapid cure, insisted upon the retirement of father and child, and took her solitary watch beside the bed.

"If it had been any other mechanism than that of the vile human body!" muttered the philosopher, as if apologizing to himself; and with that he recovered his self-complacency and looked round him proudly.

CHAPTER V. WEAL TO THE IDLER, WOE TO THE WORKMAN.

As Providence tempers the wind to the shorn lamb, so it possibly might conform the heads of that day to a thickness suitable for the blows and knocks to which they were variously subjected; yet it was not without considerable effort and much struggling that Marmaduke's senses recovered the shock received, less by his flesh-wound and the loss of blood, than a blow on the seat of reason that might have despatched a passable ox of these degenerate days. Nature, to say nothing of Madge's leechcraft, ultimately triumphed, and Marmaduke woke one morning in full possession of such understanding as Nature had endowed him with. He was then alone, and it was with much simple surprise that he turned his large hazel eyes from corner to corner of the unfamiliar room. He began to retrace and weave together sundry disordered and vague reminiscences: he commenced with the commencement, and clearly satisfied himself that he had been grievously wounded and sorely bruised; he then recalled the solitary light at the high lattice, and his memory found itself at the porch of the large, lonely, ruinous old house; then all became a bewildered and feverish dream. He caught at the vision of an old man with a long beard, whom he associated, displeasingly, with recollections of pain; he glanced off to a fair face, with eyes that looked tender pity whenever he writhed or groaned under the tortures that, no doubt, that old accursed carle had inflicted upon him. But even this face did not dwell with pleasure in his memory,—it woke up confused and labouring associations of something weird and witchlike, of sorceresses and tymbesteres, of wild warnings screeched in his ear, of incantations and devilries and doom. Impatient of these musings, he sought to leap from his bed, and was amazed that the leap subsided into a tottering crawl. He found an ewer and basin, and his ablutions refreshed and invigorated him. He searched for his raiment, and discovered it all except the mantle, dagger, hat, and girdle; and while looking for these, his eye fell on an old tarnished steel mirror. He started as if he had seen his ghost; was it possible that his hardy face could have waned into that pale and almost femininely delicate visage? With the pride (call it not coxcombry) that then made the care of person the distinction of gentle birth, he strove to reduce into order the tangled locks of the long hair, of which a considerable portion above a part that seemed peculiarly sensitive to the touch had been mercilessly clipped; and as he had just completed this task, with little satisfaction and much inward chafing at the lack of all befitting essences and perfumes, the door gently opened, and the fair face he had dreamed of appeared at the aperture.

The girl uttered a cry of astonishment and alarm at seeing the patient thus arrayed and convalescent, and would suddenly have retreated; but the Nevile advanced, and courteously taking her hand—

"Fair maiden," said he, "if, as I trow, I owe to thy cares my tending and cure—nay, it may be a life hitherto of little worth, save to myself—do not fly from my thanks. May Our Lady of Walsingham bless and reward thee!"

"Sir," answered Sibyll, gently withdrawing her hands from his clasp, "our poor cares have been a slight return for thy generous protection to myself."

"To thee! ah, forgive me—how could I be so dull? I remember thy face now; and, perchance, I deserve the disaster I met with in leaving thee so discourteously. My heart smote me for it as my light footfall passed from thy side."

A slight blush, succeeded by a thoughtful smile—the smile of one who recalls and caresses some not displeasing remembrance—passed over Sibyll's charming countenance, as the sufferer said this with something of the grace of a well-born man, whose boyhood had been taught to serve God and the Ladies.

There was a short pause before she answered, looking down, "Nay, sir, I was sufficiently beholden to you; and for the rest, all molestation was over. But I will now call your nurse—for it is to our servant, not us, that your thanks are due—to see to your state, and administer the proper medicaments."

"Truly, fair damsel, it is not precisely medicaments that I hunger and thirst for; and if your hospitality could spare me from the larder a manchet, or a corner of a pasty, and from the cellar a stoup of wine or a cup of ale, methinks it would tend more to restore me than those potions which are so strange to my taste that they rather offend than tempt it; and, pardie, it seemeth to my poor senses as if I had not broken bread for a week!"

"I am glad to hear you of such good cheer," answered Sibyll; "wait but a moment or so, till I consult your physician."

And, so saying, she closed the door, slowly descended the steps, and pursued her way into what seemed more like a vault than a habitable room, where she found the single servant of the household. Time, which makes changes so fantastic in the dress of the better classes, has a greater respect for the costume of the humbler; and though the garments were of a very coarse sort of serge, there was not so great a difference, in point of comfort and sufficiency, as might be supposed, between the dress of old Madge and that of some primitive servant in the North during the last century. The old woman's face was thin and pinched; but its sharp expression brightened into a smile as she caught sight, through the damps and darkness, of the gracious form of her young mistress. "Ah, Madge," said Sibyll, with a sigh, "it is a sad thing to be poor!"

"For such as thou, Mistress Sibyll, it is indeed. It does not matter for the like of us. But it goes to my old heart when I see you shut up here, or worse, going out in that old courtpie and wimple,—you, a knight's grandchild; you, who have played round a queen's knees, and who might have been so well-to-do, an' my master had thought a little more of the gear of this world. But patience is a good palfrey, and will carry us a long day. And when the master has done what he looks for, why, the king—sith we must so call the new man on the throne—will be sure to reward him; but, sweetheart, tarry not here; it's an ill air for your young lips to drink in. What brings you to old Madge?"

"The stranger is recovered, and—"

"Ay, I warrant me, I have cured worse than he. He must have a spoonful of broth,—I have not forgot it. You see I wanted no dinner myself—what is dinner to old folks!—so I e'en put it all in the pot for him. The broth will be brave and strong."

"My poor Madge, God requite you for what you suffer for us! But he has asked"—here was another sigh, and a downcast look that did not dare to face the consternation of Madge, as she repeated, with a half-smile—"he has asked—for meat, and a stoup of wine, Madge!"

"Eh, sirs! And where is he to get them? Not that it will be bad for the lad, either. Wine! There's Master Sancroft of the Oak will not trust us a penny, the seely hilding, and—"

"Oh, Madge, I forgot!—we can still sell the gittern for something. Get on your wimple, Madge—quick,—while I go for it."

"Why, Mistress Sibyll, that's your only pleasure when you sit all alone, the long summer days."

"It will be more pleasure to remember that it supplied the wants of my father's guest," said Sibyll; and retracing the way up the stairs, she returned with the broken instrument, and despatched Madge with it, laden with instructions that the wine should be of the best. She then once more mounted the rugged steps, and halting a moment at Marmaduke's door, as she heard his feeble step walking impatiently to and fro, she ascended higher, where the flight, winding up a square, dilapidated turret, became rougher, narrower, and darker, and opened the door of her father's retreat.

It was a room so bare of ornament and furniture that it seemed merely wrought out of the mingled rubble and rough stones which composed the walls of the mansion, and was lighted towards the street by a narrow slit, glazed, it is true,—which all the windows of the house were not,—but the sun scarcely pierced the dull panes and the deep walls in which they were sunk. The room contained a strong furnace and a rude laboratory. There were several strange-looking mechanical contrivances scattered about, several manuscripts upon some oaken shelves, and a large pannier of wood and charcoal in the corner. In that poverty-stricken house, the money spent on fuel alone, in the height of summer, would have comfortably maintained the inmates; but neither Sibyll nor Madge ever thought to murmur at this waste, dedicated to what had become the vital want of a man who drew air in a world of his own. This was the first thing to be provided for; and Science was of more imperative necessity than even Hunger.

Adam Warner was indeed a creature of remarkable genius,—and genius, in an age where it is not appreciated, is the greatest curse the iron Fates can inflict on man. If not wholly without the fond fancies which led the wisdom of the darker ages to the philosopher's stone and the elixir, he had been deterred from the chase of a chimera by want of means to pursue it! for it required the resources or the patronage of a prince or noble to obtain the costly ingredients consumed in the alchemist's crucible. In early life, therefore, and while yet in possession of a competence derived from a line of distinguished and knightly ancestors, Adam Warner had devoted himself to the surer and less costly study of the mathematics, which then had begun to attract the attention of the learned, but which was still looked upon by the vulgar as a branch of the black art. This pursuit had opened to him the insight into discoveries equally useful and sublime. They necessitated a still more various knowledge; and in an age when there was no division of labour and rare and precarious communication among students, it became necessary for each discoverer to acquire sufficient science for his own collateral experiments.

In applying mathematics to the practical purposes of life, in recognizing its mighty utilities to commerce and civilization, Adam Warner was driven to conjoin with it, not only an extensive knowledge of languages, but many of the rudest tasks of the mechanist's art; and chemistry was, in some of his researches, summoned to his aid. By degrees, the tyranny that a man's genius exercises over his life, abstracted him from all external objects. He had loved his wife tenderly, but his rapid waste of his fortune in the purchase of instruments and books, then enormously dear, and the neglect of all things not centred in the hope to be the benefactor of the world, had ruined her health and broken her heart. Happily Warner perceived not her decay till just before her death; happily he never conceived its cause, for her soul was wrapped in his. She revered, and loved, and never upbraided him. Her heart was the martyr to his mind.

Had she foreseen the future destinies of her daughter, it might have been otherwise. She could have remonstrated with the father, though not with the husband. But, fortunately, as it seemed to her, she (a Frenchwoman by birth) had passed her youth in the service of Margaret of Anjou, and that haughty queen, who was equally warm to friends and inexorable to enemies, had, on her attendant's marriage, promised to ensure the fortunes of her offspring. Sibyll at the age of nine—between seven and eight years before the date the story enters on, and two years prior to the fatal field of Towton, which gave to Edward the throne of England—had been admitted among the young girls whom the custom of the day ranked amidst the attendants of the queen; and in the interval that elapsed before Margaret was obliged to dismiss her to her home, her mother died. She died without foreseeing the reverses that were to ensue, in the hope that her child, at least, was nobly provided for, and not without the belief (for there is so much faith in love!) that her husband's researches, which in his youth had won favour of the Protector Duke of Gloucester, the most enlightened prince of his time, would be crowned at last with the rewards and favours of his king. That precise period was, indeed, the fairest that had yet dawned upon the philosopher. Henry VI., slowly recovering from one of those attacks which passed for imbecility, had condescended to amuse himself with various conversations with Warner, urged to it first by representations of the unholy nature of the student's pursuits; and, having satisfied his mind of his learned subject's orthodoxy, the poor monarch had taken a sort of interest, not so much, perhaps, in the objects of Warner's occupations, as in that complete absorption from actual life which characterized the subject, and gave him in this a melancholy resemblance to the king. While the House of Lancaster was on the throne, the wife felt that her husband's pursuits would be respected, and his harmless life safe from the fierce prejudices of the people; and the good queen would not suffer him to starve, when the last mark was expended in devices how to benefit his country:—and in these hopes the woman died!

A year afterwards, all at court was in disorder,—armed men supplied the service of young girls, and Sibyll, with a purse of broad pieces, soon converted into manuscripts, was sent back to her father's desolate home. There had she grown a flower amidst ruins, with no companion of her own age, and left to bear, as her sweet and affectionate nature well did, the contrast between the luxuries of a court and the penury of a hearth which, year after year, hunger and want came more and more sensibly to invade.

Sibyll had been taught, even as a child, some accomplishments little vouchsafed then to either sex,—she could read and write; and Margaret had not so wholly lost, in the sterner North, all reminiscence of the accomplishments that graced her father's court as to neglect the education of those brought up in her household. Much attention was given to music, for it soothed the dark hours of King Henry; the blazoning of missals or the lives of saints, with the labours of the loom, were also among the resources of Sibyll's girlhood, and by these last she had, from time to time, served to assist the maintenance of the little family of which, child though she was, she became the actual head. But latterly—that is, for the last few weeks—even these sources failed her; for as more peaceful times allowed her neighbours to interest themselves in the affairs of others, the dark reports against Warner had revived. His name became a by-word of horror; the lonely light at the lattice burning till midnight, against all the early usages and habits of the day; the dark smoke of the furnace, constant in summer as in winter, scandalized the religion of the place far and near. And finding, to their great dissatisfaction, that the king's government and the Church interfered not for their protection, and unable themselves to volunteer any charges against the recluse (for the cows in the neighbourhood remained provokingly healthy), they came suddenly, and, as it were by one of those common sympathies which in all times the huge persecutor we call the PUBLIC manifests when a victim is to be crushed, to the pious resolution of starving where they could not burn. Why buy the quaint devilries of the wizard's daughter?—no luck could come of it. A missal blazoned by such hands, an embroidery worked at such a loom, was like the Lord's Prayer read backwards. And one morning, when poor Sibyll stole out as usual to vend a month's labour, she was driven from door to door with oaths and curses.

Though Sibyll's heart was gentle, she was not without a certain strength of mind. She had much of the patient devotion of her mother, much of the quiet fortitude of her father's nature. If not comprehending to

the full the loftiness of Warner's pursuits, she still anticipated from them an ultimate success which reconciled her to all temporary sacrifices. The violent prejudices, the ignorant cruelty, thus brought to bear against existence itself, filled her with sadness, it is true, but not unmixed with that contempt for her persecutors, which, even in the meekest tempers, takes the sting from despair. But hunger pressed. Her father was nearing the goal of his discoveries, and in a moment of that pride which in its very contempt for appearances braves them all, Sibyll had stolen out to the pastime-ground,—with what result has been seen already. Having thus accounted for the penury of the mansion, we return to its owner.

Warner was contemplating with evident complacency and delight the model of a machine which had occupied him for many years, and which he imagined he was now rapidly bringing to perfection. His hands and face were grimed with the smoke of his forge, and his hair and beard, neglected as usual, looked parched and dried up, as if with the constant fever that burned within.

"Yes, yes!" he muttered, "how they will bless me for this! What Roger Bacon only suggested I shall accomplish! How it will change the face of the globe! What wealth it will bestow on ages yet unborn!"

"My father," said the gentle voice of Sibyll, "my poor father, thou hast not tasted bread to-day."

Warner turned, and his face relaxed into a tender expression as he saw his daughter.

"My child," he said, pointing to his model, "the time comes when it will live! Patience! patience!"

"And who would not have patience with thee, and for thee, Father?" said Sibyll, with enthusiasm speaking on every feature. "What is the valour of knight and soldier—dull statues of steel—to thine? Thou, with thy naked breast, confronting all dangers,—sharper than the lance and glaive, and all—"

"All to make England great!"

"Alas! what hath England merited from men like thee? The people, more savage than their rulers, clamour for the stake, the gibbet, and the dungeon, for all who strive to make them wiser. Remember the death of Bolingbroke, [A mathematician accused as an accomplice, in sorcery, of Eleanor Cobham, wife of Humphrey, Duke of Gloucester, and hanged upon that charge. His contemporary (William Wyrcestre) highly extols his learning.]—a wizard, because, O Father!—because his pursuits were thine!"

Adam, startled by this burst, looked at his daughter with more attention than he usually evinced to any living thing. "Child," he said at length, shaking his head in grave reproof, "let me not say to thee, 'O thou of little faith!' There were no heroes were there no martyrs!"

"Do not frown on me, Father," said Sibyll, sadly; "let the world frown,—not thou! Yes, thou art right. Thou must triumph at last." And suddenly, her whole countenance changing into a soft and caressing endearment, she added, "But now come, Father. Thou hast laboured well for this morning. We shall have a little feast for thee in a few minutes. And the stranger is recovered, thanks to our leechcraft. He is impatient to see and thank thee."

"Well, well, I come, Sibyll," said the student, with a regretful, lingering look at his model, and a sigh to be disturbed from its contemplation; and he slowly quitted the room with Sibyll.

"But not, dear sir and father, not thus—not quite thus—will you go to the stranger, well-born like yourself? Oh, no! your Sibyll is proud, you know,—proud of her father." So saying, she clung to him fondly, and drew him mechanically, for he had sunk into a revery, and heeded her not, into an adjoining chamber, in which he slept. The comforts even of the gentry, of men with the acres that Adam had sold, were then few and scanty. The nobles and the wealthy merchants, indeed, boasted many luxuries that

excelled in gaud and pomp those of their equals now. But the class of the gentry who had very little money at command were contented with hardships from which a menial of this day would revolt. What they could spend in luxury was usually consumed in dress and the table they were obliged to keep. These were the essentials of dignity. Of furniture there was a woful stint. In many houses, even of knights, an edifice large enough to occupy a quadrangle was composed more of offices than chambers inhabited by the owners; rarely boasting more than three beds, which were bequeathed in wills as articles of great value. The reader must, therefore, not be surprised that Warner's abode contained but one bed, properly so called, and that was now devoted to Nevile. The couch which served the philosopher for bed was a wretched pallet, stretched on the floor, stuffed with straw,—with rough say, or serge, and an old cloak for the coverings. His daughter's, in a room below, was little better. The walls were bare; the whole house boasted but one chair, which was in Marmaduke's chamber; stools or settles of rude oak elsewhere supplied their place. There was no chimney except in Nevile's room, and in that appropriated to the forge.

To this chamber, then, resembling a dungeon in appearance, Sibyll drew the student, and here, from an old worm-eaten chest, she carefully extracted a gown of brown velvet, which his father, Sir Armine, had bequeathed to him by will,—faded, it is true, but still such as the low-born wore not, [By the sumptuary laws only a knight was entitled to wear velvet.] trimmed with fur, and clasped with a brooch of gold. And then she held the ewer and basin to him, while, with the docility of a child, he washed the smoke-soil from his hands and face. It was touching to see in this, as in all else, the reverse of their natural position,—the child tending and heeding and protecting, as it were, the father; and that not from his deficiency, but his greatness; not because he was below the vulgar intelligences of life, but above them. And certainly, when, his patriarchal hair and beard smoothed into order, and his velvet gown flowing in majestic folds around a figure tall and commanding, Sibyll followed her father into Marmaduke's chamber, she might well have been proud of his appearance; and she felt the innocent vanity of her sex and age in noticing the half-start of surprise with which Marmaduke regarded his host, and the tone of respect in which he proffered him his salutations and thanks. Even his manner altered to Sibyll; it grew less frank and affable, more courtly and reserved: and when Madge came to announce that the refection was served, it was with a blush of shame, perhaps, at his treatment of the poor gittern-player on the pastime-ground, that the Nevile extended his left hand, for his right was still not at his command, to lead the damsel to the hall.

This room, which was divided from the entrance by a screen, and, except a small closet that adjoined it, was the only sitting-room in a day when, as now on the Continent, no shame was attached to receiving visitors in sleeping apartments, was long and low; an old and very narrow table, that might have feasted thirty persons, stretched across a dais raised upon a stone floor; there was no rere-dosse, or fireplace, which does not seem at that day to have been an absolute necessity in the houses of the metropolis and its suburbs, its place being supplied by a movable brazier. Three oak stools were placed in state at the board, and to one of these Marmaduke, in a silence unusual to him, conducted the fair Sibyll.

"You will forgive our lack of provisions," said Warner, relapsing into the courteous fashions of his elder days, which the unwonted spectacle of a cold capon, a pasty, and a flask of wine brought to his mind by a train of ideas that actively glided by the intervening circumstances, which ought to have filled him with astonishment at the sight, "for my Sibyll is but a young housewife, and I am a simple scholar, of few wants."

"Verily," answered Marmaduke, finding his tongue as he attacked the pasty, "I see nothing that the most dainty need complain of; fair Mistress Sibyll, your dainty lips will not, I trow, refuse me the waisall. [I.e. waissail or wassal; the spelling of the time is adopted in the text.] To you also, worshipful sir! Gramercy! it seems that there is nothing which better stirs a man's appetite than a sick bed. And, speaking thereof, deign to inform me, kind sir, how long I have been indebted to your hospitality. Of a surety, this pasty hath an excellent flavour, and if not venison, is something better. But to return, it mazes me much to think what time hath passed since my encounter with the robbers."

"They were robbers, then, who so cruelly assailed thee?" observed Sibyll.

"Have I not said so—surely, who else? And, as I was remarking to your worshipful father, whether this mischance happened hours, days, months, or years ago, beshrew me if I can venture the smallest guess."

Master Warner smiled, and observing that some reply was expected from him, said, "Why, indeed, young sir, I fear I am almost as oblivious as yourself. It was not yesterday that you arrived, nor the day before, nor—Sibyll, my child, how long is it since this gentleman hath been our guest?"

"This is the fifth day," answered Sibyll.

"So long! and I like a senseless log by the wayside, when others are pushing on, bit and spur, to the great road. I pray you, sir, tell me the news of the morning. The Lord Warwick is still in London, the court still at the Tower?"

Poor Adam, whose heart was with his model, and who had now satisfied his temperate wants, looked somewhat bewildered and perplexed by this question. "The king, save his honoured head," said he, inclining his own, "is, I fear me, always at the Tower, since his unhappy detention, but he minds it not, sir,—he heeds it not; his soul is not on this side Paradise."

Sibyll uttered a faint exclamation of fear at this dangerous indiscretion of her father's absence of mind; and drawing closer to Nevile, she put her hand with touching confidence on his arm, and whispered, "You will not repeat this, Sir! my father lives only in his studies, and he has never known but one king!"

Marmaduke turned his bold face to the maid, and pointed to the salt-cellar, as he answered in the same tone, "Does the brave man betray his host?"

There was a moment's silence. Marmaduke rose. "I fear," said he, "that I must now leave you; and while it is yet broad noon, I must indeed be blind if I again miss my way."

This speech suddenly recalled Adam from his meditations; for whenever his kindly and simple benevolence was touched, even his mathematics and his model were forgotten. "No, young sir," said he, "you must not quit us yet; your danger is not over. Exercise may bring fever. Celsus recommends quiet. You must consent to tarry with us a day or two more."

"Can you tell me," said the Nevile, hesitatingly, "what distance it is to the Temple-gate, or the nearest wharf on the river?"

"Two miles, at the least," answered Sibyll.

"Two miles!—and now I mind me, I have not the accoutrements that beseem me. Those hildings have stolen my mantle (which, I perceive, by the way, is but a rustic garment, now laid aside for the super-tunic), and my hat and dague, nor have they left even a half groat to supply their place. Verily, therefore, since ye permit me to burden your hospitality longer, I will not say ye nay, provided you, worshipful sir, will suffer one of your people to step to the house of one Master Heyford, goldsmith, in the Chepe, and crave one Nicholas Alwyn, his freedman, to visit me. I can commission him touching my goods left at mine hostelrie, and learn some other things which it behooves me to know."

"Assuredly. Sibyll, tell Simon or Jonas to put himself under our guest's order."

Simon or Jonas! The poor Adam absolutely forgot that Simon and Jonas had quitted the house these six years! How could he look on the capon, the wine, and the velvet gown trimmed with fur, and not fancy himself back in the heyday of his wealth?

Sibyll half smiled and half sighed, as she withdrew to consult with her sole counsellor, Madge, how the guest's orders were to be obeyed, and how, alas! the board was to be replenished for the evening meal. But in both these troubles she was more fortunate than she anticipated. Madge had sold the broken gittern, for musical instruments were then, comparatively speaking, dear (and this had been a queen's gift), for sufficient to provide decently for some days; and, elated herself with the prospect of so much good cheer, she readily consented to be the messenger to Nicholas Alwyn. When with a light step and a lighter heart Sibyll tripped back to the hall, she was scarcely surprised to find the guest alone. Her father, after her departure, had begun to evince much restless perturbation. He answered Marmaduke's queries but by abstracted and desultory monosyllables; and seeing his guest at length engaged in contemplating some old pieces of armour hung upon the walls, he stole stealthily and furtively away, and halted not till once more before his beloved model.

Unaware of his departure, Marmaduke, whose back was turned to him, was, as he fondly imagined, enlightening his host with much soldier-like learning as to the old helmets and weapons that graced the hall. "Certes, my host," said he, musingly, "that sort of casque, which has not, I opine, been worn this century, had its merits; the vizor is less open to the arrows. But as for these chain suits, they suited only—I venture, with due deference, to declare—the Wars of the Crusades, where the enemy fought chiefly with dart and scymetar. They would be but a sorry defence against the mace and battle-axe; nevertheless, they were light for man and horse, and in some service, especially against foot, might be revived with advantage. Think you not so?"

He turned, and saw the arch face of Sibyll.

"I crave pardon for my blindness, gentle damsel," said he, in some confusion, "but your father was here anon."

"His mornings are so devoted to labour," answered Sibyll, "that he entreats you to pardon his discourtesy. Meanwhile if you would wish to breathe the air, we have a small garden in the rear;" and so saying, she led the way into the small withdrawing-room, or rather closet, which was her own favourite chamber, and which communicated, by another door, with a broad, neglected grassplot, surrounded by high walls, having a raised terrace in front, divided by a low stone Gothic palisade from the green sward.

On the palisade sat droopingly, and half asleep, a solitary peacock; but when Sibyll and the stranger appeared at the door, he woke up suddenly, descended from his height, and with a vanity not wholly unlike his young mistress's wish to make the best possible display in the eyes of a guest, spread his plumes broadly in the sun. Sibyll threw him some bread, which she had taken from the table for that purpose; but the proud bird, however hungry, disdained to eat, till he had thoroughly satisfied himself that his glories had been sufficiently observed.

"Poor proud one," said Sibyll, half to herself, "thy plumage lasts with thee through all changes."

"Like the name of a brave knight," said Marmaduke, who overheard her.

"Thou thinkest of the career of arms."

"Surely,—I am a Nevile!"

"Is there no fame to be won but that of a warrior?"

"Not that I weet of, or heed for, Mistress Sibyll."

"Thinkest thou it were nothing to be a minstrel, who gave delight; a scholar, who dispelled darkness?"

"For the scholar? Certes, I respect holy Mother Church, which they tell me alone produces that kind of wonder with full safety to the soul, and that only in the higher prelates and dignitaries. For the minstrel, I love him, I would fight for him, I would give him at need the last penny in my gipsire; but it is better to do deeds than to sing them."

Sibyll smiled, and the smile perplexed and half displeased the young adventurer. But the fire of the young man had its charm.

By degrees, as they walked to and fro the neglected terrace, their talk flowed free and familiar; for Marmaduke, like most young men full of himself, was joyous with the happy egotism of a frank and careless nature. He told his young confidante of a day his birth, his history, his hopes, and fears; and in return he learned, in answer to the questions he addressed to her, so much, at least, of her past and present life, as the reverses of her father, occasioned by costly studies, her own brief sojourn at the court of Margaret, and the solitude, if not the struggles, in which her youth was consumed. It would have been a sweet and grateful sight to some kindly bystander to hear these pleasant communications between two young persons so unfriended, and to imagine that hearts thus opened to each other might unite in one. But Sibyll, though she listened to him with interest, and found a certain sympathy in his aspirations, was ever and anon secretly comparing him to one, the charm of whose voice still lingered in her ears; and her intellect, cultivated and acute, detected in Marmaduke deficient education, and that limited experience which is the folly and the happiness of the young.

On the other hand, whatever admiration Nevile might conceive was strangely mixed with surprise, and, it might almost be said, with fear. This girl, with her wise converse and her child's face, was a character so thoroughly new to him. Her language was superior to what he had ever heard, the words more choice, the current more flowing: was that to be attributed to her court-training or her learned parentage?

"Your father, fair mistress," said he, rousing himself in one of the pauses of their conversation—"your father, then, is a mighty scholar, and I suppose knows Latin like English?"

"Why, a hedge-priest pretends to know Latin," said Sibyll, smiling; "my father is one of the six men living who have learned the Greek and the Hebrew."

"Gramercy!" cried Marmaduke, crossing himself. "That is awsome indeed! He has taught you his lere in the tongues?"

"Nay, I know but my own and the French; my mother was a native of France."

"The Holy Mother be praised!" said Marmaduke, breathing more freely; "for French I have heard my father and uncle say is a language fit for gentles and knights, specially those who come, like the Neviles, from Norman stock. This Margaret of Anjou—didst thou love her well, Mistress Sibyll?"

"Nay," answered Sibyll, "Margaret commanded awe, but she scarcely permitted love from an inferior: and though gracious and well-governed when she so pleased, it was but to those whom she wished to win. She cared not for the heart, if the hand or the brain could not assist her. But, poor queen, who could blame her for this?—her nature was turned from its milk; and, when, more lately, I have heard how many she trusted most have turned against her, I rebuked myself that—"

"Thou wert not by her side?" added the Nevile, observing her pause, and with the generous thought of a gentleman and a soldier.

"Nay, I meant not that so expressly, Master Nevile, but rather that I had ever murmured at her haste and shrewdness of mood. By her side, said you?—alas! I have a nearer duty at home; my father is all in this world to me! Thou knowest not, Master Nevile, how it flatters the weak to think there is some one they can protect. But eno' of myself. Thou wilt go to the stout earl, thou wilt pass to the court, thou wilt win the gold spurs, and thou wilt fight with the strong hand, and leave others to cozen with the keen head."

"She is telling my fortune!" muttered Marmaduke, crossing himself again. "The gold spurs—I thank thee, Mistress Sibyll!—will it be on the battle-field that I shall be knighted, and by whose hand?"

Sibyll glanced her bright eye at the questioner, and seeing his wistful face, laughed outright.

"What, thinkest thou, Master Nevile, I can read thee all riddles without my sieve and my shears?"

"They are essentials, then, Mistress Sibyll?" said the Nevile, with blunt simplicity. "I thought ye more learned damozels might tell by the palm, or the—why dost thou laugh at me?"

"Nay," answered Sibyll, composing herself. "It is my right to be angered. Sith thou wouldst take me to be a witch, all that I can tell thee of thy future" (she added touchingly) "is from that which I have seen of thy past. Thou hast a brave heart, and a gentle; thou hast a frank tongue, and a courteous; and these qualities make men honoured and loved,—except they have the gifts which turn all into gall, and bring oppression for honour, and hate for love."

"And those gifts, gentle Sibyll?"

"Are my father's," answered the girl, with another and a sadder change in her expressive countenance. And the conversation flagged till Marmaduke, feeling more weakened by his loss of blood than he had conceived it possible, retired to his chamber to repose himself.

CHAPTER VI. MASTER MARMADUKE NEVILE FEARS FOR THE SPIRITUAL WEAL OF HIS HOST AND HOSTESS.

Before the hour of supper, which was served at six o'clock, Nicholas Alwyn arrived at the house indicated to him by Madge. Marmaduke, after a sound sleep, which was little flattering to Sibyll's attractions, had descended to the hall in search of the maiden and his host, and finding no one, had sauntered in extreme weariness and impatience into the little withdrawing-closet, where as it was now dusk, burned a single candle in a melancholy and rustic sconce; standing by the door that opened on the garden, he amused himself with watching the peacock, when his friend, following Madge into the chamber, tapped him on the shoulder.

"Well, Master Nevile. Ha! by Saint Thomas, what has chanced to thee? Thine arm swathed up, thy locks shorn, thy face blanched! My honoured foster-brother, thy Westmoreland blood seems over-hot for Cockaigne!"

"If so, there are plenty in this city of cut-throats to let out the surplusage," returned Marmaduke; and he briefly related his adventure to Nicholas.

When he had done, the kind trader reproached himself for having suffered Marmaduke to find his way alone. "The suburbs abound with these miscreants," said he; "and there is more danger in a night walk near London than in the loneliest glens of green Sherwood—more shame to the city! An' I be Lord Mayor one of these days, I will look to it better. But our civil wars make men hold human life very cheap, and there's parlous little care from the great of the blood and limbs of the wayfarers. But war makes thieves—and peace hangs them! Only wait till I manage affairs!"

"Many thanks to thee, Nicholas," returned the Nevile; "but foul befall me if ever I seek protection from sheriff or mayor! A man who cannot keep his own life with his own right hand merits well to hap-lose it; and I, for one, shall think ill of the day when an Englishman looks more to the laws than his good arm for his safety; but, letting this pass, I beseech thee to avise me if my Lord Warwick be still in the city?"

"Yes, marry, I know that by the hostelries, which swarm with his badges, and the oxen, that go in scores to the shambles! It is a shame to the Estate to see one subject so great, and it bodes no good to our peace. The earl is preparing the most magnificent embassage that ever crossed the salt seas—I would it were not to the French, for our interests lie contrary; but thou hast some days yet to rest here and grow stout, for I would not have thee present thyself with a visage of chalk to a man who values his kind mainly by their thews and their sinews. Moreover, thou shouldst send for the tailor, and get thee trimmed to the mark. It would be a long step in thy path to promotion, an' the earl would take thee in his train; and the gaudier thy plumes, why, the better chance for thy flight. Wherefore, since thou sayest they are thus friendly to thee under this roof, bide yet a while peacefully; I will send thee the mercer, and the clothier, and the tailor, to divert thy impatience. And as these fellows are greedy, my gentle and dear Master Nevile, may I ask, without offence, how thou art provided?"

"Nay, nay, I have moneys at the hostelrie, an' thou wilt send me my mails. For the rest, I like thy advice, and will take it."

"Good!" answered Nicholas. "Hem! thou seemest to have got into a poor house,—a decayed gentleman, I wot, by the slovenly ruin!"

"I would that were the worst," replied Marmaduke, solemnly, and under his breath; and therewith he repeated to Nicholas the adventure on the pastime-ground, the warnings of the timbrel-girls, and the "awsome" learning and strange pursuits of his host. As for Sibyll, he was evidently inclined to attribute to glamour the reluctant admiration with which she had inspired him. "For," said he, "though I deny not that the maid is passing fair, there be many with rosier cheeks, and taller by this hand!"

Nicholas listened, at first, with the peculiar expression of shrewd sarcasm which mainly characterized his intelligent face, but his attention grew more earnest before Marmaduke had concluded.

"In regard to the maiden," said he, smiling and shaking his head, "it is not always the handsomest that win us the most,—while fair Meg went a maying, black Meg got to church; and I give thee more reasonable warning than thy timbrel-girls, when, in spite of thy cold language, I bid thee take care of thyself against her attractions; for, verily, my dear foster-brother, thou must mend and not mar thy fortune, by thy love matters; and keep thy heart whole for some fair one with marks in her gipsire, whom the earl may find out for thee. Love and raw pease are two ill things in the porridge-pot. But the father!—I mind me now that I have heard of his name, through my friend Master Caxton, the mercer, as one of prodigious skill in the mathematics. I should like much to see him, and, with thy leave (an' he ask me), will tarry to supper. But what are these?"—and Nicholas took up one of the illuminated manuscripts which Sibyll had prepared for sale. "By the blood! this is couthly and marvellously blazoned."

The book was still in his hands when Sibyll entered. Nicholas stared at her, as he bowed with a stiff and ungraceful embarrassment, which often at first did injustice to his bold, clear intellect, and his perfect self-possession in matters of trade or importance.

"The first woman face," muttered Nicholas to himself, "I ever saw that had the sense of a man's. And, by the rood, what a smile!"

"Is this thy friend, Master Nevile?" said Sibyll, with a glance at the goldsmith. "He is welcome. But is it fair and courteous, Master Nelwyn—"

"Alwyn, an' it please you, fair mistress. A humble name, but good Saxon,—which, I take it, Nelwyn is not," interrupted Nicholas.

"Master Alwyn, forgive me; but can I forgive thee so readily for thy espial of my handiwork, without license or leave?"

"Yours, comely mistress!" exclaimed Nicholas, opening his eyes, and unheeding the gay rebuke—"why, this is a master-hand. My Lord Scales—nay, the Earl of Worcester himself—hath scarce a finer in all his amassment."

"Well, I forgive thy fault for thy flattery; and I pray thee, in my father's name, to stay and sup with thy friend." Nicholas bowed low, and still riveted his eyes on the book with such open admiration, that Marmaduke thought it right to excuse his abstraction; but there was something in that admiration which raised the spirits of Sibyll, which gave her hope when hope was well-nigh gone; and she became so vivacious, so debonair, so charming, in the flow of a gayety natural to her, and very uncommon with English maidens, but which she took partly, perhaps, from her French blood, and partly from the example of girls and maidens of French extraction in Margaret's court, that Nicholas Alwyn thought he had never seen any one so irresistible. Madge had now served the evening meal, put in her head to announce it, and Sibyll withdrew to summon her father.

"I trust he will not tarry too long, for I am sharp set!" muttered Marmaduke. "What thinkest thou of the damozel?"

"Marry," answered Alwyn, thoughtfully, "I pity and marvel at her. There is eno' in her to furnish forth twenty court beauties. But what good can so much wit and cunning do to an honest maiden?"

"That is exactly my own thought," said Marmaduke; and both the young men sunk into silence, till Sibyll re-entered with her father.

To the surprise of Marmaduke, Nicholas Alwyn, whose less gallant manner he was inclined to ridicule, soon contrived to rouse their host from his lethargy, and to absorb all the notice of Sibyll; and the surprise was increased, when he saw that his friend appeared not unfamiliar with those abstruse and mystical sciences in which Adam was engaged.

"What!" said Adam, "you know, then, my deft and worthy friend Master Caxton! He hath seen notable things abroad—"

"Which, he more than hints," said Nicholas, "will lower the value of those manuscripts this fair damozel has so couthly enriched; and that he hopes, ere long, to show the Englishers how to make fifty, a hundred,—nay even five hundred exemplars of the choicest book, in a much shorter time than a scribe would take in writing out two or three score pages in a single copy."

"Verily," said Marmaduke, with a smile of compassion, "the poor man must be somewhat demented; for I opine that the value of such curiosities must be in their rarity; and who would care for a book, if five hundred others had precisely the same?—allowing always, good Nicholas, for thy friend's vaunting and over-crowing. Five hundred! By'r Lady, there would be scarcely five hundred fools in merry England to waste good nobles on spoilt rags, specially while bows and mail are so dear."

"Young gentleman," said Adam, rebukingly, "meseemeth that thou wrongest our age and country, to the which, if we have but peace and freedom, I trust the birth of great discoveries is ordained. Certes, Master Alwyn," he added, turning to the goldsmith, "this achievement maybe readily performed, and hath existed, I heard an ingenious Fleming say years ago, for many ages amongst a strange people [Query, the Chinese?] known to the Venetians! But dost thou think there is much appetite among those who govern the State to lend encouragement to such matters?"

"My master serves my Lord Hastings, the king's chamberlain, and my lord has often been pleased to converse with me, so that I venture to say, from my knowledge of his affection to all excellent craft and lere, that whatever will tend to make men wiser will have his countenance and favour with the king."

"That is it, that is it!" exclaimed Adam, rubbing his hands. "My invention shall not die!"

"And that invention—"

"Is one that will multiply exemplars of books without hands; works of craft without 'prentice or journeyman; will move wagons and litters without horses; will direct ships without sails; will—But, alack! it is not yet complete, and, for want of means, it never may be."

Sibyll still kept her animated countenance fixed on Alwyn, whose intelligence she had already detected, and was charmed with the profound attention with which he listened. But her eye glancing from his sharp features to the handsome, honest face of the Nevile, the contrast was so forcible, that she could not restrain her laughter, though, the moment after, a keen pang shot through her heart. The worthy Marmaduke had been in the act of conveying his cup to his lips; the cup stood arrested midway, his jaws dropped, his eyes opened to their widest extent, an expression of the most evident consternation and dismay spoke in every feature; and when he heard the merry laugh of Sibyll, he pushed his stool from her as far as he well could, and surveyed her with a look of mingled fear and pity.

"Alas! thou art sure my poor father is a wizard now?"

"Pardie!" answered the Nevile. "Hath he not said so? Hath he not spoken of wagons without horses, ships without sails? And is not all this what every dissour and jongleur tells us of in his stories of Merlin? Gentle maiden," he added earnestly, drawing nearer to her, and whispering in a voice of much simple pathos, "thou art young, and I owe thee much. Take care of thyself. Such wonders and derring-do are too solemn for laughter."

"Ah," answered Sibyll, rising, "I fear they are. How can I expect the people to be wiser than thou, or their hard natures kinder in their judgment than thy kind heart?" Her low and melancholy voice went to the heart thus appealed to. Marmaduke also rose, and followed her into the parlour, or withdrawing-closet, while Adam and the goldsmith continued to converse (though Alwyn's eye followed the young hostess), the former appearing perfectly unconscious of the secession of his other listeners. But Alwyn's attention occasionally wandered, and he soon contrived to draw his host into the parlour.

When Nicholas rose, at last, to depart, he beckoned Sibyll aside. "Fair mistress," said he, with some awkward hesitation, "forgive a plain, blunt tongue; but ye of the better birth are not always above aid, even from such as I am. If you would sell these blazoned manuscripts, I can not only obtain you a noble

purchaser in my Lord Scales, or in my Lord Hastings, an equally ripe scholar, but it may be the means of my procuring a suitable patron for your father; and, in these times, the scholar must creep under the knight's manteline."

"Master Alwyn," said Sibyll, suppressing her tears, "it was for my father's sake that these labours were wrought. We are poor and friendless. Take the manuscripts, and sell them as thou wilt, and God and Saint Mary requite thee!"

"Your father is a great man," said Alwyn, after a pause.

"But were he to walk the streets, they would stone him," replied Sibyll, with a quiet bitterness.

Here the Nevile, carefully shunning the magician, who, in the nervous excitement produced by the conversation of a mind less uncongenial than he had encountered for many years, seemed about to address him—here, I say, the Nevile chimed in, "Hast thou no weapon but thy bludgeon? Dear foster-brother, I fear for thy safety."

"Nay, robbers rarely attack us mechanical folk; and I know my way better than thou. I shall find a boat near York House; so pleasant night and quick cure to thee, honoured foster-brother. I will send the tailor and other craftsmen to-morrow."

"And at the same time," whispered Marmaduke, accompanying his friend to the door, "send me a breviary, just to patter an ave or so. This gray-haired carle puts my heart in a tremble. Moreover, buy me a gittern—a brave one—for the damozel. She is too proud to take money, and, 'fore Heaven, I have small doubts the old wizard could turn my hose into nobles an' he had a mind for such gear. Wagons without horses, ships without sails, quotha!"

As soon as Alwyn had departed, Madge appeared with the final refreshment, called "the Wines," consisting of spiced hippocras and confections, of the former of which the Nevile partook in solemn silence.

CHAPTER VII. THERE IS A ROD FOR THE BACK OF EVERY FOOL WHO WOULD BE WISER THAN HIS GENERATION.

The next morning, when Marmaduke descended to the hall, Madge, accosting him on the threshold, informed him that Mistress Sibyll was unwell, and kept her chamber, and that Master Warner was never visible much before noon. He was, therefore, prayed to take his meal alone. "Alone" was a word peculiarly unwelcome to Marmaduke Nevile, who was an animal thoroughly social and gregarious. He managed, therefore, to detain the old servant, who, besides the liking a skilful leech naturally takes to a thriving patient, had enough of her sex about her to be pleased with a comely face and a frank, good-humoured voice. Moreover, Marmaduke, wishing to satisfy his curiosity, turned the conversation upon Warner and Sibyll, a theme upon which the old woman was well disposed to be garrulous. He soon learned the poverty of the mansion and the sacrifice of the gittern; and his generosity and compassion were busily engaged in devising some means to requite the hospitality he had received, without wounding

the pride of his host, when the arrival of his mails, together with the visits of the tailor and mercer, sent to him by Alwyn, diverted his thoughts into a new channel.

Between the comparative merits of gowns and surcoats, broad-toed shoes and pointed, some time was disposed of with much cheerfulness and edification; but when his visitors had retired, the benevolent mind of the young guest again recurred to the penury of his host. Placing his marks before him on the table in the little withdrawing parlour, he began counting them over, and putting aside the sum he meditated devoting to Warner's relief. "But how," he muttered, "how to get him to take the gold. I know, by myself, what a gentleman and a knight's son must feel at the proffer of alms—pardie! I would as lief Alwyn had struck me as offered me his gipsire,—the ill-mannered, affectionate fellow! I must think—I must think—"

And while still thinking, the door softly opened, and Warner himself, in a high state of abstraction and revery, stalked noiselessly into the room, on his way to the garden, in which, when musing over some new spring for his invention, he was wont to peripatize. The sight of the gold on the table struck full on the philosopher's eyes, and waked him at once from his revery. That gold—oh, what precious instruments, what learned manuscripts it could purchase! That gold, it was the breath of life to his model! He walked deliberately up to the table, and laid his hand upon one of the little heaps. Marmaduke drew back his stool, and stared at him with open mouth.

"Young man, what wantest thou with all this gold?" said Adam, in a petulant, reproachful tone. "Put it up! put it up! Never let the poor see gold; it tempts them, sir,—it tempts them." And so saying, the student abruptly turned away his eyes, and moved towards the garden. Marmaduke rose and put himself in Adam's way. "Honoured sir," said the young man, "you say justly what want I with all this gold? The only gold a young man should covet is eno' to suffice for the knight's spurs to his heels. If, without offence, you would—that is—ahem!—I mean,—Gramercy! I shall never say it, but I believe my father owed your father four marks, and he bade me repay them. Here, sir!" He held out the glittering coins; the philosopher's hand closed on them as the fish's maw closes on the bait. Adam burst into a laugh, that sounded strangely weird and unearthly upon Marmaduke's startled ear.

"All this for me!" he exclaimed. "For me! No, no, no! for me, for IT—I take it—I take it, sir! I will pay it back with large usury. Come to me this day year, when this world will be a new world, and Adam Warner will be—ha! ha! Kind Heaven, I thank thee!" Suddenly turning away, the philosopher strode through the hall, opened the front door, and escaped into the street.

"By'r Lady," said Marmaduke, slowly recovering his surprise, "I need not have been so much at a loss; the old gentleman takes to my gold as kindly as if it were mother's milk. 'Fore Heaven, mine host's laugh is a ghastly thing!" So soliloquizing, he prudently put up the rest of his money, and locked his mails.

As time went on, the young man became exceedingly weary of his own company. Sibyll still withheld her appearance; the gloom of the old hall, the uncultivated sadness of the lonely garden, preyed upon his spirits. At length, impatient to get a view of the world without, he mounted a high stool in the hall, and so contrived to enjoy the prospect which the unglazed wicker lattice, deep set in the wall, afforded. But the scene without was little more animated than that within,—all was so deserted in the neighbourhood,—the shops mean and scattered, the thoroughfare almost desolate. At last he heard a shout, or rather hoot, at a distance; and, turning his attention whence it proceeded, he beheld a figure emerge from an alley opposite the casement, with a sack under one arm, and several books heaped under the other. At his heels followed a train of ragged boys, shouting and hallooing, "The wizard! the wizard!—Ah! Bah! The old devil's kin!" At this cry the dull neighbourhood seemed suddenly to burst forth into life. From the casements and thresholds of every house curious faces emerged, and many voices of men and women joined, in deeper bass, with the shrill tenor of the choral urchins, "The wizard! the wizard! out at daylight!" The person thus stigmatized, as he approached the house, turned his face with an expression of wistful perplexity from side to side. His lips moved convulsively, and his face was very pale, but he spoke not. And now, the children,

seeing him near his refuge, became more outrageous. They placed themselves menacingly before him, they pulled his robe, they even struck at him; and one, bolder than the rest, jumped up, and plucked his beard. At this last insult, Adam Warner, for it was he, broke silence; but such was the sweetness of his disposition, that it was rather with pity than reproof in his voice, that he said,—

"Fie, little one! I fear me thine own age will have small honour if thou thus mockest mature years in me."

This gentleness only served to increase the audacity of his persecutors, who now, momently augmenting, presented a formidable obstacle to further progress. Perceiving that he could not advance without offensive measures on his own part, the poor scholar halted; and looking at the crowd with mild dignity, he asked, "What means this, my children? How have I injured you?"

"The wizard! the wizard!" was the only answer he received. Adam shrugged his shoulders, and strode on with so sudden a step, that one of the smaller children, a curly-headed laughing rogue, of about eight years old, was thrown down at his feet, and the rest gave way. But the poor man, seeing one of his foes thus fallen, instead of pursuing his victory, again paused, and forgetful of the precious burdens he carried, let drop the sack and books, and took up the child in his arms. On seeing their companion in the embrace of the wizard, a simultaneous cry of horror broke from the assemblage, "He is going to curse poor Tim!"

"My child! my boy!" shrieked a woman, from one of the casements; "let go my child!"

On his part, the boy kicked and shrieked lustily, as Adam, bending his noble face tenderly over him, said, "Thou art not hurt, child. Poor boy! thinkest thou I would harm thee?" While he spoke a storm of missiles—mud, dirt, sticks, bricks, stones—from the enemy, that had now fallen back in the rear, burst upon him. A stone struck him on the shoulder. Then his face changed; an angry gleam shot from his deep, calm eyes; he put down the child, and, turning steadily to the grown people at the windows, said, "Ye train your children ill;" picked up his sack and books, sighed, as he saw the latter stained by the mire, which he wiped with his long sleeve, and too proud to show fear, slowly made for his door. Fortunately Sibyll had heard the clamour, and was ready to admit her father, and close the door upon the rush which instantaneously followed his escape. The baffled rout set up a yell of wrath, and the boys were now joined by several foes more formidable from the adjacent houses; assured in their own minds that some terrible execration had been pronounced upon the limbs and body of Master Tim, who still continued bellowing and howling, probably from the excitement of finding himself raised to the dignity of a martyr, the pious neighbours poured forth, with oaths and curses, and such weapons as they could seize in haste, to storm the wizard's fortress.

From his casement Marmaduke Nevile had espied all that had hitherto passed, and though indignant at the brutality of the persecutors, he had thought it by no means unnatural. "If men, gentlemen born, will read uncanny books, and resolve to be wizards, why, they must reap what they sow," was the logical reflection that passed through the mind of that ingenuous youth; but when he now perceived the arrival of more important allies, when stones began to fly through the wicker lattice, when threats of setting fire to the house and burning the sorcerer who muttered spells over innocent little boys were heard, seriously increasing in depth and loudness, Marmaduke felt his chivalry called forth, and with some difficulty opening the rusty wicket in the casement, he exclaimed: "Shame on you, my countrymen, for thus disturbing in broad day a peaceful habitation! Ye call mine host a wizard. Thus much say I on his behalf: I was robbed and wounded a few nights since in your neighbourhood, and in this house alone I found shelter and healing."

The unexpected sight of the fair young face of Marmaduke Nevile, and the healthful sound of his clear ringing voice, produced a momentary effect on the besiegers, when one of them, a sturdy baker, cried out, "Heed him not,—he is a goblin. Those devil-mongers can bake ye a dozen such every moment, as deftly as I can draw loaves from the oven!"

This speech turned the tide, and at that instant a savage-looking man, the father of the aggrieved boy, followed by his wife, gesticulating and weeping, ran from his house, waving a torch in his right hand, his arm bare to the shoulder; and the cry of "Fire the door!" was universal.

In fact, the danger now grew imminent: several of the party were already piling straw and fagots against the threshold, and Marmaduke began to think the only chance of life to his host and Sibyll was in flight by some back way, when he beheld a man, clad somewhat in the fashion of a country yeoman, a formidable knotted club in his hand, pushing his way, with Herculean shoulders, through the crowd; and stationing himself before the threshold and brandishing aloft his formidable weapon, he exclaimed, "What! In the devil's name, do you mean to get yourselves all hanged for riot? Do you think that King Edward is as soft a man as King Henry was, and that he will suffer any one but himself to set fire to people's houses in this way? I dare say you are all right enough in the main, but by the blood of Saint Thomas, I will brain the first man who advances a step,—by way of preserving the necks of the rest!"

"A Robin! a Robin!" cried several of the mob. "It is our good friend Robin. Harken to Robin. He is always right."

"Ay, that I am!" quoth the defender; "you know that well enough. If I had my way, the world should be turned upside down, but what the poor folk should get nearer to the sun! But what I say is this, never go against law, while the law is too strong. And it were a sad thing to see fifty fine fellows trussed up for burning an old wizard. So, be off with you, and let us, at least all that can afford it, make for Master Sancroft's hostelrie and talk soberly over our ale. For little, I trow, will ye work now your blood's up."

This address was received with a shout of approbation. The father of the injured child set his broad foot on his torch, the baker chucked up his white cap, the ragged boys yelled out, "A Robin! a Robin!" and in less than two minutes the place was as empty as it had been before the appearance of the scholar. Marmaduke, who, though so ignorant of books, was acute and penetrating in all matters of action, could not help admiring the address and dexterity of the club-bearer; and the danger being now over, withdrew from the casement, in search of the inmates of the house. Ascending the stairs, he found on the landing-place, near his room, and by the embrasure of a huge casement which jutted from the wall, Adam and his daughter. Adam was leaning against the wall, with his arms folded, and Sibyll, hanging upon him, was uttering the softest and most soothing words of comfort her tenderness could suggest.

"My child," said the old man, shaking his head sadly, "I shall never again have heart for these studies,—never! A king's anger I could brave, a priest's malice I could pity; but to find the very children, the young race for whose sake I have made thee and myself paupers, to find them thus—thus—" He stopped, for his voice failed him, and the tears rolled down his cheeks.

"Come and speak comfort to my father, Master Nevile," exclaimed Sibyll; "come and tell him that whoever is above the herd, whether knight or scholar, must learn to despise the hootings that follow Merit. Father, Father, they threw mud and stones at thy king as he passed through the streets of London. Thou art not the only one whom this base world misjudges."

"Worthy mine host!" said Marmaduke, thus appealed to, "Algates, it were not speaking truth to tell thee that I think a gentleman of birth and quality should walk the thoroughfares with a bundle of books under his arm; yet as for the raptril vulgar, the hildings and cullions who hiss one day what they applaud the next, I hold it the duty of every Christian and well-born man to regard them as the dirt on the crossings. Brave soldiers term it no disgrace to receive a blow from a base hind. An' it had been knights and gentles who had insulted thee, thou mightest have cause for shame. But a mob of lewd rascallions and squalling infants—bah! verily, it is mere matter for scorn and laughter."

These philosophical propositions and distinctions did not seem to have their due effect upon Adam. He smiled, however, gently upon his guest, and with a blush over his pale face, said, “I am rightly chastised, good young man; mean was I, methinks, and sordid to take from thee thy good gold. But thou knowest not what fever burns in the brain of a man who feels that, had he wealth, his knowledge could do great things,—such things!—I thought to repay thee well. Now the frenzy is gone, and I, who an hour ago esteemed myself a puissant sage, sink in mine own conceit to a miserable blinded fool. Child, I am very weak; I will lay me down and rest.”

So saying, the poor philosopher went his way to his chamber, leaning on his daughter’s arm.

In a few minutes Sibyll rejoined Marmaduke, who had returned to the hall, and informed him that her father had lain down a while to compose himself.

“It is a hard fate, sir,” said the girl, with a faint smile,—“a hard fate, to be banned and accursed by the world, only because one has sought to be wiser than the world is.”

“Douce maiden,” returned the Nevile, “it is happy for thee that thy sex forbids thee to follow thy father’s footsteps, or I should say his hard fate were thy fair warning.”

Sibyll smiled faintly, and after a pause, said, with a deep blush,—

“You have been generous to my father; do not misjudge him. He would give his last groat to a starving beggar. But when his passion of scholar and inventor masters him, thou mightest think him worse than miser. It is an overnoble yearning that ofttimes makes him mean.”

“Nay,” answered Marmaduke, touched by the heavy sigh and swimming eyes with which the last words were spoken; “I have heard Nick Alwyn’s uncle, who was a learned monk, declare that he could not constrain himself to pray to be delivered from temptation, seeing that he might thereby lose an occasion for filching some notable book! For the rest,” he added, “you forget how much I owe to Master Warner’s hospitality.”

He took her hand with a frank and brotherly gallantry as he spoke; but the touch of that small, soft hand, freely and innocently resigned to him, sent a thrill to his heart—and again the face of Sibyll seemed to him wondrous fair.

There was a long silence, which Sibyll was the first to break. She turned the conversation once more upon Marmaduke’s views in life. It had been easy for a deeper observer than he was to see that, under all that young girl’s simplicity and sweetness, there lurked something of dangerous ambition. She loved to recall the court-life her childhood had known, though her youth had resigned it with apparent cheerfulness. Like many who are poor and fallen, Sibyll built herself a sad consolation out of her pride; she never forgot that she was well-born. But Marmaduke, in what was ambition, saw but interest in himself, and his heart beat more quickly as he bent his eyes upon that downcast, thoughtful, earnest countenance.

After an hour thus passed, Sibyll left the guest, and remounted to her father’s chamber. She found Adam pacing the narrow floor, and muttering to himself. He turned abruptly as she entered, and said, “Come hither, child; I took four marks from that young man, for I wanted books and instruments, and there are two left; see, take them back to him.”

“My father, he will not receive them. Fear not, thou shalt repay him some day.”

“Take them, I say, and if the young man says thee nay, why, buy thyself gauds and gear, or let us eat, and drink, and laugh. What else is life made for? Ha, ha! Laugh, child, laugh!”

There was something strangely pathetic in this outburst, this terrible mirth, born of profound dejection. Alas for this guileless, simple creature, who had clutched at gold with a huckster's eagerness! who, forgetting the wants of his own child, had employed it upon the service of an Abstract Thought, and whom the scorn of his kind now pierced through all the folds of his close-webbed philosophy and self forgetful genius. Awful is the duel between MAN and THE AGE in which he lives! For the gain of posterity, Adam Warner had martyrized existence,—and the children pelted him as he passed the streets! Sibyll burst into tears.

"No, my father, no," she sobbed, pushing back the money into his hands. "Let us both starve rather than you should despond. God and man will bring you justice yet."

"Ah," said the baffled enthusiast, "my whole mind is one sore now! I feel as if I could love man no more. Go, and leave me. Go, I say!" and the poor student, usually so mild and gall-less, stamped his foot in impotent rage. Sibyll, weeping as if her heart would break, left him.

Then Adam Warner again paced to and fro restlessly, and again muttered to himself for several minutes. At last he approached his Model,—the model of a mighty and stupendous invention, the fruit of no chimerical and visionary science; a great Promethean THING, that, once matured, would divide the Old World from the New, enter into all operations of Labour, animate all the future affairs, colour all the practical doctrines of active men. He paused before it, and addressed it as if it heard and understood him: "My hair was dark, and my tread was firm, when, one night, a THOUGHT passed into my soul,—a thought to make Matter the gigantic slave of Mind. Out of this thought, thou, not yet born after five-and-twenty years of travail, wert conceived. My coffers were then full, and my name was honoured; and the rich respected and the poor loved me. Art thou a devil, that has tempted me to ruin, or a god, that has lifted me above the earth? I am old before my time, my hair is blanched, my frame is bowed, my wealth is gone, my name is sullied. And all, dumb idol of Iron and the Element, all for thee! I had a wife whom I adored; she died,—I forgot her loss in the hope of thy life. I have a child still—God and our Lady forgive me! she is less dear to me than thou hast been. And now"—the old man ceased abruptly, and folding his arms, looked at the deaf iron sternly, as on a human foe. By his side was a huge hammer, employed in the toils of his forge; suddenly he seized and swung it aloft. One blow, and the labour of years was shattered into pieces! One blow!—But the heart failed him, and the hammer fell heavily to the ground.

"Ay!" he muttered, "true, true! if thou, who hast destroyed all else, wert destroyed too, what were left me? Is it a crime to murder Alan?—a greater crime to murder Thought, which is the life of all men! Come, I forgive thee!"

And all that day and all that night the Enthusiast laboured in his chamber, and the next day the remembrance of the hooting, the pelting, the mob, was gone,—clean gone from his breast. The Model began to move, life hovered over its wheels; and the Martyr of Science had forgotten the very world for which he, groaning and rejoicing, toiled!

CHAPTER VIII. MASTER MARMADUKE NEVILE MAKES LOVE, AND IS FRIGHTENED.

For two or three days Marmaduke and Sibyll were necessarily brought much together. Such familiarity of intercourse was peculiarly rare in that time, when, except perhaps in the dissolute court of Edward IV., the virgins of gentle birth mixed sparingly, and with great reserve, amongst those of opposite sex.

Marmaduke, rapidly recovering from the effect of his wounds, and without other resource than Sibyll's society in the solitude of his confinement, was not proof against the temptation which one so young and so sweetly winning brought to his fancy or his senses. The poor Sibyll—she was no faultless paragon,—she was a rare and singular mixture of many opposite qualities in heart and in intellect! She was one moment infantine in simplicity and gay playfulness; the next a shade passed over her bright face, and she uttered some sentence of that bitter and chilling wisdom, which the sense of persecution, the cruelty of the world, had already taught her. She was, indeed, at that age when the Child and the Woman are struggling against each other. Her character was not yet formed,—a little happiness would have ripened it at once into the richest bloom of goodness. But sorrow, that ever sharpens the intellect, might only serve to sour the heart. Her mind was so innately chaste and pure, that she knew not the nature of the admiration she excited; but the admiration pleased her as it pleases some young child; she was vain then, but it was an infant's vanity, not a woman's. And thus, from innocence itself, there was a fearlessness, a freedom, a something endearing and familiar in her manner, which might have turned a wiser head than Marmaduke Nevile's. And this the more, because, while liking her young guest, confiding in him, raised in her own esteem by his gallantry, enjoying that intercourse of youth with youth so unfamiliar to her, and surrendering herself the more to its charm from the joy that animated her spirits, in seeing that her father had forgotten his humiliation, and returned to his wonted labours,—she yet knew not for the handsome Nevile one sentiment that approached to love. Her mind was so superior to his own, that she felt almost as if older in years, and in their talk her rosy lips preached to him in grave advice.

On the landing, by Marmaduke's chamber, there was a large oriel casement jutting from the wall. It was only glazed at the upper part, and that most imperfectly, the lower part being closed at night or in inclement weather with rude shutters. The recess formed by this comfortless casement answered, therefore, the purpose of a balcony; it commanded a full view of the vicinity without, and gave to those who might be passing by the power also of indulging their own curiosity by a view of the interior.

Whenever he lost sight of Sibyll, and had grown weary of the peacock, this spot was Marmaduke's favourite haunt. It diverted him, poor youth, to look out of the window upon the livelier world beyond. The place, it is true, was ordinarily deserted, but still the spires and turrets of London were always discernible,—and they were something.

Accordingly, in this embrasure stood Marmaduke, when one morning, Sibyll, coming from her father's room, joined him.

"And what, Master Nevile," said Sibyll, with a malicious yet charming smile, "what claimed thy meditations? Some misgiving as to the trimming of thy tunic, or the length of thy shoon?"

"Nay," returned Marmaduke, gravely, "such thoughts, though not without their importance in the mind of a gentleman, who would not that his ignorance of court delicacies should commit him to the japes of his equals, were not at that moment uppermost. I was thinking—"

"Of those mastiffs, quarrelling for a bone. Avow it."

"By our Lady, I saw them not, but now I look, they are brave dogs. Ha! seest thou how gallantly each fronts the other, the hair bristling, the eyes fixed, the tail on end, the fangs glistening? Now the lesser one moves slowly round and round the bigger, who, mind you, Mistress Sibyll, is no dullard, but moves, too, quick as thought, not to be taken unawares. Ha! that is a brave spring! Heigh, dogs, Neigh! a good sight!—it makes the blood warm! The little one hath him by the throat!"

"Alack," said Sibyll, turning away her eyes, "can you find pleasure in seeing two poor brutes mangle each other for a bone?"

"By Saint Dunstan! doth it matter what may be the cause of quarrel, so long as dog or man bears himself bravely, with a due sense of honour and derring-do? See! the big one is up again. Ah, foul fall the butcher, who drives them away! Those seely mechanics know not the joyaunce of fair fighting to gentle and to hound. For a hound, mark you, hath nothing mechanical in his nature. He is a gentleman all over,—brave against equal and stranger, forbearing to the small and defenceless, true in poverty and need where he loveth, stern and ruthless where he hateth, and despising thieves, hildings, and the vulgar as much as e'er a gold spur in King Edward's court! Oh, certes, your best gentleman is the best hound!"

"You moralize to-day; and I know not how to gainsay you," returned Sibyll, as the dogs, reluctantly beaten off, retired each from each, snarling and reluctant, while a small black cur, that had hitherto sat unobserved at the door of a small hostelrie, now coolly approached and dragged off the bone of contention. "But what sayst thou now? See! see! the patient mongrel carries off the bone from the gentleman-hounds. Is that the way of the world?"

"Pardie! it is a naught world, if so, and much changed from the time of our fathers, the Normans. But these Saxons are getting uppermost again, and the yard measure, I fear me, is more potent in these holiday times than the mace or the battle-axe." The Nevile paused, sighed, and changed the subject: "This house of thine must have been a stately pile in its day. I see but one side of the quadrangle is left, though it be easy to trace where the other three have stood."

"And you may see their stones and their fittings in the butcher's and baker's stalls over the way," replied Sibyll.

"Ay!" said the Nevile, "the parings of the gentry begin to be the wealth of the varlets."

"Little ought we to pine at that," returned Sibyll, "if the varlets were but gentle with our poverty; but they loathe the humbled fortunes on which they rise, and while slaves to the rich, are tyrants to the poor."

This was said so sadly, that the Nevile felt his eyes overflow; and the humble dress of the girl, the melancholy ridges which evinced the site of a noble house, now shrunk into a dismal ruin, the remembrance of the pastime-ground, the insults of the crowd, and the broken gittern, all conspired to move his compassion, and to give force to yet more tender emotions.

"Ah," he said suddenly, and with a quick faint blush over his handsome and manly countenance,—"ah, fair maid—fair Sibyll—God grant that I may win something of gold and fortune amidst yonder towers, on which the sun shines so cheerly. God grant it, not for my sake,—not for mine; but that I may have something besides a true heart and a stainless name to lay at thy feet. Oh, Sibyll! By this hand, by my father's soul, I love thee, Sibyll! Have I not said it before? Well, hear me now,—I love thee!"

As he spoke, he clasped her hand in his own, and she suffered it for one instant to rest in his. Then withdrawing it, and meeting his enamoured eyes with a strange sadness in her own darker, deeper, and more intelligent orbs, she said,—

"I thank thee,—thank thee for the honour of such kind thoughts; and frankly I answer, as thou hast frankly spoken. It was sweet to me, who have known little in life not hard and bitter,—sweet to wish I had a brother like thee, and, as a brother, I can love and pray for thee. But ask not more, Marmaduke. I have aims in life which forbid all other love."

"Art thou too aspiring for one who has his spurs to win?"

"Not so; but listen. My mother's lessons and my own heart have made my poor father the first end and object of all things on earth to me. I live to protect him, work for him, honour him; and for the rest, I have

thoughts thou canst not know, an ambition thou canst not feel. Nay," she added, with that delightful smile which chased away the graver thought which had before saddened her aspect, "what would thy sober friend Master Alwyn say to thee, if he heard thou hadst courted the wizard's daughter?"

"By my faith," exclaimed Marmaduke, "thou art a very April,—smiles and clouds in a breath! If what thou despisest in me be my want of bookcraft, and such like, by my halidame I will turn scholar for thy sake; and—"

Here, as he had again taken Sibyll's hand, with the passionate ardour of his bold nature, not to be lightly daunted by a maiden's first "No," a sudden shrill, wild burst of laughter, accompanied with a gusty fit of unmelodious music from the street below, made both maiden and youth start, and turn their eyes; there, weaving their immodest dance, tawdry in their tinsel attire, their naked arms glancing above their heads, as they waved on high their instruments, went the timbrel-girls.

"Ha, ha!" cried their leader, "see the gallant and the witch-leman! The glamour has done its work! Foul is fair! foul is fair! and the devil will have his own!"

But these creatures, whose bold license the ancient chronicler records, were rarely seen alone. They haunted parties of pomp and pleasure; they linked together the extremes of life,—the grotesque Chorus that introduced the terrible truth of foul vice and abandoned wretchedness in the midst of the world's holiday and pageant. So now, as they wheeled into the silent, squalid street, they heralded a goodly company of dames and cavaliers on horseback, who were passing through the neighbouring plains into the park of Marybone to enjoy the sport of falconry. The splendid dresses of this procession, and the grave and measured dignity with which it swept along, contrasted forcibly with the wild movements and disorderly mirth of the timbrel-players. These last darted round and round the riders, holding out their instruments for largess, and retorting, with laugh and gibe, the disdainful look or sharp rebuke with which their salutations were mostly received.

Suddenly, as the company, two by two, paced up the street, Sibyll uttered a faint exclamation, and strove to snatch her hand from the Nevile's grasp. Her eye rested upon one of the horsemen, who rode last, and who seemed in earnest conversation with a dame, who, though scarcely in her first youth, excelled all her fair companions in beauty of face and grace of horsemanship, as well as in the costly equipments of the white barb that caracoled beneath her easy hand. At the same moment the horseman looked up and gazed steadily at Sibyll, whose countenance grew pale, and flushed, in a breath. His eye then glanced rapidly at Marmaduke; a half-smile passed his pale, firm lips; he slightly raised the plumed cap from his brow, inclined gravely to Sibyll, and, turning once more to his companion, appeared to answer some question she addressed to him as to the object of his salutation, for her look, which was proud, keen, and lofty, was raised to Sibyll, and then dropped somewhat disdainfully, as she listened to the words addressed her by the cavalier.

The lynx eyes of the tymbesteres had seen the recognition; and their leader, laying her bold hand on the embossed bridle of the horseman, exclaimed, in a voice shrill and loud enough to be heard in the balcony above, "Largess! noble lord, largess! for the sake of the lady thou lovest best!"

The fair equestrian turned away her head at these words; the nobleman watched her a moment, and dropped some coins into the timbrel.

"Ha, ha!" cried the tymbestere, pointing her long arm to Sibyll, and springing towards the balcony,—

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                "The cushat would mate
                 Above her state,
And she flutters her wings round the falcon's beak;
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            But death to the dove
            Is the falcon's love!
Oh, sharp is the kiss of the falcon's beak!"
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Before this rude song was ended, Sibyll had vanished from the place; the cavalcade had disappeared. The timbrel-players, without deigning to notice Marmaduke, darted elsewhere to ply their discordant trade, and the Nevile, crossing himself devoutly, muttered, "Jesu defend us! Those she Will-o'-the-wisps are eno' to scare all the blood out of one's body. What—a murrain on them!—do they portend, flitting round and round, and skirting off, as if the devil's broomstick was behind them! By the Mass! they have frighted away the damozel, and I am not sorry for it. They have left me small heart for the part of Sir Launval."

His meditations were broken off by the sudden sight of Nicholas Alwyn, mounted on a small palfrey, and followed by a sturdy groom on horseback, leading a steed handsomely caparisoned. In another moment, Marmaduke had descended, opened the door, and drawn Alwyn into the hall.

CHAPTER IX. MASTER MARMADUKE NEVILE LEAVES THE WIZARD'S HOUSE FOR THE GREAT WORLD.

"Right glad am I," said Nicholas, "to see you so stout and hearty, for I am the bearer of good news. Though I have been away, I have not forgotten you; and it so chanced that I went yesterday to attend my Lord of Warwick with some nowches [buckles and other ornaments] and knackeries, that he takes out as gifts and exemplars of English work. They were indifferently well wrought, specially a chevesail, of which the—"

"Spare me the fashion of thy mechanicals, and come to the point," interrupted Marmaduke, impatiently.

"Pardon me, Master Nevile. I interrupt thee not when thou talkest of bassinets and hauberks,—every cobbler to his last. But, as thou sayest, to the point: the stout earl, while scanning my workmanship, for in much the chevesail was mine, was pleased to speak graciously of my skill with the bow, of which he had heard; and he then turned to thyself, of whom my Lord Montagu had already made disparaging mention. When I told the earl somewhat more about thy qualities and disposings, and when I spoke of thy desire to serve him, and the letter of which thou art the bearer, his black brows smoothed mighty graciously, and he bade me tell thee to come to him this afternoon, and he would judge of thee with his own eyes and ears. Wherefore I have ordered the craftsman to have all thy gauds and gear ready at thine hostelrie, and I have engaged thee henchmen and horses for thy fitting appearance. Be quick: time and the great wait for no man. So take whatever thou needest for present want from thy mails, and I will send a porter for the rest ere sunset."

"But the gittern for the damozel?"

"I have provided that for thee, as is meet." And Nicholas, stepping back, eased the groom of a case which contained a gittern, whose workmanship and ornaments delighted the Nevile.

"It is of my lord the young Duke of Gloucester's own musical-vendor; and the duke, though a lad yet, is a notable judge of all appertaining to the gentle craft. [For Richard III.'s love of music, and patronage of

musicians and minstrels, see the discriminating character of that prince in Sharon Turner's "History of England," vol. IV. p. 66.] So despatch, and away!"

Marmaduke retired to his chamber, and Nicholas, after a moment spent in silent thought, searched the room for the hand-bell, which then made the mode of communication between the master and domestics. Not finding this necessary luxury, he contrived at last to make Madge hear his voice from her subterranean retreat; and on her arrival, sent her in quest of Sibyll.

The answer he received was, that Mistress Sibyll was ill, and unable to see him. Alwyn looked disconcerted at this intelligence, but, drawing from his girdle a small gipsire, richly broidered, he prayed Madge to deliver it to her young mistress, and inform her that it was the fruit of the commission with which she had honoured him.

"It is passing strange," said he, pacing the hall alone,—"passing strange, that the poor child should have taken such hold on me. After all, she would be a bad wife for a plain man like me. Tush! that is the trader's thought all over. Have I brought no fresher feeling out of my fair village-green? Would it not be sweet to work for her, and rise in life, with her by my side? And these girls of the city, so prim and so brainless!—as well marry a painted puppet. Sibyll! Am I dement? Stark wode? What have I to do with girls and marriage? Humph! I marvel what Marmaduke still thinks of her,—and she of him."

While Alwyn thus soliloquized, the Nevile having hastily arranged his dress, and laden himself with the moneys his mails contained, summoned old Madge to receive his largess, and to conduct him to Warner's chamber, in order to proffer his farewell.

With somewhat of a timid step he followed the old woman (who kept muttering thanks and benedicites as she eyed the coin in her palm) up the ragged stairs, and for the first time knocked at the door of the student's sanctuary. No answer came. "Eh, sir! you must enter," said Madge; "an' you fired a bombard under his ear he would not heed you." So, suiting the action to the word, she threw open the door, and closed it behind him, as Marmaduke entered.

The room was filled with smoke, through which mirky atmosphere the clear red light of the burning charcoal peered out steadily like a Cyclop's eye. A small, but heaving, regular, labouring, continuous sound, as of a fairy hammer, smote the young man's ear. But as his gaze, accustoming itself to the atmosphere, searched around, he could not perceive what was its cause. Adam Warner was standing in the middle of the room, his arms folded, and contemplating something at a little distance, which Marmaduke could not accurately distinguish. The youth took courage, and approached. "Honoured mine host," said he, "I thank thee for hospitality and kindness, I crave pardon for disturbing thee in thy incanta—ehem!—thy—thy studies, and I come to bid thee farewell."

Adam turned round with a puzzled, absent air, as if scarcely recognizing his guest; at length, as his recollection slowly came back to him, he smiled graciously, and said: "Good youth, thou art richly welcome to what little it was in my power to do for thee. Peradventure a time may come when they who seek the roof of Adam Warner may find less homely cheer, a less rugged habitation,—for look you!" he exclaimed suddenly, with a burst of irrepressible enthusiasm—and laying his hand on Nevile's arm, as, through all the smoke and grime that obscured his face, flashed the ardent soul of the triumphant Inventor,—"look you! since you have been in this house, one of my great objects is well-nigh matured,—achieved. Come hither," and he dragged the wondering Marmaduke to his model, or Eureka, as Adam had fondly named his contrivance. The Nevile then perceived that it was from the interior of this machine that the sound which had startled him arose; to his eye the THING was uncouth and hideous; from the jaws of an iron serpent, that, wreathing round it, rose on high with erect crest, gushed a rapid volume of black smoke, and a damp spray fell around. A column of iron in the centre kept in perpetual and regular motion, rising and sinking successively, as the whole mechanism within seemed alive with noise and action.

"The Syracusan asked an inch of earth, beyond the earth, to move the earth," said Adam; "I stand in the world, and lo! with this engine the world shall one day be moved."

"Holy Mother!" faltered Marmaduke; "I pray thee, dread sir, to ponder well ere thou attemptest any such sports with the habitation in which every woman's son is so concerned. Bethink thee, that if in moving the world thou shouldst make any mistake, it would—"

"Now stand there and attend," interrupted Adam, who had not heard one word of this judicious exhortation.

"Pardon me, terrible sir!" exclaimed Marmaduke, in great trepidation, and retreating rapidly to the door; "but I have heard that the fiends are mighty malignant to all lookers-on not initiated."

While he spoke, fast gushed the smoke, heavily heaved the fairy hammers, up and down, down and up, sank or rose the column, with its sullen sound. The young man's heart sank to the soles of his feet.

"Indeed and in truth," he stammered out, "I am but a dolt in these matters; I wish thee all success compatible with the weal of a Christian, and bid thee, in sad humility, good day:" and he added, in a whisper—"the Lord's forgiveness! Amen!"

Marmaduke then fairly rushed through the open door, and hurried out of the chamber as fast as possible.

He breathed more freely as he descended the stairs. "Before I would call that gray carle my father, or his child my wife, may I feel all the hammers of the elves and sprites he keeps tortured within that ugly little prison-house playing a death's march on my body! Holy Saint Dunstan, the timbrel-girls came in time! They say these wizards always have fair daughters, and their love can be no blessing!"

As he thus muttered, the door of Sibyll's chamber opened, and she stood before him at the threshold. Her countenance was very pale, and bore evidence of weeping. There was a silence on both sides, which the girl was the first to break.

"So, Madge tells me thou art about to leave us?"

"Yes, gentle maiden! I—I—that is, my Lord of Warwick has summoned me. I wish and pray for all blessings on thee! and—and—if ever it be mine to serve or aid thee, it will be—that is—verily, my tongue falters, but my heart—that is—fare thee well, maiden! Would thou hadst a less wise father; and so may the saints (Saint Anthony especially, whom the Evil One was parlous afraid of) guard and keep thee!"

With this strange and incoherent address, Marmaduke left the maiden standing by the threshold of her miserable chamber. Hurrying into the hall, he summoned Alwyn from his meditations, and, giving the gittern to Madge, with an injunction to render it to her mistress, with his greeting and service, he vaulted lightly on his steed; the steady and more sober Alwyn mounted his palfrey with slow care and due caution. As the air of spring waved the fair locks of the young cavalier, as the good horse caracoled under his lithesome weight, his natural temper of mind, hardy, healthful, joyous, and world-awake, returned to him. The image of Sibyll and her strange father fled from his thoughts like sickly dreams.

BOOK II. THE KING'S COURT.

CHAPTER I. EARL WARWICK THE KING-MAKER.

The young men entered the Strand, which, thanks to the profits of a toll-bar, was a passable road for equestrians, studded towards the river, as we have before observed, with stately and half-fortified mansions; while on the opposite side, here and there, were straggling houses of a humbler kind,—the mediaeval villas of merchant and trader (for, from the earliest period since the Conquest, the Londoners had delight in such retreats), surrounded with blossoming orchards, [On all sides, without the suburbs, are the citizens' gardens and orchards, etc.—FITZSTEPHEN.] and adorned in front with the fleur-de-lis, emblem of the vain victories of renowned Agincourt. But by far the greater portion of the road northward stretched, unbuilt upon, towards a fair chain of fields and meadows, refreshed by many brooks, "turning water-mills with a pleasant noise." High rose, on the thoroughfare, the famous Cross, at which "the Judges Itinerant whilome sate, without London." [Stowe.] There, hallowed and solitary, stood the inn for the penitent pilgrims, who sought "the murmuring runnels" of St. Clement's healing well; for in this neighbourhood, even from the age of the Roman, springs of crystal wave and salubrious virtue received the homage of credulous disease. Through the gloomy arches of the Temple Gate and Lud, our horsemen wound their way, and finally arrived in safety at Marmaduke's hostelrie in the East Chepe. Here Marmaduke found the decorators of his comely person already assembled. The simpler yet more manly fashions he had taken from the provinces were now exchanged for an attire worthy the kinsman of the great minister of a court unparalleled, since the reign of William the Red King, for extravagant gorgeousness of dress. His corset was of the finest cloth, sown with seed pearls; above it the lawn shirt, worn without collar, partially appeared, fringed with gold; over this was loosely hung a super-tunic of crimson sarcenet, slashed and pounced with a profusion of fringes. His velvet cap, turned up at the sides, extended in a point far over the forehead. His hose—under which appellation is to be understood what serves us of the modern day both for stockings and pantaloons—were of white cloth; and his shoes, very narrow, were curiously carved into chequer work at the instep, and tied with bobbins of gold thread, turning up like skates at the extremity, three inches in length. His dagger was suspended by a slight silver-gilt chain, and his girdle contained a large gipsire, or pouch, of embossed leather, richly gilt.

And this dress, marvellous as it seemed to the Nevile, the tailor gravely assured him was far under the mark of the highest fashion, and that an' the noble youth had been a knight, the shoes would have stretched at least three inches farther over the natural length of the feet, the placard have shone with jewels, and the tunic luxuriated in flowers of damacene. Even as it was, however, Marmaduke felt a natural diffidence of his habiliments, which cost him a round third of his whole capital; and no bride ever unveiled herself with more shamefaced bashfulness than did Marmaduke Nevile experience when he remounted his horse, and, taking leave of his foster-brother, bent his way to Warwick Lane, where the earl lodged.

The narrow streets were, however, crowded with equestrians whose dress eclipsed his own, some bending their way to the Tower, some to the palaces of the Flete. Carriages there were none, and only twice he encountered the huge litters, in which some aged prelate or some high-born dame veiled greatness from the day. But the frequent vistas to the river gave glimpses of the gay boats and barges that crowded the Thames, which was then the principal thoroughfare for every class, but more especially the noble. The ways were fortunately dry and clean for London, though occasionally deep holes and furrows in the road menaced perils to the unwary horseman. The streets themselves might well disappoint in splendour the stranger's eye; for although, viewed at a distance, ancient London was incalculably more picturesque and stately than the modern, yet when fairly in its tortuous labyrinths, it seemed to those who had improved the taste by travel the meanest and the mirkiest capital of Christendom. The streets were marvellously

narrow, the upper stories, chiefly of wood, projecting far over the lower, which were formed of mud and plaster. The shops were pitiful booths, and the ‘prentices standing at the entrance bare-headed and cap in hand, and lining the passages, as the old French writer avers, comme idoles, [Perlin] kept up an eternal din with their clamorous invitations, often varied by pert witticisms on some churlish passenger, or loud vituperations of each other. The whole ancient family of the London criers were in full bay. Scarcely had Marmaduke’s ears recovered the shock of “Hot peascods,—all hot!” than they were saluted with “Mackerel!” “Sheep’s feet! hot sheep’s feet!” At the smaller taverns stood the inviting vociferaters of “Cock-pie,” “Ribs of beef,—hot beef!” while, blended with these multi-toned discords, whined the vielle, or primitive hurdy-gurdy, screamed the pipe, twanged the harp, from every quarter where the thirsty paused to drink, or the idler stood to gape. [See Lydgate: London Lyckpenny.]

Through this Babel Marmaduke at last slowly wound his way, and arrived before the mighty mansion in which the chief baron of England held his state.

As he dismounted and resigned his steed to the servitor hired for him by Alwyn, Marmaduke paused a moment, struck by the disparity, common as it was to eyes more accustomed to the metropolis, between the stately edifice and the sordid neighbourhood. He had not noticed this so much when he had repaired to the earl’s house on his first arrival in London, for his thoughts then had been too much bewildered by the general bustle and novelty of the scene; but now it seemed to him that he better comprehended the homage accorded to a great noble in surveying, at a glance, the immeasurable eminence to which he was elevated above his fellow-men by wealth and rank.

Far on either side of the wings of the earl’s abode stretched, in numerous deformity, sheds rather than houses, of broken plaster and crazy timbers. But here and there were open places of public reception, crowded with the lower followers of the puissant chief; and the eye rested on many idle groups of sturdy swash-bucklers, some half-clad in armour, some in rude jerkins of leather, before the doors of these resorts,—as others, like bees about a hive, swarmed in and out with a perpetual hum.

The exterior of Warwick House was of a gray but dingy stone, and presented a half-fortified and formidable appearance. The windows, or rather loop-holes, towards the street were few, and strongly barred. The black and massive arch of the gateway yawned between two huge square towers; and from a yet higher but slender tower on the inner side, the flag gave the “White Bear and Ragged Staff” to the smoky air. Still, under the portal as he entered, hung the grate of the portcullis, and the square court which he saw before him swarmed with the more immediate retainers of the earl, in scarlet jackets, wrought with their chieftain’s cognizance. A man of gigantic girth and stature, who officiated as porter, leaning against the wall under the arch, now emerged from the shadow, and with sufficient civility demanded the young visitor’s name and business. On hearing the former, he bowed low as he doffed his hat, and conducted Marmaduke through the first quadrangle. The two sides to the right and left were devoted to the offices and rooms of retainers, of whom no less than six hundred, not to speak of the domestic and more orderly retinue, attested the state of the Last of the English Barons on his visits to the capital. Far from being then, as now, the object of the great to thrust all that belongs to the service of the house out of sight, it was their pride to strike awe into the visitor by the extent of accommodation afforded to their followers: some seated on benches of stone ranged along the walls; some grouped in the centre of the court; some lying at length upon the two oblong patches of what had been turf, till worn away by frequent feet,—this domestic army filled the young Nevile with an admiration far greater than the gay satins of the knights and nobles who had gathered round the lord of Montagu and Northumberland at the pastime-ground.

This assemblage, however, were evidently under a rude discipline of their own. They were neither noisy nor drunk. They made way with surly obeisance as the cavalier passed, and closing on his track like some horde of wild cattle, gazed after him with earnest silence, and then turned once more to their indolent whispers with each other.

And now Nevile entered the last side of the quadrangle. The huge hall, divided from the passage by a screen of stone fretwork, so fine as to attest the hand of some architect in the reign of Henry III., stretched to his right; and so vast, in truth, it was, that though more than fifty persons were variously engaged therein, their number was lost in the immense space. Of these, at one end of the longer and lower table beneath the dais, some squires of good dress and mien were engaged at chess or dice; others were conferring in the gloomy embrasures of the casements; some walking to and fro, others gathered round the shovel-board. At the entrance of this hall the porter left Marmaduke, after exchanging a whisper with a gentleman whose dress eclipsed the Nevile's in splendour; and this latter personage, who, though of high birth, did not disdain to perform the office of chamberlain, or usher, to the king-like earl, advanced to Marmaduke with a smile, and said,—

"My lord expects you, sir, and has appointed this time to receive you, that you may not be held back from his presence by the crowds that crave audience in the forenoon. Please to follow me!" This said, the gentleman slowly preceded the visitor, now and then stopping to exchange a friendly word with the various parties he passed in his progress; for the urbanity which Warwick possessed himself, his policy inculcated as a duty on all who served him. A small door at the other extremity of the hall admitted into an anteroom, in which some half score pages, the sons of knights and barons, were gathered round an old warrior, placed at their head as a sort of tutor, to instruct them in all knightly accomplishments; and beckoning forth one of these youths from the ring, the earl's chamberlain said, with a profound reverence, "Will you be pleased, my young lord, to conduct your cousin, Master Marmaduke Nevile, to the earl's presence?" The young gentleman eyed Marmaduke with a supercilious glance.

"Marry!" said he, pertly, "if a man born in the North were to feed all his cousins, he would soon have a tail as long as my uncle, the stout earl's. Come, sir cousin, this way." And without tarrying even to give Nevile information of the name and quality of his new-found relation,—who was no less than Lord Montagu's son, the sole male heir to the honours of that mighty family, though now learning the apprenticeship of chivalry amongst his uncle's pages,—the boy passed before Marmaduke with a saunter, that, had they been in plain Westmoreland, might have cost him a cuff from the stout hand of the indignant elder cousin. He raised the tapestry at one end of the room, and ascending a short flight of broad stairs, knocked gently on the panels of an arched door sunk deep in the walls.

"Enter!" said a clear, loud voice, and the next moment Marmaduke was in the presence of the King-maker.

He heard his guide pronounce his name, and saw him smile maliciously at the momentary embarrassment the young man displayed, as the boy passed by Marmaduke, and vanished. The Earl of Warwick was seated near a door that opened upon an inner court, or rather garden, which gave communication to the river. The chamber was painted in the style of Henry III., with huge figures representing the battle of Hastings, or rather, for there were many separate pieces, the conquest of Saxon England. Over each head, to enlighten the ignorant, the artist had taken the precaution to insert a label, which told the name and the subject. The ceiling was groined, vaulted, and emblazoned with the richest gilding and colours. The chimneypiece (a modern ornament) rose to the roof, and represented in bold reliefs, gilt and decorated, the signing of Magna Charta. The floor was strewed thick with dried rushes and odorous herbs; the furniture was scanty, but rich. The low-backed chairs, of which there were but four, carved in ebony, had cushions of velvet with fringes of massive gold; a small cupboard, or beaufet, covered with carpetz de cuir (carpets of gilt and painted leather), of great price, held various quaint and curious ornaments of plate inwrought with precious stones; and beside this—a singular contrast—on a plain Gothic table lay the helmet, the gauntlets, and the battle-axe of the master. Warwick himself, seated before a large, cumbrous desk, was writing,—but slowly and with pain,—and he lifted his finger as the Nevile approached, in token of his wish to conclude a task probably little congenial to his tastes. But Marmaduke was grateful for the moments afforded him to recover his self-possession, and to examine his kinsman.

The earl was in the lusty vigour of his age. His hair, of the deepest black, was worn short, as if in disdain of the effeminate fashions of the day; and fretted bare from the temples by the constant and early friction of his helmet, gave to a forehead naturally lofty yet more majestic appearance of expanse and height. His complexion, though dark and sunburned, glowed with rich health. The beard was closely shaven, and left in all its remarkable beauty the contour of the oval face and strong jaw,—strong as if clasped in iron. The features were marked and aquiline, as was common to those of Norman blood. The form spare, but of prodigious width and depth of chest, the more apparent from the fashion of the short surcoat, which was thrown back, and left in broad expanse a placard, not of holiday velvet and satins, but of steel polished as a mirror, and inlaid with gold. And now as, concluding his task, the earl rose and motioned Marmaduke to a stool by his side, his great stature, which, from the length of his limbs, was not so observable when he sat, actually startled his guest. Tall as Marmaduke was himself, the earl towered [The faded portrait of Richard Nevile, Earl of Warwick, in the Rous Roll, preserved at the Herald's College, does justice, at least, to the height and majesty of his stature. The portrait of Edward IV. is the only one in that long series which at all rivals the stately proportions of the King-maker.] above him,—with his high, majestic, smooth, unwrinkled forehead,—like some Paladin of the rhyme of poet or romancer; and, perhaps, not only in this masculine advantage, but in the rare and harmonious combination of colossal strength with graceful lightness, a more splendid union of all the outward qualities we are inclined to give to the heroes of old never dazzled the eye or impressed the fancy. But even this effect of mere person was subordinate to that which this eminent nobleman created—upon his inferiors, at least—by a manner so void of all arrogance, yet of all condescension, so simple, open, cordial, and hero-like, that Marmaduke Nevile, peculiarly alive to external impressions, and subdued and fascinated by the earl's first word, and that word was "Welcome!" dropped on his knee, and kissing the hand extended to him, said, "Noble kinsman, in thy service and for thy sake let me live and die!" Had the young man been prepared by the subtlest master of courtcraft for this interview, so important to his fortunes, he could not have advanced a hundredth part so far with the great earl as he did by that sudden, frank burst of genuine emotion; for Warwick was extremely sensitive to the admiration he excited,—vain or proud of it, it matters not which; grateful as a child for love, and inexorable as a woman for slight or insult: in rude ages, one sex has often the qualities of the other.

"Thou hast thy father's warm heart and hasty thought, Marmaduke," said Warwick, raising him; "and now he is gone where, we trust, brave men, shrived of their sins, look down upon us, who should be thy friend but Richard Nevile? So—so—yes, let me look at thee. Ha! stout Guy's honest face, every line of it: but to the girls, perhaps, comelier, for wanting a scar or two. Never blush,—thou shalt win the scars yet. So thou hast a letter from thy father?"

"It is here, noble lord."

"And why," said the earl, cutting the silk with his dagger—"why hast thou so long hung back from presenting it? But I need not ask thee. These uncivil times have made kith and kin doubt worse of each other than thy delay did of me. Sir Guy's mark, sure eno'! Brave old man! I loved him the better for that, like me, the sword was more meet than the pen for his bold hand." Here Warwick scanned, with some slowness, the lines dictated by the dead to the priest; and when he had done, he laid the letter respectfully on his desk, and bowing his head over it, muttered to himself,—it might be an Ave for the deceased. "Well," he said, reseating himself, and again motioning Marmaduke to follow his example, "thy father was, in sooth, to blame for the side he took in the Wars. What son of the Norman could bow knee or vail plume to that shadow of a king, Henry of Windsor? And for his bloody wife—she knew no more of an Englishman's pith and pride than I know of the rhymes and roundels of old Rene, her father. Guy Nevile—good Guy—many a day in my boyhood did he teach me how to bear my lance at the crest, and direct my sword at the mail joints. He was cunning at fence—thy worshipful father—but I was ever a bad scholar; and my dull arm, to this day, hopes more from its strength than its craft."

"I have heard it said, noble earl, that the stoutest hand can scarcely lift your battle-axe."

"Fables! romaunt!" answered the earl, smiling; "there it lies,—go and lift it."

Marmaduke went to the table, and, though with some difficulty, raised and swung this formidable weapon.

"By my halidame, well swung, cousin mine! Its use depends not on the strength, but the practice. Why, look you now, there is the boy Richard of Gloucester, who comes not up to thy shoulder, and by dint of custom each day can wield mace or axe with as much ease as a jester doth his lathesword. Ah, trust me, Marmaduke, the York House is a princely one; and if we must have a king, we barons, by stout Saint George, let no meaner race ever furnish our lieges. But to thyself, Marmaduke—what are thy views and thy wishes?"

"To be one of thy following, noble Warwick."

"I thank and accept thee, young Nevile; but thou hast heard that I am about to leave England, and in the mean time thy youth would run danger without a guide." The earl paused a moment, and resumed: "My brother of Montagu showed thee cold countenance; but a word from me will win thee his grace and favour. What sayest thou, wilt thou be one of his gentlemen? If so, I will tell thee the qualities a man must have,—a discreet tongue, a quick eye, the last fashion in hood and shoe-bobbins, a perfect seat on thy horse, a light touch for the gittern, a voice for a love-song, and—"

"I have none of these save the horsemanship, gracious my lord; and if thou wilt not receive me thyself, I will not burden my Lord of Montagu and Northumberland."

"Hot and quick! No! John of Montagu would not suit thee, nor thou him. But how to provide for thee till my return I know not."

"Dare I not hope, then, to make one of your embassage, noble earl?"

Warwick bent his brows, and looked at him in surprise. "Of our embassage! Why, thou art haughty, indeed! Nay, and so a soldier's son and a Nevile should be! I blame thee not; but I could not make thee one of my train, without creating a hundred enemies—to me (but that's nothing) and to thee, which were much. Knowest thou not that there is scarce a gentleman of my train below the state of a peer's son, and that I have made, by refusals, malcontents eno', as it is?—Yet, bold! there is my learned brother, the Archbishop of York. Knowest thou Latin and the schools?"

"'Fore Heaven, my lord," said the Nevile, bluntly, "I see already I had best go back to green Westmoreland, for I am as unfit for his grace the archbishop as I am for my Lord Montagu."

"Well, then," said the earl, dryly, "since thou hast not yet station enough for my train, nor glosing for Northumberland, nor wit and lere for the archbishop, I suppose, my poor youth, I must e'en make you only a gentleman about the king! It is not a post so sure of quick rising and full gipsires as one about myself or my brethren, but it will be less envied, and is good for thy first essay. How goes the clock? Oh, here is Nick Alwyn's new horologe. He tells me that the English will soon rival the Dutch in these baubles. [Clockwork appears to have been introduced into England in the reign of Edward III., when three Dutch horologers were invited over from Delft. They must soon have passed into common use, for Chaucer thus familiarly speaks of them:—

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"Full sickerer was his crowing in his loge
 Than is a clock or any abbey orloge."]
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The more the pity!—our red-faced yeomen, alas, are fast sinking into lank-jawed mechanics! We shall find the king in his garden within the next half-hour. Thou shalt attend me."

Marmaduke expressed, with more feeling than eloquence, the thanks he owed for an offer that, he was about to say, exceeded his hopes; but he had already, since his departure from Westmoreland, acquired sufficient wit to think twice of his words. And so eagerly, at that time, did the youth of the nobility contend for the honour of posts about the person of Warwick, and even of his brothers, and so strong was the belief that the earl's power to make or to mar fortune was all-paramount in England, that even a place in the king's household was considered an inferior appointment to that which made Warwick the immediate patron and protector. This was more especially the case amongst the more haughty and ancient gentry since the favour shown by Edward to the relations of his wife, and his own indifference to the rank and birth of his associates. Warwick had therefore spoken with truth when he expressed a comparative pity for the youth, whom he could not better provide for than by a place about the court of his sovereign!

The earl then drew from Marmaduke some account of his early training, his dependence on his brother, his adventures at the archery-ground, his misadventure with the robbers, and even his sojourn with Warner,—though Marmaduke was discreetly silent as to the very existence of Sibyll. The earl, in the mean while, walked to and fro the chamber with a light, careless stride, every moment pausing to laugh at the frank simplicity of his kinsman, or to throw in some shrewd remark, which he cast purposely in the rough Westmoreland dialect; for no man ever attains to the popularity that rejoiced or accursed the Earl of Warwick, without a tendency to broad and familiar humour, without a certain commonplace of character in its shallower and more every-day properties. This charm—always great in the great—Warwick possessed to perfection; and in him—such was his native and unaffected majesty of bearing, and such the splendour that surrounded his name—it never seemed coarse or unfamiliar, but "everything he did became him best." Marmaduke had just brought his narrative to a conclusion, when, after a slight tap at the door, which Warwick did not hear, two fair young forms bounded joyously in, and not seeing the stranger, threw themselves upon Warwick's breast with the caressing familiarity of infancy.

"Ah, Father," said the elder of these two girls, as Warwick's hand smoothed her hair fondly, "you promised you would take us in your barge to see the sports on the river, and now it will be too late."

"Make your peace with your young cousins here," said the earl, turning to Marmaduke; "you will cost them an hour's joyaunce. This is my eldest daughter, Isabel; and this soft-eyed, pale-cheeked damozel—too loyal for a leaf of the red rose—is the Lady Anne."

The two girls had started from their father's arms at the first address to Marmaduke, and their countenances had relapsed from their caressing and childlike expression into all the stately demureness with which they had been brought up to regard a stranger. Howbeit, this reserve, to which he was accustomed, awed Marmaduke less than the alternate gayety and sadness of the wilder Sibyll, and he addressed them with all the gallantry to the exercise of which he had been reared, concluding his compliments with a declaration that he would rather forego the advantage proffered him by the earl's favour with the king, than foster one obnoxious and ungracious memory in damozels so fair and honoured.

A haughty smile flitted for a moment over the proud young face of Isabel Nevile; but the softer Anne blushed, and drew bashfully behind her sister.

As yet these girls, born for the highest and fated to the most wretched fortunes, were in all the bloom of earliest youth; but the difference between their characters might be already observable in their mien and countenance. Isabel; of tall and commanding stature, had some resemblance to her father, in her aquiline features, rich, dark hair, and the lustrous brilliancy of her eyes; while Anne, less striking, yet not less lovely, of smaller size and slighter proportions, bore in her pale, clear face, her dove-like eyes, and her gentle brow an expression of yielding meekness not unmixed with melancholy, which, conjoined with an exquisite symmetry of features, could not fail of exciting interest where her sister commanded admiration. Not a word, however, from either did Marmaduke abstract in return for his courtesies, nor did either he or the earl seem to expect it; for the latter, seating himself and drawing Anne on his knee, while Isabella

walked with stately grace towards the table that bore her father's warlike accoutrements, and played, as it were, unconsciously with the black plume on his black burgonet, said to Nevile,

"Well, thou hast seen enough of the Lancastrian raptrils to make thee true to the Yorkists. I would I could say as much for the king himself, who is already crowding the court with that venomous faction, in honour of Dame Elizabeth Gray, born Mistress Woodville, and now Queen of England. Ha, my proud Isabel, thou wouldst have better filled the throne that thy father built!"

And at these words a proud flash broke from the earl's dark eyes, betraying even to Marmaduke the secret of perhaps his earliest alienation from Edward IV. Isabella pouted her rich lip, but said nothing. "As for thee, Anne," continued the earl, "it is a pity that monks cannot marry,—thou wouldst have suited some sober priest better than a mailed knight. 'Fore George, I would not ask thee to buckle my baldrick when the war-steeds were snorting, but I would trust Isabel with the links of my hauberk."

"Nay, Father," said the low, timid voice of Anne, "if thou wert going to danger, I could be brave in all that could guard thee!"

"Why, that's my girl! kiss me! Thou hast a look of thy mother now,—so thou hast! and I will not chide thee the next time I hear thee muttering soft treason in pity of Henry of Windsor."

"Is he not to be pitied?—Crown, wife, son, and Earl Warwick's stout arm lost—lost!"

"No!" said Isabel, suddenly; "no, sweet sister Anne, and fie on thee for the words! He lost all, because he had neither the hand of a knight nor the heart of a man! For the rest—Margaret of Anjou, or her butchers, beheaded our father's father."

"And may God and Saint George forget me, when I forget those gray and gory hairs!" exclaimed the earl; and putting away the Lady Anne somewhat roughly, he made a stride across the room, and stood by his hearth. "And yet Edward, the son of Richard of York, who fell by my father's side—he forgets, he forgives! And the minions of Rivers the Lancastrian tread the heels of Richard of Warwick."

At this unexpected turn in the conversation, peculiarly unwelcome, as it may be supposed, to the son of one who had fought on the Lancastrian side in the very battle referred to, Marmaduke felt somewhat uneasy; and turning to the Lady Anne, he said, with the gravity of wounded pride, "I owe more to my lord, your father, than I even wist of,—how much he must have overlooked to—"

"Not so!" interrupted Warwick, who overheard him,—"not so; thou wrongest me! Thy father was shocked at those butcheries; thy father recoiled from that accursed standard; thy father was of a stock ancient and noble as my own! But, these Woodvilles!—tush! my passion overmasters me. We will go to the king,—it is time."

Warwick here rang the hand-bell on his table, and on the entrance of his attendant gentleman, bade him see that the barge was in readiness; then beckoning to his kinsman, and with a nod to his daughters, he caught up his plumed cap, and passed at once into the garden.

"Anne," said Isabel, when the two girls were alone, "thou hast vexed my father, and what marvel? If the Lancastrians can be pitied, the Earl of Warwick must be condemned!"

"Unkind!" said Anne, shedding tears; "I can pity woe and mischance, without blaming those whose hard duty it might be to achieve them."

"In good sooth cannot I! Thou wouldst pity and pardon till thou leftst no distinction between foeman and friend, leife and loathing. Be it mine, like my great father, to love and to hate!"

"Yet why art thou so attached to the White Rose?" said Anne, stung, if not to malice, at least to archness. "Thou knowest my father's nearest wish was that his eldest daughter might be betrothed to King Edward. Dost thou not pay good for evil when thou seest no excellence out of the House of York?"

"Saucy Anne," answered Isabel, with a half smile, "I am not raught by thy shafts, for I was a child for the nurses when King Edward sought a wife for his love. But were I chafed—as I may be vain enough to know myself—whom should I blame?—Not the king, but the Lancastrian who witched him!"

She paused a moment, and, looking away, added in a low tone, "Didst thou hear, sister Anne, if the Duke of Clarence visited my father the forenoon?"

"Ah, Isabel, Isabel!"

"Ah, sister Anne, sister Anne! Wilt thou know all my secrets ere I know them myself?"—and Isabel, with something of her father's playfulness, put her hands to Anne's laughing lips.

Meanwhile Warwick, after walking musingly a few moments along the garden, which was formed by plots of sward, bordered with fruit-trees, and white rose-trees not yet in blossom, turned to his silent kinsman, and said, "Forgive me, cousin mine, my mannerless burst against thy brave father's faction; but when thou hast been a short while at court, thou wilt see where the sore is. Certes, I love this king!" Here his dark face lighted up. "Love him as a king,—ay, and as a son! And who would not love him; brave as his sword, gallant, and winning, and gracious as the noonday in summer? Besides, I placed him on his throne; I honour myself in him!"

The earl's stature dilated as he spoke the last sentence, and his hand rested on his dagger hilt. He resumed, with the same daring and incautious candour that stamped his dauntless, soldier-like nature, "God hath given me no son. Isabel of Warwick had been a mate for William the Norman; and my grandson, if heir to his grandsire's soul, should have ruled from the throne of England over the realms of Charlemagne! But it hath pleased Him whom the Christian knight alone bows to without shame, to order otherwise. So be it. I forgot my just pretensions,—forgot my blood, and counselled the king to strengthen his throne with the alliance of Louis XI. He rejected the Princess Bona of Savoy, to marry widow Elizabeth Gray; I sorrowed for his sake, and forgave the slight to my counsels. At his prayer I followed the train of his queen, and hushed the proud hearts of our barons to obeisance. But since then, this Dame Woodville, whom I queened, if her husband mated, must dispute this roiaulme with mine and me,—a Nevile, nowadays, must vail his plume to a Woodville! And not the great barons whom it will suit Edward's policy to win from the Lancastrians—not the Exeters and the Somersets—but the craven varlets and lackeys and dross of the camp—false alike to Henry and to Edward—are to be fondled into lordships and dandled into power. Young man, I am speaking hotly—Richard Nevile never lies nor conceals; but I am speaking to a kinsman, am I not? Thou hearest,—thou wilt not repeat?"

"Sooner would I pluck forth my tongue by the roots."

"Enough!" returned the earl, with a pleased smile. "When I come from France, I will speak more to thee. Meanwhile be courteous to all men, servile to none. Now to the king."

So speaking, he shook back his surcoat, drew his cap over his brow, and passed to the broad stairs, at the foot of which fifty rowers, with their badges on their shoulders, waited in the huge barge, gilt richly at prow and stern, and with an awning of silk, wrought with the earl's arms and cognizance. As they pushed

off, six musicians, placed towards the helm, began a slow and half Eastern march, which, doubtless, some crusader of the Temple had brought from the cymbals and trumps of Palestine.

CHAPTER II. KING EDWARD THE FOURTH.

The Tower of London, more consecrated to associations of gloom and blood than those of gayety and splendour, was, nevertheless, during the reign of Edward IV., the seat of a gallant and gorgeous court. That king, from the first to the last so dear to the people of London, made it his principal residence when in his metropolis; and its ancient halls and towers were then the scene of many a brawl and galliard. As Warwick's barge now approached its huge walls, rising from the river, there was much that might either animate or awe, according to the mood of the spectator. The king's barge, with many lesser craft reserved for the use of the courtiers, gay with awnings and streamers and painting and gilding, lay below the wharfs, not far from the gate of St. Thomas, now called the Traitor's Gate. On the walk raised above the battlemented wall of the inner ward, not only paced the sentries, but there dames and knights were inhaling the noonday breezes, and the gleam of their rich dresses of cloth-of-gold glanced upon the eye at frequent intervals from tower to tower. Over the vast round turret, behind the Traitor's Gate, now called "The Bloody Tower," floated cheerily in the light wind the royal banner. Near the Lion's Tower, two or three of the keepers of the menagerie, in the king's livery, were leading forth, by a strong chain, the huge white bear that made one of the boasts of the collection, and was an especial favourite with the king and his brother Richard. The sheriffs of London were bound to find this grisly minion his chain and his cord, when he deigned to amuse himself with bathing or "fishing" in the river; and several boats, filled with gape-mouthed passengers, lay near the wharf, to witness the diversions of Bruin. These folks set up a loud shout of—"A Warwick! a Warwick!" "The stout earl, and God bless him!" as the gorgeous barge shot towards the fortress. The earl acknowledged their greeting by vailing his plumed cap; and passing the keepers with a merry allusion to their care of his own badge, and a friendly compliment to the grunting bear, he stepped ashore, followed by his kinsman. Now, however, he paused a moment; and a more thoughtful shade passed over his countenance, as, glancing his eye carelessly aloft towards the standard of King Edward, he caught sight of the casement in the neighbouring tower, of the very room in which the sovereign of his youth, Henry the Sixth, was a prisoner, almost within hearing of the revels of his successor; then, with a quick stride, he hurried on through the vast court, and, passing the White Tower, gained the royal lodge. Here, in the great hall, he left his companion, amidst a group of squires and gentlemen, to whom he formally presented the Nevile as his friend and kinsman, and was ushered by the deputy-chamberlain (with an apology for the absence of his chief, the Lord Hastings, who had gone abroad to fly his falcon) into the small garden, where Edward was idling away the interval between the noon and evening meals,—repasts to which already the young king inclined with that intemperate zest and ardour which he carried into all his pleasures, and which finally destroyed the handsomest person and embruted one of the most vigorous intellects of the age.

The garden, if bare of flowers, supplied their place by the various and brilliant-coloured garbs of the living beauties assembled on its straight walks and smooth sward. Under one of those graceful cloisters, which were the taste of the day, and had been recently built and gayly decorated, the earl was stopped in his path by a group of ladies playing at closheys (ninepins) of ivory; [Narrative of Louis of Bruges, Lord Grauthuse. Edited by Sir F. Madden, "Archaelogia," 1836.] and one of these fair dames, who excelled the rest in her skill, had just bowled down the central or crowned pin,—the king of the closheys. This lady, no less a person than Elizabeth, the Queen of England, was then in her thirty-sixth year,—ten years older than her lord; but the peculiar fairness and delicacy of her complexion still preserved to her beauty the aspect and bloom of youth. From a lofty headgear, embroidered with fleur-de-lis, round which wreathed a light

diadem of pearls, her hair, of the pale yellow considered then the perfection of beauty, flowed so straight and so shining down her shoulders, almost to the knees, that it seemed like a mantle of gold. The baudekin stripes (blue and gold) of her tunic attested her royalty. The blue courtpie of satin was bordered with ermine, and the sleeves, sitting close to an arm of exquisite contour, shone with seed pearls. Her features were straight and regular, yet would have been insipid, but for an expression rather of cunning than intellect; and the high arch of her eyebrows, with a slight curve downward of a mouth otherwise beautiful, did not improve the expression, by an addition of something supercilious and contemptuous, rather than haughty or majestic.

"My lord of Warwick," said Elizabeth, pointing to the fallen closhey, "what would my enemies say if they heard I had toppled down the king?"

"They would content themselves with asking which of your Grace's brothers you would place in his stead," answered the hardy earl, unable to restrain the sarcasm.

The queen blushed, and glanced round her ladies with an eye which never looked direct or straight upon its object, but wandered sidelong with a furtive and stealthy expression, that did much to obtain for her the popular character of falseness and self-seeking. Her displeasure was yet more increased by observing the ill-concealed smile which the taunt had called forth.

"Nay, my lord," she said, after a short pause, "we value the peace of our roiaulme too much for so high an ambition. Were we to make a brother even the prince of the closheys, we should disappoint the hopes of a Nevile."

The earl disdained pursuing the war of words, and answering coldly, "The Neviles are more famous for making ingrates than asking favours. I leave your Highness to the closheys"—turned away, and strode towards the king, who, at the opposite end of the garden, was reclining on a bench beside a lady, in whose ear, to judge by her downcast and blushing cheek, he was breathing no unwelcome whispers.

"Mort-Dieu!" muttered the earl, who was singularly exempt, himself, from the amorous follies of the day, and eyed them with so much contempt that it often obscured his natural downright penetration into character, and never more than when it led him afterwards to underrate the talents of Edward IV.,—"Mort-Dieu! if, an hour before the battle of Towton, some wizard had shown me in his glass this glimpse of the gardens of the Tower, that giglet for a queen, and that squire of dames for a king, I had not slain my black destrier (poor Malech!), that I might conquer or die for Edward Earl of March."

"But see!" said the lady, looking up from the enamoured and conquering eyes of the king, "art thou not ashamed, my lord?—the grim earl comes to chide thee for thy faithlessness to thy queen, whom he loves so well."

"Pasque-Dieu! as my cousin Louis of France says or swears," answered the king, with an evident petulance in his altered voice, "I would that Warwick could be only worn with one's armour! I would as lief try to kiss through my vizor as hear him talk of glory and Towton, and King John and poor Edward II., because I am not always in mail. Go! leave us, sweet bonnibel! we must brave the bear alone!" The lady inclined her head, drew her hood round her face, and striking into the contrary path from that in which Warwick was slowly striding, gained the group round the queen, whose apparent freedom from jealousy, the consequence of cold affections and prudent calculation, made one principal cause of the empire she held over the powerful mind, but the indolent temper, of the gay and facile Edward.

The king rose as Warwick now approached him; and the appearance of these two eminent persons was in singular contrast. Warwick, though richly and even gorgeously attired,—nay, with all the care which in that age was considered the imperative duty a man of station and birth owed to himself,—held in lofty

disdain whatever vagary of custom tended to cripple the movements or womanize the man. No loose flowing robes, no shoon half a yard long, no flaunting tawdriness of fringe and aiglet, characterized the appearance of the baron, who, even in peace, gave his address a half-martial fashion.

But Edward, who, in common with all the princes of the House of York, carried dress to a passion, had not only reintroduced many of the most effeminate modes in vogue under William the Red King, but added to them whatever could tend to impart an almost oriental character to the old Norman garb. His gown (a womanly garment which had greatly superseded, with men of the highest rank, not only the mantle but the surcoat) flowed to his heels, trimmed with ermine, and broidered with large flowers of crimson wrought upon cloth-of-gold. Over this he wore a tippet of ermine, and a collar or necklace of uncut jewels set in filigree gold; the nether limbs were, it is true, clad in the more manly fashion of tight-fitting hosen, but the folds of the gown, as the day was somewhat fresh, were drawn around so as to conceal the only part of the dress which really betokened the male sex. To add to this unwarlike attire, Edward's locks of a rich golden colour, and perfuming the whole air with odours, flowed not in curls, but straight to his shoulders, and the cheek of the fairest lady in his court might have seemed less fair beside the dazzling clearness of a complexion at once radiant with health and delicate with youth. Yet, in spite of all this effeminacy, the appearance of Edward IV. was not effeminate. From this it was preserved, not only by a stature little less commanding than that of Warwick himself, and of great strength and breadth of shoulder, but also by features, beautiful indeed, but pre-eminently masculine,—large and bold in their outline, and evincing by their expression all the gallantry and daring characteristic of the hottest soldier, next to Warwick, and without any exception the ablest captain, of the age.

"And welcome,—a merry welcome, dear Warwick, and cousin mine," said Edward, as Warwick slightly bent his proud knee to his king; "your brother, Lord Montagu, has but left us. Would that our court had the same, joyaunce for you as for him."

"Dear and honoured my liege," answered Warwick, his brow smoothing at once,—for his affectionate though hasty and irritable nature was rarely proof against the kind voice and winning smile of his young sovereign,—"could I ever serve you at the court as I can with the people, you would not complain that John of Montagu was a better courtier than Richard of Warwick. But each to his calling. I depart to-morrow for Calais, and thence to King Louis. And, surely, never envoy or delegate had better chance to be welcome than one empowered to treat of an alliance that will bestow on a prince deserving, I trust, his fortunes, the sister of the bravest sovereign in Christian Europe."

"Now, out on thy flattery, my cousin; though I must needs own I provoked it by my complaint of thy courtiership. But thou hast learned only half thy business, good Warwick; and it is well Margaret did not hear thee. Is not the prince of France more to be envied for winning a fair lady than having a fortunate soldier for his brother-in-law?"

"My liege," replied Warwick, smiling, "thou knowest I am a poor judge of a lady's fair cheek, though indifferently well skilled as to the valour of a warrior's stout arm. Algates, the Lady Margaret is indeed worthy in her excellent beauties to become the mother of brave men."

"And that is all we can wring from thy stern lip, man of iron? Well, that must content us. But to more serious matters." And the king, leaning his hand on the earl's arm, and walking with him slowly to and fro the terrace, continued: "Knowest thou not, Warwick, that this French alliance, to which thou hast induced us, displeases sorely our good traders of London?"

"Mort-Dieu!" returned Warwick, bluntly, "and what business have the flat-caps with the marriage of a king's sister? Is it for them to breathe garlic on the alliances of Bourbons and Plantagenets? Faugh! You have spoiled them, good my lord king,—you have spoiled them by your condescensions. Henry IV. staled

not his majesty to consultations with the mayor of his city. Henry V. gave the knighthood of the hath to the heroes of Agincourt, not to the vendors of cloth and spices."

"Ah, my poor knights of the Bath!" said Edward, good-humouredly, "wilt thou never let that sore scar quietly over? Ownest thou not that the men had their merits?"

"What the merits were, I weet not," answered the earl,—"unless, peradventure, their wives were comely and young."

"Thou wrongest me, Warwick," said the king, carelessly; "Dame Cook was awry, Dame Philips a grandmother, Dame Jocelyn had lost her front teeth, and Dame Waer saw seven ways at once! But thou forgettest, man, the occasion of those honours,—the eve before Elizabeth was crowned,—and it was policy to make the city of London have a share in her honours. As to the rest," pursued the king, earnestly and with dignity, "I and my House have owed much to London. When the peers of England, save thee and thy friends, stood aloof from my cause, London was ever loyal and true. Thou seest not, my poor Warwick, that these burgesses are growing up into power by the decline of the orders above them. And if the sword is the monarch's appeal for his right, he must look to contented and honoured industry for his buckler in peace. This is policy,—policy, Warwick; and Louis XI. will tell thee the same truths, harsh though they grate in a warrior's ear."

The earl bowed his haughty head, and answered shortly, but with a touching grace, "Be it ever thine, noble king, to rule as it likes thee, and mine to defend with my blood even what I approve not with my brain! But if thou doubtest the wisdom of this alliance, it is not too late yet. Let me dismiss my following, and cross not the seas. Unless thy heart is with the marriage, the ties I would form are threads and cobwebs."

"Nay," returned Edward, irresolutely: "in these great state matters thy wit is elder than mine; but men do say the Count of Charolois is a mighty lord; and the alliance with Burgundy will be more profitable to staple and mart."

"Then, in God's name, so conclude it!" said the earl, hastily, but with so dark a fire in his eyes that Edward, who was observing him, changed countenance; "only ask me not, my liege, to advance such a marriage. The Count of Charolois knows me as his foe—shame were mine did I shun to say where I love, where I hate. That proud dullard once slighted me when we met at his father's court, and the wish next to my heart is to pay back my affront with my battle-axe. Give thy sister to the heir of Burgundy, and forgive me if I depart to my castle of Middleham."

Edward, stung by the sharpness of this reply, was about to answer as became his majesty of king, when Warwick more deliberately resumed: "Yet think well; Henry of Windsor is thy prisoner, but his cause lives in Margaret and his son. There is but one power in Europe that can threaten thee with aid to the Lancastrians; that power is France. Make Louis thy friend and ally, and thou givest peace to thy life and thy lineage; make Louis thy foe, and count on plots and stratagems and treason, uneasy days and sleepless nights. Already thou hast lost one occasion to secure that wiliest and most restless of princes, in rejecting the hand of the Princess Bona. Happily, this loss now can be retrieved. But alliance with Burgundy is war with France,—war more deadly because Louis is a man who declares it not; a war carried on by intrigue and bribe, by spies and minions, till some disaffection ripens the hour when young Edward of Lancaster shall land on thy coasts, with the Oriflamme and the Red Rose, with French soldiers and English malcontents. Wouldst thou look to Burgundy for help?—Burgundy will have enough to guard its own frontiers from the gripe of Louis the Sleepless. Edward, my king, my pupil in arms, Edward, my loved, my honoured liege, forgive Richard Nevile his bluntness, and let not his faults stand in bar of his counsels."

"You are right, as you are ever, safeguard of England, and pillar of my state," said the king, frankly, and pressing the arm he still held. "Go to France and settle all as thou wilt."

Warwick bent low and kissed the hand of his sovereign. "And," said he, with a slight, but a sad smile, "when I am gone, my liege will not repent, will not misthink me, will not listen to my foes, nor suffer merchant and mayor to sigh him back to the mechanics of Flanders?"

"Warwick, thou deemest ill of thy king's kingliness."

"Not of thy kingliness; but that same gracious quality of yielding to counsel which bows this proud nature to submission often makes me fear for thy firmness, when thy will is, won through thy heart. And now, good my liege, forgive me one sentence more. Heaven forefend that I should stand in the way of thy princely favours. A king's countenance is a sun that should shine on all. But bethink thee well, the barons of England are a stubborn and haughty race; chafe not thy most puissant peers by too cold a neglect of their past services, and too lavish a largess to new men."

"Thou aimest at Elizabeth's kin," interrupted Edward, withdrawing his hand from his minister's arm, "and I tell thee once for all times, that I would rather sink again to mine earldom of March, with a subject's right to honour where he loves, than wear crown and wield sceptre without a king's unquestioned prerogative to ennoble the line and blood of one he has deemed worthy of his throne. As for the barons, with whose wrath thou threatenest me, I banish them not. If they go in gloom from my court, why, let them chafe themselves sleek again."

"King Edward," said Warwick, moodily, "tried services merit not this contempt. It is not as the kith of the queen that I regret to see lands and honours lavished upon men rooted so newly to the soil that the first blast of the war-trump will scatter their greenness to the winds; but what sorrows me is to mark those who have fought against thee preferred to the stout loyalty that braved block and field for thy cause. Look round thy court; where are the men of bloody York and victorious Towton?—unrequited, sullen in their strongholds, begirt with their yeomen and retainers. Thou standest—thou, the heir of York—almost alone (save where the Neviles—whom one day thy court will seek also to disgrace and discard—vex their old comrades in arms by their defection)—thou standest almost alone among the favourites and minions of Lancaster. Is there no danger in proving to men that to have served thee is discredit, to have warred against thee is guerdon and grace?"

"Enough of this, cousin," replied the king, with an effort which preserved his firmness. "On this head we cannot agree. Take what else thou wilt of royalty,—make treaties and contract marriages, establish peace or proclaim war; but trench not on my sweetest prerogative to give and to forgive. And now, wilt thou tarry and sup with us? The ladies grow impatient of a commune that detains from their eyes the stateliest knight since the Round Table was chopped into fire-wood."

"No, my liege," said Warwick, whom flattery of this sort rather angered than soothed, "I have much yet to prepare. I leave your Highness to fairer homage and more witching counsels than mine." So saying, he kissed the king's hand, and was retiring, when he remembered his kinsman, whose humble interests in the midst of more exciting topics he had hitherto forgotten, and added, "May I crave, since you are so merciful to the Lancastrians, one grace for my namesake,—a Nevile whose father repented the side he espoused, a son of Sir Guy of Arsdale?"

"Ah," said the king, smiling maliciously, "it pleaseth us much to find that it is easier to the warm heart of our cousin Warwick to preach sententiaries of sternness to his king than to enforce the same by his own practice!"

"You misthink me, sire. I ask not that Marmaduke Nevile should supplant his superiors and elders; I ask not that he should be made baron and peer; I ask only that, as a young gentleman who hath taken no part himself in the wars, and whose father repented his error, your Grace should strengthen your following by an ancient name and a faithful servant. But I should have remembered me that his name of Nevile would have procured him a taunt in the place of advancement."

"Saw man ever so froward a temper?" cried Edward, not without reason. "Why, Warwick, thou art as shrewish to a jest as a woman to advice. Thy kinsman's fortunes shall be my care. Thou sayest thou hast enemies,—I weet not who they be. But to show what I think of them, I make thy namesake and client a gentleman of my chamber. When Warwick is false to Edward, let him think that Warwick's kinsman wears a dagger within reach of the king's heart day and night."

This speech was made with so noble and touching a kindness of voice and manner, that the earl, thoroughly subdued, looked at his sovereign with moistened eyes, and only trusting himself to say,—"Edward, thou art king, knight, gentleman, and soldier; and I verily trow that I love thee best when my petulant zeal makes me anger thee most,"—turned away with evident emotion, and passing the queen and her ladies with a lowlier homage than that with which he had before greeted them, left the garden. Edward's eye followed him musingly. The frank expression of his face vanished, and with the deep breath of a man who is throwing a weight from his heart, he muttered,—

"He loves me,—yes; but will suffer no one else to love me! This must end some day. I am weary of the bondage." And sauntering towards the ladies, he listened in silence, but not apparently in displeasure, to his queen's sharp sayings on the imperious mood and irritable temper of the iron-handed builder of his throne.

CHAPTER III. THE ANTECHAMBER.

As Warwick passed the door that led from the garden, he brushed by a young man, the baudekin stripes of whose vest announced his relationship to the king, and who, though far less majestic than Edward, possessed sufficient of family likeness to pass for a very handsome and comely person; but his countenance wanted the open and fearless expression which gave that of the king so masculine and heroic a character. The features were smaller, and less clearly cut, and to a physiognomical observer there was much that was weak and irresolute in the light blue eyes and the smiling lips which never closed firmly over the teeth. He did not wear the long gown then so much in vogue, but his light figure was displayed to advantage by a vest, fitting it exactly, descending half-way down the thigh, and trimmed at the border and the collar with ermine. The sleeves of the doublet were slit, so as to show the white lawn beneath, and adorned with aiglets and knots of gold.

Over the left arm hung a rich jacket of furs and velvet, something like that adopted by the modern hussar. His hat, or cap, was high and tiara-like, with a single white plume, and the ribbon of the Garter bound his knee. Though the dress of this personage was thus far less effeminate than Edward's, the effect of his appearance was infinitely more so,—partly, perhaps, from a less muscular frame, and partly from his extreme youth; for George Duke of Clarence was then, though initiated not only in the gayeties, but all the intrigues of the court, only in his eighteenth year. Laying his hand, every finger of which sparkled with jewels, on the earl's shoulder—"Hold!" said the young prince, in a whisper, "a word in thy ear, noble Warwick!"

The earl, who, next to Edward, loved Clarence the most of his princely House, and who always found the latter as docile as the other (when humour or affection seized him) was intractable, relaxed into a familiar smile at the duke's greeting, and suffered the young prince to draw him aside from the groups of courtiers with whom the chamber was filled, to the leaning-places (as they were called) of a large mullion window. In the mean while, as they thus conferred, the courtiers interchanged looks, and many an eye of fear and hate was directed towards the stately form of the earl. For these courtiers were composed principally of the kindred or friends of the queen, and though they dared not openly evince the malice with which they retorted Warwick's lofty scorn and undisguised resentment at their new fortunes, they ceased not to hope for his speedy humiliation and disgrace, reeking little what storm might rend the empire, so that it uprooted the giant oak, which still in some measure shaded their sunlight and checked their growth. True, however, that amongst these were mingled, though rarely, men of a hardier stamp and nobler birth,—some few of the veteran friends of the king's great father; and these, keeping sternly and loftily aloof from the herd, regarded Warwick with the same almost reverential and yet affectionate admiration which he inspired amongst the yeomen, peasants, and mechanics,—for in that growing but quiet struggle of the burgesses, as it will often happen in more civilized times, the great Aristocracy and the Populace were much united in affection, though with very different objects; and the Middle and Trading Class, with whom the earl's desire for French alliances and disdain of commerce had much weakened his popularity, alone shared not the enthusiasm of their countrymen for the lion-hearted minister.

Nevertheless, it must here be owned that the rise of Elizabeth's kindred introduced a far more intellectual, accomplished, and literary race into court favour than had for many generations flourished in so uncongenial a soil: and in this ante-chamber feud, the pride of education and mind retaliated with juster sarcasm the pride of birth and sinews.

Amongst those opposed to the earl, and fit in all qualities to be the head of the new movement,—if the expressive modern word be allowed us,—stood at that moment in the very centre of the chamber Anthony Woodville, in right of the rich heiress he had married the Lord Scales. As, when some hostile and formidable foe enters the meads where the flock grazes, the gazing herd gather slowly round their leader, so grouped the queen's faction slowly, and by degrees, round this accomplished nobleman, at the prolonged sojourn of Warwick.

"Gramercy!" said the Lord Scales, in a somewhat affected intonation of voice, "the conjunction of the bear and the young lion is a parlous omen, for the which I could much desire we had a wise astrologer's reading."

"It is said," observed one of the courtiers, "that the Duke of Clarence much affects either the lands or the person of the Lady Isabel."

"A passably fair damozel," returned Anthony, "though a thought or so too marked and high in her lineaments, and wholly unlettered, no doubt; which were a pity, for George of Clarence has some pretty taste in the arts and poesies. But as Occleve hath it—

> 'Gold, silver, jewel, cloth, beddyng, array,'

would make gentle George amorous of a worse-featured face than high-nosed Isabel; 'strange to spell or rede,' as I would wager my best destrier to a tailor's hobby, the damozel surely is."

"Notest thou yon gaudy popinjay?" whispered the Lord of St. John to one of his Towton comrades, as, leaning against the wall, they overheard the sarcasms of Anthony, and the laugh of the courtiers, who glassed their faces and moods to his. "Is the time so out of joint that Master Anthony Woodville can vent his scurrile japes on the heiress of Salisbury and Warwick in the king's chamber?"

"And prate of spelling and reading as if they were the cardinal virtues?" returned his sullen companion. "By my halidame, I have two fair daughters at home who will lack husbands, I trow, for they can only spin and be chaste,—two maidenly gifts out of bloom with the White Rose."

In the mean while, unwitting, or contemptuous, of the attention they excited, Warwick and Clarence continued yet more earnestly to confer.

"No, George, no," said the earl, who, as the descendant of John of Gaunt, and of kin to the king's blood, maintained, in private, a father's familiarity with the princes of York, though on state occasions, and when in the hearing of others, he sedulously marked his deference for their rank—"no, George, calm and steady thy hot mettle, for thy brother's and England's sake. I grieve as much as thou to hear that the queen does not spare even thee in her froward and unwomanly peevishness. But there is a glamour in this, believe me, that must melt away soon or late, and our kingly Edward recover his senses."

"Glamour!" said Clarence; "thinkest thou, indeed, that her mother, Jacquetta, has bewitched the king? One word of thy belief in such spells, spread abroad amongst the people, would soon raise the same storm that blew Eleanor Cobham from Duke Humphrey's bed, along London streets in her penance-shift."

"Troth," said the earl, indifferently, "I leave such grave questions as these to prelate and priest; the glamour I spoke of is that of a fair face over a wanton heart; and Edward is not so steady a lover that this should never wear out."

"It amates me much, noble cousin, that thou leavest the court in this juncture. The queen's heart is with Burgundy, the city's hate is with France; and when once thou art gone, I fear that the king will be teased into mating my sister with the Count of Charolois."

"Ho!" exclaimed Warwick, with an oath so loud that it rung through the chamber, and startled every ear that heard it. Then, perceiving his indiscretion, he lowered his tone into a deep and hollow whisper, and griped the prince's arm almost fiercely as he spoke.

"Could Edward so dishonour my embassy, so palter and juggle with my faith, so flout me in the eyes of Christendom, I would—I would—" he paused, and relaxed his hold of the duke, and added, with an altered voice—"I would leave his wife and his lemans, and yon things of silk, whom he makes peers (that is easy) but cannot make men, to guard his throne from the grandson of Henry V. But thy fears, thy zeal, thy love for me, dearest prince and cousin, make thee misthink Edward's kingly honour and knightly faith. I go with the sure knowledge that by alliance with France I shut the House of Lancaster from all hope of this roiaulme."

"Hadst thou not better, at least, see my sister Margaret? She has a high spirit, and she thinks thou mightest, at least, woo her assent, and tell her of the good gifts of her lord to be!"

"Are the daughters of York spoiled to this by the manners and guise of a court, in which beshrew me if I well know which the woman and whom the man? Is it not enough to give peace to broad England, root to her brother's stem? Is it not enough to wed the son of a king, the descendant of Charlemagne and Saint Louis? Must I go bonnet in hand and simper forth the sleek personals of the choice of her kith and House; swear the bridegroom's side-locks are as long as King Edward's, and that he bows with the grace of Master Anthony Woodville? Tell her this thyself, gentle Clarence, if thou wilt: all Warwick could say would but anger her ear, if she be the maid thou bespeakest her."

The Duke of Clarence hesitated a moment, and then, colouring slightly, said, "If, then, the daughter's hand be the gift of her kith alone, shall I have thy favour when the Lady Isabel—"

"George," interrupted Warwick, with a fond and paternal smile, "when we have made England safe, there is nothing the son of Richard of York can ask of Warwick in vain. Alas!" he added mournfully, "thy father and mine were united in the same murtherous death, and I think they will smile down on us from their seats in heaven when a happier generation cements that bloody union with a marriage bond!"

Without waiting for further parlance, the earl turned suddenly away, threw his cap on his towering head, and strode right through the centre of the whispering courtiers, who shrunk, louting low, from his haughty path, to break into a hubbub of angry exclamations or sarcastic jests at his unmannerly bearing, as his black plume disappeared in the arch of the vaulted door.

While such the scene in the interior chambers of the palace, Marmaduke, with the frank simpleness which belonged to his youth and training, had already won much favour and popularity, and he was laughing loud with a knot of young men by the shovel-board when Warwick re-entered. The earl, though so disliked by the courtiers more immediately about the person of the king, was still the favourite of the less elevated knights and gentry who formed the subordinate household and retainers; and with these, indeed, his manner, so proud and arrogant to his foes and rivals, relapsed at once into the ease of the manly and idolized chief. He was pleased to see the way made by his young namesake, and lifting his cap, as he nodded to the group and leaned his arm upon Marmaduke's shoulder, he said, "Thanks, and hearty thanks, to you, knights and gentles, for your courteous reception of an old friend's young son. I have our king's most gracious permission to see him enrolled one of the court you grace. Ah, Master Falconer, and how does thy worthy uncle?—braver knight never trod. What young gentleman is yonder?—a new face and a manly one; by your favour, present him. The son of a Savile! Sir, on my return, be not the only Savile who shuns our table of Warwick Court. Master Dacres, commend me to the lady, your mother; she and I have danced many a measure together in the old time,—we all live again in our children. Good den to you, sirs. Marmaduke, follow me to the office,—you lodge in the palace. You are gentleman to the most gracious and, if Warwick lives, to the most puissant of Europe's sovereigns. I shall see Montagu at home; he shall instruct thee in thy duties, and requite thee for all discourtesies on the archery-ground."

BOOK III. IN WHICH THE HISTORY PASSES FROM THE KING'S COURT TO THE STUDENT'S CELL, AND RELATES THE PERILS THAT BEFELL A PHILOSOPHER FOR MEDDLING WITH THE AFFAIRS OF THE WORLD.

CHAPTER I. THE SOLITARY SAGE AND THE SOLITARY MAID.

While such the entrance of Marmaduke Nevile into a court, that if far less intellectual and refined than those of later days, was yet more calculated to dazzle the fancy, to sharpen the wit, and to charm the senses,—for round the throne of Edward IV. chivalry was magnificent, intrigue restless, and pleasure ever on the wing,—Sibyll had ample leisure in her solitary home to muse over the incidents that had preceded the departure of the young guest. Though she had rejected Marmaduke's proffered love, his tone, so

suddenly altered, his abrupt, broken words and confusion, his farewell, so soon succeeding his passionate declaration, could not fail to wound that pride of woman which never sleeps till modesty is gone. But this made the least cause of the profound humiliation which bowed down her spirit. The meaning taunt conveyed in the rhyme of the tymbesteres pierced her to the quick; the calm, indifferent smile of the stranger, as he regarded her, the beauty of the dame he attended, woke mingled and contrary feelings, but those of jealousy were perhaps the keenest: and in the midst of all she started to ask herself if indeed she had suffered her vain thoughts to dwell too tenderly upon one from whom the vast inequalities of human life must divide her evermore. What to her was his indifference? Nothing,—yet had she given worlds to banish that careless smile from her remembrance.

Shrinking at last from the tyranny of thoughts till of late unknown, her eye rested upon the gipsire which Alwyn had sent her by the old servant. The sight restored to her the holy recollection of her father, the sweet joy of having ministered to his wants. She put up the little treasure, intending to devote it all to Warner; and after bathing her heavy eyes, that no sorrow of hers might afflict the student, she passed with a listless step into her father's chamber.

There is, to the quick and mercurial spirits of the young, something of marvellous and preternatural in that life within life, which the strong passion of science and genius forms and feeds,—that passion so much stronger than love, and so much more self-dependent; which asks no sympathy, leans on no kindred heart; which lives alone in its works and fancies, like a god amidst his creations.

The philosopher, too, had experienced a great affliction since they met last. In the pride of his heart he had designed to show Marmaduke the mystic operations of his model, which had seemed that morning to open into life; and when the young man was gone, and he made the experiment alone, alas! he found that new progress but involved him in new difficulties. He had gained the first steps in the gigantic creation of modern days, and he was met by the obstacle that baffled so long the great modern sage. There was the cylinder, there the boiler; yet, work as he would, the steam failed to keep the cylinder at work. And now, patiently as the spider re-weaves the broken web, his untiring ardour was bent upon constructing a new cylinder of other materials. "Strange," he said to himself, "that the heat of the mover aids not the movement;" and so, blundering near the truth, he laboured on.

Sibyll, meanwhile, seated herself abstractedly on a heap of fagots piled in the corner, and seemed busy in framing characters on the dusty floor with the point of her tiny slipper. So fresh and fair and young she seemed, in that murky atmosphere, that strange scene, and beside that worn man, that it might have seemed to a poet as if the youngest of the Graces were come to visit Mulciber at his forge.

The man pursued his work, the girl renewed her dreams, the dark evening hour gradually stealing over both. The silence was unbroken, for the forge and the model were now at rest, save by the grating of Adam's file upon the metal, or by some ejaculation of complacency now and then vented by the enthusiast. So, apart from the many-noised, gaudy, babbling world without, even in the midst of that bloody, turbulent, and semi-barbarous time, went on (the one neglected and unknown, the other loathed and hated) the two movers of the ALL that continues the airy life of the Beautiful from age to age,—the Woman's dreaming Fancy and the Man's active Genius.

CHAPTER II. MASTER ADAM WARNER GROWS A MISER, AND BEHAVES SHAMEFULLY.

For two or three days nothing disturbed the outward monotony of the recluse's household. Apparently all had settled back as before the advent of the young cavalier. But Sibyll's voice was not heard singing, as of old, when she passed the stairs to her father's room. She sat with him in his work no less frequently and regularly than before; but her childish spirits no longer broke forth in idle talk or petulant movements, vexing the good man from his absorption and his toils. The little cares and anxieties, which had formerly made up so much of Sibyll's day by forethought of provision for the morrow, were suspended; for the money transmitted to her by Alwyn in return for the emblazoned manuscripts was sufficient to supply their modest wants for months to come. Adam, more and more engrossed in his labours, did not appear to perceive the daintier plenty of his board, nor the purchase of some small comforts unknown for years. He only said one morning, "It is strange, girl, that as that gathers in life (and he pointed to the model), it seems already to provide, to my fantasy, the luxuries it will one day give to us all in truth. Methought my very bed last night seemed wondrous easy, and the coverings were warmer, for I woke not with the cold."

"Ah," thought the sweet daughter, smiling through moist eyes, "while my cares can smooth thy barren path through life, why should I cark and pine?"

Their solitude was now occasionally broken in the evenings by the visits of Nicholas Alwyn. The young goldsmith was himself not ignorant of the simpler mathematics; he had some talent for invention, and took pleasure in the construction of horologes, though, properly speaking, not a part of his trade. His excuse for his visits was the wish to profit by Warner's mechanical knowledge; but the student was so rapt in his own pursuits, that he gave but little instruction to his visitor. Nevertheless Alwyn was satisfied, for he saw Sibyll. He saw her in the most attractive phase of her character,—the loving, patient, devoted daughter; and the view of her household virtues affected more and more his honest English heart. But, ever awkward and embarrassed, he gave no vent to his feelings. To Sibyll he spoke little, and with formal constraint; and the girl, unconscious of her conquest, was little less indifferent to his visits than her abstracted father.

But all at once Adam woke to a sense of the change that had taken place; all at once he caught scent of gold, for his works were brought to a pause for want of some finer and more costly materials than the coins in his own possession (the remnant of Marmaduke's gift) enabled him to purchase. He had stolen out at dusk, unknown to Sibyll, and lavished the whole upon the model; but in vain! The model in itself was, indeed, completed; his invention had mastered the difficulty that it had encountered. But Adam had complicated the contrivance by adding to it experimental proofs of the agency it was intended to exercise. It was necessary in that age, if he were to convince others, to show more than the principle of his engine,—he must show also something of its effects; turn a mill without wind or water, or set in motion some mimic vehicle without other force than that the contrivance itself supplied. And here, at every step, new obstacles arose. It was the misfortune to science in those days, not only that all books and mathematical instruments were enormously dear, but that the students, still struggling into light, through the glorious delusions of alchemy and mysticism, imagined that, even in simple practical operations, there were peculiar virtues in virgin gold and certain precious stones. A link in the process upon which Adam was engaged failed him; his ingenuity was baffled, his work stood still; and in poring again and again over the learned manuscripts—alas! now lost—in which certain German doctors had sought to explain the pregnant hints of Roger Bacon, he found it inculcated that the axle of a certain wheel must be composed of a diamond. Now, in truth, it so happened that Adam's contrivance, which (even without the appliances which were added in illustration of the theory) was infinitely more complicated than modern research has found necessary, did not even require the wheel in question, much less the absent diamond; it happened, also, that his understanding, which, though so obtuse in common life, was in these matters astonishingly clear, could not trace any mathematical operations by which the diamond axle would in the least correct the difficulty that had suddenly started up; and yet the accursed diamond began to haunt him,—the German authority was so positive on the point, and that authority had in many respects been accurate. Nor was this all,—the diamond was to be no vulgar diamond; it was to be endowed, by talismanic skill, with certain properties and virtues; it was to be for a certain number of hours exposed to the rays of the full

moon; it was to be washed in a primitive and wondrous elixir, the making of which consumed no little of the finest gold. This diamond was to be to the machine what the soul is to the body,—a glorious, all-pervading, mysterious principle of activity and life. Such were the dreams that obscured the cradle of infant science! And Adam, with all his reasoning powers, big lore in the hard truths of mathematics, was but one of the giant children of the dawn. The magnificent phrases and solemn promises of the mystic Germans got firm hold of his fancy. Night and day, waking or sleeping, the diamond, basking in the silence of the full moon, sparkled before his eyes. Meanwhile all was at a stand. In the very last steps of his discovery he was arrested. Then suddenly looking round for vulgar moneys to purchase the precious gem, and the materials for the soluble elixir, he saw that MONEY had been at work around him,—that he had been sleeping softly and faring sumptuously. He was seized with a divine rage. How had Sibyll dared to secrete from him this hoard; how presumed to waste upon the base body what might have so profited the eternal mind? In his relentless ardour, in his sublime devotion and loyalty to his abstract idea, there was a devouring cruelty, of which this meek and gentle scholar was wholly unconscious. The grim iron model, like a Moloch, ate up all things,—health, life, love; and its jaws now opened for his child. He rose from his bed,—it was daybreak,—he threw on his dressing-robe, he strode into his daughter's room; the gray twilight came through the comfortless, curtainless casement, deep sunk into the wall. Adam did not pause to notice that the poor child, though she had provoked his anger by refitting his dismal chamber, had spent nothing in giving a less rugged frown to her own.

The scanty worm-worn furniture, the wretched pallet, the poor attire folded decently beside,—nothing save that inexpressible purity and cleanliness which, in the lowliest hovel, a pure and maiden mind gathers round it; nothing to distinguish the room of her whose childhood had passed in courts from the but of the meanest daughter of drudgery and toil! No,—he who had lavished the fortunes of his father and big child into the grave of his idea—no—he saw nothing of this self-forgetful penury—the diamond danced before him! He approached the bed; and oh! the contrast of that dreary room and peasant pallet to the delicate, pure, enchanting loveliness of the sleeping inmate. The scanty covering left partially exposed the snow-white neck and rounded shoulder; the face was pillowed upon the arm, in an infantine grace; the face was slightly flushed, and the fresh red lips parted into a smile,—for in her sleep the virgin dreamed,—a happy dream! It was a sight to have touched a father's heart, to have stopped his footstep, and hushed his breath into prayer. And call not Adam hard—unnatural—that he was not then, as men far more harsh than he—for the father at that moment was not in his breast, the human man was gone—he himself, like his model, was a machine of iron!—his life was his one idea!

"Wake, child, wake!" he said, in a loud but hollow voice. "Where is the gold thou hast hidden from me? Wake! confess!"

Roused from her gracious dreams thus savagely, Sibyll started, and saw the eager, darkened face of her father. Its expression was peculiar and undefinable, for it was not threatening, angry, stern; there was a vacancy in the eyes, a strain in the features, and yet a wild, intense animation lighting and pervading all,—it was as the face of one walking in his sleep, and, at the first confusion of waking, Sibyll thought indeed that such was her father's state. But the impatience with which he shook the arm he grasped, and repeated, as he opened convulsively his other hand, "The gold, Sibyll, the gold! Why didst thou hide it from me?" speedily convinced her that her father's mind was under the influence of the prevailing malady that made all its weakness and all its strength.

"My poor father!" she said pityingly, "wilt thou not leave thyself the means whereby to keep strength and health for thine high hopes? Ah, Father, thy Sibyll only hoarded her poor gains for thee!"

"The gold!" said Adam, mechanically, but in a softer voice,—"all—all thou hast! How didst thou get it,—how?"

"By the labours of these hands. Ah, do not frown on me!"

"Thou—the child of knightly fathers—thou labour!" said Adam, an instinct of his former state of gentle-born and high-hearted youth flashing from his eyes. "It was wrong in thee!"

"Dost thou not labour too?"

"Ay, but for the world. Well, the gold!"

Sibyll rose, and modestly throwing over her form the old mantle which lay on the pallet, passed to a corner of the room, and opening a chest, took from it the gipsire, and held it out to her father.

"If it please thee, dear and honoured sir, so be it; and Heaven prosper it in thy hands!"

Before Adam's clutch could close on the gipsire, a rude hand was laid on his shoulder, the gipsire was snatched from Sibyll, and the gaunt, half-clad form of old Madge interposed between the two.

"Eh, sir!" she said, in her shrill, cracked tone, "I thought when I heard your door open, and your step hurrying down, you were after no good deeds. Fie, master, fie! I have clung to you when all reviled, and when starvation within and foul words without made all my hire; for I ever thought you a good and mild man, though little better than stark wode. But, augh! to rob your child thus, to leave her to starve and pine! We old folks are used to it. Look round, look round! I remember this chamber, when ye first came to your father's hall. Saints of heaven! There stood the brave bed all rustling with damask of silk; on those stone walls once hung fine arras of the Flemings,—a marriage gift to my lady from Queen Margaret, and a mighty show to see, and good for the soul's comforts, with Bible stories wrought on it. Eh, sir! don't you call to mind your namesake, Master Adam, in his brave scarlet hosen, and Madam Eve, in her bonny blue kirtle and laced courtpie? and now—now look round, I say, and see what you have brought your child to!"

"Hush! hush! Madge, bush!" cried Sibyll, while Adam gazed in evident perturbation and awakening shame at the intruder, turning his eyes round the room as she spoke, and heaving from time to time short, deep sighs.

"But I will not hush," pursued the old woman; "I will say my say, for I love ye both, and I loved my poor mistress who is dead and gone. Ah, sir, groan! it does you good. And now when this sweet damsel is growing up, now when you should think of saving a marriage dower for her (for no marriage where no pot boils), do you rend from her the little that she has drudged to gain!—She! Oh, out on your heart! And for what,—for what, sir? For the neighbours to set fire to your father's house, and the little ones to—"

"Forbear, woman!" cried Adam, in a voice of thunder; "forbear! Heavens!" And he waved his hand as he spoke, with so unexpected a majesty that Madge was awed into sudden silence, and, darting a look of compassion at Sibyll, she hobbled from the room. Adam stood motionless an instant; but when he felt his child's soft arms round his neck, when he heard her voice struggling against tears, praying him not to heed the foolish words of the old servant,—to take—to take all, that it would be easy to gain more,—the ice of his philosophy melted at once; the man broke forth, and, clasping Sibyll to his heart, and kissing her cheek, her lips, her hands, he faltered out, "No! no! forgive me! Forgive thy cruel father! Much thought has maddened me, I think,—it has indeed! Poor child, poor Sibyll," and he stroked her cheek gently, and with a movement of pathetic pity—"poor child, thou art pale, and so slight and delicate! And this chamber—and thy loneliness—and—ah! my life hath been a curse to thee, yet I meant to bequeath it a boon to all!

"Father, dear father, speak not thus. You break my heart. Here, here, take the gold—or rather, for thou must not venture out to insult again, let me purchase with it what thou needest. Tell me, trust me—"

"No!" exclaimed Adam, with that hollow energy by which a man resolves to impose restraint on himself; "I will not, for all that science ever achieved,—I will not lay this shame on my soul! Spend this gold on thyself, trim this room, buy thee raiment,—all that thou needest,—I order, I command it! And hark thee, if thou gettest more, hide it from me, hide it well; men's desires are foul tempters! I never knew, in following wisdom, that I had a vice. I wake and find myself a miser and a robber!"

And with these words he fled from the girl's chamber, gained his own, and locked the door.

CHAPTER III. A STRANGE VISITOR.—ALL AGES OF THE WORLD BREED WORLD-BETTERS.

Sibyll, whose soft heart bled for her father, and who now reproached herself for having concealed from him her little hoard, began hastily to dress that she might seek him out, and soothe the painful feelings which the honest rudeness of Madge had aroused. But before her task was concluded, there pealed a loud knock at the outer door. She heard the old housekeeper's quivering voice responding to a loud clear tone; and presently Madge herself ascended the stairs to Warner's room, followed by a man whom Sibyll instantly recognized—for he was not one easily to be forgotten—as their protector from the assault of the mob. She drew back hastily as he passed her door, and in some wonder and alarm awaited the descent of Madge. That venerable personage having with some difficulty induced her master to open his door and admit the stranger, came straight into her young lady's chamber. "Cheer up, cheer up, sweetheart," said the old woman; "I think better days will shine soon; for the honest man I have admitted says he is but come to tell Master Warner something that will redound much to his profit. Oh, he is a wonderful fellow, this same Robin! You saw how he turned the cullions from burning the old house!"

"What! you know this man, Madge! What is he, and who?"

Madge looked puzzled. "That is more than I can say, sweet mistress. But though he has been but some weeks in the neighbourhood, they all hold him in high count and esteem. For why—it is said he is a rich man and a kind one. He does a world of good to the poor."

While Sibyll listened to such explanations as Madge could give her, the stranger, who had carefully closed the door of the student's chamber, after regarding Adam for a moment with silent but keen scrutiny, thus began,—

"When last we met, Adam Warner, it was with satchells on our backs. Look well at me!"

"Troth," answered Adam, languidly, for he was still under the deep dejection that had followed the scene with Sibyll, "I cannot call you to mind, nor seems it veritable that our schooldays passed together, seeing that my hair is gray and men call me old; but thou art in all the lustihood of this human life."

"Nathless," returned the stranger, "there are but two years or so between thine age and mine. When thou wert poring over the crabbed text, and pattering Latin by the ell, dost thou not remember a lack-grace good-for-naught, Robert Hilyard, who was always setting the school in an uproar, and was finally outlawed from that boy-world, as he hath been since from the man's world, for inciting the weak to resist the strong?"

"Ah," exclaimed Adam, with a gleam of something like joy on his face, "art thou indeed that riotous, brawling, fighting, frank-hearted, bold fellow, Robert Hilyard? Ha! ha!—those were merry days! I have known none like them—" The old schoolfellows shook hands heartily.

"The world has not fared well with thee in person or pouch, I fear me, poor Adam," said Hilyard; "thou canst scarcely have passed thy fiftieth year, and yet thy learned studies have given thee the weight of sixty; while I, though ever in toil and bustle, often wanting a meal, and even fearing the halter, am strong and hearty as when I shot my first fallow buck in the king's forest, and kissed the forester's pretty daughter. Yet, methinks, Adam, if what I hear of thy tasks be true, thou and I have each been working for one end; thou to make the world other than it is, and I to—"

"What! hast thou, too, taken nourishment from the bitter milk of Philosophy,—thou, fighting Rob?"

"I know not whether it be called philosophy, but marry, Edward of York would call it rebellion; they are much the same, for both war against rules established!" returned Hilyard, with more depth of thought than his careless manner seemed to promise. He paused, and laying his broad brown hand on Warner's shoulder, resumed, "Thou art poor, Adam!"

"Very poor,—very, very!"

"Does thy philosophy disdain gold?"

"What can philosophy achieve without it? She is a hungry dragon, and her very food is gold!"

"Wilt thou brave some danger—thou went ever a fearless boy when thy blood was up, though so meek and gentle—wilt thou brave some danger for large reward?"

"My life braves the scorn of men, the pinchings of famine, and, it may be, the stake and the fagot. Soldiers brave not the dangers that are braved by a wise man in an unwise age!"

"Gramercy! thou hast a hero's calm aspect while thou speakest, and thy words move me! Listen! Thou wert wont, when Henry of Windsor was King of England, to visit and confer with him on learned matters. He is now a captive in the Tower; but his jailers permit him still to receive the visits of pious monks and harmless scholars. I ask thee to pay him such a visit, and for this office I am empowered, by richer men than myself, to award thee the guerdon of twenty broad pieces of gold."

"Twenty!—A mine! a Tmolus!" exclaimed Adam, in uncontrollable glee. "Twenty! O true friend, then my work will be born at last!"

"But hear me further, Adam, for I will not deceive thee; the visit hath its peril! Thou must first see if the mind of King Henry, for king he is, though the usurper wear his holy crown, be clear and healthful. Thou knowest he is subject to dark moods,—suspension of man's reason; and if he be, as his friends hope, sane and right-judging, thou wilt give him certain papers, which, after his hand has signed them, thou wilt bring back to me. If in this thou succeedest, know that thou mayst restore the royalty of Lancaster to the purple and the throne; that thou wilt have princes and earls for favourers and protectors to thy learned life; that thy fortunes and fame are made! Fail, be discovered,—and Edward of York never spares!—thy guerdon will be the nearest tree and the strongest rope!"

"Robert," said Adam, who had listened to this address with unusual attention, "thou dealest with me plainly, and as man should deal with man. I know little of stratagem and polity, wars and kings; and save that King Henry, though passing ignorant in the mathematics, and more given to alchemists than to solid seekers after truth, was once or twice gracious to me, I could have no choice, in these four walls, between

an Edward and a Henry on the throne. But I have a king whose throne is in mine own breast, and, alack, it taxeth me heavily, and with sore burdens."

"I comprehend," said the visitor, glancing round the room,—"I comprehend: thou wantest money for thy books and instruments, and thy melancholic passion is thy sovereign. Thou wilt incur the risk?"

"I will," said Adam. "I would rather seek in the lion's den for what I lack than do what I well-nigh did this day."

"What crime was that, poor scholar?" said Robin, smiling.

"My child worked for her bread and my luxuries—I would have robbed her, old schoolfellow. Ha, ha! what is cord and gibbet to one so tempted?"

A tear stood in the bright gray eyes of the bluff visitor. "Ah, Adam," he said sadly, "only by the candle held in the skeleton hand of Poverty can man read his own dark heart. But thou, Workman of Knowledge, hast the same interest as the poor who dig and delve. Though strange circumstance hath made me the servant and emissary of Margaret, think not that I am but the varlet of the great." Hilyard paused a moment, and resumed,—

"Thou knowest, peradventure, that my race dates from an elder date than these Norman nobles, who boast their robber-fathers. From the renowned Saxon Thane, who, free of hand and of cheer, won the name of Hildegardis, [Hildegardis, namely, old German, a person of noble or generous disposition. Wotton's "Baronetage," art. Hilyard, or Hildyard, of Pattrington.] our family took its rise. But under these Norman barons we sank with the nation to which we belonged. Still were we called gentlemen, and still were dubbed knights. But as I grew up to man's estate, I felt myself more Saxon than gentleman, and, as one of a subject and vassal race, I was a son of the Saxon people. My father, like thee, was a man of thought and bookcraft. I dare own to thee that he was a Lollard; and with the religion of those bold foes to priest-vice, goes a spirit that asks why the people should be evermore the spoil and prey of lords and kings. Early in my youth, my father, fearing rack and fagot in England, sought refuge in the Hans town of Lubeck. There I learned grave truths,—how liberty can be won and guarded. Later in life I saw the republics of Italy, and I asked why they were so glorious in all the arts and craft of civil life, while the braver men of France and England seemed as savages by the side of the Florentine burgess, nay, of the Lombard vine-dresser. I saw that, even when those republics fell a victim to some tyrant or podesta, their men still preserved rights and uttered thoughts which left them more free and more great than the Commons of England after all their boasted wars. I came back to my native land and settled in the North, as my franklin ancestry before me. The broad lands of my forefathers had devolved on the elder line, and gave a knight's fee to Sir Robert Hilyard, who fell afterwards at Towton for the Lancastrians. But I had won gold in the far countree, and I took farm and homestead near Lord Warwick's tower of Middleham. The feud between Lancaster and York broke forth; Earl Warwick summoned his retainers, myself amongst them, since I lived upon his land; I sought the great earl, and I told him boldly—him whom the Commons deemed a friend, and a foe to all malfaisance and abuse—I told him that the war he asked me to join seemed to me but a war of ambitious lords, and that I saw not how the Commons were to be bettered, let who would be king. The earl listened and deigned to reason; and when he saw I was not convinced, he left me to my will; for he is a noble chief, and I admired even his angry pride, when he said, 'Let no man fight for Warwick whose heart beats not in his cause.' I lived afterwards to discharge my debt to the proud earl, and show him how even the lion may be meshed, and how even the mouse may gnaw the net. But to my own tragedy. So I quitted those parts, for I feared my own resolution near so great a man; I made a new home not far from the city of York. So, Adam, when all the land around bristled with pike and gisarme, and while my own cousin and namesake, the head of my House, was winning laurels and wasting blood—I, thy quarrelsome, fighting friend—lived at home in peace with my wife and child (for I was now married, and wife and child were dear to me), and tilled my lands. But in peace I was active and astir, for my words inflamed the

bosoms of labourers and peasants, and many of them, benighted as they were, thought with me. One day—I was absent from home, selling my grain in the marts of York—one day there entered the village a young captain, a boy-chief, Edward Earl of March, beating for recruits. Dost thou heed me, Adam? Well, man—well, the peasants stood aloof from tromp and banner, and they answered, to all the talk of hire and fame, 'Robin Hilyard tells us we have nothing to gain but blows,—leave us to hew and to delve.' Oh, Adam, this boy, this chief, the Earl of March, now crowned King Edward, made but one reply, 'This Robin Hilyard must be a wise man,—show me his house.' They pointed out the ricks, the barns, the homestead, and in five minutes all—all were in flames. 'Tell the hilding, when he returns, that thus Edward of March, fair to friends and terrible to foes, rewards the coward who disaffects the men of Yorkshire to their chief.' And by the blazing rafters, and the pale faces of the silent crowd, he rode on his way to battle and the throne!"

Hilyard paused, and the anguish of his countenance was terrible to behold.

"I returned to find a heap of ashes; I returned to find my wife a maniac; I returned to find my child—my boy—great God!—he had run to hide himself, in terror at the torches and the grim men; they had failed to discover him, till, too late, his shrieks, amidst the crashing walls, burst on his mother's ear,—and the scorched, mangled, lifeless corpse lay on that mother's bosom!"

Adam rose; his figure was transformed. Not the stooping student, but the knight-descended man, seemed to tower in the murky chamber; his hand felt at his side, as for a sword; he stifled a curse, and Hilyard, in that suppressed low voice which evinces a strong mind in deep emotion, continued his tale.

"Blessed be the Divine Intercessor, the mother of the dead died too! Behold me, a lonely, ruined, wifeless, childless wretch! I made all the world my foe! The old love of liberty (alone left me) became a crime; I plunged into the gloom of the forest, a robber-chief, sparing—no, never-never—never one York captain, one spurred knight, one belted lord! But the poor, my Saxon countrymen, they had suffered, and were safe!

"One dark twilight—thou hast heard the tale, every village minstrel sets it to his viol—a majestic woman, a hunted fugitive, crossed my path; she led a boy in her hand, a year or so younger than my murdered child. 'Friend!' said the woman, fearlessly, 'save the son of your king; I am Margaret, Queen of England!' I saved them both. From that hour the robber-chief, the Lollard's son, became a queen's friend. Here opened, at least, vengeance against the fell destroyer. Now see you why I seek you, why tempt you into danger? Pause, if you will, for my passion heats my blood,—and all the kings since Saul, it may be, are not worth one scholar's life! And yet," continued Hilyard, regaining his ordinary calm tone, "and yet, it seemeth to me, as I said at first, that all who labour have in this a common cause and interest with the poor. This woman-king, though bloody man, with his wine-cups and his harlots, this usurping York—his very existence flaunts the life of the sons of toil. In civil war and in broil, in strife that needs the arms of the people, the people shall get their own."

"I will go," said Adam, and he advanced to the door. Hilyard caught his arm. "Why, friend, thou hast not even the documents, and how wouldst thou get access to the prison? Listen to me; or," added the conspirator, observing poor Adam's abstracted air, "or let me rather speak a word to thy fair daughter; women have ready wit, and are the pioneers to the advance of men! Adam, Adam! thou art dreaming!"—He shook the philosopher's arm roughly.

"I heed you," said Warner, meekly.

"The first thing required," renewed Hilyard, "is a permit to see King Henry. This is obtained either from the Lord Worcester, governor of the Tower, a cruel man, who may deny it, or the Lord Hastings, Edward's chamberlain, a humane and gentle one, who will readily grant it. Let not thy daughter know why

thou wouldst visit Henry; let her suppose it is solely to make report of his health to Margaret; let her not know there is scheming or danger,—so, at least, her ignorance will secure her safety. But let her go to the lord chamberlain, and obtain the order for a learned clerk to visit the learned prisoner—to—ha! well thought of—this strange machine is, doubtless, the invention of which thy neighbours speak; this shall make thy excuse; thou wouldst divert the prisoner with thy mechanical—comprehendest thou, Adam?"

"Ah, King Henry will see the model, and when he is on the throne—"

"He will protect the scholar!" interrupted Hilyard. "Good! good! Wait here; I will confer with thy daughter." He gently pushed aside Adam, opened the door, and on descending the stairs, found Sibyll by the large casement where she had stood with Marmaduke, and heard the rude stave of the tymbesteres.

The anxiety the visit of Hilyard had occasioned her was at once allayed, when he informed her that he had been her father's schoolmate, and desired to become his friend. And when he drew a moving picture of the exiled condition of Margaret and the young prince, and their natural desire to learn tidings of the health of the deposed king, her gentle heart, forgetting the haughty insolence with which her royal mistress had often wounded and chilled her childhood, felt all the generous and compassionate sympathy the conspirator desired to awaken. "The occasion," added Hilyard, "for learning the poor captive's state now offers! He hath heard of your father's labours; he desires to learn their nature from his own lips. He is allowed to receive, by an order from King Edward's chamberlain, the visits of those scholars in whose converse he was ever wont to delight. Wilt thou so far aid the charitable work as to seek the Lord Hastings, and crave the necessary license? Thou seest that thy father has wayward and abstract moods; he might forget that Henry of Windsor is no longer king, and might give him that title in speaking to Lord Hastings,—a slip of the tongue which the law styles treason."

"Certes," said Sibyll, quickly, "if my father would seek the poor captive, I will be his messenger to my Lord Hastings. But oh, sir, as thou hast known my father's boyhood, and as thou hopest for mercy in the last day, tempt to no danger one so guileless!"

Hilyard winced as he interrupted her hastily,

"There is no danger if thou wilt obtain the license. I will say more,—a reward awaits him, that will not only banish his poverty but save his life."

"His life!"

"Ay! seest thou not, fair mistress, that Adam Warner is dying, not of the body's hunger, but of the soul's? He craveth gold, that his toils may reap their guerdon. If that gold be denied, his toils will fret him to the grave!"

"Alas! alas! it is true."

"That gold he shall honourably win! Nor is this all. Thou wilt see the Lord Hastings: he is less learned, perhaps, than Worcester, less dainty in accomplishments and gifts than Anthony Woodville, but his mind is profound and vast; all men praise him save the queen's kin. He loves scholars; he is mild to distress; he laughs at the superstitions of the vulgar. Thou wilt see the Lord Hastings, and thou mayst interest him in thy father's genius and his fate!"

"There is frankness in thy voice, and I will trust thee," answered Sibyll. "When shall I seek this lord?"

"This day, if thou wilt. He lodges at the Tower, and gives access, it is said, to all who need his offices, or seek succour from his power."

"This day, then, be it!" answered Sibyll, calmly.

Hilyard gazed at her countenance, rendered so noble in its youthful resignation, in its soft firmness of expression, and muttering, "Heaven prosper thee, maiden; we shall meet tomorrow," descended the stairs, and quitted the house.

His heart smote him when he was in the street. "If evil should come to this meek scholar, to that poor child's father, it would be a sore sin to my soul. But no; I will not think it. The saints will not suffer this bloody Edward to triumph long; and in this vast chessboard of vengeance and great ends, we must move men to and fro, and harden our natures to the hazard of the game."

Sibyll sought her father; his mind had flown back to the model. He was already living in the life that the promised gold would give to the dumb thought. True that all the ingenious additions to the engine—additions that were to convince the reason and startle the fancy—were not yet complete (for want, of course, of the diamond bathed in moonbeams); but still there was enough in the inventions already achieved to excite curiosity and obtain encouragement. So, with care and diligence and sanguine hope the philosopher prepared the grim model for exhibition to a man who had worn a crown, and might wear again. But with that innocent and sad cunning which is so common with enthusiasts of one idea, the sublime dwellers of the narrow border between madness and inspiration, Adam, amidst his excitement, contrived to conceal from his daughter all glimpse of the danger he ran, of the correspondence of which he was to be the medium,—or rather, may we think that he had forgotten both! Not the stout Warwick himself, in the roar of battle, thought so little of peril to life and limb as that gentle student, in the reveries of his lonely closet; and therefore, all unsuspicious, and seeing but diversion to Adam's recent gloom of despair, an opening to all his bright prospects, Sibyll attired herself in her holiday garments, drew her wimple closely round her face, and summoning Madge to attend her, bent her way to the Tower. Near York House, within view of the Sanctuary and the Palace of Westminster, they took a boat, and arrived at the stairs of the Tower.

CHAPTER IV. LORD HASTINGS.

William Lord Hastings was one of the most remarkable men of the age. Philip de Comines bears testimony to his high repute for wisdom and virtue. Born the son of a knight of ancient lineage but scanty lands, he had risen, while yet in the prime of life, to a rank and an influence second, perhaps, only to the House of Nevile. Like Lord Montagu, he united in happy combination the talents of a soldier and a courtier. But as a statesman, a schemer, a thinker, Montagu, with all his craft, was inferior to Hastings. In this, the latter had but two equals,—namely, George, the youngest of the Nevile brothers, Archbishop of York; and a boy, whose intellect was not yet fully developed, but in whom was already apparent to the observant the dawn of a restless, fearless, calculating, and subtle genius. That boy, whom the philosophers of Utrecht had taught to reason, whom the lessons of Warwick had trained to arms, was Richard, Duke of Gloucester, famous even now for his skill in the tilt-yard and his ingenuity in the rhetoric of the schools.

The manners of Lord Hastings had contributed to his fortunes. Despite the newness of his honours, even the haughtiest of the ancient nobles bore him no grudge, for his demeanour was at once modest and manly. He was peculiarly simple and unostentatious in his habits, and possessed that nameless charm which makes men popular with the lowly and welcome to the great. [On Edward's accession so highly were the services of Hastings appreciated by the party, that not only the king, but many of the nobility, contributed to render his wealth equal to his new station, by grants of lands and moneys. Several years

afterwards, when he went with Edward into France, no less than two lords, nine knights, fifty-eight squires, and twenty gentlemen joined his train.—Dugdale: Baronage, p. 583. Sharon Turner: History of England, vol. iii. p. 380.] But in that day a certain mixture of vice was necessary to success; and Hastings wounded no self-love by the assumption of unfashionable purism. He was regarded with small favour by the queen, who knew him as the companion of Edward in his pleasures, and at a later period accused him of enticing her faithless lord into unworthy affections. And certain it is, that he was foremost amongst the courtiers in those adventures which we call the excesses of gayety and folly, though too often leading to Solomon's wisdom and his sadness. But profligacy with Hastings had the excuse of ardent passions: he had loved deeply, and unhappily, in his earlier youth, and he gave in to the dissipation of the time with the restless eagerness common to strong and active natures when the heart is not at ease; and under all the light fascination of his converse; or the dissipation of his life, lurked the melancholic temperament of a man worthy of nobler things. Nor was the courtly vice of the libertine the only drawback to the virtuous character assigned to Hastings by Comines. His experience of men had taught him something of the disdain of the cynic, and he scrupled not at serving his pleasures or his ambition by means which his loftier nature could not excuse to his clear sense. [See Comines, book vi., for a curious anecdote of what Mr. Sharon Turner happily calls "the moral coquetry" of Hastings,—an anecdote which reveals much of his character.] Still, however, the world, which had deteriorated, could not harden him. Few persons so able acted so frequently from impulse; the impulses were for the most part affectionate and generous, but then came the regrets of caution and experience; and Hastings summoned his intellect to correct the movement of his heart,—in other words, reflection sought to undo what impulse had suggested. Though so successful a gallant, he had not acquired the ruthless egotism of the sensualist; and his conduct to women often evinced the weakness of giddy youth rather than the cold deliberation of profligate manhood. Thus in his veriest vices there was a spurious amiability, a seductive charm; while in the graver affairs of life the intellectual susceptibility of his nature served but to quicken his penetration and stimulate his energies, and Hastings might have said, with one of his Italian contemporaries, "That in subjection to the influences of women he had learned the government of men." In a word, his powers to attract, and his capacities to command, may be guessed by this,—that Lord Hastings was the only man Richard III. seems to have loved, when Duke of Gloucester, [Sir Thomas More, "Life of Edward V.," speaks of "the great love" Richard bore to Hastings.] and the only man he seems to have feared, when resolved to be King of England.

Hastings was alone in the apartments assigned to him in the Tower, when his page, with a peculiar smile, announced to him the visit of a young donzell, who would not impart her business to his attendants.

The accomplished chamberlain looked up somewhat impatiently from the beautiful manuscripts, enriched with the silver verse of Petrarch, which lay open on his table, and after muttering to himself, "It is only Edward to whom the face of a woman never is unwelcome," bade the page admit the visitor. The damsel entered, and the door closed upon her.

"Be not alarmed, maiden," said Hastings, touched by the downcast bend of the hooded countenance, and the unmistakable and timid modesty of his visitor's bearing. "What hast thou to say to me?"

At the sound of his voice, Sibyll Warner started, and uttered a faint exclamation. The stranger of the pastime-ground was before her. Instinctively she drew the wimple yet more closely round her face, and laid her hand upon the bolt of the door as if in the impulse of retreat.

The nobleman's curiosity was roused. He looked again and earnestly on the form that seemed to shrink from his gaze; then rising slowly, he advanced, and laid his band on her arm. "Donzell, I recognize thee," he said, in a voice that sounded cold and stern. "What service wouldst thou ask me to render thee? Speak! Nay! I pray thee, speak."

"Indeed, good my lord," said Sibyll, conquering her confusion; and, lifting her wimple, her dark blue eyes met those bent on her, with fearless truth and innocence, "I knew not, and you will believe me,—I knew not till this moment that I had such cause for gratitude to the Lord Hastings. I sought you but on the behalf of my father, Master Adam Warner, who would fain have the permission accorded to other scholars, to see the Lord Henry of Windsor, who was gracious to him in other days, and to while the duress of that princely captive with the show of a quaint instrument he has invented."

"Doubtless," answered Hastings, who deserved his character (rare in that day) for humanity and mildness—"doubt less it will pleasure me, nor offend his grace the king, to show all courtesy and indulgence to the unhappy gentleman and lord, whom the weal of England condemns us to hold incarcerate. I have heard of thy father, maiden, an honest and simple man, in whom we need not fear a conspirator; and of thee, young mistress, I have heard also, since we parted."

"Of me, noble sir?"

"Of thee," said Hastings, with a smile; and, placing a seat for her, he took from the table an illuminated manuscript. "I have to thank thy friend Master Alwyn for procuring me this treasure!"

"What, my lord!" said Sibyll, and her eyes glistened, "were you—you the—the—"

"The fortunate person whom Alwyn has enriched at so slight a cost? Yes. Do not grudge me my good fortune in this. Thou hast nobler treasures, methinks, to bestow on another!"

"My good lord!"

"Nay, I must not distress thee. And the young gentleman has a fair face; may it bespeak a true heart!"

These words gave Sibyll an emotion of strange delight. They seemed spoken sadly, they seemed to betoken a jealous sorrow; they awoke the strange, wayward woman-feeling, which is pleased at the pain that betrays the woman's influence: the girl's rosy lips smiled maliciously. Hastings watched her, and her face was so radiant with that rare gleam of secret happiness,—so fresh, so young, so pure, and withal so arch and captivating, that hackneyed and jaded as he was in the vulgar pursuit of pleasure, the sight moved better and tenderer feelings than those of the sensualist. "Yes," he muttered to himself, "there are some toys it were a sin to sport with and cast away amidst the broken rubbish of gone passions!"

He turned to the table, and wrote the order of admission to Henry's prison, and as he gave it to Sibyll, he said, "Thy young gallant, I see, is at the court now. It is a perilous ordeal, and especially to one for whom the name of Nevile opens the road to advancement and honour. Men learn betimes in courts to forsake Love for Plutus, and many a wealthy lord would give his heiress to the poorest gentleman who claims kindred to the Earl of Salisbury and Warwick."

"May my father's guest so prosper," answered Sibyll, "for he seems of loyal heart and gentle nature!"

"Thou art unselfish, sweet mistress," said Hastings; and, surprised by her careless tone, he paused a moment: "or art thou, in truth, indifferent? Saw I not thy hand in his, when even those loathly tymbesteres chanted warning to thee for loving, not above thy merits, but, alas, it may be, above thy fortunes?"

Sibyll's delight increased. Oh, then, he had not applied that hateful warning to himself! He guessed not her secret. She blushed, and the blush was so chaste and maidenly, while the smile that went with it was so ineffably animated and joyous, that Hastings exclaimed, with unaffected admiration, "Surely, fair donzell, Petrarch dreamed of thee, when he spoke of the woman-blush and the angel-smile of Laura. Woe to the man who would injure thee! Farewell! I would not see thee too often, unless I saw thee ever."

He lifted her hand to his lips with a chivalrous respect as he spoke; opened the door, and called his page to attend her to the gates.

Sibyll was more flattered by the abrupt dismissal than if he had knelt to detain her. How different seemed the world as her light step wended homeward!

CHAPTER V. MASTER ADAM WARNER AND KING HENRY THE SIXTH.

The next morning Hilyard revisited Warner with the letters for Henry. The conspirator made Adam reveal to him the interior mechanism of the Eureka, to which Adam, who had toiled all night, had appended one of the most ingenious contrivances he had as yet been enabled (sans the diamond) to accomplish, for the better display of the agencies which the engine was designed to achieve. This contrivance was full of strange cells and recesses, in one of which the documents were placed. And there they lay, so well concealed as to puzzle the minutest search, if not aided by the inventor, or one to whom he had communicated the secrets of the contrivance.

After repeated warnings and exhortations to discretion, Hilyard then, whose busy, active mind had made all the necessary arrangements, summoned a stout-looking fellow, whom he had left below, and with his aid conveyed the heavy machine across the garden, to a back lane, where a mule stood ready to receive the burden.

“Suffer this trusty fellow to guide thee, dear Adam; he will take thee through ways where thy brutal neighbours are not likely to meet and molest thee. Call all thy wits to the surface. Speed and prosper!”

“Fear not,” said Adam, disdainfully. “In the neighbourhood of kings, science is ever safe. Bless thee, child,” and he laid his hand upon Sibyll’s head, for she had accompanied them thus far in silence, “now go in.”

“I go with thee, Father,” said Sibyll, firmly. “Master Hilyard, it is best so,” she whispered; “what if my father fall into one of his reveries?”

“You are right: go with him, at least, to the Tower gate. Hard by is the house of a noble dame and a worthy, known to our friend Hugh, where thou mayest wait Master Warner’s return. It will not suit thy modesty and sex to loiter amongst the pages and soldiery in the yard. Adam, thy daughter must wend with thee.”

Adam had not attended to this colloquy, and mechanically bowing his head, he set off, and was greatly surprised, on gaining the river-side (where a boat was found large enough to accommodate not only the human passengers, but the mule and its burden), to see Sibyll by his side.

The imprisonment of the unfortunate Henry, though guarded with sufficient rigour against all chances of escape, was not, as the reader has perceived, at this period embittered by unnecessary harshness. His attendants treated him with respect, his table was supplied more abundantly and daintily than his habitual abstinence required, and the monks and learned men whom he had favoured, were, we need not repeat, permitted to enliven his solitude with their grave converse.

On the other hand, all attempts at correspondence between Margaret or the exiled Lancastrians and himself had been jealously watched, and when detected, the emissaries had been punished with relentless severity. A man named Hawkins had been racked for attempting to borrow money for the queen from the great London merchant, Sir Thomas Cook. A shoemaker had been tortured to death with red-hot pincers for abetting her correspondence with her allies. Various persons had been racked for similar offences; but the energy of Margaret and the zeal of her adherents were still unexhausted and unconquered.

Either unconscious or contemptuous of the perils to which he was subjected, the student, with his silent companions, performed the voyage, and landed in sight of the Fortress-Palatine. And now Hugh stopped before a house of good fashion, knocked at the door, which was opened by an old servitor, disappeared for a few moments, and returning, informed Sibyll, in a meaning whisper, that the gentlewoman within was a good Lancastrian, and prayed the donzell to rest in her company till Master Warner's return.

Sibyll, accordingly, after pressing her father's hand without fear—for she had deemed the sole danger Adam risked was from the rabble by the way—followed Hugh into a fair chamber, strewed with rushes, where an aged dame, of noble air and aspect, was employed at her broidery frame. This gentlewoman, the widow of a nobleman who had fallen in the service of Henry, received her graciously, and Hugh then retired to complete his commission. The student, the mule, the model, and the porter pursued their way to the entrance of that part of the gloomy palace inhabited by Henry. Here they were stopped, and Adam, after rummaging long in vain for the chamberlain's passport, at last happily discovered it, pinned to his sleeve, by Sibyll's forethought. On this a gentleman was summoned to inspect the order, and in a few moments Adam was conducted to the presence of the illustrious prisoner.

"And what," said a subaltern officer, lolling by the archway of the (now styled) "Bloody Tower," hard by the turret devoted to the prisoner, [The Wakefield Tower] and speaking to Adam's guide, who still mounted guard by the model,—"what may be the precious burden of which thou art the convoy?"

"Marry, sir," said Hugh, who spoke in the strong Yorkshire dialect, which we are obliged to render into intelligible English—"marry, I weet not,—it is some curious puppet-box, or quiet contrivance, that Master Warner, whom they say is a very deft and ingenious personage, is permitted to bring hither for the Lord Henry's diversion."

"A puppet-box!" said the officer, with much animated curiosity. "'Fore the Mass! that must be a pleasant sight. Lift the lid, fellow!"

"Please your honour, I do not dare," returned Hugh,—"I but obey orders."

"Obey mine, then. Out of the way," and the officer lifted the lid of the pannier with the point of his dagger, and peered within. He drew back, much disappointed. "Holy Mother!" said he, "this seemeth more like an instrument of torture than a juggler's merry device. It looks parlous ugly!"

"Hush!" said one of the lazy bystanders, with whom the various gateways and courts of the Palace-Fortress were crowded, "hush—thy cap and thy knee, sir!"

The officer started; and, looking round, perceived a young man of low stature, followed by three or four knights and nobles, slowly approaching towards the arch, and every cap in the vicinity was off, and every knee bowed.

The eye of this young man was already bent, with a searching and keen gaze, upon the motionless mule, standing patiently by the Wakefield Tower; and turning from the mule to the porter, the latter shrunk, and grew pale, at that dark, steady, penetrating eye, which seemed to pierce at once into the secrets and hearts of men.

"Who may this young lord be?" he whispered to the officer.

"Prince Richard, Duke of Gloucester, man," was the answer. "Uncover, varlet!"

"Surely," said the prince, pausing by the gate, "surely this is no sumpter-mule, bearing provisions to the Lord Henry of Windsor. It would be but poor respect to that noble person, whom, alas the day! his grace the king is unwillingly compelled to guard from the malicious designs of rebels and mischief-seekers, that one not bearing the king's livery should attend to any of the needful wants of so worshipful a lord and guest!"

"My lord," said the officer at the gate, "one Master Adam Warner hath just, by permission, been conducted to the Lord Henry's presence, and the beast beareth some strange and grim-looking device for my lord's diversion."

The singular softness and urbanity which generally characterized the Duke of Gloucester's tone and bearing at that time,—which in a court so full of factions and intrigues made him the enemy of none and seemingly the friend of all, and, conjoined with abilities already universally acknowledged, had given to his very boyhood a pre-eminence of grave repute and good opinion, which, indeed, he retained till the terrible circumstances connected with his accession to the throne, under the bloody name of Richard the Third, roused all men's hearts and reasons into the persuasion that what before had seemed virtue was but dissimulation,—this singular sweetness, we say, of manner and voice, had in it, nevertheless, something that imposed and thrilled and awed. And in truth, in our common and more vulgar intercourse with life, we must have observed, that where external gentleness of bearing is accompanied by a repute for iron will, determined resolution, and a serious, profound, and all-inquiring intellect, it carries with it a majesty wholly distinct from that charm which is exercised by one whose mildness of nature corresponds with the outward humility; and, if it does not convey the notion of falseness, bears the appearance of that perfect self-possession, that calm repose of power, which intimidates those it influences far more than the imperious port and the loud voice. And they who best knew the duke, knew also that, despite this general smoothness of mien, his temperament was naturally irritable, quick, and subject to stormy gusts of passion, the which defects his admirers praised him for labouring hard and sedulously to keep in due control. Still, to a keen observer, the constitutional tendencies of that nervous temperament were often visible, even in his blandest moments, even when his voice was most musical, his smile most gracious. If something stung or excited him, an uneasy gnawing of the nether lip, a fretful playing with his dagger, drawing it up and down from its sheath, [Pol. Virg. 565] a slight twitching of the muscles of the face, and a quiver of the eyelid, betokened the efforts he made at self-command; and now, as his dark eyes rested upon Hugh's pale countenance, and then glanced upon the impassive mule, dozing quietly under the weight of poor Adam's model, his hand mechanically sought his dagger-hilt, and his face took a sinister and sombre expression.

"Thy name, friend?"

"Hugh Withers, please you, my lord duke."

"Um! North country, by thine accent. Dost thou serve this Master Warner?"

"No, my lord, I was only hired with my mule to carry—"

"Ah, true! to carry what thy pannier contains; open it. Holy Paul! a strange jonglerie indeed! This Master Adam Warner,—methinks, I have heard his name—a learned man—um—let me see his safe conduct. Right,—it is Lord Hastings's signature." But still the prince held the passport, and still suspiciously eyed the Eureka and its appliances, which, in their complicated and native ugliness of doors, wheels, pipes, and

chimney, were exposed to his view. At this moment, one of the attendants of Henry descended the stairs of the Wakefield Tower, with a request that the model might be carried up to divert the prisoner.

Richard paused a moment, as the officer hesitatingly watched his countenance before giving the desired permission. But the prince, turning to him, and smoothing his brow, said mildly, “Certes! all that can divert the Lord Henry must be innocent pastime. And I am well pleased that he hath this cheerful mood for recreation. It gainsayeth those who would accuse us of rigour in his durance. Yes, this warrant is complete and formal;” and the prince returned the passport to the officer, and walked slowly on through that gloomy arch ever more associated with Richard of Gloucester’s memory, and beneath the very room in which our belief yet holds that the infant sons of Edward IV. breathed their last; still, as Gloucester moved, he turned and turned, and kept his eye furtively fixed upon the porter.

“Lovell,” he said to one of the gentlemen who attended him, and who was among the few admitted to his more peculiar intimacy, “that man is of the North.”

“Well, my lord?”

“The North was always well affected to the Lancastrians. Master Warner hath been accused of witchcraft. Marry, I should like to see his device—um; Master Catesby, come hither,—approach, sir. Go back, and the instant Adam Warner and his contrivance are dismissed, bring them both to me in the king’s chamber. Thou understandest? We too would see his device,—and let neither man nor mechanical, when once they reappear, out of thine eye’s reach. For divers and subtle are the contrivances of treasonable men!”

Catesby bowed, and Richard, without speaking further, took his way to the royal apartments, which lay beyond the White Tower, towards the river, and are long since demolished.

Meanwhile the porter, with the aid of one of the attendants, had carried the model into the chamber of the august captive. Henry, attired in a loose robe, was pacing the room with a slow step, and his head sunk on his bosom,—while Adam with much animation was enlarging on the wonders of the contrivance he was about to show him. The chamber was commodious, and furnished with sufficient attention to the state and dignity of the prisoner; for Edward, though savage and relentless when his blood was up, never descended into the cool and continuous cruelty of detail.

The chamber may yet be seen,—its shape a spacious octagon; but the walls now rude and bare were then painted and blazoned with scenes from the Old Testament. The door opened beneath the pointed arch in the central side (not where it now does), giving entrance from a small anteroom, in which the visitor now beholds the receptacle for old rolls and papers. At the right, on entering, where now, if our memory mistake not, is placed a press, stood the bed, quaintly carved, and with hangings of damascene. At the farther end the deep recess which faced the ancient door was fitted up as a kind of oratory. And there were to be seen, besides the crucifix and the Mass-book, a profusion of small vessels of gold and crystal, containing the relics, supposed or real, of saint and martyr, treasures which the deposed king had collected in his palmier days at a sum that, in the minds of his followers, had been better bestowed on arms and war-steeds. A young man named Allerton—one of the three gentlemen personally attached to Henry, to whom Edward had permitted general access, and who, in fact, lodged in other apartments of the Wakefield Tower, and might be said to share his captivity—was seated before a table, and following the steps of his musing master, with earnest and watchful eyes.

One of the small spaniels employed in springing game—for Henry, despite his mildness, had been fond of all the sports of the field—lay curled round on the floor, but started up, with a shrill bark, at the entrance of the bearer of the model, while a starling in a cage by the window, seemingly delighted at the disturbance, flapped his wings, and screamed out, “Bad men! Bad world! Poor Henry!”

The captive paused at that cry, and a sad and patient smile of inexpressible melancholy and sweetness hovered over his lips. Henry still retained much of the personal comeliness he possessed at the time when Margaret of Anjou, the theme of minstrel and minne singer, left her native court of poets for the fatal throne of England. But beauty, usually so popular and precious a gift to kings, was not in him of that order which commanded the eye and moved the admiration of a turbulent people and a haughty chivalry. The features, if regular, were small; their expression meek and timid; the form, though tall, was not firm-knit and muscular; the lower limbs were too thin, the body had too much flesh, the delicate hands betrayed the sickly paleness of feeble health; there was a dreamy vagueness in the clear soft blue eyes, and a listless absence of all energy in the habitual bend, the slow, heavy, sauntering tread,—all about that benevolent aspect, that soft voice, that resigned mien, and gentle manner, spoke the exquisite, unresisting goodness, which provoked the lewd to taunt, the hardy to despise, the insolent to rebel; for the foes of a king in stormy times are often less his vices than his virtues.

"And now, good my lord," said Adam, hastening, with eager hands, to assist the bearer in depositing the model on the table—"now will I explain to you the contrivance which it hath cost me long years of patient toil to shape from thought into this iron form."

"But first," said Allerton, "were it not well that these good people withdrew? A contriver likes not others to learn his secret ere the time hath come to reap its profits."

"Surely, surely!" said Adam, and alarmed at the idea thus suggested, he threw the folds of his gown over the model.

The attendant bowed and retired; Hugh followed him, but not till he had exchanged a significant look with Allerton. As soon as the room was left clear to Adam, the captive, and Master Allerton, the last rose, and looking hastily round the chamber, approached the mechanician. "Quick, sir!" said he, in a whisper, "we are not often left without witnesses."

"Verily," said Adam, who had now forgotten kings and stratagems, plots and counterplots, and was all absorbed in his invention, "verily, young man, hurry not in this fashion,—I am about to begin. Know, my lord," and he turned to Henry, who, with an indolent, dreamy gaze, stood contemplating the Eureka,—"know that more than a hundred years before the Christian era, one Hero, an Alexandrian, discovered the force produced by the vapour begot by heat on water. That this power was not unknown to the ancient sages, witness the contrivance, not otherwise to be accounted for, of the heathen oracles; but to our great countryman and predecessor, Roger Bacon, who first suggested that vehicles might be drawn without steeds or steers, and ships might—"

"Marry, sir," interrupted Allerton, with great impatience, "it is not to prate to us of such trivial fables of Man, or such wanton sports of the Foul Fiend, that thou hast risked limb and life. Time is precious. I have been prevised that thou hast letters for King Henry; produce them, quick!"

A deep glow of indignation had overspread the enthusiast's face at the commencement of this address; but the close reminded him, in truth, of his errand.

"Hot youth," said he, with dignity, "a future age may judge differently of what thou deemest trivial fables, and may rate high this poor invention when the brawls of York and Lancaster are forgotten."

"Hear him," said Henry, with a soft smile, and laying his hand on the shoulder of the young man, who was about to utter a passionate and scornful retort,—"hear him, sir. Have I not often and ever said this same thing to thee? We children of a day imagine our contests are the sole things that move the world. Alack! our fathers thought the same; and they and their turmoils sleep forgotten! Nay, Master Warner,"—for here Adam, poor man, awed by Henry's mildness into shame at his discourteous vaunting, began to

apologize,—"nay, sir, nay—thou art right to contemn our bloody and futile struggles for a crown of thorns; for—"

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'Kingdoms are but cares,
   State is devoid of stay
 Riches are ready snares,
   And hasten to decay.'
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[Lines ascribed to Henry VI., with commendation "as a prettie verse," by Sir John Harrington, in the "Nugae Antiquate." They are also given, with little alteration, to the unhappy king by Baldwin, in his tragedy of "King Henry VI."]

"And yet, sir, believe me, thou hast no cause for vain glory in thine own craft and labours; for to wit and to lere there are the same vanity and vexation of spirit as to war and empire. Only, O would-be wise man, only when we muse on Heaven do our souls ascend from the fowler's snare!"

"My saint-like liege," said Allerton, bowing low, and with tears in his eyes, "thinkest thou not that thy very disdain of thy rights makes thee more worthy of them? If not for thine, for thy son's sake, remember that the usurper sits on the throne of the conqueror of Agincourt!—Sir Clerk, the letters."

Adam, already anxious to retrieve the error of his first forgetfulness, here, after a moment's struggle for the necessary remembrance, drew the papers from the labyrinthine receptacle which concealed them; and Henry uttered an exclamation of joy as, after cutting the silk, his eye glanced over the writing—

"My Margaret! my wife!" Presently he grew pale, and his hands trembled. "Saints defend her! Saints defend her! She is here, disguised, in London!"

"Margaret! our hero-queen! the manlike woman!" exclaimed Allerton, clasping his hands. "Then be sure that—" He stopped, and abruptly taking Adam's arm, drew him aside, while Henry continued to read—"Master Warner, we may trust thee,—thou art one of us; thou art sent here, I know; by Robin of Redesdale,—we may trust thee?"

"Young sir," replied the philosopher, gravely, "the fears and hopes of power are not amidst the uneasier passions of the student's mind. I pledged myself but to bear these papers hither, and to return with what may be sent back."

"But thou didst this for love of the cause, the truth, and the right?"

"I did it partly from Hilyard's tale of wrong, but partly, also, for the gold," answered Adam, simply; and his noble air, his high brow, the serene calm of his features, so contrasted with the meanness implied in the latter words of his confession, that Allerton stared at him amazed, and without reply.

Meanwhile Henry had concluded the letter, and with a heavy sigh glanced over the papers that accompanied it. "Alack! alack! more turbulence, more danger and disquiet, more of my people's blood!" He motioned to the young man, and drawing him to the window, while Adam returned to his model, put the papers in his hand. "Allerton," he said, "thou lovest me, but thou art one of the few in this distraught land who love also God. Thou art not one of the warriors, the men of steel. Counsel me. See: Margaret demands my signature to these papers; the one, empowering and craving the levy of men and arms in the northern counties; the other, promising free pardon to all who will desert Edward; the third—it seemeth to me more strange and less kinglike than the others—undertaking to abolish all the imposts and all the laws that press upon the commons, and (is this a holy and pious stipulation?) to inquire into the exactions and persecutions of the priesthood of our Holy Church!"

"Sire!" said the young man, after he had hastily perused the papers, "my lady liege showeth good argument for your assent to two, at least, of these undertakings. See the names of fifty gentlemen ready to take arms in your cause if authorized by your royal warrant. The men of the North are malcontent with the usurper, but they will not yet stir, unless at your own command. Such documents will, of course, be used with discretion, and not to imperil your Grace's safety."

"My safety!" said Henry, with a flash of his father's hero soul in his eyes—"of that I think not! If I have small courage to attack, I have some fortitude to bear. But three months after these be signed, how many brave hearts will be still! how many stout hands be dust! O Margaret! Margaret! why temptest thou? Wert thou so happy when a queen?" The prisoner broke from Allerton's arm, and walked, in great disorder and irresolution, to and fro the chamber; and strange it was to see the contrast between himself and Warner,—both in so much alike, both so purely creatures out of the common world, so gentle, abstract, so utterly living in the life apart: and now the student so calm, the prince so disturbed! The contrast struck Henry himself! He paused abruptly, and, folding his arms, contemplated the philosopher, as, with an affectionate complacency, Adam played and toyed, as it were, with his beloved model; now opening and shutting again its doors, now brushing away with his sleeve some particles of dust that had settled on it, now retiring a few paces to gaze the better on its stern symmetry.

"Oh, my Allerton!" cried Henry, "behold! the kingdom a man makes out of his own mind is the only one that it delighteth man to govern! Behold, he is lord over its springs and movements; its wheels revolve and stop at his bidding. Here, here, alone, God never asketh the ruler, 'Why was the blood of thousands poured forth like water, that a worm might wear a crown?'"

"Sire," said Allerton, solemnly, "when our Heavenly King appoints his anointed representative on earth, He gives to that human delegate no power to resign the ambassade and trust. What suicide is to a man, abdication is to a king! How canst thou dispose of thy son's rights? And what becomes of those rights if thou wilt prefer for him the exile, for thyself the prison, when one effort may restore a throne!"

Henry seemed struck by a tone of argument that suited both his own mind and the reasoning of the age. He gazed a moment on the face of the young man, muttered to himself, and suddenly moving to the table, signed the papers, and restored them to Adam, who mechanically replaced them in their iron hiding-place.

"Now begone, Sir!" whispered Allerton, afraid that Henry's mind might again change.

"Will not my lord examine the engine?" asked Warner, half-beseechingly.

"Not to-day! See, he has already retired to his oratory, he is in prayer!" and, going to the door, Allerton summoned the attendants in waiting to carry down the model.

"Well, well, patience, patience! thou shalt have thine audience at last," muttered Adam, as he retired from the room, his eyes fixed upon the neglected infant of his brain.

CHAPTER VI. HOW, ON LEAVING KING LOG, FOOLISH WISDOM RUNS A-MUCK ON KING STORK.

At the outer door of the Tower by which he had entered, the philosopher was accosted by Catesby,—a man who, in imitation of his young patron, exhibited the soft and oily manner which concealed intense ambition and innate ferocity.

“Worshipful my master,” said he, bowing low, but with a half sneer on his lips, “the king and his Highness the Duke of Gloucester have heard much of your strange skill, and command me to lead you to their presence. Follow, sir, and you, my men, convey this quaint contrivance to the king’s apartments.”

With this, not waiting for any reply, Catesby strode on. Hugh’s face fell; he turned very pale, and, imagining himself unobserved, turned round to slink away. But Catesby, who seemed to have eyes at the back of his head, called out, in a mild tone,—

“Good fellow, help to bear the mechanical—you, too, may be needed.”

“Cog’s wounds!” muttered Hugh, “an’ I had but known what it was to set my foot in a king’s palace! Such walking may do for the silken shoon, but the hobnail always gets into a hobble.” With that, affecting a cheerful mien, he helped to replace the model on the mule.

Meanwhile, Adam, elated, poor man! at the flattery of the royal mandate, persuaded that his fame had reached Edward’s ears, and chafed at the little heed paid by the pious Henry to his great work, stalked on, his head in the air. “Verily,” mused the student, “King Edward may have been a cruel youth, and over hasty; it is horrible to think of Robert Hilyard’s calamities! But men do say he hath an acute and masterly comprehension. Doubtless, he will perceive at a glance how much I can advantage his kingdom.” With this, we grieve to say, selfish reflection—which, if the thought of his model could have slept a while, Adam would have blushed to recall, as an affront to Hilyard’s wrongs—the philosopher followed Catesby across the spacious yard, along a narrow passage, and up a winding turret-stair, to a room in the third story, which opened at one door into the king’s closet, at the other into the spacious gallery, which was already a feature in the plan of the more princely houses. In another minute Adam and his model were in the presence of the king. The part of the room in which Edward sat was distinguished from the rest by a small eastern carpet on the floor (a luxury more in use in the palaces of that day than it appears to have been a century later); [see the Narrative of the Lord Grauthuse, before referred to] a table was set before him, on which the model was placed. At his right hand sat Jacquetta, Duchess of Bedford, the queen’s mother; at his left, Prince Richard. The duchess, though not without the remains of beauty, had a stern, haughty, scornful expression in her sharp aquiline features, compressed lips, and imperious eye. The paleness of her complexion, and the careworn, anxious lines of her countenance, were ascribed by the vulgar to studies of no holy cast. Her reputation for sorcery and witchcraft was daily increasing, and served well the purpose of the discontented barons, whom the rise of her children mortified and enraged.

“Approach, Master—What say you his name is, Richard?”

“Adam Warner,” replied the sweet voice of the Duke of Gloucester; “of excellent skill in the mathematics.”

“Approach, sir, and show us the nature of this notable invention.”

“I desire nothing better, my lord king,” said Adam, boldly; “but first let me crave a small modicum of fuel. Fire, which is the life of the world, as the wise of old held it, is also the soul of this, my mechanical.”

“Peradventure,” whispered the duchess, “the wizard desireth to consume us.”

“More likely,” replied Richard, in the same undertone, “to consume whatever of treasonable nature may lurk concealed in his engine.”

"True," said Edward, and then, speaking aloud, "Master Warner," he added, "put thy puppet to its purpose without fire,—we will it."

"It is impossible, my lord," said Adam, with a lofty smile. "Science and nature are more powerful than a king's word."

"Do not say that in public, my friend," said Edward, dryly, "or we must hang thee! I would not my subjects were told anything so treasonable. Howbeit, to give thee no excuse in failure, thou shalt have what thou needest."

"But surely not in our presence," exclaimed the duchess. "This may be a device of the Lancastrians for our perdition."

"As you please, belle mere," said Edward, and he motioned to a gentleman, who stood a few paces behind his chair, and who, from the entrance of the mechanician, had seemed to observe him with intense interest. "Master Nevile, attend this wise man; supply his wants, and hark, in thy ear, watch well that he abstract nothing from the womb of his engine; observe what he doeth; be all eyes." Marmaduke bowed low to conceal his change of countenance, and, stepping forward, made a sign to Adam to follow him.

"Go also, Catesby," said Richard to his follower, who had taken his post near him, "and clear the chamber."

As soon as the three members of the royal family were left alone, the king, stretching himself, with a slight yawn, observed, "This man looks not like a conspirator, brother Richard, though his sententiary as to nature and science lacked loyalty and respect."

"Sire and brother," answered Richard, "great leaders often dupe their own tools; at least, meseemeth that they would reason well so to do. Remember, I have told thee that there is strong cause to suppose Margaret to be in London. In the suburbs of the city has also appeared, within the last few weeks, that strange and dangerous person, whose very objects are a mystery, save that he is our foe,—Robin of Redesdale. The men of the North have exhibited a spirit of insurrection; a man of that country attends this reputed wizard, and he himself was favoured in past times by Henry of Windsor. These are ominous signs when the conjunctions be considered!"

"It is well said; but a fair day for breathing our palfrey is half-spent!" returned the indolent prince. "By'r Lady! I like the fashion of thy super-tunic well, Richard; but thou hast it too much puffed over the shoulders."

Richard's dark eye shot fire, and he gnawed his lip as he answered, "God hath not given to me the fair shape of my kinsmen."

"Thy pardon, dear boy," said Edward, kindly; "yet little needest thou our broad backs and strong sinews, for thou hast a tongue to charm women and a wit to command men."

Richard bowed his face, little less beautiful than his brother's, though wholly different from it in feature, for Edward had the long oval countenance, the fair hair, the rich colouring, and the large outline of his mother, the Rose of Raby. Richard, on the contrary, had the short face, the dark brown locks, and the pale olive complexion of his father, whom he alone of the royal brothers strikingly resembled. [Pol. Virg. 544.]

The cheeks, too, were somewhat sunken, and already, though scarcely past childhood, about his lips were seen the lines of thoughtful manhood. But then those small features, delicately aquiline, were so regular; that dark eye was so deep, so fathomless in its bright, musing intelligence; that quivering lip was at once

so beautifully formed and so expressive of intellectual subtlety and haughty will; and that pale forehead was so massive, high, and majestic,—that when, at a later period, the Scottish prelate [Archibald Quhitlaw.—"Faciem tuam summo imperio principatu dignam inspicit, quam moralis et heroica, virtus illustrat," etc.—We need scarcely observe that even a Scotchman would not have risked a public compliment to Richard's face, if so inappropriate as to seem a sarcasm, especially as the orator immediately proceeds to notice the shortness of Richard's stature,—a comment not likely to have been peculiarly acceptable in the Rous Roll, the portrait of Richard represents him as undersized, but compactly and strongly built, and without any sign of deformity, unless the inelegant defect of a short neck can be so called.] commended Richard's "princely countenance," the compliment was not one to be disputed, much less contemned. But now as he rose, obedient to a whisper from the duchess, and followed her to the window, while Edward appeared engaged in admiring the shape of his own long, upturned shoes, those defects in his shape which the popular hatred and the rise of the House of Tudor exaggerated into the absolute deformity that the unexamining ignorance of modern days and Shakspeare's fiery tragedy have fixed into established caricature, were sufficiently apparent. Deformed or hunchbacked we need scarcely say he was not, for no man so disfigured could have possessed that great personal strength which he invariably exhibited in battle, despite the comparative slightness of his frame. He was considerably below the ordinary height, which the great stature of his brother rendered yet more disadvantageous by contrast; but his lower limbs were strong-jointed and muscular. Though the back was not curved, yet one shoulder was slightly higher than the other, which was the more observable from the evident pains that he took to disguise it, and the gorgeous splendour, savouring of personal coxcombry—from which no Plantagenet was ever free,—that he exhibited in his dress. And as, in a warlike age, the physical conformation of men is always critically regarded, so this defect and that of his low stature were not so much redeemed as they would be in our day by the beauty and intelligence of his face. Added to this, his neck was short, and a habit of bending his head on his bosom (arising either from thought, or the affectation of humility, which was a part of his character) made it seem shorter still. But this peculiarity, while taking from the grace, added to the strength of his frame, which, spare, sinewy, and compact, showed to an observer that power of endurance, that combination of solid stubbornness and active energy, which, at the battle of Barnet, made him no less formidable to encounter than the ruthless sword of the mighty Edward.

"So, prince," said the duchess, "this new gentleman of the king's is, it seems, a Nevile. When will Edward's high spirit cast off that hateful yoke?"

Richard sighed and shook his head. The duchess, encouraged by these signs of sympathy, continued,—

"Your brother Clarence, Prince Richard, despises us, to cringe to the proud earl. But you—"

"I am not suitor to the Lady Isabel; Clarence is overlavish, and Isabel has a fair face and a queenly dowry."

"May I perish," said the duchess, "ere Warwick's daughter wears the baudekin of royalty, and sits in as high a state as the queen's mother! Prince, I would fain confer with thee; we have a project to abase and banish this hateful lord. If you but join us, success is sure; the Count of Charolois—"

"Dear lady," interrupted Richard, with an air of profound humility, "tell me nothing of plot or project; my years are too few for such high and subtle policy; and the Lord Warwick hath been a leal friend to our House of York."

The duchess bit her lip—"Yet I have heard you tell Edward that a subject can be too powerful?"

"Never, lady! you have never heard me."

"Then Edward has told Elizabeth that you so spoke."

"Ah," said Richard, turning away with a smile, "I see that the king's conscience hath a discreet keeper. Pardon me, Edward, now that he hath sufficiently surveyed his shoon, must marvel at this prolonged colloquy. And see, the door opens."

With this, the duke slowly moved to the table, and resumed his seat.

Marmaduke, full of fear for his ancient host, had in vain sought an opportunity to address a few words of exhortation to him to forbear all necromancy, and to abstain from all perilous distinctions between the power of Edward IV. and that of his damnable Nature and Science; but Catesby watched him with so feline a vigilance, that he was unable to slip in more than—"Ah, Master Warner, for our blessed Lord's sake, recollect that rack and cord are more than mere words here!" To the which pleasant remark, Adam, then busy in filling his miniature boiler, only replied by a wistful stare, not in the least recognizing the Nevile in his fine attire, and the new-fashioned mode of dressing his long hair.

But Catesby watched in vain for the abstraction of any treasonable contents in the engine, which the Duke of Gloucester had so shrewdly suspected. The truth must be told. Adam had entirely forgotten that in the intricacies of his mechanical lurked the papers that might overthrow a throne! Magnificent Incarnation was he (in that oblivion) of Science itself, which cares not a jot for men and nations, in their ephemeral existences; which only remembers THINGS,—things that endure for ages; and in its stupendous calculations loses sight of the unit of a generation! No, he had thoroughly forgotten Henry, Edward, his own limbs and life,—not only York and Lancaster, but Adam Warner and the rack. Grand in his forgetfulness, he stood before the tiger and the tiger-cat,—Edward and—Richard,—A Pure Thought, a Man's Soul; Science fearless in the presence of Cruelty, Tyranny, Craft, and Power.

In truth, now that Adam was thoroughly in his own sphere, was in the domain of which he was king, and those beings in velvet and ermine were but as ignorant savages admitted to the frontier of his realm, his form seemed to dilate into a majesty the beholders had not before recognized; and even the lazy Edward muttered involuntarily, "By my halidame, the man has a noble presence!"

"I am prepared now, sire," said Adam, loftily, "to show to my king and to this court, that, unnoticed and obscure, in study and retreat, often live those men whom kings may be proud to call their subjects. Will it please you, my lords, this way!" and he motioned so commandingly to the room in which he had left the Eureka, that his audience rose by a common impulse, and in another minute stood grouped round the model in the adjoining chamber. This really wonderful invention—so wonderful, indeed, that it will surpass the faith of those who do not pause to consider what vast forestallments of modern science have been made and lost in the darkness of ages not fitted to receive them—was, doubtless, in many important details not yet adapted for the practical uses to which Adam designed its application. But as a mere model, as a marvellous essay, for the suggestion of gigantic results, it was, perhaps, to the full as effective as the ingenuity of a mechanic of our own day could construct. It is true that it was crowded with unnecessary cylinders, slides, cocks, and wheals—hideous and clumsy to the eye—but through this intricacy the great simple design accomplished its main object. It contrived to show what force and skill man can obtain from the alliance of nature; the more clearly, inasmuch as the mechanism affixed to it, still more ingenious than itself, was well calculated to illustrate practically one of the many uses to which the principle was destined to be applied.

Adam had not yet fathomed the secret by which to supply the miniature cylinder with sufficient steam for any prolonged effect,—the great truth of latent heat was unknown to him; but he had contrived to regulate the supply of water so as to make the engine discharge its duties sufficiently for the satisfaction of curiosity and the explanation of its objects. And now this strange thing of iron was in full life. From its serpent chimney issued the thick rapid smoke, and the groan of its travail was heard within.

"And what propose you to yourself and to the kingdom in all this, Master Adam?" asked Edward, curiously bending his tall person over the tortured iron.

"I propose to make Nature the labourer of man," answered Warner. "When I was a child of some eight years old, I observed that water swelleth into vapour when fire is applied to it. Twelve years afterwards, at the age of twenty, I observed that while undergoing this change it exerts a mighty mechanical force. At twenty-five, constantly musing, I said, 'Why should not that force become subject to man's art?' I then began the first rude model, of which this is the descendant. I noticed that the vapour so produced is elastic,—that is, that as it expands, it presses against what opposes it; it has a force applicable everywhere force is needed by man's labour. Behold a second agency of gigantic resources! And then, still studying this, I perceived that the vapour thus produced can be reconverted into water, shrinking necessarily, while so retransformed, from the space it filled as vapour, and leaving that space a vacuum. But Nature abhors a vacuum; produce a vacuum, and the bodies that surround rush into it. Thus, the vapour again, while changing back into water, becomes also a force,—our agent. And all the while these truths were shaping themselves to my mind, I was devising and improving also the material form by which I might render them useful to man; so at last, out of these truths, arose this invention!"

"Pardie," said Edward, with the haste natural to royalty, "what in common there can be between thy jargon of smoke and water and this huge ugliness of iron passeth all understanding. But spare us thy speeches, and on to thy puppet-show."

Adam stared a moment at the king in the surprise that one full of his subject feels when he sees it impossible to make another understand it, sighed, shook his head, and prepared to begin.

"Observe," he said, "that there is no juggling, no deceit. I will place in this deposit this small lump of brass—would the size of this toy would admit of larger experiment! I will then pray ye to note, as I open door after door, how the metal passes through various changes, all operated by this one agency of vapour. Heed and attend. And if the crowning work please thee, think, great king, what such an agency upon the large scale would be to thee; think how it would multiply all arts and lessen all labour; think that thou hast, in this, achieved for a whole people the true philosopher's stone. Now note!"

He placed the rough ore in its receptacle, and suddenly it seemed seized by a vice within, and vanished. He proceeded then, while dexterously attending to the complex movements, to open door after door, to show the astonished spectators the rapid transitions the metal underwent, and suddenly, in the midst of his pride, he stopped short, for, like a lightning-flash, came across his mind the remembrance of the fatal papers. Within the next door he was to open, they lay concealed. His change of countenance did not escape Richard, and he noted the door which Adam forbore to open, as the student hurriedly, and with some presence of mind, passed to the next, in which the metal was shortly to appear.

"Open this door," said the prince, pointing to the handle. "No! forbear! There is danger! forbear!" exclaimed the mechanician.

"Danger to thine own neck, varlet and impostor!" exclaimed the duke; and he was about himself to open the door, when suddenly a loud roar, a terrific explosion was heard. Alas! Adam Warner had not yet discovered for his engine what we now call the safety-valve. The steam contained in the miniature boiler had acquired an undue pressure; Adam's attention had been too much engrossed to notice the signs of the growing increase, and the rest may be easily conceived. Nothing could equal the stupor and the horror of the spectators at this explosion, save only the boy-duke, who remained immovable, and still frowning. All rushed to the door, huddling one on the other, scarcely knowing what next was to befall them, but certain that the wizard was bent upon their destruction. Edward was the first to recover himself; and seeing that no lives were lost, his first impulse was that of ungovernable rage.

"Foul traitor!" he exclaimed, "was it for this that thou hast pretended to beguile us with thy damnable sorceries? Seize him! Away to the Tower Hill! and let the priest patter an ave while the doomsman knots the rope."

Not a hand stirred; even Catesby would as lief have touched the king's lion before meals, as that poor mechanician, standing aghast, and unheeding all, beside his mutilated engine.

"Master Nevile," said the king, sternly, "dost thou hear us?

"Verily," muttered the Nevile, approaching very slowly, "I knew what would happen; but to lay hands on my host, an' he were fifty times a wizard—No! My liege," he said in a firm tone, but falling on his knee, and his gallant countenance pale with generous terror, "my liege, forgive me. This man succoured me when struck down and wounded by a Lancastrian ruffian; this man gave me shelter, food, and healing. Command me not, O gracious my lord, to aid in taking the life of one to whom I owe my own."

"His life!" exclaimed the Duchess of Bedford,—"the life of this most illustrious person! Sire, you do not dream it!"

"Heh! by the saints, what now?" cried the king, whose choler, though fierce and ruthless, was as short-lived as the passions of the indolent usually are, and whom the earnest interposition of his mother-in-law much surprised and diverted. "If, fair belle-mere, thou thinkest it so illustrious a deed to frighten us out of our mortal senses, and narrowly to 'scape sending us across the river like a bevy of balls from a bombard, there is no disputing of tastes. Rise up, Master Nevile, we esteem thee not less for thy boldness; ever be the host and the benefactor revered by English gentlemen and Christian youth. Master Warner may go free."

Here Warner uttered so deep and hollow a groan, that it startled all present.

"Twenty-five years of labour, and not to have seen this!" he ejaculated. "Twenty and five years, and all wasted! How repair this disaster? O fatal day!"

"What says he? What means he?" said Jacquetta.

"Come home!—home!" said Marmaduke, approaching the philosopher, in great alarm lest he should once more jeopardize his life. But Adam, shaking him off, began eagerly, and with tremulous hands, to examine the machine, and not perceiving any mode by which to guard in future against a danger that he saw at once would, if not removed, render his invention useless, tottered to a chair and covered his face with his hands.

"He seemeth mightily grieved that our bones are still whole!" muttered Edward. "And why, belle-mere mine, wouldst thou protect this pleasant tregetour?"

"What!" said the duchess, "see you not that a man capable of such devices must be of doughty service against our foes?"

"Not I. How?"

"Why, if merely to signify his displeasure at our young Richard's over-curious meddling, he can cause this strange engine to shake the walls,—nay, to destroy itself,—think what he might do were his power and malice at our disposing. I know something of these nigromancers."

"And would you knew less! for already the commons murmur at your favour to them. But be it as you will. And now—ho, there! let our steeds be caparisoned."

"You forget, sire," said Richard, who had hitherto silently watched the various parties, "the object for which we summoned this worthy man. Please you now, sir, to open that door."

"No, no!" exclaimed the king, hastily, "I will have no more provoking the foul fiend; conspirator or not, I have had enough of Master Warner. Pah! My poor placard is turned lampblack. Sweet mother-in-law, take him under thy protection; and Richard, come with me."

So saying, the king linked his arm in that of the reluctant Gloucester, and quitted the room. The duchess then ordered the rest also to depart, and was left alone with the crest-fallen philosopher.

CHAPTER VII. MY LADY DUCHESS'S OPINION OF THE UTILITY OF MASTER WARNER'S INVENTION, AND HER ESTEEM FOR ITS—EXPLOSION.

Adam, utterly unheeding, or rather deaf to, the discussion that had taken place, and his narrow escape from cord and gibbet, lifted his head peevishly from his bosom, as the duchess rested her hand almost caressingly on his shoulder, and thus addressed him,—

"Most puissant Sir, think not that I am one of those who, in their ignorance and folly, slight the mysteries of which thou art clearly so great a master. When I heard thee speak of subjecting Nature to Man, I at once comprehended thee, and blushed for the dulness of my kindred."

"Ah, lady, thou hast studied, then, the mathematics. Alack! this is a grievous blow; but it is no inherent fault in the device. I am clearly of mind that it can be remedied. But oh! what time, what thought, what sleepless nights, what gold will be needed!"

"Give me thy sleepless nights and thy grand thoughts, and thou shalt not want gold."

"Lady," cried Adam, starting to his feet, "do I hear aright? Art thou, in truth, the patron I have so long dreamed of? Hast thou the brain and the heart to aid the pursuits of science?"

"Ay! and the power to protect the students! Sage, I am the Duchess of Bedford, whom men accuse of witchcraft,—as thee of wizardy. From the wife of a private gentleman, I have become the mother of a queen. I stand amidst a court full of foes; I desire gold to corrupt, and wisdom to guard against, and means to destroy them. And I seek all these in men like thee!"

Adam turned on her his bewildered eyes, and made no answer.

"They tell me," said the duchess, "that Henry of Windsor employed learned men to transmute the baser metals into gold. Wert thou one of them?"

"No."

"Thou knowest that art?"

"I studied it in my youth, but the ingredients of the crucible were too costly."

"Thou shalt not lack them with me. Thou knowest the lore of the stars, and canst foretell the designs of enemies,—the hour whether to act or to forbear?"

"Astrology I have studied, but that also was in youth; for there dwelleth in the pure mathematics that have led me to this invention—"

"Truce with that invention, whatever it be; think of it no more,—it has served its end in the explosion, which proved thy power of mischief. High objects are now before thee. Wilt thou be of my household, one of my alchemists and astrologers? Thou shalt have leisure, honour, and all the moneys thou canst need."

"Moneys!" said Adam, eagerly, and casting his eyes upon the mangled model. "Well, I agree; what you will,—alchemist, astrologist, wizard,—what you will. This shall all be repaired,—all; I begin to see now, all! I begin to see; yes, if a pipe by which the too-excessive vapour could—ay, ay!—right, right," and he rubbed his hands.

Jacquetta was struck with his enthusiasm. "But surely, Master Warner, this has some virtue you have not vouchsafed to explain; confide in me, can it change iron to gold?"

"No; but—"

"Can it predict the future?"

"No; but—"

"Can it prolong life?"

"No; but—"

"Then, in God's name let us waste no more time about it!" said the duchess, impatiently,—"your art is mine now. Ho, there!—I will send my page to conduct thee to thy apartments, and thou shalt lodge next to Friar Bungey, a man of wondrous lere, Master Warner, and a worthy confrere in thy researches. Hast thou any one of kith and kin at home to whom thou wilt announce thy advancement?"

"Ah, lady! Heaven forgive me, I have a daughter,—an only child,—my Sibyll; I cannot leave her alone, and—"

"Well, nothing should distract thy cares from thine art,—she shall be sent for. I will rank her amongst my maidens. Fare-thee-well, Master Warner! At night I will send for thee, and appoint the tasks I would have thee accomplish."

So saying, the duchess quitted the room, and left Adam alone, bending over his model in deep revery.

From this absorption it was the poor man's fate to be again aroused.

The peculiar character of the boy-prince of Gloucester was that of one who, having once seized upon an object, never willingly relinquished it. First, he crept and slid and coiled round it as the snake. But if craft failed, his passion, roused by resistance, sprang at his prey with a lion's leap: and whoever examines the career of this extraordinary personage, will perceive, that whatever might be his habitual hypocrisy, he

seemed to lose sight of it wholly when once resolved upon force. Then the naked ferocity with which the destructive propensity swept away the objects in his path becomes fearfully and startlingly apparent, and offers a strange contrast to the wily duplicity with which, in calmer moments, he seems to have sought to coax the victim into his folds. Firmly convinced that Adam's engine had been made the medium of dangerous and treasonable correspondence with the royal prisoner, and of that suspicious, restless, feverish temperament which never slept when a fear was wakened, a doubt conceived, he had broke from his brother, whose more open valour and less unquiet intellect were ever willing to leave the crown defended but by the gibbet for the detected traitor, the sword for the declared foe; and obtaining Edward's permission "to inquire further into these strange matters," he sent at once for the porter who had conveyed the model to the Tower; but that suspicious accomplice was gone. The sound of the explosion of the engine had no less startled the guard below than the spectators above. Releasing their hold of their prisoner, they had some taken fairly to their heels, others rushed into the palace to learn what mischief had ensued; and Hugh, with the quick discretion of his north country, had not lost so favourable an opportunity for escape. There stood the dozing mule at the door below, but the guide was vanished. More confirmed in his suspicions by this disappearance of Adam's companion, Richard, giving some preparatory orders to Catesby, turned at once to the room which still held the philosopher and his device. He closed the door on entering, and his brow was dark and sinister as he approached the musing inmate. But here we must return to Sibyll.

CHAPTER VIII. THE OLD WOMAN TALKS OF SORROWS, THE YOUNG WOMAN DREAMS OF LOVE; THE COURTIER FLIES FROM PRESENT POWER TO REMEMBRANCES OF PAST HOPES, AND THE WORLD-BETTERED OPENS UTOPIA, WITH A VIEW OF

THE GIBBET FOR THE SILLY SAGE HE HAS SEDUCED INTO HIS SCHEMES,—SO, EVER AND EVERMORE, RUNS THE WORLD AWAY!

The old lady looked up from her embroidery-frame, as Sibyll sat musing on a stool before her; she scanned the maiden with a wistful and somewhat melancholy eye.

"Fair girl," she said, breaking a silence that had lasted for some moments, "it seems to me that I have seen thy face before. Wert thou never in Queen Margaret's court?"

"In childhood, yes, lady."

"Do you not remember me, the dame of Longueville?" Sibyll started in surprise, and gazed long before she recognized the features of her hostess; for the dame of Longueville had been still, when Sibyll was a child at the court, renowned for matronly beauty, and the change was greater than the lapse of years could account for. The lady smiled sadly: "Yes, you marvel to see me thus bent and faded. Maiden, I lost my husband at the battle of St. Alban's, and my three sons in the field of Towton. My lands and my wealth have been confiscated to enrich new men; and to one of them—one of the enemies of the only king whom Alice de Longueville will acknowledge—I owe the food for my board and the roof for my head. Do you marvel now that I am so changed?"

Sibyll rose and kissed the lady's hand, and the tear that sparkled on its surface was her only answer.

"I learn," said the dame of Longueville, "that your father has an order from the Lord Hastings to see King Henry. I trust that he will rest here as he returns, to tell me how the monarch-saint bears his afflictions. But I know: his example should console us all." She paused a moment, and resumed, "Sees your father much of the Lord Hastings?"

"He never saw him that I weet of," answered Sibyll, blushing; "the order was given, but as of usual form to a learned scholar."

"But given to whom?" persisted the lady. "To—to me," replied Sibyll, falteringly. The dame of Longueville smiled.

"Ah, Hastings could scarcely say no to a prayer from such rosy lips. But let me not imply aught to disparage his humane and gracious heart. To Lord Hastings, next to God and his saints, I owe all that is left to me on earth. Strange that he is not yet here! This is the usual day and hour on which he comes, from pomp and pleasurement, to visit the lonely widow." And, pleased to find an attentive listener to her grateful loquacity, the dame then proceeded, with warm eulogies upon her protector, to inform Sibyll that her husband had, in the first outbreak of the Civil War, chanced to capture Hastings, and, moved by his valour and youth, and some old connections with his father, Sir Leonard, had favoured his escape from the certain death that awaited him from the wrath of the relentless Margaret. After the field of Towton, Hastings had accepted one of the manors confiscated from the attainted House of Longueville, solely that he might restore it to the widow of the fallen lord; and with a chivalrous consideration, not contented with beneficence, he omitted no occasion to show to the noblewoman whatever homage and respect might soothe the pride, which, in the poverty of those who have been great, becomes disease. The loyalty of the Lady Longueville was carried to a sentiment most rare in that day, and rather resembling the devotion inspired by the later Stuarts. She made her home within the precincts of the Tower, that, morning and eve, when Henry opened his lattice to greet the rising and the setting sun, she might catch a dim and distant glance of the captive king, or animate, by that sad sight, the hopes and courage of the Lancastrian emissaries, to whom, fearless of danger, she scrupled not to give counsel, and, at need, asylum.

While Sibyll, with enchanted sense, was listening to the praise of Hastings, a low knock at the door was succeeded by the entrance of that nobleman himself. Not to Elizabeth, in the alcoves of Shene, or on the dais of the palace hall, did the graceful courtier bend with more respectful reverence than to the powerless widow, whose very bread was his alms; for the true high-breeding of chivalry exists not without delicacy of feeling, formed originally by warmth of heart; and though the warmth may lose its glow, the delicacy endures, as the steel that acquires through heat its polish retains its lustre, even when the shine but betrays the hardness.

"And how fares my noble lady of Longueville? But need I ask? for her cheek still wears the rose of Lancaster. A companion? Ha! Mistress Warner, I learn now how much pleasure exists in surprise!"

"My young visitor," said the dame, "is but an old friend; she was one of the child-maidens reared at the court of Queen Margaret."

"In sooth!" exclaimed Hastings; and then, in an altered tone, he added, "but I should have guessed so much grace had not come all from Nature. And your father has gone to see the Lord Henry, and you rest, here, his return? Ah, noble lady, may you harbour always such innocent Lancastrians!" The fascinations of this eminent person's voice and manner were such that they soon restored Sibyll, to the ease she had lost at his sudden entrance. He conversed gayly with the old dame upon such matters of court anecdote as in all the changes of state were still welcome to one so long accustomed to court air; but from time to time

he addressed himself to Sibyll, and provoked replies which startled herself—for she was not yet well aware of her own gifts—by their spirit and intelligence.

"You do not tell us," said the Lady Longueville, sarcastically, "of the happy spousailles of Elizabeth's brother with the Duchess of Norfolk,—a bachelor of twenty, a bride of some eighty-two. [The old chronicler justly calls this a "diabolical marriage." It greatly roused the wrath of the nobles and indeed of all honourable men, as a proof of the shameless avarice of the queen's family.] Verily, these alliances are new things in the history of English royalty. But when Edward, who, even if not a rightful king, is at least a born Plantagenet, condescended to marry Mistress Elizabeth, a born Woodville, scarce of good gentleman's blood, naught else seems strange enough to provoke marvel."

"As to the last matter," returned Hastings, gravely, "though her grace the queen be no warm friend to me, I must needs become her champion and the king's. The lady who refused the dishonouring suit of the fairest prince and the boldest knight in the Christian world thereby made herself worthy of the suit that honoured her; it was not Elizabeth Woodville alone that won the purple. On the day she mounted a throne, the chastity of woman herself was crowned."

"What!" said the Lady Longueville, angrily, "mean you to say that there is no disgrace in the mal-alliance of kite and falcon, of Plantagenet and Woodville, of high-born and mud-descended?"

"You forget, lady, that the widow of Henry the Fifth, Catherine of Valois, a king's daughter, married the Welsh soldier, Owen Tudor; that all England teems with brave men born from similar spousailles, where love has levelled all distinctions, and made a purer hearth, and raised a bolder offspring, than the lukewarm likings of hearts that beat but for lands and gold. Wherefore, lady, appeal not to me, a squire of dames, a believer in the old Parliament of Love; whoever is fair and chaste, gentle and loving, is, in the eyes of William de Hastings, the mate and equal of a king!"

Sibyll turned involuntarily as the courtier spoke thus, with animation in his voice, and fire in his eyes; she turned, and her breath came quick; she turned, and her look met his, and those words and that look sank deep into her heart; they called forth brilliant and ambitious dreams; they rooted the growing love, but they aided to make it holy; they gave to the delicious fancy what before it had not paused, on its wing, to sigh for; they gave it that without which all fancy sooner or later dies; they gave it that which, once received in a noble heart, is the excuse for untiring faith; they gave it,—HOPE!

"And thou wouldst say," replied the lady of Longueville, with a meaning smile, still more emphatically—"thou wouldst say that a youth, brave and well nurtured, ambitious and loving, ought, in the eyes of rank and pride, to be the mate and equal of—"

"Ah, noble dame," interrupted Hastings, quickly, "I must not prolong encounter with so sharp a wit. Let me leave that answer to this fair maiden, for by rights it is a challenge to her sex, not to mine."

"How say you, then, Mistress Warner?" said the dame. "Suppose a young heiress, of the loftiest birth, of the broadest lands, of the comeliest form—suppose her wooed by a gentleman poor and stationless, but with a mighty soul, born to achieve greatness, would she lower herself by hearkening to his suit?"

"A maiden, methinks," answered Sibyll, with reluctant but charming hesitation, "cannot love truly if she love unworthily; and if she love worthily, it is not rank nor wealth she loves."

"But her parents, sweet mistress, may deem differently; and should not her love refuse submission to their tyranny?" asked Hastings.

"Nay, good my lord, nay," returned Sibyll, shaking her head with thoughtful demureness. "Surely the wooer, if he love worthily, will not press her to the curse of a child's disobedience and a parent's wrath!"

"Shrewdly answered," said the dame of Longueville. "Then she would renounce the poor gentleman if the parent ordain her to marry a rich lord. Ah, you hesitate, for a woman's ambition is pleased with the excuse of a child's obedience."

Hastings said this so bitterly that Sibyll could not but perceive that some personal feeling gave significance to his words. Yet how could they be applied to him,—to one now in rank and repute equal to the highest below the throne?

"If the demoiselle should so choose," said the dame of Longueville, "it seemeth to me that the rejected suitor might find it facile to disdain and to forget."

Hastings made no reply; but that remarkable and deep shade of melancholy which sometimes in his gayest hours startled those who beheld it, and which had, perhaps, induced many of the prophecies that circulated as to the untimely and violent death that should close his bright career, gathered like a cloud over his brow. At this moment the door opened gently, and Robert Hilyard stood at the aperture. He was clad in the dress of a friar, but the raised cowl showed his features to the lady of Longueville, to whom alone he was visible; and those bold features were literally haggard with agitation and alarm. He lifted his finger to his lips, and motioning the lady to follow him, closed the door.

The dame of Longueville rose, and praying her visitors to excuse her absence for a few moments, she left Hastings and Sibyll to themselves.

"Lady," said Hilyard, in a hollow whisper, as soon as the dame appeared in the low hall, communicating on the one hand with the room just left, on the other with the street, "I fear all will be detected. Hush! Adam and the iron coffer that contains the precious papers have been conducted to Edward's presence. A terrible explosion, possibly connected with the contrivance, caused such confusion among the guards that Hugh escaped to scare me with his news. Stationed near the gate in this disguise, I ventured to enter the courtyard, and saw—saw—the TORMENTOR! the torturer, the hideous, masked minister of agony, led towards the chambers in which our hapless messenger is examined by the ruthless tyrants. Gloucester, the lynx-eyed mannikin, is there!"

"O Margaret, my queen," exclaimed the lady of Longueville, "the papers will reveal her whereabout."

"No, she is safe!" returned Hilyard; "but thy poor scholar, I tremble for him, and for the heads of all whom the papers name."

"What can be done! Ha! Lord Hastings is here,—he is ever humane and pitiful. Dare we confide in him?"

A bright gleam shot over Hilyard's face. "Yes, yes; let me confer with him alone. I wait him here,—quick!" The lady hastened back. Hastings was conversing in a low voice with Sibyll. The dame of Longueville whispered in the courtier's ear, drew him into the hall, and left him alone with the false friar, who had drawn the cowl over his face.

"Lord Hastings," said Hilyard, speaking rapidly, "you are in danger, if not of loss of life, of loss of favour. You gave a passport to one Warner to see the ex-king Henry. Warner's simplicity (for he is innocent) hath been duped,—he is made the bearer of secret intelligence from the unhappy gentlemen who still cling to the Lancaster cause. He is suspected, he is examined; he may be questioned by the torture. If the treason be discovered, it was thy hand that signed the passport; the queen, thou knowest, hates thee, the Woodvilles thirst for thy downfall. What handle may this give them! Fly! my lord,—fly to the Tower;

thou mayst yet be in time; thy wit can screen all that may otherwise be bare. Save this poor scholar, conceal this correspondence. Hark ye, lord! frown not so haughtily,—that correspondence names thee as one who hast taken the gold of Count Charolois, and whom, therefore, King Louis may outbuy. Look to thyself!"

A slight blush passed over the pale brow of the great statesman, but he answered with a steady voice, "Friar or layman, I care not which, the gold of the heir of Burgundy was a gift, not a bribe. But I need no threats to save, if not too late, from rack and gibbet the life of a guiltless man. I am gone. Hold! bid the maiden, the scholar's daughter, follow me to the Tower."

CHAPTER IX. HOW THE DESTRUCTIVE ORGAN OF PRINCE RICHARD PROMISES GOODLY DEVELOPMENT.

The Duke of Gloucester approached Adam as he stood gazing on his model. "Old man," said the prince, touching him with the point of his sheathed dagger, "look up and answer. What converse hast thou held with Henry of Windsor, and who commissioned thee to visit him in his confinement? Speak, and the truth! for by holy Paul, I am one who can detect a lie, and without that door stands—the Tormentor!"

Upon a pleasing and joyous dream broke these harsh words; for Adam then was full of the contrivance by which to repair the defect of the engine, and with this suggestion was blent confusedly the thought that he was now protected by royalty, that he should have means and leisure to accomplish his great design, that he should have friends whose power could obtain its adoption by the king. He raised his eyes, and that young dark face frowned upon him,—the child menacing the sage, brute force in a pigmy shape, having authority of life and death over the giant strength of genius. But these words, which recalled Warner from his existence as philosopher, woke that of the gentle but brave and honourable man which he was, when reduced to earth.

"Sir," he said gravely, "if I have consented to hold converse with the unhappy, it was not as the tell-tale and the spier. I had formal warrant for my visit, and I was solicited to render it by an early friend and comrade, who sought to be my benefactor in aiding with gold my poor studies for the king's people."

"Tut!" said Richard, impatiently, and playing with his dagger hilt; "thy words, stealthy and evasive, prove thy guilt! Sure am I that this iron traitor with its intricate hollows and recesses holds what, unless confessed, will give thee to the hangman! Confess all, and thou art spared."

"If," said Adam, mildly, "your Highness—for though I know not your quality, I opine that no one less than royal could so menace—if your Highness imagines that I have been intrusted by a fallen man, wrong me not by supposing that I could fear death more than dishonour; for certes!" continued Adam, with innocent pedantry, "to put the case scholastically, and in the logic familiar, doubtless, to your Highness, either I have something to confess or I have not; if I have—"

"Hound!" interrupted the prince, stamping his foot, "thinkest thou to banter me,—see!" As his foot shook the floor, the door opened, and a man with his arms bare, covered from head to foot in a black gown of serge, with his features concealed by a hideous mask, stood ominously at the aperture.

The prince motioned to the torturer (or tormentor, as he was technically styled) to approach, which he did noiselessly, till he stood, tall, grim, and lowering, beside Adam, like some silent and devouring monster by its prey.

“Dost thou repent thy contumacy? A moment, and I render my questioning to another!”

“Sir,” said Adam, drawing himself up, and with so sudden a change of mien, that his loftiness almost awed even the dauntless Richard,—“sir, my fathers feared not death when they did battle for the throne of England; and why?—because in their loyal valour they placed not the interests of a mortal man, but the cause of imperishable honour! And though their son be a poor scholar, and wears not the spurs of gold; though his frame be weak and his hairs gray, he loveth honour also well eno’ to look without dread on death!”

Fierce and ruthless, when irritated and opposed, as the prince was, he was still in his first youth,—ambition had here no motive to harden him into stone. He was naturally so brave himself that bravery could not fail to win from him something of respect and sympathy, and he was taken wholly by surprise in hearing the language of a knight and hero from one whom he had regarded but as the artful impostor or the despicable intriguer.

He changed countenance as Warner spoke, and remained a moment silent. Then as a thought occurred to him, at which his features relaxed into a half-smile, he beckoned to the tormentor, said a word in his ear, and the horrible intruder nodded and withdrew.

“Master Warner,” then said the prince, in his customary sweet and gliding tones, “it were a pity that so gallant a gentleman should be exposed to peril for adhesion to a cause that can never prosper, and that would be fatal, could it prosper, to our common country. For look you, this Margaret, who is now, we believe, in London” (here he examined Adam’s countenance, which evinced surprise), “this Margaret, who is seeking to rekindle the brand and brennen of civil war, has already sold for base gold to the enemy of the realm, to Louis XI., that very Calais which your fathers, doubtless, lavished their blood to annex to our possessions. Shame on the lewd harlot! What woman so bloody and so dissolute? What man so feeble and craven as her lord?”

“Alas! sir,” said Adam, “I am unfitted for these high considerations of state. I live but for my art, and in it. And now, behold how my kingdom is shaken and rent!” he pointed with so touching a smile, and so simple a sadness, to the broken engine, that Richard was moved.

“Thou lovest this, thy toy? I can comprehend that love for some dumb thing that we have toiled for. Ay!” continued the prince, thoughtfully,—“ay! I have noted myself in life that there are objects, senseless as that mould of iron, which if we labour at them wind round our hearts as if they were flesh and blood. So some men love learning, others glory, others power. Well, man, thou lovest that mechanical? How many years hast thou been about it?”

“From the first to the last, twenty-five years, and it is still incomplete.”

“Um!” said the prince, smiling, “Master Warner, thou hast read of the judgment of Solomon,—how the wise king discovered the truth by ordering the child’s death?”

“It was indeed,” said Adam, unsuspectingly, “a most shrewd suggestion of native wit and clerkly wisdom.”

“Glad am I thou approvest it, Master Warner,” said Richard. And as he spoke the tormentor reappeared with a smith, armed with the implements of his trade.

"Good smith, break into pieces this stubborn iron; bare all its receptacles; leave not one fragment standing on the other! 'Delenda est tua Carthago,' Master Warner. There is Latin in answer to thy logic."

It is impossible to convey any notion of the terror, the rage, the despair, which seized upon the unhappy sage when these words smote his ear, and he saw the smith's brawny arms swing on high the ponderous hammer. He flung himself between the murderous stroke and his beloved model. He embraced the grim iron tightly. "Kill me!" he exclaimed sublimely, "kill me!—not my THOUGHT!"

"Solomon was verily and indeed a wise king," said the duke, with a low inward laugh. "And now, man, I have thee! To save thy infant, thine art's hideous infant, confess the whole!"

It was then that a fierce struggle evidently took place in Adam's bosom. It was, perhaps—O reader! thou whom pleasure, love, ambition, hatred, avarice, in thine and our ordinary existence, tempt—it was, perhaps, to him the one arch-temptation of a life. In the changing countenance, the heaving breast, the trembling lip, the eyes that closed and opened to close again, as if to shut out the unworthy weakness,—yea, in the whole physical man,—was seen the crisis of the moral struggle. And what, in truth, to him an Edward or a Henry, a Lancaster or a York? Nothing. But still that instinct, that principle, that conscience, ever strongest in those whose eyes are accustomed to the search of truth, prevailed. So he rose suddenly and quietly, drew himself apart, left his work to the Destroyer, and said,—

"Prince, thou art a boy! Let a boy's voice annihilate that which should have served all time. Strike!"

Richard motioned; the hammer descended, the engine and its appurtenances reeled and crashed, the doors flew open, the wheels rattled, the sparks flew. And Adam Warner fell to the ground, as if the blow had broken his own heart. Little heeding the insensible victim of his hard and cunning policy, Richard advanced to the inspection of the interior recesses of the machinery. But that which promised Adam's destruction saved him. The heavy stroke had battered in the receptacle of the documents, had buried them in the layers of iron. The faithful Eureka, even amidst its injuries and wrecks, preserved the secret of its master.

The prince, with impatient hands, explored all the apertures yet revealed, and after wasting many minutes in a fruitless search, was about to bid the smith complete the work of destruction, when the door suddenly opened and Lord Hastings entered. His quick eye took in the whole scene; he arrested the lifted arm of the smith, and passing deliberately to Gloucester, said, with a profound reverence, but a half-reproachful smile, "My lord! my lord! your Highness is indeed severe upon my poor scholar."

"Canst thou answer for thy scholar's loyalty?" said the duke, gloomily.

Hastings drew the prince aside, and said, in a low tone, "His loyalty! poor man, I know not; but his guilelessness, surely, yes. Look you, sweet prince, I know the interest thou hast in keeping well with the Earl of Warwick, whom I, in sooth, have slight cause to love. Thou hast trusted me with thy young hopes of the Lady Anne; this new Nevile placed about the king, and whose fortunes Warwick hath made his care, hath, I have reason to think, some love passages with the scholar's daughter,—the daughter came to me for the passport. Shall this Marmaduke Nevile have it to say to his fair kinswoman, with the unforgiving malice of a lover's memory, that the princely Gloucester stooped to be the torturer of yon poor old man? If there be treason in the scholar or in yon battered craft-work, leave the search to me!"

The duke raised his dark, penetrating eyes to those of Hastings, which did not quail; for here world-genius encountered world-genius, and art, art.

"Thine argument hath more subtlety and circumlocution than suit with simple truth," said the prince, smiling. "But it is enough to Richard that Hastings wills protection even to a spy!"

Hastings kissed the duke's hand in silence, and going to the door, he disappeared a moment and returned with Sibyll. As she entered, pale and trembling, Adam rose, and the girl with a wild cry flew to his bosom.

"It is a winsome face, Hastings," said the duke, dryly. "I pity Master Nevile the lover, and envy my Lord Chamberlain the protector."

Hastings laughed, for he was well pleased that Richard's suspicion took that turn.

"And now," he said, "I suppose Master Nevile and the Duchess of Bedford's page may enter. Your guard stopped them hitherto. They come for this gentleman from her highness the queen's mother."

"Enter, Master Nevile, and you, Sir Page. What is your errand?"

"My lady, the duchess," said the page, "has sent me to conduct Master Warner to the apartments prepared for him as her special multiplier and alchemist."

"What!" said the prince, who, unlike the irritable Clarence, made it his policy to show all decorous homage to the queen's kin, "hath that illustrious lady taken this gentleman into her service? Why announced you not, Master Warner, what at once had saved you from further questioning? Lord Hastings, I thank you now for your intercession."

Hastings, in answer, pointed archly at Marmaduke, who was aiding Sibyll to support her father. "Do you suspect me still, prince?" he whispered.

The duke shrugged his shoulders, and Adam, breaking from Marmaduke and Sibyll, passed with tottering steps to the shattered labour of his solitary life. He looked at the ruin with mournful despondence, with quivering lips. "Have you done with me?" then he said, bowing his head lowlily, for his pride was gone; "may we—that is, I and this, my poor device—withdraw from your palace? I see we are not fit for kings!"

"Say not so," said the young duke, gently: "we have now convinced ourselves of our error, and I crave thy pardon, Master Warner, for my harsh dealings. As for this, thy toy, the king's workmen shall set it right for thee. Smith, call the fellows yonder, to help bear this to—" He paused, and glanced at Hastings.

"To my apartments," said the chamberlain. "Your Highness may be sure that I will there inspect it. Fear not, Master Warner; no further harm shall chance to thy contrivance."

"Come, sir, forgive me," said the duke. With gracious affability the young prince held out his hand, the fingers of which sparkled with costly gems, to the old man. The old man bowed as if his beard would have swept the earth, but he did not touch the hand. He seemed still in a state between dream and reason, life and death: he moved not, spoke not, till the men came to bear the model; and he then followed it, his arms folded in his gown, till, on entering the court, it was borne in a contrary direction from his own, to the chamberlain's apartment; then wistfully pursuing it with his eyes, he uttered such a sigh as might have come from a resigned father losing the last glimpse of a beloved son.

Richard hesitated a moment, loth to relinquish his research, and doubtful whether to follow the Eureka for renewed investigation; but partly unwilling to compromise his dignity in the eyes of Hastings, should his suspicions prove unfounded, and partly indisposed to risk the displeasure of the vindictive Duchess of Bedford by further molestation of one now under her protection, he reluctantly trusted all further inquiry to the well-known loyalty of Hastings. "If Margaret be in London," he muttered to himself as he turned slowly away, "now is the time to seize and chain the lioness! Ho, Catesby,—hither (a valuable man that Catesby—a lawyer's nurturing with a bloodhound's nature!)—Catesby, while King Edward rides for pleasure, let thou and I track the scent of his foes. If the she-wolf of Anjou hath ventured hither, she hides

in some convent or monastery, be sure. See to our palfreys, Catesby! Strange," added the prince, muttering to himself, "that I am more restless to guard the crown than he who wears it! Nay, a crown is a goodly heirloom in a man's family, and a fair sight to see near—and near—and near—"

The prince abruptly paused, opened and shut his right hand convulsively, and drew a long sigh.

BOOK IV. INTRIGUES OF THE COURT OF EDWARD IV.

CHAPTER I. MARGARET OF ANJOU.

The day after the events recorded in the last section of this narrative, and about the hour of noon, Robert Hilyard (still in the reverend disguise in which he had accosted Hastings) bent his way through the labyrinth of alleys that wound in dingy confusion from the Chepe towards the river.

The purlieus of the Thames, in that day of ineffective police, sheltered many who either lived upon plunder, or sought abodes that proffered, at alarm, the facility of flight. Here, sauntering in twos or threes, or lazily reclined by the threshold of plaster huts, might be seen that refuse population which is the unholy offspring of civil war,—disbanded soldiers of either Rose, too inured to violence and strife for peaceful employment, and ready for any enterprise by which keen steel wins bright gold. At length our friend stopped before the gate of a small house, on the very marge of the river, which belonged to one of the many religious orders then existing; but from its site and aspect denoted the poverty seldom their characteristic. Here he knocked; the door was opened by a lay-brother; a sign and a smile were interchanged, and the visitor was ushered into a room belonging to the superior, but given up for the last few days to a foreign priest, to whom the whole community appeared to consider the reverence of a saint was due. And yet this priest, who, seated alone, by a casement which commanded a partial view of the distant Tower of London, received the conspirator, was clad in the humblest serge. His face was smooth and delicate; and the animation of the aspect, the vehement impatience of the gesture, evinced little of the holy calm that should belong to those who have relinquished the affairs of earth for meditation on the things of heaven. To this personage the sturdy Hilyard bowed his manly knees; and casting himself at the priest's feet, his eyes, his countenance, changed from their customary hardihood and recklessness into an expression at once of reverence and of pity.

"Well, man—well, friend—good friend, tried and leal friend, speak! speak!" exclaimed the priest, in an accent that plainly revealed a foreign birth.

"Oh, gracious lady! all hope is over; I come but to bid you fly. Adam Warner was brought before the usurper; he escaped, indeed, the torture, and was faithful to the trust. But the papers—the secret of the rising—are in the hands of Hastings."

"How long, O Lord," said Margaret of Anjou, for she it was, under that reverend disguise, "how long wilt Thou delay the hour of triumph and revenge?"

The princess as she spoke had suffered her hood to fall back, and her pale, commanding countenance, so well fitted to express fiery and terrible emotion, wore that aspect in which many a sentenced man had read his doom,—an aspect the more fearful, inasmuch as the passion that pervaded it did not distort the features, but left them locked, rigid, and marble-like in beauty, as the head of the Medusa.

"The day will dawn at last," said Hilyard; "but the judgments of Heaven are slow. We are favoured, at the least, that our secret is confined to a man more merciful than his tribe." He then related to Margaret his interview with Hastings at the house of the Lady Lougueville, and continued: "This morning, not an hour since, I sought him (for last evening he did not leave Edward, a council met at the Tower), and learned that he had detected the documents in the recesses of Warner's engine. Knowing from your Highness and your spies that he had been open to the gifts of Charolois, I spoke to him plainly of the guerdon that should await his silence. 'Friar,' he answered, 'if in this court and this world I have found it were a fool's virtue to be more pure than others, and if I know that I should but provoke the wrath of those who profit by Burgundian gold, were I alone to disdain its glitter, I have still eno' of my younger conscience left me not to make barter of human flesh. Did I give these papers to King Edward, the heads of fifty gallant men, whose error is but loyalty to their ancient sovereign, would glut the doomsman; but,' he continued, 'I am yet true to my king and his cause; I shall know how to advise Edward to the frustrating all your schemes. The districts where you hoped a rising will be guarded, the men ye count upon will be watched: the Duke of Gloucester, whose vigilance never sleeps, has learned that the Lady Margaret is in England, disguised as a priest. To-morrow all the religious houses will be searched; if thou knowest where she lies concealed, bid her lose not an hour to fly.'"

"I Will NOT fly!" exclaimed Margaret; "let Edward, if he dare, proclaim to my people that their queen is in her city of London. Let him send his hirelings to seize her. Not in this dress shall she be found. In robes of state, the sceptre in her hand, shall they drag the consort of their king to the prison-house of her palace."

"On my knees, great queen, I implore you to be calm; with the loss of your liberty ends indeed all hope of victory, all chance even of struggle. Think not Edward's fears would leave to Margaret the life that his disdain has spared to your royal spouse. Between your prison and your grave, but one secret and bloody step! Be ruled; no time to lose! My trusty Hugh even now waits with his boat below. Relays of horses are ready, night and day, to bear you to the coast; while seeking your restoration, I have never neglected the facilities for flight. Pause not, O gracious lady; let not your son say, 'My mother's passion has lost me the hope of my grandsire's crown.'"

"My boy; my princely boy, my Edward!" exclaimed Margaret, bursting into tears, all the warrior-queen merged in the remembrance of the fond mother. "Ah, faithful friend! he is so gallant and so beautiful! Oh, he shall reward thee well hereafter!"

"May he live to crush these barons, and raise this people!" said the demagogue of Redesdale. "But now, save thyself!"

"But what! is it not possible yet to strike the blow? Rather let us spur to the north; rather let us hasten the hour of action, and raise the Red Rose through the length and breadth of England!"

"Ah, lady, if without warrant from your lord; if without foreign subsidies; if without having yet ripened the time; if without gold, without arms, and without one great baron on our side, we forestall a rising, all that we have gained is lost; and instead of war, you can scarcely provoke a riot. But for this accursed alliance of Edward's daughter with the brother of icy-hearted Louis, our triumph had been secure. The French king's gold would have manned a camp, bribed the discontented lords, and his support have sustained the hopes of the more leal Lancastrians. But it is in vain to deny, that if Lord Warwick win Louis—"

"He will not! he shall not!—Louis, mine own kinsman!" exclaimed Margaret, in a voice in which the anguish pierced through the louder tone of resentment and disdain.

"Let us hope that he will not," replied Hilyard, soothingly; "some chance may yet break off these nuptials, and once more give us France as our firm ally. But now we must be patient. Already Edward is fast wearing away the gloss of his crown; already the great lords desert his court; already, in the rural provinces, peasant and franklin complain of the exactions of his minions; already the mighty House of Nevile frowns sullen on the throne it built. Another year, and who knows but the Earl of Warwick,—the beloved and the fearless, whose statesman-art alone hath severed from you the arms and aid of France, at whose lifted finger all England would bristle with armed men—may ride by the side of Margaret through the gates of London?"

"Evil-omened consoler, never!" exclaimed the princess, starting to her feet, with eyes that literally shot fire. "Thinkest thou that the spirit of a queen lies in me so low and crushed, that I, the descendant of Charlemagne, could forgive the wrongs endured from Warwick and his father? But thou, though wise and loyal, art of the Commons; thou knowest not how they feel through whose veins rolls the blood of kings!"

A dark and cold shade fell over the bold face of Robin of Redesdale at these words.

"Ah, lady," he said, with bitterness, "if no misfortune can curb thy pride, in vain would we rebuild thy throne. It is these Commons, Margaret of Anjou—these English Commons—this Saxon People, that can alone secure to thee the holding of the realm which the right arm wins. And, beshrew me, much as I love thy cause, much as thou hast with thy sorrows and thy princely beauty glamoured and spelled my heart and my hand,—ay, so that I, the son of a Lollard, forget the wrongs the Lollards sustained from the House of Lancaster; so that I, who have seen the glorious fruitage of a Republic, yet labour for thee, to overshadow the land with the throne of ONE—yet—yet, lady—yet, if I thought thou wert to be the same Margaret as of old, looking back to thy dead kings, and contemptuous of thy living people, I would not bid one mother's son lift lance or bill on thy behalf."

So resolutely did Robin of Redesdale utter these words, that the queen's haughty eye fell abashed as he spoke; and her craft, or her intellect, which was keen and prompt where her passions did not deafen and blind her judgment, instantly returned to her. Few women equalled this once idol of knight and minstrel, in the subduing fascination that she could exert in her happier moments. Her affability was as gracious as her wrath was savage; and with a dignified and winning frankness, she extended her hand to her ally, as she answered, in a sweet, humble, womanly, and almost penitent voice,—

"O bravest and lealest of friends, forgive thy wretched queen. Her troubles distract her brain,—chide her not if they sour her speech. Saints above! will ye not pardon Margaret if at times her nature be turned from the mother's milk into streams of gall and bloody purpose, when ye see, from your homes serene, in what a world of strife and falsehood her very womanhood hath grown unsexed?" She paused a moment, and her uplifted eyes shed tears fast and large. Then, with a sigh, she turned to Hilyard, and resumed more calmly, "Yes, thou art right,—adversity hath taught me much. And though adversity will too often but feed and not starve our pride, yet thou—thou hast made me know that there is more of true nobility in the blunt Children of the People than in many a breast over which flows the kingly robe. Forgive me, and the daughter of Charlemagne shall yet be a mother to the Commons, who claim thee as their brother!"

Thoroughly melted, Robin of Redesdale bowed over the hand held to his lips, and his rough voice trembled as he answered, though that answer took but the shape of prayer.

"And now," said the princess, smiling, "to make peace lasting between us, I conquer myself, I yield to thy counsels. Once more the fugitive, I abandon the city that contains Henry's unheeded prison. See, I am ready. Who will know Margaret in this attire? Lead on!"

Rejoiced to seize advantage of this altered and submissive mood, Robin instantly took the way through a narrow passage, to a small door communicating with the river. There Hugh was waiting in a small boat, moored to the damp and discoloured stairs.

Robin, by a gesture, checked the man's impulse to throw himself at the feet of the pretended priest, and bade him put forth his best speed. The princess seated herself by the helm, and the little boat cut rapidly through the noble stream. Galleys, gay and gilded, with armorial streamers, and filled with nobles and gallants, passed them, noisy with mirth or music, on their way. These the fallen sovereign heeded not; but, with all her faults, the woman's heart beating in her bosom—she who in prosperity had so often wrought ruin, and shame, and woe to her gentle lord; she who had been reckless of her trust as queen; and incurred grave—but, let us charitably hope, unjust—suspicion of her faith as wife, still fixed her eyes on the gloomy tower that contained her captive husband, and felt that she could have forgotten a while even the loss of power if but permitted to fall on that plighted heart, and weep over the past with the woe-worn bridegroom of her youth.

CHAPTER II. IN WHICH ARE LAID OPEN TO THE READER THE CHARACTER OF EDWARD THE FOURTH AND THAT OF HIS COURT, WITH THE MACHINATIONS OF THE WOODVILLES AGAINST THE EARL OF WARWICK.

Scarcely need it be said to those who have looked with some philosophy upon human life, that the young existence of Master Marmaduke Nevile, once fairly merged in the great common sea, will rarely reappear before us individualized and distinct. The type of the provincial cadet of the day hastening courtwards to seek his fortune, he becomes lost amidst the gigantic characters and fervid passions that alone stand forth in history. And as, in reading biography, we first take interest in the individual who narrates, but if his career shall pass into that broader and more stirring life, in which he mingles with men who have left a more dazzling memory than his own, we find the interest change from the narrator to those by whom he is surrounded and eclipsed,—so, in this record of a time, we scarce follow our young adventurer into the court of the brilliant Edward ere the scene itself allures and separates us from our guide; his mission is, as it were, well-nigh done. We leave, then, for a while this bold, frank nature-fresh from the health of the rural life—gradually to improve, or deprave itself, in the companionship it finds. The example of the Lords Hastings, Scales, and Worcester, and the accomplishments of the two younger Princes of York, especially the Duke of Gloucester, had diffused among the younger and gayer part of the court that growing taste for letters which had somewhat slept during the dynasty of the House of Lancaster; and Marmaduke's mind became aware that learning was no longer the peculiar distinction of the Church, and that Warwick was behind his age when he boasted "that the sword was more familiar to him than the pen." He had the sagacity to perceive that the alliance with the great earl did not conduce to his popularity at court; and even in the king's presence, the courtiers permitted themselves many taunts and jests at the fiery Warwick, which they would have bitten out their tongues ere they would have vented before the earl himself. But though the Nevile sufficiently controlled his native candour not to incur unprofitable quarrel by ill-mannered and unseasonable defence of the hero-baron when sneered at or assailed, he had enough of the soldier and the man in him not to be tainted by the envy of the time and place,—not to lose his gratitude to his patron, nor his respect for the bulwark of the country. Rather, it may be said, that Warwick gained in his estimation whenever compared with the gay and silken personages who avenged themselves by words for his superiority in deeds. Not only as a soldier, but as a statesman, the great and peculiar merits of the earl were visible in all those measures which emanated solely from himself. Though so

indifferently educated, his busy, practical career, his affable mixing with all classes, and his hearty, national sympathies made him so well acquainted with the interests of his country and the habits of his countrymen, that he was far more fitted to rule than the scientific Worcester or the learned Scales. The Young Duke of Gloucester presented a marked contrast to the general levity of the court, in speaking of this powerful nobleman. He never named him but with respect, and was pointedly courteous to even the humblest member of the earl's family. In this he appeared to advantage by the side of Clarence, whose weakness of disposition made him take the tone of the society in which he was thrown, and who, while really loving Warwick, often smiled at the jests against him,—not, indeed, if uttered by the queen or her family, of whom he ill concealed his jealousy and hatred.

The whole court was animated and pregnant with a spirit of intrigue, which the artful cunning of the queen, the astute policy of Jacquetta, and the animosity of the different factions had fomented to a degree quite unknown under former reigns. It was a place in which the wit of young men grew old rapidly; amidst stratagem, and plot, and ambitious design, and stealthy overreaching, the boyhood of Richard III. passed to its relentless manhood: such is the inevitable fruit of that era in civilization when a martial aristocracy first begins to merge into a voluptuous court.

Through this moving and shifting web of ambition and intrigue the royal Edward moved with a careless grace: simple himself, because his object was won, and pleasure had supplanted ambition. His indolent, joyous temper served to deaden his powerful intellect; or, rather, his intellect was now lost in the sensual stream through which it flowed. Ever in pursuit of some new face, his schemes and counterschemes were limited to cheat a husband or deceive a wife; and dexterous and successful no doubt they were. But a vice always more destructive than the love of women began also to reign over him,—namely, the intemperance of the table. The fastidious and graceful epicurism of the early Normans, inclined to dainties but abhorring excess, and regarding with astonished disdain the heavy meals and deep draughts of the Saxon, had long ceased to characterize the offspring of that noblest of all noble races. Warwick, whose stately manliness was disgusted with whatever savoured of effeminacy or debauch, used to declare that he would rather fight fifty battles for Edward IV. than once sup with him! Feasts were prolonged for hours, and the banquets of this king of the Middle Ages almost resembled those of the later Roman emperors. The Lord Montagu did not share the abstemiousness of his brother of Warwick. He was, next to Hastings, the king's chosen and most favourite companion. He ate almost as much as the king, and drank very little less. Of few courtiers could the same be said! Over the lavish profligacy and excess of the court, however, a veil dazzling to the young and high-spirited was thrown. Edward was thoroughly the cavalier, deeply imbued with the romance of chivalry, and, while making the absolute woman his plaything, always treated the ideal woman as a goddess. A refined gallantry, a deferential courtesy to dame and demoiselle, united the language of an Amadis with the licentiousness of a Gaolor; and a far more alluring contrast than the court of Charles II. presented to the grim Commonwealth seduced the vulgar in that of this most brave and most beautiful prince, when compared with the mournful and lugubrious circles in which Henry VI. had reigned and prayed. Edward himself, too, it was so impossible to judge with severe justice, that his extraordinary popularity in London, where he was daily seen, was never diminished by his faults; he was so bold in the field, yet so mild in the chamber; when his passions slept, he was so thoroughly good-natured and social, so kind to all about his person, so hearty and gladsome in his talk and in his vices, so magnificent and so generous withal; and, despite his indolence, his capacities for business were marvellous,—and these last commanded the reverence of the good Londoners; he often administered justice himself, like the caliphs of the East, and with great acuteness and address. Like most extravagant men, he had a wholesome touch of avarice. That contempt for commerce which characterizes a modern aristocracy was little felt by the nobles of that day, with the exception of such blunt patricians as Lord Warwick or Raoul de Fulke. The great House of De la Pole (Duke of Suffolk), the heir of which married Edward's sister Elizabeth, had been founded by a merchant of Hull. Earls and archbishops scrupled not to derive revenues from what we should now esteem the literal resources of trade. [The Abbot of St. Alban's (temp. Henry III.) was a vendor of Yarmouth bloaters. The Cistercian Monks were wool-merchants; and Macpherson tells us of a couple of Iceland bishops who got a license from Henry VI. for smuggling. (Matthew Paris. Macpherson's

"Annals of Commerce," 10.) As the Whig historians generally have thought fit to consider the Lancastrian cause the more "liberal" of the two, because Henry IV. was the popular choice, and, in fact, an elected, not an hereditary king, so it cannot be too emphatically repeated, that the accession of Edward IV. was the success of two new and two highly—popular principles,—the one that of church reform, the other that of commercial calculation. All that immense section, almost a majority of the people, who had been persecuted by the Lancastrian kings as Lollards, revenged on Henry the aggrieved rights of religious toleration. On the other hand, though Henry IV., who was immeasurably superior to his warlike son in intellect and statesmanship, had favoured the growing commercial spirit, it had received nothing but injury under Henry V., and little better than contempt under Henry VI. The accession of the Yorkists was, then, on two grounds a great popular movement; and it was followed by a third advantage to the popular cause,—namely, in the determined desire both of Edward and Richard III. to destroy the dangerous influence of the old feudal aristocracy. To this end Edward laboured in the creation of a court noblesse; and Richard, with the more dogged resolution that belonged to him, went at once to the root of the feudal power, in forbidding the nobles to give badges and liveries (this also was forbidden, it is true, by the edict of Edward IV. as well as by his predecessors from the reign of Richard II.; but no king seems to have had the courage to enforce the prohibition before Richard III.),—in other words, to appropriate armies under the name of retainers. Henry VII., in short, did not originate the policy for which he has monopolized the credit; he did but steadily follow out the theory of raising the middle class and humbling the baronial, which the House of York first put into practice.] shown itself on this point more liberal in its policy, more free from feudal prejudices, than that of the Plantagenets. Even Edward II. was tenacious of the commerce with Genoa, and an intercourse with the merchant princes of that republic probably served to associate the pursuits of commerce with the notion of rank and power. Edward III. is still called the Father of English Commerce; but Edward IV. carried the theories of his ancestors into far more extensive practice, for his own personal profit. This king, so indolent in the palace, was literally the most active merchant in the mart. He traded largely in ships of his own, freighted with his own goods; and though, according to sound modern economics, this was anything but an aid to commerce, seeing that no private merchant could compete with a royal trader who went out and came in duty-free, yet certainly the mere companionship and association in risk and gain, and the common conversation that it made between the affable monarch and the homeliest trader, served to increase his popularity, and to couple it with respect for practical sense. Edward IV. was in all this pre-eminently THE MAN OF HIS AGE,—not an inch behind it or before! And, in addition to this happy position, he was one of those darlings of Nature, so affluent and blest in gifts of person, mind, and outward show, that it is only at the distance of posterity we ask why men of his own age admired the false, the licentious, and the cruel, where those contemporaries, over-dazzled, saw but the heroic and the joyous, the young, the beautiful,—the affable to friend, and the terrible to foe!

It was necessary to say thus much on the commercial tendencies of Edward, because, at this epoch, they operated greatly, besides other motives shortly to be made clear, in favour of the plot laid by the enemies of the Earl of Warwick, to dishonour that powerful minister and drive him from the councils of the king.

One morning Hastings received a summons to attend Edward, and on entering the royal chamber, he found already assembled Lord Rivers, the queen's father, Anthony Woodville, and the Earl of Worcester.

The king seemed thoughtful; he beckoned Hastings to approach, and placed in his hand a letter, dated from Rouen. "Read and judge, Hastings," said Edward.

The letter was from a gentleman in Warwick's train. It gave a glowing account of the honours accorded to the earl by Louis XI., greater than those ever before manifested to a subject, and proceeded thus:—

"But it is just I should apprise you that there be strange rumours as to the marvellous love that King Louis shows my lord the earl. He lodgeth in the next house to him, and hath even had an opening made in the partition-wall between his own chamber and the earl's. Men do say that the king visits him nightly, and

there be those who think that so much stealthy intercourse between an English ambassador and the kinsman of Margaret of Anjou bodeth small profit to our grace the king."

"I observe," said Hastings, glancing to the superscription, "that this letter is addressed to my Lord Rivers. Can he avouch the fidelity of his correspondent?"

"Surely, yes," answered Rivers; "it is a gentleman of my own blood."

"Were he not so accredited," returned Hastings, "I should question the truth of a man who can thus consent to play the spy upon his lord and superior."

"The public weal justifies all things," said the Earl of Worcester (who, though by marriage nearly connected to Warwick, eyed his power with the jealous scorn which the man of book-lore often feels for one whose talent lies in action),—"so held our masters in all state-craft, the Greek and Roman."

"Certes," said Sir Anthony Woodville, "it grieveth the pride of an English knight that we should be beholden for courtesies to the born foe of England, which I take the Frenchman naturally to be."

"Ah," said Edward, smiling sternly, "I would rather be myself, with banner and trump, before the walls of Paris, than sending my cousin the earl to beg the French king's brother to accept my sister as a bride. And what is to become of my good merchant-ships if Burgundy take umbrage and close its ports?"

"Beau sire," said Hastings, "thou knowest how little cause I have to love the Earl of Warwick. We all here, save your gracious self, bear the memory of some affront rendered to us by his pride and heat of mood! but in this council I must cease to be William de Hastings, and be all and wholly the king's servant. I say first, then, with reference to these noble peers, that Warwick's faith to the House of York is too well proven to become suspected because of the courtesies of King Louis,—an artful craft, as it clearly seems to me, of the wily Frenchman, to weaken your throne, by provoking your distrust of its great supporter. Fall we not into such a snare! Moreover, we may be sure that Warwick cannot be false, if he achieve the object of his embassy,—namely, detach Louis from the side of Margaret and Lancaster by close alliance with Edward and York. Secondly, sire, with regard to that alliance, which it seems you would repent,—I hold now, as I have held ever, that it is a master-stroke in policy, and the earl in this proves his sharp brain worthy his strong arm; for as his highness the Duke of Gloucester hath now clearly discovered that Margaret of Anjou has been of late in London, and that treasonable designs were meditated, though now frustrated, so we may ask why the friends of Lancaster really stood aloof; why all conspiracy was, and is, in vain?—Because, sire, of this very alliance with France; because the gold and subsidies of Louis are not forthcoming; because the Lancastrians see that if once Lord Warwick win France from the Red Rose, nothing short of such a miracle as their gaining Warwick instead can give a hope to their treason. Your Highness fears the anger of Burgundy, and the suspension of your trade with the Flemings; but—forgive me—this is not reasonable. Burgundy dare not offend England, matched, as its arms are, with France; the Flemings gain more by you than you gain by the Flemings, and those interested burghers will not suffer any prince's quarrel to damage their commerce. Charolois may bluster and threat, but the storm will pass, and Burgundy will be contented, if England remain neutral in the feud with France. All these reasons, sire, urge me to support my private foe, the Lord Warwick, and to pray you to give no ear to the discrediting his Honour and his embassy."

The profound sagacity of these remarks, the repute of the speaker, and the well-known grudge between him and Warwick, for reasons hereafter to be explained, produced a strong effect upon the intellect of Edward, always vigorous, save when clouded with passion. But Rivers, whose malice to the earl was indomitable, coldly recommenced,—

"With submission to the Lord Hastings, sire, whom we know that love sometimes blinds, and whose allegiance to the earl's fair sister, the Lady of Bonville, perchance somewhat moves him to forget the day when Lord Warwick—"

"Cease, my lord," said Hastings, white with suppressed anger; "these references beseem not the councils of grave men."

"Tut, Hastings," said Edward, laughing merrily, "women mix themselves up in all things: board or council, bed or battle,—wherever there is mischief astir, there, be sure, peeps a woman's sly face from her wimple. Go on, Rivers."

"Your pardon, my Lord Hastings," said Rivers, "I knew not my thrust went so home; there is another letter I have not yet laid before the king." He drew forth a scroll from his bosom, and read as follows:—

"Yesterday the earl feasted the king, and as, in discharge of mine office, I carved for my lord, I heard King Louis say, 'Pasque Dieu, my Lord Warwick, our couriers bring us word that Count Charolois declares he shall yet wed the Lady Margaret, and that he laughs at your ambassage. What if our brother, King Edward, fall back from the treaty?' 'He durst not!' said the earl."

"Durst not!" exclaimed Edward, starting to his feet, and striking the table with his clenched hand, "durst not! Hastings, hear you that?"

Hastings bowed his head in assent. "Is that all, Lord Rivers?"

"All! and methinks enough."

"Enough, by my halidame!" said Edward, laughing bitterly; "he shall see what a king dares, when a subject threatens. Admit the worshipful the deputies from our city of London,—lord chamberlain, it is thine office,—they await in the anteroom."

Hastings gravely obeyed, and in crimson gowns, with purple hoods and gold chains, marshalled into the king's presence a goodly deputation from the various corporate companies of London.

These personages advanced within a few paces of the dais, and there halted and knelt, while their spokesman read, on his knees, a long petition, praying the king to take into his gracious consideration the state of the trade with the Flemings; and though not absolutely venturing to name or to deprecate the meditated alliance with France, beseeching his grace to satisfy them as to certain rumours, already very prejudicial to their commerce, of the possibility of a breach with the Duke of Burgundy. The merchant-king listened with great attention and affability to this petition; and replied shortly, that he thanked the deputation for their zeal for the public weal,—that a king would have enough to do if he contravened every gossip's tale; but that it was his firm purpose to protect, in all ways, the London traders, and to maintain the most amicable understanding with the Duke of Burgundy.

The supplicators then withdrew from the royal presence.

"Note you how gracious the king was to me?" whispered Master Heyford to one of his brethren; "he looked at me while he answered."

"Coxcomb!" muttered the confidant, "as if I did not catch his eye when he said, 'Ye are the pillars of the public weal!' But because Master Heyford has a handsome wife he thinks he tosseth all London on his own horns!"

As the citizens were quitting the palace, Lord Rivers joined them. “You will thank me for suggesting this deputation, worthy sirs,” said he, smiling significantly; “you have timed it well!”—and passing by them, without further comment, he took the way to the queen’s chamber.

Elizabeth was playing with her infant daughter, tossing the child in the air, and laughing at its riotous laughter. The stern old Duchess of Bedford, leaning over the back of the state-chair, looked on with all a grandmother’s pride, and half chanted a nursery rhyme. It was a sight fair to see! Elizabeth never seemed more lovely: her artificial, dissimulating smile changed into hearty, maternal glee, her smooth cheek flushed with exercise, a stray ringlet escaping from the stiff coif!—And, alas, the moment the two ladies caught sight of Rivers, all the charm was dissolved; the child was hastily put on the floor; the queen, half ashamed of being natural, even before her father, smoothed back the rebel lock, and the duchess, breaking off in the midst of her grandam song, exclaimed,—

“Well, well! how thrives our policy?”

“The king,” answered Rivers, “is in the very mood we could desire. At the words, ‘He durst not!’ the Plantagenet sprung up in his breast; and now, lest he ask to see the rest of the letter, thus I destroy it;” and flinging the scroll in the blazing hearth, he watched it consume.

“Why this, sir?” said the queen.

“Because, my Elizabeth, the bold words glided off into a decent gloss,—‘He durst not,’ said Warwick, ‘because what a noble heart dares least is to belie the plighted word, and what the kind heart shuns most is to wrong the confiding friend.”

“It was fortunate,” said the duchess, “that Edward took heat at the first words, nor stopped, it seems, for the rest!”

“I was prepared, Jacquetta; had he asked to see the rest, I should have dropped the scroll into the brazier, as containing what I would not presume to read. Courage! Edward has seen the merchants; he has flouted Hastings,—who would gainsay us. For the rest, Elizabeth, be it yours to speak of affronts paid by the earl to your highness; be it yours, Jacquetta, to rouse Edward’s pride by dwelling on Warwick’s overweening power; be it mine to enlist his interest on behalf of his merchandise; be it Margaret’s to move his heart by soft tears for the bold Charolois; and ere a month be told, Warwick shall find his embassy a thriftless laughing-stock, and no shade pass between the House of Woodville and the sun of England.”

“I am scarce queen while Warwick is minister,” said Elizabeth, vindictively. “How he taunted me in the garden, when we met last!”

“But hark you, daughter and lady liege, hark you! Edward is not prepared for the decisive stroke. I have arranged with Anthony, whose chivalrous follies fit him not for full comprehension of our objects, how upon fair excuse the heir of Burgundy’s brother—the Count de la Roche—shall visit London; and the count once here, all is ours! Hush! take up the little one,—Edward comes!”

CHAPTER III. WHEREIN MASTER NICHOLAS ALWYN VISITS THE COURT, AND THERE LEARNS MATTER OF WHICH THE ACUTE READER WILL JUDGE FOR HIMSELF.

It was a morning towards the end of May (some little time after Edward's gracious reception of the London deputies), when Nicholas Alwyn, accompanied by two servitors armed to the teeth,—for they carried with them goods of much value, and even in the broad daylight and amidst the most frequented parts of the city, men still confided little in the security of the law,—arrived at the Tower, and was conducted to the presence of the queen.

Elizabeth and her mother were engaged in animated but whispered conversation when the goldsmith entered; and there was an unusual gayety in the queen's countenance as she turned to Alwyn and bade him show her his newest gauds.

While with a curiosity and eagerness that seemed almost childlike Elizabeth turned over rings, chains, and brooches, scarcely listening to Alwyn's comments on the lustre of the gems or the quaintness of the fashion, the duchess disappeared for a moment, and returned with the Princess Margaret.

This young princess had much of the majestic beauty of her royal brother; but, instead of the frank, careless expression so fascinating in Edward, there was, in her full and curved lip and bright large eye, something at once of haughtiness and passion, which spoke a decision and vivacity of character beyond her years.

"Choose for thyself, sweetheart and daughter mine," said the duchess, affectionately placing her hand on Margaret's luxuriant hair, "and let the noble visitor we await confess that our rose of England outblooms the world."

The princess coloured with complaisant vanity at these words, and, drawing near the queen, looked silently at a collar of pearls, which Elizabeth held.

"If I may adventure so to say," observed Alwyn, "pearls will mightily beseem her highness's youthful bloom; and lo! here be some adornments for the bodice or partelet, to sort with the collar; not," added the goldsmith, bowing low, and looking down,—"not perchance displeasing to her highness, in that they are wrought in the guise of the fleur de lis—"

An impatient gesture in the queen, and a sudden cloud over the fair brow of Margaret, instantly betokened to the shrewd trader that he had committed some most unwelcome error in this last allusion to the alliance with King Louis of France, which, according to rumour, the Earl of Warwick had well-nigh brought to a successful negotiation; and to convince him yet more of his mistake, the duchess said haughtily, "Good fellow, be contented to display thy goods, and spare us thy comments. As for thy hideous fleur de lis, an' thy master had no better device, he would not long rest the king's jeweller."

"I have no heart for the pearls," said Margaret, abruptly; "they are at best pale and sicklied. What hast thou of bolder ornament and more dazzling lustrousness?"

"These emeralds, it is said, were once among the jewels of the great House of Burgundy," observed Nicholas, slowly, and fixing his keen, sagacious look on the royal purchasers.

"Of Burgundy!" exclaimed the queen.

"It is true," said the Duchess of Bedford, looking at the ornament with care, and slightly colouring,—for in fact the jewels had been a present from Philip the Good to the Duke of Bedford, and the exigencies of the civil wars had led, some time since, first to their mortgage, or rather pawn, and then to their sale.

The princess passed her arm affectionately round Jacquetta's neck, and said, "If you leave me my choice, I will have none but these emeralds."

The two elder ladies exchanged looks and smiles. "Hast thou travelled, young man?" asked the duchess.

"Not in foreign parts, gracious lady, but I have lived much with those who have been great wanderers."

"Ah, and what say they of the ancient friends of mine House, the princes of Burgundy?"

"Lady, all men agree that a nobler prince and a juster than Duke Philip never reigned over brave men; and those who have seen the wisdom of his rule, grieve sorely to think so excellent and mighty a lord should have trouble brought to his old age by the turbulence of his son, the Count of Charolois."

Again Margaret's fair brow lowered, and the duchess hastened to answer, "The disputes between princes, young man, can never be rightly understood by such as thou and thy friends. The Count of Charolois is a noble gentleman; and fire in youth will break out. Richard the Lion Hearted of England was not less puissant a king for the troubles he occasioned to his sire when prince."

Alwyn bit his lip, to restrain a reply that might not have been well received; and the queen, putting aside the emeralds and a few other trinkets, said, smilingly, to the duchess, "Shall the king pay for these, or have thy learned men yet discovered the great secret?"

"Nay, wicked child," said the duchess, "thou lovest to banter me; and truth to say, more gold has been melted in the crucible than as yet promises ever to come out of it; but my new alchemist, Master Warner, seems to have gone nearer to the result than any I have yet known. Meanwhile, the king's treasurer must, perforce, supply the gear to the king's sister."

The queen wrote an order on the officer thus referred to, who was no other than her own father, Lord Rivers; and Alwyn, putting up his goods, was about to withdraw, when the duchess said carelessly, "Good youth, the dealings of our merchants are more with Flanders than with France, is it not so?"

"Surely," said Alwyn; "the Flemings are good traders and honest folk."

"It is well known, I trust, in the city of London, that this new alliance with France is the work of their favourite, the Lord Warwick," said the duchess, scornfully; "but whatever the earl does is right with ye of the hood and cap, even though he were to leave yon river without one merchant-mast."

"Whatever be our thoughts, puissant lady," said Alwyn, cautiously, "we give them not vent to the meddling with state affairs."

"Ay," persisted Jacquetta, "thine answer is loyal and discreet. But an' the Lord Warwick had sought alliance with the Count of Charolois, would there have been brighter bonfires than ye will see in Smithfield, when ye hear that business with the Flemings is surrendered for fine words from King Louis the Cunning?"

"We trust too much to our king's love for the citizens of London to fear that surrender, please your Highness," answered Alwyn; "our king himself is the first of our merchants, and he hath given a gracious answer to the deputation from our city."

"You speak wisely, sir," said the queen; "and your king will yet defend you from the plots of your enemies. You may retire."

Alwyn, glad to be released from questionings but little to his taste, hastened to depart. At the gate of the royal lodge, he gave his caskets to the servitors who attended him, and passing slowly along the courtyard, thus soliloquized:

"Our neighbours the Scotch say, 'It is good fishing in muddy waters;' but he who fishes into the secrets of courts must bait with his head. What mischief doth that crafty queen, the proud duchess, devise? Um! They are thinking still to match the young princess with the hot Count of Charolois. Better for trade, it is true, to be hand in hand with the Flemings; but there are two sides to a loaf. If they play such a trick on the stout earl, he is not a man to sit down and do nothing. More food for the ravens, I fear,—more brown bills and bright lances in the green fields of poor England!—and King Louis is an awful carle to sow flax in his neighbour's house, when the torches are burning. Um! Where is fair Marmaduke. He looks brave in his gay super-tunic. Well, sir and foster-brother, how fare you at court?"

"My dear Nicholas, a merry welcome and hearty to your sharp, thoughtful face. Ah, man! we shall have a gay time for you venders of gewgaws. There are to be revels and jousts, revels in the Tower and jousts in Smithfield. We gentles are already hard at practice in the tilt-yard."

"Sham battles are better than real ones, Master Nevile! But what is in the wind?"

"A sail, Nicholas! a sail bound to England! Know that the Count of Charolois has permitted Sir Anthony Count de la Roche, his bastard brother, to come over to London, to cross lances with our own Sir Anthony Lord Scales. It is an old challenge, and right royally will the encounter be held."

"Um!" muttered Alwyn, "this bastard, then, is the carrier pigeon.—And," said he, aloud, "is it only to exchange hard blows that Sir Anthony of Burgundy comes over to confer with Sir Anthony of England? Is there no court rumour of other matters between them?"

"Nay. What else? Plague on you craftsmen! You cannot even comprehend the pleasure and pastime two knights take in the storm of the lists!"

"I humbly avow it, Master Nevile. But it seemeth, indeed, strange to me that the Count of Charolois should take this very moment to send envoys of courtesy when so sharp a slight has been put on his pride, and so dangerous a blow struck at his interests, as the alliance between the French prince and the Lady Margaret. Bold Charles has some cunning, I trow, which your kinsman of Warwick is not here to detect."

"Tush, man! Trade, I see, teaches ye all so to cheat and overreach, that ye suppose a knight's burgonet is as full of tricks and traps as a citizen's flat-cap. Would, though, that my kinsman of Warwick were here," added Marmaduke, in a low whisper, "for the women and the courtiers are doing their best to belie him."

"Keep thyself clear of them all, Marmaduke," said Alwyn; "for, by the Lord, I see that the evil days are coming once more, fast and dark, and men like thee will again have to choose between friend and friend, kinsman and king. For my part, I say nothing; for I love not fighting, unless compelled to it. But if ever I do fight, it will not be by thy side, under Warwick's broad flag."

"Eh, man?" interrupted Nevile.

"Nay, nay," continued Nicholas, shaking his head, "I admire the great earl, and were I lord or gentle, the great earl should be my chief. But each to his order; and the trader's tree grows not out of a baron's walking-staff. King Edward may be a stern ruler, but he is a friend to the goldsmiths, and has just

confirmed our charter. 'Let every man praise the bridge he goes over,' as the saw saith. Truce to this talk, Master Nevile. I hear that your young hostess—ehem!—Mistress Sibyll, is greatly marvelled at among the court gallants, is it so?"

Marmaduke's frank face grew gloomy. "Alas! dear foster-brother," he said, dropping the somewhat affected tone in which he had before spoken, "I must confess to my shame, that I cannot yet get the damsel out of my thoughts, which is what I consider it a point of manhood and spirit to achieve."

"How so?"

"Because, when a maiden chooseth steadily to say nay to your wooing, to follow her heels, and whine and beg, is a dog's duty, not a man's."

"What!" exclaimed Alwyn, in a voice of great eagerness, "mean you to say that you have wooed Sibyll Warner as your wife?"

"Verily, yes!"

"And failed?"

"And failed."

"Poor Marmaduke!"

"There is no 'poor' in the matter, Nick Alwyn," returned Marmaduke, sturdily; "if a girl likes me, well; if not, there are too many others in the wide world for a young fellow to break his heart about one. Yet," he added, after a short pause, and with a sigh,—"yet, if thou hast not seen her since she came to the court, thou wilt find her wondrously changed."

"More's the pity!" said Alwyn, reciprocating his friend's sigh.

"I mean that she seems all the comelier for the court air. And beshrew me, I think the Lord Hastings, with his dulcet flatteries, hath made it a sort of frenzy for all the gallants to flock round her."

"I should like to see Master Warner again," said Alwyn; "where lodges he?"

"Yonder, by the little postern, on the third flight of the turret that flanks the corridor, [This description refers to that part of the Tower called the King's or Queen's Lodge, and long since destroyed.] next to Friar Bungey, the magician; but it is broad daylight, and therefore not so dangerous,—not but thou mayest as well patter an ave in going up stairs."

"Farewell, Master Nevile," said Alwyn, smiling; "I will seek the mechanician, and if I find there Mistress Sibyll, what shall I say from thee?"

"That young bachelors in the reign of Edward IV. will never want fair feres," answered the Nevile, debonairly smoothing his lawn partelet.

CHAPTER IV. EXHIBITING THE BENEFITS WHICH ROYAL PATRONAGE CONFERS ON GENIUS,—ALSO THE EARLY LOVES OF THE LORD HASTINGS; WITH OTHER MATTERS EDIFYING AND DELECTABLE.

The furnace was still at work, the flame glowed, the bellows heaved; but these were no longer ministering to the service of a mighty and practical invention. The mathematician, the philosopher, had descended to the alchemist. The nature of the TIME had conquered the nature of a GENIUS meant to subdue time. Those studies that had gone so far to forestall the master-triumph of far later ages were exchanged for occupations that played with the toys of infant wisdom. O true Tartarus of Genius, when its energies are misapplied, when the labour but rolls the stone up the mountain, but pours water upon water through the sieve!

There is a sanguineness in men of great intellect which often leads them into follies avoided by the dull. When Adam Warner saw the ruin of his contrivance; when he felt that time and toil and money were necessary to its restoration; and when the gold he lacked was placed before him as a reward for alchemical labours, he at first turned to alchemy as he would have turned to the plough,—as he had turned to conspiracy,—simply as a means to his darling end. But by rapid degrees the fascination which all the elder sages experienced in the grand secret exercised its witchery over his mind. If Roger Bacon, though catching the notion of the steam-engine, devoted himself to the philosopher's stone; if even in so much more enlightened an age Newton had wasted some precious hours in the transmutation of metals, it was natural that the solitary sage of the reign of Edward IV. should grow, for a while at least, wedded to a pursuit which promised results so august. And the worst of alchemy is, that it always allures on its victims: one gets so near and so near the object,—it seems that so small an addition will complete the sum! So there he was—this great practical genius—hard at work on turning copper into gold!

"Well, Master Warner," said the young goldsmith, entering the student's chamber, "methinks you scarcely remember your friend and visitor, Nicholas Alwyn?"

"Remember, oh, certes! doubtless one of the gentlemen present when they proposed to put me to the brake [the old word for rack]. Please to stand a little on this side—what is your will?"

"I am not a gentleman, and I should have been loth to stand idly by when the torture was talked of for a free-born Englishman, let alone a scholar. And where is your fair daughter, Master Warner? I suppose you see but little of her now she is the great dame's waiting-damsel?"

"And why so, Master Alwyn?" asked a charming voice; and Alwyn for the first time perceived the young form of Sibyll, by the embrasure of a window, from which might be seen in the court below a gay group of lords and courtiers, with the plain, dark dress of Hastings, contrasting their gaudy surcoats, glittering with cloth-of-gold. Alwyn's tongue clove to his mouth; all he had to say was forgotten in a certain bashful and indescribable emotion.

The alchemist had returned to his furnace, and the young man and the girl were as much alone as if Adam Warner had been in heaven.

"And why should the daughter forsake the sire more in a court, where love is rare, than in the humbler home, where they may need each other less?"

"I thank thee for the rebuke, mistress," said Alwyn, delighted with her speech; "for I should have been sorry to see thy heart spoiled by the vanities that kill most natures." Scarcely had he uttered these words,

than they seemed to him overbold and presuming; for his eye now took in the great change of which Marmaduke had spoken. Sibyll's dress beseemed the new rank which she held: the corset, fringed with gold, and made of the finest thread, showed the exquisite contour of the throat and neck, whose ivory it concealed. The kirtle of rich blue became the fair complexion and dark chestnut hair; and over all she wore that most graceful robe, called the sasquenice, of which the old French poet sang,—

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"Car nulie robe n'est si belle
 A dame ne a demoiselle."
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This garment, worn over the rest of the dress, had perhaps a classical origin, and with slight variations may be seen on the Etruscan vases; it was long and loose, of the whitest and finest linen, with hanging sleeves, and open at the sides. But it was not the mere dress that had embellished the young maiden's form and aspect,—it was rather an indefinable alteration in the expression and the bearing. She looked as if born to the airs of courts; still modest indeed, and simple, but with a consciousness of dignity, and almost of power; and in fact the woman had been taught the power that womanhood possesses. She had been admired, followed, flattered; she had learned the authority of beauty. Her accomplishments, uncommon in that age among her sex, had aided her charm of person; her natural pride, which, though hitherto latent, was high and ardent, fed her heart with sweet hopes; a bright career seemed to extend before her; and, at peace as to her father's safety, relieved from the drudging cares of poverty, her fancy was free to follow the phantasms of sanguine youth through the airy land of dreams. And therefore it was that the maid was changed!

At the sight of the delicate beauty, the self-possessed expression, the courtly dress, the noble air of Sibyll, Nicholas Alwyn recoiled and turned pale; he no longer marvelled at her rejection of Marmaduke, and he started at the remembrance of the bold thoughts which he had dared himself to indulge.

The girl smiled at the young man's confusion.

"It is not prosperity that spoils the heart," she said touchingly, "unless it be mean indeed. Thou rememberest, Master Alwyn, that when God tried His saint, it was by adversity and affliction."

"May thy trial in these last be over," answered Alwyn; "but the humble must console their state by thinking that the great have their trials too; and, as our homely adage hath it, 'That is not always good in the maw which is sweet in the mouth.' Thou seest much of my gentle foster-brother, Mistress Sibyll?"

"But in the court dances, Master Alwyn; for most of the hours in which my lady duchess needs me not are spent here. Oh, my father hopes great things! and now at last fame dawns upon him."

"I rejoice to hear it, mistress; and so, having paid ye both my homage, I take my leave, praying that I may visit you from time to time, if it be only to consult this worshipful master touching certain improvements in the horologe, in which his mathematics can doubtless instruct me. Farewell. I have some jewels to show to the Lady of Bonville."

"The Lady of Bonville!" repeated Sibyll, changing colour; "she is a dame of notable loveliness."

"So men say,—and mated to a foolish lord; but scandal, which spares few, breathes not on her,—rare praise for a court dame. Few Houses can have the boast of Lord Warwick's,—'that all the men are without fear, and all the women without stain.'"

"It is said," observed Sibyll, looking down, "that my Lord Hastings once much affectioned the Lady Bonville. Hast thou heard such gossip?"

"Surely, yes; in the city we hear all the tales of the court; for many a courtier, following King Edward's exemplar, dines with the citizen to-day, that he may borrow gold from the citizen to-morrow. Surely, yes; and hence, they say, the small love the wise Hastings bears to the stout earl."

"How runs the tale? Be seated, Master Alwyn."

"Marry, thus: when William Hastings was but a squire, and much favoured by Richard, Duke of York, he lifted his eyes to the Lady Katherine Nevile, sister to the Earl of Warwick, and in beauty and in dower, as in birth, a mate for a king's son."

"And, doubtless, the Lady Katherine returned his love?"

"So it is said, maiden; and the Earl of Salisbury her father and Lord Warwick her brother discovered the secret, and swore that no new man (the stout earl's favourite word of contempt), though he were made a duke, should give to an upstart posterity the quarterings of Montagu and Nevile. Marry, Mistress Sibyll, there is a north country and pithy proverb, 'Happy is the man whose father went to the devil.' Had some old Hastings been a robber and extortioner, and left to brave William the heirship of his wickedness in lordships and lands, Lord Warwick had not called him 'a new man.' Master Hastings was dragged, like a serf's son, before the earl on his dais; and be sure he was rated soundly, for his bold blood was up, and he defied the earl, as a gentleman born, to single battle. Then the earl's followers would have fallen on him; and in those days, under King Henry, he who bearded a baron in his hall must have a troop at his back, or was like to have a rope round his neck; but the earl (for the lion is not as fierce as they paint him) came down from his dais, and said, 'Man, I like thy spirit, and I myself will dub thee knight that I may pick up thy glove and give thee battle.'"

"And they fought? Brave Hastings!"

"No. For whether the Duke of York forbade it, or whether the Lady Katherine would not hear of such strife between fere and frere, I know not; but Duke Richard sent Hastings to Ireland, and, a month after, the Lady Katherine married Lord Bonville's son and heir,—so, at least, tell the gossips and sing the ballad-mongers. Men add that Lord Hastings still loves the dame, though, certes, he knows how to console himself."

"Loves her! Nay, nay,—I trove not," answered Sibyll, in a low voice, and with a curl of her dewy lip.

At this moment the door opened gently and Lord Hastings himself entered. He came in with the familiarity of one accustomed to the place.

"And how fares the grand secret, Master Warner? Sweet mistress! thou seemest lovelier to me in this dark chamber than outshining all in the galliard. Ha! Master Alwyn, I owe thee many thanks for making me know first the rare arts of this fair emblazoner. Move me yon stool, good Alwyn."

As the goldsmith obeyed, he glanced from Hastings to the blushing face and heaving bosom of Sibyll, and a deep and exquisite pang shot through his heart. It was not jealousy alone; it was anxiety, compassion, terror. The powerful Hastings, the ambitious lord, the accomplished libertine—what a fate for poor Sibyll, if for such a man the cheek blushed and the bosom heaved!

"Well, Master Warner," resumed Hastings, "thou art still silent as to thy progress."

The philosopher uttered an impatient groan. "Ah, I comprehend. The goldmaker must not speak of his craft before the goldsmith. Good Alwyn, thou mayest retire. All arts have their mysteries."

Alwyn, with a sombre brow, moved to the door.

“In sooth,” he said, “I have overtarried, good my lord. The Lady Bonville will chide me; for she is of no patient temper.”

“Bridle thy tongue, artisan, and begone!” said Hastings, with unusual haughtiness and petulance.

“I stung him there,” muttered Alwyn, as he withdrew. “Oh, fool that I was to—nay, I thought it never, I did but dream it. What wonder we traders hate these silken lords! They reap, we sow; they trifle, we toil; they steal with soft words into the hearts which—Oh, Marmaduke, thou art right-right!—Stout men sit not down to weep beneath the willow. But she—the poor maiden—she looked so haughty and so happy. This is early May; will she wear that look when the autumn leaves are strewn?”

CHAPTER V. THE WOODVILLE INTRIGUE PROSPERS.—MONTAGU CONFERS WITH HASTINGS, VISITS THE ARCHBISHOP OF YORK, AND IS MET ON THE ROAD BY A STRANGE PERSONAGE.

And now the one topic at the court of King Edward IV. was the expected arrival of Anthony of Burgundy, Count de la Roche, bastard brother of Charolois, afterwards, as Duke of Burgundy, so famous as Charles the Bold. Few, indeed, out of the immediate circle of the Duchess of Bedford’s confidants regarded the visit of this illustrious foreigner as connected with any object beyond the avowed one of chivalrous encounter with Anthony Woodville, the fulfilment of a challenge given by the latter two years before, at the time of the queen’s coronation. The origin of this challenge, Anthony Woodville Lord Scales has himself explained in a letter to the bastard, still extant, and of which an extract may be seen in the popular and delightful biographies of Miss Strickland. [Queens of England, vol. iii. p. 380] It seems that, on the Wednesday before Easter Day, 1465, as Sir Anthony was speaking to his royal sister, “on his knees,” all the ladies of the court gathered round him, and bound to his left knee a band of gold adorned with stones fashioned into the letters S. S. (souvenance or remembrance), and to this band was suspended an enamelled “Forget-me-not.” “And one of the ladies said that ‘he ought to take a step fitting for the times.’” This step was denoted by a letter on vellum, bound with a gold thread, placed in his cap; and having obtained the king’s permission to bring the adventure of the flower of souvenance to a conclusion, the gallant Anthony forwarded the articles and the enamelled flower to the Bastard of Burgundy, beseeching him to touch the latter with his knightly hand, in token of his accepting the challenge. The Count de la Roche did so, but was not sent by his brother amongst the knights whom Charolois despatched to England, and the combat had been suspended to the present time.

But now the intriguing Rivers and his duchess gladly availed themselves of so fair a pretext for introducing to Edward the able brother of Warwick’s enemy and the French prince’s rival, Charles of Burgundy; and Anthony Woodville, too gentle and knightly a person to have abetted their cunning projects in any mode less chivalrous, willingly consented to revive a challenge in honour of the ladies of England.

The only one amongst the courtiers who seemed dissatisfied with the meditated visit of the doughty Burgundian champion was the Lord Montagu. This penetrating and experienced personage was not to be duped by an affectation of that chivalry which, however natural at the court of Edward III., was no longer

in unison with the more intriguing and ambitious times over which presided the luxurious husband of Elizabeth Woodville. He had noticed of late, with suspicion, that Edward had held several councils with the anti-Nevile faction, from which he himself was excluded. The king, who heretofore had delighted in his companionship, had shown him marks of coldness and estrangement; and there was an exulting malice in the looks of the Duchess of Bedford, which augured some approaching triumph over the great family which the Woodvilles so openly laboured to supplant. One day, as Marmaduke was loitering in the courtyard of the Tower, laughing and jesting with his friends, Lord Montagu, issuing from the king's closet, passed him with a hurried step and a thoughtful brow. This haughty brother of the Earl of Warwick had so far attended to the recommendation of the latter, that he had with some courtesy excused himself to Marmaduke for his language in the archery-ground, and had subsequently, when seeing him in attendance on the king, honoured him with a stately nod, or a brief "Good morrow, young kinsman." But as his eye now rested on Marmaduke, while the group vailed their bonnets to the powerful courtier, he called him forth, with a familiar smile he had never before assumed, and drawing him apart, and leaning on his shoulder, much to the envy of the standers by, he said caressingly,—

"Dear kinsman Guy—"

"Marmaduke, please you, my lord."

"Dear kinsman Marmaduke, my brother esteems you for your father's sake. And, sooth to say, the Neviles are not so numerous in court as they were. Business and state matters have made me see too seldom those whom I would most affect. Wilt thou ride with me to the More Park? I would present thee to my brother the archbishop."

"If the king would graciously hold me excused."

"The king, sir! when I—I forgot," said Montagu, checking himself—"oh, as to that, the king stirs not out to-day! He hath with him a score of tailors and armourers in high council on the coming festivities. I will warrant thy release; and here comes Hastings, who shall confirm it."

"Fair my lord!"—as at that moment Hastings emerged from the little postern that gave egress from the apartments occupied by the alchemist of the Duchess of Bedford—"wilt thou be pleased, in thy capacity of chamberlain, to sanction my cousin in a day's absence? I would confer with him on family matters."

"Certes, a small favour to so deserving a youth. I will see to his deputy."

"A word with you, Hastings," said Montagu, thoughtfully, and he drew aside his fellow courtier: "what thinkest thou of this Burgundy bastard's visit?"

"That it has given a peacock's strut to the popinjay Anthony Woodville."

"Would that were all!" returned Montagu. "But the very moment that Warwick is negotiating with Louis of France, this interchange of courtesies with Louis's deadly foe, the Count of Charolois, is out of season."

"Nay, take it not so gravely,—a mere pastime."

"Hastings, thou knowest better. But thou art no friend of my great brother."

"Small cause have I to be so," answered Hastings, with a quivering lip. "To him and your father I owe as deep a curse as ever fell on the heart of man. I have lived to be above even Lord Warwick's insult. Yet young, I stand amongst the warriors and peers of England with a crest as haught and a scutcheon as

stainless as the best. I have drunk deep of the world's pleasures. I command, as I list, the world's gaudy pomps, and I tell thee, that all my success in life countervails not the agony of the hour when all the bloom and loveliness of the earth faded into winter, and the only woman I ever loved was sacrificed to her brother's pride."

The large drops stood on the pale brow of the fortunate noble as he thus spoke, and his hollow voice affected even the worldly Montagu.

"Tush, Hastings!" said Montagu, kindly; "these are but a young man's idle memories. Are we not all fated, in our early years, to love in vain?—even I married not the maiden I thought the fairest, and held the dearest. For the rest, bethink thee,—thou wert then but a simple squire."

"But of as ancient and pure a blood as ever rolled its fiery essence through a Norman's veins."

"It may be so; but old Houses, when impoverished, are cheaply held. And thou must confess thou wert then no mate for Katherine. Now, indeed, it were different; now a Nevile might be proud to call Hastings brother."

"I know it," said Hastings, proudly,—"I know it, lord; and why? Because I have gold, and land, and the king's love, and can say, as the Centurion, to my fellow-man, 'Do this, and he doeth it;' and yet I tell thee, Lord Montagu, that I am less worthy now the love of beauty, the right hand of fellowship from a noble spirit, than I was then, when—the simple squire—my heart full of truth and loyalty, with lips that had never lied, with a soul never polluted by unworthy pleasures or mean intrigues, I felt that Katherine Nevile should never blush to own her fere and plighted lord in William de Hastings. Let this pass, let it pass! You call me no friend to Warwick. True! but I am a friend to the king he has served, and the land of my birth to which he has given peace; and therefore, not till Warwick desert Edward, not till he wake the land again to broil and strife, will I mingle in the plots of those who seek his downfall. If in my office and stated rank I am compelled to countenance the pageant of this mock tournament, and seem to honour the coming of the Count de la Roche, I will at least stand aloof and free from all attempt to apply a gaudy pageant to a dangerous policy; and on this pledge, Montagu, I give you my knightly hand."

"It suffices," answered Montagu, pressing the hand extended to him. "But the other day I heard the king's dissour tell him a tale of some tyrant, who silently showed a curious questioner how to govern a land, by cutting down, with his staff, the heads of the tallest poppies; and the Duchess of Bedford turned to me, and asked, 'What says a Nevile to the application?' 'Faith, lady,' said I, 'the Nevile poppies have oak stems.' Believe me, Hastings, these Woodvilles may grieve and wrong and affront Lord Warwick, but woe to all the pigmy goaders when the lion turns at bay!"

With this solemn menace, Montagu quitted Hastings, and passed on, leaning upon Marmaduke, and with a gloomy brow.

At the gate of the palace waited the Lord Montagu's palfrey and his retinue of twenty squires and thirty grooms. "Mount, Master Marmaduke, and take thy choice among these steeds, for we shall ride alone. There is no Nevile amongst these gentlemen." Marmaduke obeyed. The earl dismissed his retinue, and in little more than ten minutes,—so different, then, was the extent of the metropolis,—the noble and the squire were amidst the open fields.

They had gone several miles at a brisk trot before the earl opened his lips, and then, slackening his pace, he said abruptly, "How dost thou like the king? Speak out, youth; there are no eavesdroppers here."

"He is a most gracious master and a most winning gentleman."

"He is both," said Montagu, with a touch of emotion that surprised Marmaduke; "and no man can come near without loving him. And yet, Marmaduke (is that thy name?)—yet whether it be weakness or falseness, no man can be sure of his king's favour from day to day. We Neviles must hold fast to each other. Not a stick should be lost if the fagot is to remain unbroken. What say you?" and the earl's keen eye turned sharply on the young man.

"I say, my lord, that the Earl of Warwick was to me patron, lord, and father, when I entered yon city a friendless orphan; and that, though I covet honours, and love pleasure, and would be loth to lift finger or speak word against King Edward, yet were that princely lord—the head of mine House—an outcast and a beggar, by his side I would wander, for his bread I would beg."

"Young man," exclaimed Montagu, "from this hour I admit thee to my heart! Give me thy hand. Beggar and outcast?—No! If the storm come, the meaner birds take to shelter, the eagle remains solitary in heaven!" So saying, he relapsed into silence, and put spurs to his steed. Towards the decline of day they drew near to the favourite palace of the Archbishop of York. There the features of the country presented a more cultivated aspect than it had hitherto worn. For at that period the lands of the churchmen were infinitely in advance of those of the laity in the elementary arts of husbandry, partly because the ecclesiastic proprietors had greater capital at their command, partly because their superior learning had taught them to avail themselves, in some measure, of the instructions of the Latin writers. Still the prevailing characteristic of the scenery was pasture land,—immense tracts of common supported flocks of sheep; the fragrance of new-mown hay breathed sweet from many a sunny field. In the rear stretched woods of Druid growth; and in the narrow lanes, that led to unfrequent farms and homesteads, built almost entirely either of wood or (more primitive still) of mud and clay, profuse weeds, brambles, and wild-flowers almost concealed the narrow pathway, never intended for cart or wagon, and arrested the slow path of the ragged horse bearing the scanty produce of acres to yard or mill. But though to the eye of an economist or philanthropist broad England now, with its variegated agriculture, its wide roads, its white-walled villas, and numerous towns, may present a more smiling countenance, to the early lover of Nature, fresh from the child-like age of poetry and romance, the rich and lovely verdure which gave to our mother-country the name of "Green England;" its wild woods and covert alleys, proffering adventure to fancy; its tranquil heaths, studded with peaceful flocks, and vocal, from time to time, with the rude scrannel of the shepherd,—had a charm which we can understand alone by the luxurious reading of our elder writers. For the country itself ministered to that mingled fancy and contemplation which the stirring and ambitious life of towns and civilization has in much banished from our later literature.

Even the thoughtful Montagu relaxed his brow as he gazed around, and he said to Marmaduke, in a gentle and subdued voice,—

"Methinks, young cousin, that in such scenes, those silly rhymes taught us in our childhood of the green woods and the summer cuckoos, of bold Robin and Maid Marian, ring back in our ears. Alas that this fair land should be so often dyed in the blood of her own children! Here, how the thought shrinks from broils and war,—civil war, war between brother and brother, son and father! In the city and the court, we forget others overmuch, from the too keen memory of ourselves."

Scarcely had Montagu said these words, before there suddenly emerged from a bosky lane to the right a man mounted upon a powerful roan horse. His dress was that of a substantial franklin; a green surtout of broadcloth, over a tight vest of the same colour, left, to the admiration of a soldierly eye, an expanse of chest that might have vied with the mighty strength of Warwick himself. A cap, somewhat like a turban, fell in two ends over the left cheek, till they touched the shoulder, and the upper part of the visage was concealed by a half-vizard, not unfrequently worn out of doors with such head-gear, as a shade from the sun. Behind this person rode, on a horse equally powerful, a man of shorter stature, but scarcely less muscular a frame, clad in a leathern jerkin, curiously fastened with thongs, and wearing a steel bonnet, projecting far over the face.

The foremost of these strangers, coming thus unawares upon the courtiers, reined in his steed, and said in a clear, full voice, "Good evening to you, my masters. It is not often that these roads witness riders in silk and pile."

"Friend," quoth the Montagu, "may the peace we enjoy under the White Rose increase the number of all travellers through our land, whether in pile or russet!"

"Peace, sir!" returned the horseman, roughly,—"peace is no blessing to poor men, unless it bring something more than life,—the means to live in security and ease. Peace hath done nothing for the poor of England. Why, look you towards yon gray tower,—the owner is, forsooth, gentleman and knight; but yesterday he and his men broke open a yeoman's house, carried off his wife and daughters to his tower, and refuseth to surrender them till ransomed by half the year's produce on the yeoman's farm."

"A caitiff and illegal act," said Montagu.

"Illegal! But the law will notice it not,—why should it? Unjust, if it punish the knight and dare not touch the king's brother!"

"How, sir?"

"I say the king's brother! Scarcely a month since, twenty-four persons under George Duke of Clarence entered by force a lady's house, and seized her jewels and her money, upon some charge, God wot, of contriving mischief to the boy-duke. [See for this and other instances of the prevalent contempt of law in the reign of Edward IV., and, indeed, during the fifteenth century, the extracts from the Parliamentary Rolls, quoted by Sharon Turner, "History of England," vol. iii. p. 399.] Are not the Commons ground by imposts for the queen's kindred? Are not the king's officers and purveyors licensed spoilers and rapiners? Are not the old chivalry banished for new upstarts? And in all this, is peace better than war?"

"Knowest thou not that these words are death, man?"

"Ay, in the city! but in the fields and waste thought is free. Frown not, my lord. Ah, I know you, and the time may come when the baron will act what the franklin speaks. What! think you I see not the signs of the storm? Are Warwick and Montagu more safe with Edward than they were with Henry? Look to thyself! Charolois will outwit King Louis, and ere the year be out, the young Margaret of England will be lady of your brave brother's sternest foe!"

"And who art thou, knave?" cried Montagu, aghast, and laying his gloved hand on the bold prophet's bridle.

"One who has sworn the fall of the House of York, and may live to fight, side by side, in that cause with Warwick; for Warwick, whatever be his faults, has an English heart, and loves the Commons."

Montagu, uttering an exclamation of astonishment, relaxed hold of the franklin's bridle; and the latter waved his hand, and spurring his steed across the wild chain of commons, disappeared with his follower.

"A sturdy traitor!" muttered the earl, following him with his eye. "One of the exiled Lancastrian lords, perchance. Strange how they pierce into our secrets! Heardst thou that fellow, Marmaduke?"

"Only in a few sentences, and those brought my hand to my dagger. But as thou madest no sign, I thought his grace the king could not be much injured by empty words."

"True! and misfortune has ever a shrewish tongue."

"An' it please you, my lord," quoth Marmaduke, "I have seen the man before, and it seemeth to me that he holds much power over the rascal rabble." And here Marmaduke narrated the attack upon Warner's house, and how it was frustrated by the intercession of Robin of Redesdale.

"Art thou sure it is the same man, for his face was masked?"

"My lord, in the North, as thou knowest, we recognize men by their forms, not faces,—as in truth we ought, seeing that it is the sinews and bulk, not the lips and nose, that make a man a useful friend or dangerous foe."

Montagu smiled at this soldierly simplicity. "And heard you the name the raptrils shouted?"

"Robin, my lord. They cried out 'Robin,' as if it had been a 'Montagu I or a 'Warwick.'"

"Robin! ah, then I guess the man,—a most perilous and stanch Lancastrian. He has more weight with the poor than had Cade the rebel, and they say Margaret trusts him as much as she does an Exeter or Somerset. I marvel that he should show himself so near the gates of London. It must be looked to. But come, cousin. Our steeds are breathed,—let us on!"

On arriving at the More, its stately architecture, embellished by the prelate with a facade of double arches, painted and blazoned somewhat in the fashion of certain old Italian houses, much dazzled Marmaduke. And the splendour of the archbishop's retinue—less martial indeed than Warwick's—was yet more imposing to the common eye. Every office that pomp could devise for a king's court was to be found in the household of this magnificent prelate,—master of the horse and the hounds, chamberlain, treasurer, pursuivant, herald, seneschal, captain of the body-guard, etc.,—and all emulously sought for and proudly held by gentlemen of the first blood and birth. His mansion was at once a court for middle life, a school for youth, an asylum for age; and thither, as to a Medici, fled the letters and the arts.

Through corridor and hall, lined with pages and squires, passed Montagu and Marmaduke, till they gained a quaint garden, the wonder and envy of the time, planned by an Italian of Mantua, and perhaps the stateliest one of the kind existent in England. Straight walks, terraces, and fountains, clipped trees, green alleys, and smooth bowling-greens abounded; but the flowers were few and common: and if here and there a statue might be found, it possessed none of the art so admirable in our earliest ecclesiastical architecture, but its clumsy proportions were made more uncouth by a profusion of barbaric painting and gilding. The fountains, however, were especially curious, diversified, and elaborate: some shot up as pyramids, others coiled in undulating streams, each jet chasing the other as serpents; some, again, branched off in the form of trees, while mimic birds, perched upon leaden boughs, poured water from their bills. Marmaduke, much astonished and bewildered, muttered a paternoster in great haste; and even the clerical rank of the prelate did not preserve him from the suspicion of magical practices in the youth's mind.

Remote from all his train, in a little arbour overgrown with the honeysuckle and white rose, a small table before him bearing fruits, confectionery, and spiced wines (for the prelate was a celebrated epicure, though still in the glow of youth), they found George Nevile, reading lazily a Latin manuscript.

"Well, my dear lord and brother," said Montagu, laying his arm on the prelate's shoulder, "first let me present to thy favour a gallant youth, Marmaduke Nevile, worthy his name and thy love."

"He is welcome, Montagu, to our poor house," said the archbishop, rising, and complacently glancing at his palace, splendidly gleaming through the trellis-work. "'Puer ingenui vultus.' Thou art acquainted, doubtless, young sir, with the Humaner Letters?"

"Well-a-day, my lord, my nurturing was somewhat neglected in the province," said Marmaduke, disconcerted, and deeply blushing, "and only of late have I deemed the languages fit study for those not reared for our Mother Church."

"Fie, sir, fie! Correct that error, I pray thee. Latin teaches the courtier how to thrive, the soldier how to manoeuvre, the husbandman how to sow; and if we churchmen are more cunning, as the profane call us (and the prelate smiled) than ye of the laity, the Latin must answer for the sins of our learning."

With this, the archbishop passed his arm affectionately through his brother's, and said, "Beshrew me, Montagu, thou lookest worn and weary. Surely thou lackest food, and supper shall be hastened. Even I, who have but slender appetite, grow hungered in these cool gloaming hours."

"Dismiss my comrade, George,—I would speak to thee," whispered Montagu.

"Thou knowest not Latin?" said the archbishop, turning with a compassionate eye to Nevile, whose own eye was amorously fixed on the delicate confectioneries,—"never too late to learn. Hold, here is a grammar of the verbs, that, with mine own hand, I have drawn up for youth. Study thine amo and thy moneo, while I confer on Church matters with giddy Montagu. I shall expect, ere we sup, that thou wilt have mastered the first tenses."

"But—"

"Oh, nay, nay; but me no buts. Thou art too tough, I fear me, for flagellation, a wondrous improver of tender youth,"—and the prelate forced his grammar into the reluctant hands of Marmaduke, and sauntered down one of the solitary alleys with his brother.

Long and earnest was their conference, and at one time keen were their dispute's.

The archbishop had very little of the energy of Montagu or the impetuosity of Warwick, but he had far more of what we now call mind, as distinct from talent, than either; that is, he had not their capacities for action, but he had a judgment and sagacity that made him considered a wise and sound adviser: this he owed principally to the churchman's love of ease, and to his freedom from the wear and tear of the passions which gnawed the great minister and the aspiring courtier; his natural intellect was also fostered by much learning. George Nevile had been reared, by an Italian ecclesiastic, in all the subtle diplomacy of the Church; and his ambition, despising lay objects (though he consented to hold the office of chancellor), was concentrated in that kingdom over kings which had animated the august dominators of religious Rome. Though, as we have said, still in that age when the affections are usually vivid, [He was consecrated Bishop of Exeter at the age of twenty; at twenty-six he became Archbishop of York, and was under thirty at the time referred to in the text.] George Nevile loved no human creature,—not even his brothers; not even King Edward, who, with all his vices, possessed so eminently the secret that wins men's hearts. His early and entire absorption in the great religious community, which stood apart from the laymen in order to control them, alienated him from his kind; and his superior instruction only served to feed him with a calm and icy contempt for all that prejudice, as he termed it, held dear and precious. He despised the knight's wayward honour, the burgher's crafty honesty. For him no such thing as principle existed; and conscience itself lay dead in the folds of a fancied exemption from all responsibility to the dull herd, that were but as wool and meat to the churchman shepherd. But withal, if somewhat pedantic, he had in his manner a suavity and elegance and polish which suited well his high station, and gave persuasion to his counsels. In all externals he was as little like a priest as the high-born prelates of that day usually were. In dress he rivalled the fopperies of the Plantagenet brothers; in the chase he was more ardent than Warwick had been in his earlier youth; and a dry sarcastic humour, sometimes elevated into wit, gave liveliness to his sagacious converse.

Montagu desired that the archbishop and himself should demand solemn audience of Edward, and gravely remonstrate with the king on the impropriety of receiving the brother of a rival suitor, while Warwick was negotiating the marriage of Margaret with a prince of France.

“Nay,” said the archbishop, with a bland smile, that fretted Montagu to the quick, “surely even a baron, a knight, a franklin, a poor priest like myself, would rise against the man who dictated to his hospitality. Is a king less irritable than baron, knight, franklin, and priest,—or rather, being, as it were, per legem, lord of all, hath he not irritability eno’ for all four? Ay, tut and tush as thou wilt, John, but thy sense must do justice to my counsel at the last. I know Edward well; he hath something of mine own idlesse and ease of temper, but with more of the dozing lion than priests, who have only, look you, the mildness of the dove. Prick up his higher spirit, not by sharp remonstrance, but by seeming trust. Observe to him, with thy gay, careless laugh—which, methinks, thou hast somewhat lost of late—that with any other prince Warwick might suspect some snare, some humiliating overthrow of his embassage, but that all men know how steadfast in faith and honour is Edward IV.”

“Truly,” said Montagu, with a forced smile, “you understand mankind; but yet, bethink you—suppose this fail, and Warwick return to England to hear that he hath been cajoled and fooled; that the Margaret he had crossed the seas to affiance to the brother of Louis is betrothed to Charolois—bethink you, I say, what manner of heart beats under our brother’s mail.”

“Impiger, iracundus!” said the archbishop; “a very Achilles, to whom our English Agamemnon, if he cross him, is a baby. All this is sad truth; our parents spoilt him in his childhood, and glory in his youth, and wealth, power, success, in his manhood. Ay! if Warwick be chafed, it will be as the stir of the sea-serpent, which, according to the Icelanders, moves a world. Still, the best way to prevent the danger is to enlist the honour of the king in his behalf,—to show that our eyes are open, but that we disdain to doubt, and are frank to confide. Meanwhile send messages and warnings privately to Warwick.”

These reasonings finally prevailed with Montagu, and the brothers returned with one mind to the house. Here, as after their ablutions they sat down to the evening meal, the archbishop remembered poor Marmaduke, and despatched to him one of his thirty household chaplains. Marmaduke was found fast asleep over the second tense of the verb amo.

CHAPTER VI. THE ARRIVAL OF THE COUNT DE LA ROCHE, AND THE VARIOUS EXCITEMENT PRODUCED ON MANY PERSONAGES BY THAT EVENT.

The prudence of the archbishop’s counsel was so far made manifest, that on the next day Montagu found all remonstrance would have been too late. The Count de la Roche had already landed, and was on his way to London. The citizens, led by Rivers partially to suspect the object of the visit, were delighted not only by the prospect of a brilliant pageant, but by the promise such a visit conveyed of a continued peace with their commercial ally; and the preparations made by the wealthy merchants increased the bitterness and discontent of Montagu. At length, at the head of a gallant and princely retinue, the Count de la Roche entered London. Though Hastings made no secret of his distaste to the Count de la Roche’s visit, it became his office as lord chamberlain to meet the count at Blackwall, and escort him and his train, in gilded barges, to the palace.

In the great hall of the Tower, in which the story of Antiochus was painted by the great artists employed under Henry III., and on the elevation of the dais, behind which, across Gothic columns, stretched draperies of cloth-of-gold, was placed Edward's chair of state. Around him were grouped the Dukes of Clarence and Gloucester, the Lords Worcester, Montagu, Rivers, D'Eyncourt, St. John, Raoul de Fulke, and others. But at the threshold of the chamber stood Anthony Woodville, the knightly challenger, his knee bound by the ladye-badge of the S. S., and his fine person clad in white-flowered velvet of Genoa, adorned with pearls. Stepping forward, as the count appeared, the gallant Englishman bent his knee half-way to the ground, and raising the count's hand to his lips, said in French, "Deign, noble sir, to accept the gratitude of one who were not worthy of encounter from so peerless a hand, save by the favour of the ladies of England, and your own courtesy, which ennobles him whom it stoops to." So saying, he led the count towards the king.

De la Roche, an experienced and profound courtier, and justly deserving Hall's praise as a man of "great witte, courage, valiantness, and liberalitie," did not affect to conceal the admiration which the remarkable presence of Edward never failed to excite; lifting his hand to his eyes, as if to shade them from a sudden blaze of light, he would have fallen on both knees, but Edward with quick condescension raised him, and, rising himself, said gayly,—

"Nay, Count de la Roche, brave and puissant chevalier, who hath crossed the seas in honour of knighthood and the ladies, we would, indeed, that our roiaulme boasted a lord like thee, from whom we might ask such homage. But since thou art not our subject, it consoles us at least that thou art our guest. By our halidame, Lord Scales, thou must look well to thy lance and thy steed's girths, for never, I trow, hast thou met a champion of goodlier strength and knightlier mettle."

"My lord king," answered the count, "I fear me, indeed, that a knight like the Sieur Anthony, who fights under the eyes of such a king, will prove invincible. Did kings enter the lists with kings, where, through broad Christendom, find a compeer for your Highness?"

"Your brother, Sir Count, if fame lies not," returned Edward, slightly laughing, and lightly touching the Bastard's shoulder, "were a fearful lance to encounter, even though Charlemagne himself were to revive with his twelve paladins at his back. Tell us, Sir Count," added the king, drawing himself up,—"tell us, for we soldiers are curious in such matters, hath not the Count of Charolois the advantage of all here in sinews and stature?"

"Sire," returned De la Roche, "my princely brother is indeed mighty with the brand and battle-axe, but your Grace is taller by half the head,—and, peradventure, of even a more stalwart build; but that mere strength in your Highness is not that gift of God which strikes the beholder most."

Edward smiled good-humouredly at a compliment the truth of which was too obvious to move much vanity, and said with a royal and knightly grace, "Our House of York hath been taught, Sir Count, to estimate men's beauty by men's deeds, and therefore the Count of Charolois hath long been known to us—who, alas, have seen him not!—as the fairest gentleman of Europe. My Lord Scales, we must here publicly crave your pardon. Our brother-in-law, Sir Count, would fain have claimed his right to hold you his guest, and have graced himself by exclusive service to your person. We have taken from him his lawful office, for we kings are jealous, and would not have our subjects more honoured than ourselves." Edward turned round to his courtiers as he spoke, and saw that his last words had called a haughty and angry look to the watchful countenance of Montagu. "Lord Hastings," he continued, "to your keeping, as our representative, we intrust this gentleman. He must need refreshment ere we present him to our queen."

The count bowed to the ground, and reverently withdrew from the royal presence, accompanied by Hastings. Edward then, singling Anthony Woodville and Lord Rivers from the group, broke up the audience, and, followed by those two noblemen, quitted the hall.

Montagu, whose countenance had recovered the dignified and high-born calm habitual to it, turned to the Duke of Clarence, and observed indifferently, “The Count de la Roche hath a goodly mien, and a fair tongue.”

“Pest on these Burgundians!” answered Clarence, in an undertone, and drawing Montagu aside. “I would wager my best greyhound to a scullion’s cur that our English knights will lower their burgonets.”

“Nay, sir, an idle holiday show. What matters whose lance breaks, or whose destrier stumbles?”

“Will you not, yourself, cousin Montagu—you who are so peerless in the joust—take part in the fray?”

“I, your Highness,—I, the brother of the Earl of Warwick, whom this pageant hath been devised by the Woodvilles to mortify and disparage in his solemn embassy to Burgundy’s mightiest foe!—I!”

“Sooth to say,” said the young prince, much embarrassed, “it grieves me sorely to hear thee speak as if Warwick would be angered at this pastime. For, look you, Montagu, I, thinking only of my hate to Burgundy and my zeal for our English honour, have consented, as high constable, and despite my grudge to the Woodvilles, to bear the bassinet of our own champion, and—”

“Saints in heaven!” exclaimed Montagu, with a burst of his fierce brother’s temper, which he immediately checked, and changed into a tone that concealed, beneath outward respect, the keenest irony, “I crave your pardon humbly for my vehemence, Prince of Clarence. I suddenly remember me that humility is the proper virtue of knighthood. Your Grace does indeed set a notable example of that virtue to the peers of England; and my poor brother’s infirmity of pride will stand rebuked for aye, when he hears that George Plantagenet bore the bassinet of Anthony Woodville.”

“But it is for the honour of the ladies,” said Clarence, falteringly; “in honour of the fairest maid of all—the flower of English beauty—the Lady Isabel—that I—”

“Your Highness will pardon me,” interrupted Montagu; “but I do trust to your esteem for our poor and insulted House of Nevile so far as to be assured that the name of my niece Isabel will not be submitted to the ribald comments of a base-born Burgundian.”

“Then I will break no lance in the lists!”

“As it likes you, prince,” replied Montagu, shortly; and, with a low bow, he quitted the chamber, and was striding to the outer gate of the Tower, when a sweet, clear voice behind him called him by his name. He turned abruptly, to meet the dark eye and all-subduing smile of the boy-Duke of Gloucester.

“A word with you, Montagu, noblest and most prized, with your princely brothers, of the champions of our House,—I read your generous indignation with our poor Clarence. Ay, sir! ay!—it was a weakness in him that moved even me. But you have not now to learn that his nature, how excellent soever, is somewhat unsteady. His judgment alone lacks weight and substance,—ever persuaded against his better reason by those who approach his infirmer side; but if it be true that our cousin Warwick intends for him the hand of the peerless Isabel, wiser heads will guide his course.”

“My brother,” said Montagu, greatly softened, “is much beholden to your Highness for a steady countenance and friendship, for which I also, believe me—and the families of Beauchamp, Montagu, and Nevile—are duly grateful. But to speak plainly (which your Grace’s youthful candour, so all-acknowledged, will permit), the kinsmen of the queen do now so aspire to rule this land, to marry or forbid to marry, not only our own children, but your illustrious father’s, that I foresee in this visit of the bastard Anthony the most signal disgrace to Warwick that ever king passed upon ambassador or

gentleman. And this moves me more!—yea, I vow to Saint George, my patron, it moves me more—by the thought of danger to your royal House than by the grief of slight to mine; for Warwick—but you know him."

"Montagu, you must soothe and calm your brother if chafed. I impose that task on your love for us. Alack, would that Edward listened more to me and less to the queen's kith! These Woodvilles!—and yet they may live to move not wrath but pity. If aught snapped the thread of Edward's life (Holy Paul forbid!), what would chance to Elizabeth, her brothers, her children?"

"Her children would mount the throne that our right hands built," said Montagu, sullenly.

"Ah, think you so?—you rejoice me! I had feared that the barons might, that the commons would, that the Church must, pronounce the unhappy truth, that—but you look amazed, my lord! Alas, my boyish years are too garrulous!"

"I catch not your Highness's meaning."

"Pooh, pooh! By Saint Paul, your seeming dulness proves your loyalty; but with me, the king's brother, frankness were safe. Thou knowest well that the king was betrothed before to the Lady Eleanor Talbot; that such betrothal, not set aside by the Pope, renders his marriage with Elizabeth against law; that his children may (would to Heaven it were not so!) be set aside as bastards, when Edward's life no longer shields them from the sharp eyes of men."

"Ah," said Montagu, thoughtfully; "and in that case, George of Clarence would wear the crown, and his children reign in England."

"Our Lord forefend," said Richard, "that I should say that Warwick thought of this when he deemed George worthy of the hand of Isabel. Nay, it could not be so; for, however clear the claim, strong and powerful would be those who would resist it, and Clarence is not, as you will see, the man who can wrestle boldly,—even for a throne. Moreover, he is too addicted to wine and pleasure to bid fair to outlive the king."

Montagu fixed his penetrating eyes on Richard, but dropped them, abashed, before that steady, deep, unrevealing gaze, which seemed to pierce into other hearts, and show nothing of the heart within.

"Happy Clarence!" resumed the prince, with a heavy sigh, and after a brief pause,—"a Nevile's husband and a Warwick's son—what can the saints do more for men? You must excuse his errors—all our errors—to your brother. You may not know, peradventure, sweet Montagu, how deep an interest I have in maintaining all amity between Lord Warwick and the king. For methinks there is one face fairer than fair Isabel's, and one man more to be envied than even Clarence. Fairest face to me in the wide world is the Lady Anne's! happiest man between the cradle and the grave is he whom the Lady Anne shall call her lord! and if I—oh, look you, Montagu, let there be no breach between Warwick and the king! Fare you well, dear lord and cousin,—I go to Baynard's Castle till these feasts are over."

"Does not your Grace," said Montagu, recovering from the surprise into which one part of Gloucester's address had thrown him—"does not your Grace—so skilled in lance and horsemanship—preside at the lists?"

"Montagu, I love your brother well enough to displease my king. The great earl shall not say, at least, that Richard Plantagenet in his absence forgot the reverence due to loyalty and merit. Tell him that; and if I seem (unlike Clarence) to forbear to confront the queen and her kindred, it is because you should make no enemies,—not the less for that should princes forget no friends."

Richard said this with a tone of deep feeling, and, folding his arms within his furred surcoat, walked slowly on to a small postern admitting to the river; but there, pausing by a buttress which concealed him till Montagu had left the yard, instead of descending to his barge, he turned back into the royal garden. Here several of the court of both sexes were assembled, conferring on the event of the day. Richard halted at a distance, and contemplated their gay dresses and animated countenances with something between melancholy and scorn upon his young brow. One of the most remarkable social characteristics of the middle ages is the prematurity at which the great arrived at manhood, shared in its passions, and indulged its ambitions. Among the numerous instances in our own and other countries that might be selected from history, few are more striking than that of this Duke of Gloucester, great in camp and in council at an age when nowadays a youth is scarcely trusted to the discipline of a college. The whole of his portentous career was closed, indeed, before the public life of modern ambition usually commences. Little could those accustomed to see on our stage "the elderly ruffian" [Sharon Turner] our actors represent, imagine that at the opening of Shakspeare's play of "Richard the Third" the hero was but in his nineteenth year; but at the still more juvenile age in which he appears in this our record, Richard of Gloucester was older in intellect, and almost in experience, than many a wise man at the date of thirty-three,—the fatal age when his sun set forever on the field of Bosworth!

The young prince, then, eyed the gaudy, fluttering, babbling assemblage before him with mingled melancholy and scorn. Not that he felt, with the acuteness which belongs to modern sentiment, his bodily defects amidst that circle of the stately and the fair, for they were not of a nature to weaken his arm in war or lessen his persuasive influences in peace. But it was rather that sadness which so often comes over an active and ambitious intellect in early youth, when it pauses to ask, in sorrow and disdain, what its plots and counterplots, its restlessness and strife, are really worth. The scene before him was of pleasure,—but in pleasure neither the youth nor the manhood of Richard III. was ever pleased; though not absolutely of the rigid austerity of Amadis or our Saxon Edward, he was comparatively free from the licentiousness of his times. His passions were too large for frivolous excitements. Already the Italian, or, as it is falsely called, the Machiavelian policy, was pervading the intellect of Europe, and the effects of its ruthless, grand, and deliberate statecraft are visible from the accession of Edward IV. till the close of Elizabeth's reign. With this policy, which reconciled itself to crime as a necessity of wisdom, was often blended a refinement of character which disdained vulgar vices. Not skilled alone in those knightly accomplishments which induced Caxton, with propriety, to dedicate to Richard "The Book of the Order of Chivalry," the Duke of Gloucester's more peaceful amusements were borrowed from severer Graces than those which presided over the tastes of his royal brothers. He loved, even to passion, the Arts, Music,—especially of the more Doric and warlike kind,—Painting and Architecture; he was a reader of books, as of men,—the books that become princes,—and hence that superior knowledge of the principles of law and of commerce which his brief reign evinced. More like an Italian in all things than the careless Norman or the simple Saxon, Machiavel might have made of his character a companion, though a contrast to that of Castruccio Castrucani.

The crowd murmured and rustled at the distance, and still with folded arms Richard gazed aloof, when a lady, entering the garden from the palace, passed by him so hastily that she brushed his surcoat, and, turning round in surprise, made a low reverence, as she exclaimed, "Prince Richard! and alone amidst so many!"

"Lady," said the duke, "it was a sudden hope that brought me into this garden,—and that was the hope to see your fair face shining above the rest."

"Your Highness jests," returned the lady, though her superb countenance and haughty carriage evinced no opinion of herself so humble as her words would imply.

"My Lady of Bonville," said the young duke, laying his hand on her arm, "mirth is not in my thoughts at this hour."

"I believe your Highness; for the Lord Richard Plantagenet is not one of the Woodvilles. The mirth is theirs to-day."

"Let who will have mirth,—it is the breath of a moment. Mirth cannot tarnish glory,—the mirror in which the gods are glassed."

"I understand you, my lord," said the proud lady; and her face, before stern and high, brightened into so lovely a change, so soft and winning a smile, that Gloucester no longer marvelled that that smile had rained so large an influence on the fate and heart of his favourite Hastings. The beauty of this noble woman was indeed remarkable in its degree, and peculiar in its character. She bore a stronger likeness in feature to the archbishop than to either of her other brothers; for the prelate had the straight and smooth outline of the Greeks,—not like Montagu and Warwick, the lordlier and manlier aquiline of the Norman race,—and his complexion was feminine in its pale clearness. But though in this resembling the subtlest of the brethren, the fair sister shared with Warwick an expression, if haughty, singularly frank and candid in its imperious majesty; she had the same splendid and steady brilliancy of eye, the same quick quiver of the lip, speaking of nervous susceptibility and haste of mood. The hateful fashion of that day which pervaded all ranks, from the highest to the lowest, was the prodigal use of paints and cosmetics, and all imaginable artificial adjuncts of a spurious beauty. This extended often even to the men, and the sturdiest warrior deemed it no shame to recur to such arts of the toilet as the vainest wanton in our day would never venture to acknowledge. But the Lady Bonville, proudly confident of her beauty, and possessing a purity of mind that revolted from the littleness of courting admiration, contrasted forcibly in this the ladies of the court. Her cheek was of a marble whiteness, though occasionally a rising flush through the clear, rich, transparent skin showed that in earlier youth the virgin bloom had not been absent from the surface. There was in her features, when they reposed, somewhat of the trace of suffering,—of a struggle, past it may be, but still remembered. But when she spoke, those features lighted up and undulated in such various and kindling life as to dazzle, to bewitch, or to awe the beholder, according as the impulse moulded the expression. Her dress suited her lofty and spotless character. Henry VI. might have contemplated with holy pleasure its matronly decorum; the jewelled gorget ascended to the rounded and dimpled chin; the arms were bare only at the wrists, where the blue veins were seen through a skin of snow; the dark glossy locks, which her tirewoman boasted, when released, swept the ground, were gathered into a modest and simple braid, surmounted by the beseeming coronet that proclaimed her rank. The Lady Bonville might have stood by the side of Cornelia, the model of a young and high-born matron, in whose virtue the honour of man might securely dwell.

"I understand you, my lord," she said, with her bright, thankful smile; "and as Lord Warwick's sister, I am grateful."

"Your love for the great earl proves you are noble enough to forgive," said Richard, meaningly. "Nay, chide me not with that lofty look; you know that there are no secrets between Hastings and Gloucester."

"My lord duke, the head of a noble House hath the right to dispose of the hands of the daughters; I know nothing in Lord Warwick to forgive."

But she turned her head as she spoke, and a tear for a moment trembled in that haughty eye.

"Lady," said Richard, moved to admiration, "to you let me confide my secret. I would be your nephew. Boy though I be in years, my heart beats as loudly as a man's; and that heart beats for Anne."

"The love of Richard Plantagenet honours even Warwick's daughter!"

"Think you so? Then stand my friend; and, being thus my friend, intercede with Warwick, if he angers at the silly holiday of this Woodville pageant."

"Alas, sir! you know that Warwick listens to no interceders between himself and his passions. But what then? Grant him wronged, aggrieved, trifled with,—what then? Can he injure the House of York?"

Richard looked in some surprise at the fair speaker.

"Can he injure the House of York?—Marry, yes," he replied bluntly.

"But for what end? Whom else should he put upon the throne?"

"What if he forgive the Lancastrians? What if—"

"Utter not the thought, prince, breathe it not," exclaimed the Lady Bonville, almost fiercely. "I love and honour my brave brother, despite—despite—" She paused a moment, blushed, and proceeded rapidly, without concluding the sentence. "I love him as a woman of his House must love the hero who forms its proudest boast. But if, for any personal grudge, any low ambition, any rash humour, the son of my father Salisbury could forget that Margaret of Anjou placed the gory head of that old man upon the gates of York, could by word or deed abet the cause of usurping and bloody Lancaster,—I would—I would—Out upon my sex! I could do nought but weep the glory of Nevile and Monthermer gone forever."

Before Richard could reply, the sound of musical instruments, and a procession of heralds and pages proceeding from the palace, announced the approach of Edward. He caught the hand of the dame of Bonville, lifted it to his lips, and saying, "May fortune one day permit me to face as the earl's son the earl's foes," made his graceful reverence, glided from the garden, gained his barge, and was rowed to the huge pile of Baynard's Castle, lately reconstructed, but in a gloomy and barbaric taste, and in which, at that time, he principally resided with his mother, the once peerless Rose of Raby.

The Lady of Bonville paused a moment, and in that pause her countenance recovered its composure. She then passed on, with a stately step, towards a group of the ladies of the court, and her eye noted with proud pleasure that the highest names of the English knighthood and nobility, comprising the numerous connections of her family, formed a sullen circle apart from the rest, betokening, by their grave countenances and moody whispers, how sensitively they felt the slight to Lord Warwick's embassy in the visit of the Count de la Roche, and how little they were disposed to cringe to the rising sun of the Woodvilles. There, collected into a puissance whose discontent hard sufficed to shake a firmer throne (the young Raoul de Fulke, the idolater of Warwick, the impersonation in himself of the old Norman seignorie, in their centre), with folded arms and lowering brows, stood the earl's kinsmen, the Lords Fitzhugh and Fauconberg: with them, Thomas Lord Stanley, a prudent noble, who rarely sided with a malcontent, and the Lord St. John, and the heir of the ancient Bergavennies, and many another chief, under whose banner marched an army. Richard of Gloucester had shown his wit in refusing to mingle in intrigues which provoked the ire of that martial phalanx. As the Lady of Bonville swept by these gentlemen, their murmur of respectful homage, their profound salutation, and unbonneted heads, contrasted forcibly with the slight and grave, if not scornful, obeisance they had just rendered to one of the queen's sisters, who had passed a moment before in the same direction. The lady still moved on, and came suddenly across the path of Hastings, as, in his robes of state, he issued from the palace. Their eyes met, and both changed colour.

"So, my lord chamberlain," said the dame, sarcastically, "the Count de la Roche is, I hear, consigned to your especial charge."

"A charge the chamberlain cannot refuse, and which William Hastings does not covet."

"A king had never asked Montagu and Warwick to consider amongst their duties any charge they had deemed dishonouring."

"Dishonouring, Lady Bonville!" exclaimed Hastings, with a bent brow and a flushed cheek,—"neither Montagu nor Warwick had, with safety, applied to me the word that has just passed your lips."

"I crave your pardon," answered Katherine, bitterly. "Mine articles of faith in men's honour are obsolete or heretical. I had deemed it dishonouring in a noble nature to countenance insult to a noble enemy in his absence. I had deemed it dishonouring in a brave soldier, a well-born gentleman (now from his valiantness, merit, and wisdom become a puissant and dreaded lord), to sink into that lackeydom and varletaille which falsehood and cringing have stablished in these walls, and baptized under the name of 'courtiers.' Better had Katherine de Bonville esteemed Lord Hastings had he rather fallen under a king's displeasure than debased his better self to a Woodville's dastard schemings."

"Lady, you are cruel and unjust, like all your haughty race; and idle were reply to one who, of all persons, should have judged me better. For the rest, if this mummery humbles Lord Warwick, gramercy! there is nothing in my memory that should make my share in it a gall to my conscience; nor do I owe the Neviles so large a gratitude, that rather than fret the pile of their pride, I should throw down the scaffolding on which my fearless step hath clomb to as fair a height, and one perhaps that may overlook as long a posterity, as the best baron that ever quartered the Raven Eagle and the Dun Bull. But," resumed Hastings, with a withering sarcasm, "doubtless the Lady de Bonville more admires the happy lord who holds himself, by right of pedigree, superior to all things that make the statesman wise, the scholar learned, and the soldier famous. Way there—back, gentles,"—and Hastings turned to the crowd behind,—"way there, for my lord of Harrington and Bonville!"

The bystanders smiled at each other as they obeyed; and a heavy, shambling, graceless man, dressed in the most exaggerated fopperies of the day, but with a face which even sickliness, that refines most faces, could not divest of the most vacant dulness, and a mien and gait to which no attire could give dignity, passed through the group, bowing awkwardly to the right and left, and saying, in a thick, husky voice, "You are too good, sirs,—too good: I must not presume so overmuch on my seignorie. The king would keep me,—he would indeed, sirs; um—um—why, Katherine—dame—thy stiff gorget makes me ashamed of thee. Thou wouldst not think, Lord Hastings, that Katherine had a white skin,—a parlous white skin. La, you now, fie on these mufflers!" The courtiers sneered; Hastings, with a look of malignant and pitiless triumph, eyed the Lady of Bonville. For a moment the colour went and came across her transparent cheek; but the confusion passed, and returning the insulting gaze of her ancient lover with an eye of unspeakable majesty, she placed her arm upon her lord's, and saying calmly, "An English matron cares but to be fair in her husband's eyes," drew him away; and the words and the manner of the lady were so dignified and simple, that the courtiers hushed their laughter, and for the moment the lord of such a woman was not only envied but respected.

While this scene had passed, the procession preceding Edward had filed into the garden in long and stately order. From another entrance Elizabeth, the Princess Margaret, and the Duchess of Bedford, with their trains, had already issued, and were now ranged upon a flight of marble steps, backed by a columned alcove, hung with velvet striped into the royal baudekin, while the stairs themselves were covered with leathern carpets, powdered with the white rose and the fleur de lis; either side lined by the bearers of the many banners of Edward, displaying the white lion of March, the black bull of Clare, the cross of Jerusalem, the dragon of Arragon, and the rising sun, which he had assumed as his peculiar war-badge since the battle of Mortimer's Cross. Again, and louder, came the flourish of music; and a murmur through the crowd, succeeded by deep silence, announced the entrance of the king. He appeared, leading by the hand the Count de la Roche, and followed by the Lords Scales, Rivers, Dorset, and the Duke of Clarence. All eyes were bent upon the count, and though seen to disadvantage by the side of the comeliest and stateliest and most gorgeously-attired prince in Christendom, his high forehead, bright sagacious eye, and powerful frame did not disappoint the expectations founded upon the fame of one equally subtle in council and redoubted in war.

The royal host and the princely guest made their way where Elizabeth, blazing in jewels and cloth-of-gold, shone royally, begirt by the ladies of her brilliant court. At her right hand stood her mother, at her left, the Princess Margaret.

"I present to you, my Elizabeth," said Edward, "a princely gentleman, to whom we nevertheless wish all ill-fortune,—for we cannot desire that he may subdue our knights, and we would fain hope that he may be conquered by our ladies."

"The last hope is already fulfilled," said the count, gallantly, as on his knee he kissed the fair hand extended to him. Then rising, and gazing full and even boldly upon the young Princess Margaret, he added, "I have seen too often the picture of the Lady Margaret not to be aware that I stand in that illustrious presence."

"Her picture! Sir Count," said the queen; "we knew not that it had been ever limned."

"Pardon me, it was done by stealth."

"And where have you seen it?"

"Worn at the heart of my brother the Count of Charolois!" answered De la Roche, in a whispered tone.

Margaret blushed with evident pride and delight; and the wily envoy, leaving the impression his words had made to take their due effect, addressed himself, with all the gay vivacity he possessed, to the fair queen and her haughty mother.

After a brief time spent in this complimentary converse, the count then adjourned to inspect the menagerie, of which the king was very proud. Edward, offering his hand to his queen, led the way, and the Duchess of Bedford, directing the count to Margaret by a shrewd and silent glance of her eye, so far smothered her dislike to Clarence as to ask his highness to attend herself.

"Ah, lady," whispered the count, as the procession moved along, "what thrones would not Charolois resign for the hand that his unworthy envoy is allowed to touch!"

"Sir," said Margaret, demurely looking down, "the Count of Charolois is a lord who, if report be true, makes war his only mistress."

"Because the only loving mistress his great heart could serve is denied to his love! Ah, poor lord and brother, what new reasons for eternal war to Burgundy, when France, not only his foe, becomes his rival!"

Margaret sighed, and the count continued till by degrees he warmed the royal maiden from her reserve; and his eye grew brighter, and a triumphant smile played about his lips, when, after the visit to the menagerie, the procession re-entered the palace, and the Lord Hastings conducted the count to the bath prepared for him, previous to the crowning banquet of the night. And far more luxurious and more splendid than might be deemed by those who read but the general histories of that sanguinary time, or the inventories of furniture in the houses even of the great barons, was the accommodation which Edward afforded to his guest. His apartments and chambers were hung with white silk and linen, the floors covered with richly-woven carpets; the counterpane of his bed was cloth-of-gold, trimmed with ermine; the cupboard shone with vessels of silver and gold; and over two baths were pitched tents of white cloth of Rennes fringed with silver. [See Madden's Narrative of the Lord Grauthuse; Archaelogia, 1830.]

Agreeably to the manners of the time, Lord Hastings assisted to disrobe the count; and, the more to bear him company, afterwards undressed himself and bathed in the one bath, while the count refreshed his limbs in the other.

"Pri'thee," said De la Roche, drawing aside the curtain of his tent, and putting forth his head—"pri'thee, my Lord Hastings, deign to instruct my ignorance of a court which I would fain know well, and let me weet whether the splendour of your king, far exceeding what I was taught to look for, is derived from his revenue as sovereign of England, or chief of the House of York?"

"Sir," returned Hastings, gravely, putting out his own head, "it is Edward's happy fortune to be the wealthiest proprietor in England, except the Earl of Warwick, and thus he is enabled to indulge a state which yet oppresses not his people."

"Except the Earl of Warwick!" repeated the count, musingly, as the fumes of the odours with which the bath was filled rose in a cloud over his long hair,—"ill would fare that subject, in most lands, who was as wealthy as his king! You have heard that Warwick has met King Louis at Rouen, and that they are inseparable?"

"It becomes an ambassador to win grace of him he is sent to please."

"But none win the grace of Louis whom Louis does not dupe."

"You know not Lord Warwick, Sir Count. His mind is so strong and so frank, that it is as hard to deceive him as it is for him to be deceived."

"Time will show," said the count, pettishly, and he withdrew his head into the tent.

And now there appeared the attendants, with hippocras, syrups, and comfits, by way of giving appetite for the supper, so that no further opportunity for private conversation was left to the two lords. While the count was dressing, the Lord Scales entered with a superb gown, clasped with jewels, and lined with minever, with which Edward had commissioned him to present the Bastard. In this robe the Lord Scales insisted upon enduing his antagonist with his own hands, and the three knights then repaired to the banquet. At the king's table no male personage out of the royal family sat, except Lord Rivers—as Elizabeth's father—and the Count de la Roche, placed between Margaret and the Duchess of Bedford.

At another table, the great peers of the realm feasted under the presidence of Anthony Woodville, while, entirely filling one side of the hall, the ladies of the court held their "mess" (so-called) apart, and "great and mighty was the eating thereof!"

The banquet ended, the dance began. The admirable "featliness" of the Count de la Roche, in the pavon, with the Lady Margaret, was rivalled only by the more majestic grace of Edward and the dainty steps of Anthony Woodville. But the lightest and happiest heart which beat in that revel was one in which no scheme and no ambition but those of love nursed the hope and dreamed the triumph.

Stung by the coldness even more than by the disdain of the Lady Bonville, and enraged to find that no taunt of his own, however galling, could ruffle a dignity which was an insult both to memory and to self-love, Hastings had exerted more than usual, both at the banquet and in the revel, those general powers of pleasing, which, even in an age when personal qualifications ranked so high, had yet made him no less renowned for successes in gallantry than the beautiful and youthful king. All about this man witnessed to the triumph of mind over the obstacles that beset it,—his rise without envy, his safety amidst foes, the happy ease with which he moved through the snares and pits of everlasting stratagem and universal wile! Him alone the arts of the Woodvilles could not supplant in Edward's confidence and love; to him alone

dark Gloucester bent his haughty soul; him alone, Warwick, who had rejected his alliance, and knew the private grudge the rejection bequeathed,—him alone, among the "new men," Warwick always treated with generous respect, as a wise patriot and a fearless soldier; and in the more frivolous scenes of courtly life, the same mind raised one no longer in the bloom of youth, with no striking advantages of person, and studiously disdainful of all the fopperies of the time, to an equality with the youngest, the fairest, the gaudiest courtier, in that rivalship which has pleasure for its object and love for its reward. Many a heart beat quicker as the graceful courtier, with that careless wit which veiled his profound mournfulness of character, or with that delicate flattery which his very contempt for human nature had taught him, moved from dame to donzell; till at length, in the sight and hearing of the Lady Bonville, as she sat, seemingly heedless of his revenge, amidst a group of matrons elder than herself, a murmur of admiration made him turn quickly, and his eye, following the gaze of the bystanders, rested upon the sweet, animated face of Sibyll, flushed into rich bloom at the notice it excited. Then as he approached the maiden, his quick glance darting to the woman he had first loved told him that he had at last discovered the secret how to wound. An involuntary compression of Katherine's proud lips, a hasty rise and fall of the stately neck, a restless, indescribable flutter, as it were, of the whole frame, told the experienced woman-reader of the signs of jealousy and fear. And he passed at once to the young maiden's side. Alas! what wonder that Sibyll that night surrendered her heart to the happiest dreams; and finding herself on the floors of a court, intoxicated by its perfumed air, hearing on all sides the murmured eulogies which approved and justified the seeming preference of the powerful noble, what wonder that she thought the humble maiden, with her dower of radiant youth and exquisite beauty, and the fresh and countless treasures of virgin love, might be no unworthy mate of the "new lord"?

It was morning [The hours of our ancestors, on great occasions, were not always more seasonable than our own. Froissart speaks of court balls, in the reign of Richard II., kept up till day.] before the revel ended; and when dismissed by the Duchess of Bedford, Sibyll was left to herself, not even amidst her happy visions did the daughter forget her office. She stole into her father's chamber. He, too, was astir and up,—at work at the untiring furnace, the damps on his brow, but all Hope's vigour at his heart. So while Pleasure feasts, and Youth revels, and Love deludes itself, and Ambition chases its shadows (chased itself by Death),—so works the world-changing and world-despised SCIENCE, the life within life, for all living,—and to all dead!

CHAPTER VII. THE RENOWNED COMBAT BETWEEN SIR ANTHONY WOODVILLE AND THE BASTARD OF BURGUNDY.

And now the day came for the memorable joust between the queen's brother and the Count de la Roche. By a chapter solemnly convoked at St. Paul's, the preliminaries were settled; upon the very timber used in decking the lists King Edward expended half the yearly revenue derived from all the forests of his duchy of York. In the wide space of Smithfield, destined at a later day to blaze with the fires of intolerant bigotry, crowded London's holiday population: and yet, though all the form and parade of chivalry were there; though in the open balconies never presided a braver king or a comelier queen; though never a more accomplished chevalier than Sir Anthony Lord of Scales, nor a more redoubted knight than the brother of Charles the Bold, met lance to lance,—it was obvious to the elder and more observant spectators, that the true spirit of the lists was already fast wearing out from the influences of the age; that the gentleman was succeeding to the knight, that a more silken and scheming race had become the heirs of the iron men, who, under Edward III., had realized the fabled Paladins of Charlemagne and Arthur. But the actors were less

changed than the spectators,—the Well-born than the People. Instead of that hearty sympathy in the contest, that awful respect for the champions, that eager anxiety for the honour of the national lance, which, a century or more ago, would have moved the throng as one breast, the comments of the bystanders evinced rather the cynicism of ridicule, the feeling that the contest was unreal, and that chivalry was out of place in the practical temper of the times. On the great chessboard the pawns were now so marshalled, that the knight's moves were no longer able to scour the board and hold in check both castle and king.

"Gramercy," said Master Stokton, who sat in high state as sheriff, [Fabyan] "this is a sad waste of moneys; and where, after all, is the glory in two tall fellows, walled a yard thick in armor, poking at each other with poles of painted wood?"

"Give me a good bull-bait!" said a sturdy butcher, in the crowd below; "that's more English, I take it, than these fooleries."

Amongst the ring, the bold 'prentices of London, up and away betimes, had pushed their path into a foremost place, much to the discontent of the gentry, and with their flat caps, long hair, thick bludgeons, loud exclamations, and turbulent demeanour, greatly scandalized the formal heralds. That, too, was a sign of the times. Nor less did it show the growth of commerce, that, on seats very little below the regal balconies, and far more conspicuous than the places of earls and barons, sat in state the mayor (that mayor a grocer!) [Sir John Yonge.—Fabyan] and aldermen of the city.

A murmur, rising gradually into a general shout, evinced the admiration into which the spectators were surprised, when Anthony Woodville Lord Scales—his head bare—appeared at the entrance of the lists,—so bold and so fair was his countenance, so radiant his armour, and so richly caparisoned his gray steed, in the gorgeous housings that almost swept the ground; and around him grouped such an attendance of knights and peers as seldom graced the train of any subject, with the Duke of Clarence at his right hand, bearing his bassinet.

But Anthony's pages, supporting his banner, shared at least the popular admiration with their gallant lord: they were, according to the old custom, which probably fell into disuse under the Tudors, disguised in imitation of the heraldic beasts that typified his armourial cognizance; [Hence the origin of Supporters] and horrible and laidly looked they in the guise of griffins, with artful scales of thin steel painted green, red forked tongues, and griping the banner in one huge claw, while, much to the marvel of the bystanders, they contrived to walk very statelily on the other. "Oh, the brave monsters!" exclaimed the butcher. "Cogs bones, this beats all the rest!"

But when the trumpets of the heralds had ceased, when the words "Laissez aller!" were pronounced, when the lances were set and the charge began, this momentary admiration was converted into a cry of derision, by the sudden restiveness of the Burgundian's horse. This animal, of the pure race of Flanders, of a bulk approaching to clumsiness, of a rich bay, where, indeed, amidst the barding and the housings, its colour could be discerned, had borne the valiant Bastard through many a sanguine field, and in the last had received a wound which had greatly impaired its sight. And now, whether scared by the shouting, or terrified by its obscure vision, and the recollection of its wound when last bestrode by its lord, it halted midway, reared on end, and, fairly turning round, despite spur and bit, carried back the Bastard, swearing strange oaths, that grumbled hoarsely through his vizor, to the very place whence he had started.

The uncourteous mob yelled and shouted and laughed, and wholly disregarding the lifted wands and drowning the solemn rebukes of the heralds, they heaped upon the furious Burgundian all the expressions of ridicule in which the wit of Cockaigne is so immemorially rich. But the courteous Anthony of England, seeing the strange and involuntary flight of his redoubted foe, incontinently reined in, lowered his lance, and made his horse, without turning round, back to the end of the lists in a series of graceful gambadas

and caracoles. Again the signal was given, and this time the gallant bay did not fail his rider; ashamed, doubtless, of its late misdemeanour, arching its head till it almost touched the breast, laying its ears level on the neck, and with a snort of anger and disdain, the steed of Flanders rushed to the encounter. The Bastard's lance shivered fairly against the small shield of the Englishman; but the Woodville's weapon, more deftly aimed, struck full on the count's bassinet, and at the same time the pike projecting from the gray charger's chaffron pierced the nostrils of the unhappy bay, which rage and shame had blinded more than ever. The noble animal, stung by the unexpected pain, and bitted sharply by the rider, whose seat was sorely shaken by the stroke on his helmet, reared again, stood an instant perfectly erect, and then fell backwards, rolling over and over the illustrious burden it had borne. Then the debonair Sir Anthony of England, casting down his lance, drew his sword, and dexterously caused his destrier to curvet in a close circle round the fallen Bastard, courteously shaking at him the brandished weapon, but without attempt to strike.

"Ho, marshal!" cried King Edward, "assist to his legs the brave count."

The marshal hastened to obey. "Ventrebleu!" quoth the Bastard, when extricated from the weight of his steed, "I cannot hold by the clouds, but though my horse failed me, surely I will not fail my companions;" and as he spoke, he placed himself in so gallant and superb a posture, that he silenced the inhospitable yell which had rejoiced in the foreigner's discomfiture. Then, observing that the gentle Anthony had dismounted, and was leaning gracefully against his destrier, the Burgundian called forth,—

"Sir Knight, thou hast conquered the steed, not the rider. We are now foot to foot. The pole-axe, or the sword,—which? Speak!"

"I pray thee, noble sieur," quoth the Woodville, mildly, "to let the strife close for this day, and when rest bath—"

"Talk of rest to striplings,—I demand my rights!"

"Heaven forefend," said Anthony Woodville, lifting his hand on high, "that I, favoured so highly by the fair dames of England, should demand repose on their behalf. But bear witness," he said (with the generosity of the last true chevalier of his age, and lifting his vizor, so as to be heard by the king, and even through the foremost ranks of the crowd)—"bear witness, that in this encounter, my cause hath befriended me, not mine arm. The Count de la Roche speaketh truly; and his steed alone be blamed for his mischance."

"It is but a blind beast!" muttered the Burgundian.

"And," added Anthony, bowing towards the tiers rich with the beauty of the court—"and the count himself assureth me that the blaze of yonder eyes blinded his goodly steed." Having delivered himself of this gallant conceit, so much in accordance with the taste of the day, the Englishman, approaching the king's balcony, craved permission to finish the encounter with the axe or brand.

"The former, rather please you, my liege; for the warriors of Burgundy have ever been deemed unconquered in that martial weapon."

Edward, whose brave blood was up and warm at the clash of steel, bowed his gracious assent, and two pole-axes were brought into the ring.

The crowd now evinced a more earnest and respectful attention than they had hitherto shown, for the pole-axe, in such stalwart hands, was no child's toy. "Hum," quoth Master Stokton, "there may be some merriment now,—not like those silly poles! Your axe lops off a limb mighty cleanly." The knights

themselves seemed aware of the greater gravity of the present encounter. Each looked well to the bracing of his vizor; and poising their weapons with method and care, they stood apart some moments, eying each other steadfastly,—as adroit fencers with the small sword do in our schools at this day.

At length the Burgundian, darting forward, launched a mighty stroke at the Lord Scales, which, though rapidly parried, broke down the guard, and descended with such weight on the shoulder that but for the thrice-proven steel of Milan, the benevolent expectation of Master Stokton had been happily fulfilled. Even as it was, the Lord Scales uttered a slight cry,—which might be either of anger or of pain,—and lifting his axe with both hands, levelled a blow on the Burgundian's helmet that well nigh brought him to his knee. And now for the space of some ten minutes, the crowd with charmed suspense beheld the almost breathless rapidity with which stroke on stroke was given and parried; the axe shifted to and fro, wielded now with both hands, now the left, now the right, and the combat reeling, as it were, to and fro,—so that one moment it raged at one extreme of the lists, the next at the other; and so well inured, from their very infancy, to the weight of mail were these redoubted champions, that the very wrestlers on the village green, nay, the naked gladiators of old, might have envied their lithe agility and supple quickness.

At last, by a most dexterous stroke, Anthony Woodville forced the point of his axe into the vizor of the Burgundian, and there so firmly did it stick, that he was enabled to pull his antagonist to and fro at his will, while the Bastard, rendered as blind as his horse by the stoppage of the eye-hole, dealt his own blows about at random, and was placed completely at the mercy of the Englishman. And gracious as the gentle Sir Anthony was, he was still so smarting under many a bruise felt through his dinted mail, that small mercy, perchance, would the Bastard have found, for the gripe of the Woodville's left hand was on his foe's throat, and the right seemed about to force the point deliberately forward into the brain, when Edward, roused from his delight at that pleasing spectacle by a loud shriek from his sister Margaret, echoed by the Duchess of Bedford, who was by no means anxious that her son's axe should be laid at the root of all her schemes, rose, and crying, "Hold!" with that loud voice which had so often thrilled a mightier field, cast down his warderer.

Instantly the lists opened; the marshals advanced, severed the champions, and unbraced the count's helmet. But the Bastard's martial spirit, exceedingly dissatisfied at the unfriendly interruption, rewarded the attention of the marshals by an oath worthy his relationship to Charles the Bold; and hurrying straight to the king, his face flushed with wrath and his eyes sparkling with fire,—

"Noble sire and king," he cried, "do me not this wrong! I am not overthrown nor scathed nor subdued,—I yield not. By every knightly law till one champion yields he can call upon the other to lay on and do his worst."

Edward paused, much perplexed and surprised at finding his intercession so displeasing. He glanced first at the Lord Rivers, who sat a little below him, and whose cheek grew pale at the prospect of his son's renewed encounter with one so determined, then at the immovable aspect of the gentle and apathetic Elizabeth, then at the agitated countenance of the duchess, then at the imploring eyes of Margaret, who, with an effort, preserved herself from swooning; and finally beckoning to him the Duke of Clarence, as high constable, and the Duke of Norfolk, as earl marshal, he said, "Tarry a moment, Sir Count, till we take counsel in this grave affair." The count bowed sullenly; the spectators maintained an anxious silence; the curtain before the king's gallery was closed while the council conferred. At the end of some three minutes, however, the drapery was drawn aside by the Duke of Norfolk; and Edward, fixing his bright blue eye upon the fiery Burgundian, said gravely, "Count de la Roche, your demand is just. According to the laws of the list, you may fairly claim that the encounter go on."

"Oh, knightly prince, well said! My thanks. We lose time.—Squires, my bassinet!"

"Yea," renewed Edward, "bring hither the count's bassinet. By the laws, the combat may go on at thine asking,—I retract my warderer. But, Count de la Roche, by those laws you appeal to, the said combat must go on precisely at the point at which it was broken off. Wherefore brace on thy bassinet, Count de la Roche; and thou, Anthony Lord Scales, fix the pike of thine axe, which I now perceive was inserted exactly where the right eye giveth easy access to the brain, precisely in the same place. So renew the contest, and the Lord have mercy on thy soul, Count de la Roche!"

At this startling sentence, wholly unexpected, and yet wholly according to those laws of which Edward was so learned a judge, the Bastard's visage fell. With open mouth and astounded eyes, he stood gazing at the king, who, majestically reseating himself, motioned to the heralds.

"Is that the law, sire?" at length faltered forth the Bastard.

"Can you dispute it? Can any knight or gentleman gainsay it?"

"Then," quoth the Bastard, gruffly, and throwing his axe to the ground, "by all the saints in the calendar, I have had enough! I came hither to dare all that beseems a chevalier, but to stand still while Sir Anthony Woodville deliberately pokes out my right eye were a feat to show that very few brains would follow. And so, my Lord Scales, I give thee my right hand, and wish thee joy of thy triumph, and the golden collar." [The prize was a collar of gold, enamelled with the flower of the souvenance.]

"No triumph," replied the Woodville, modestly, "for thou art only, as brave knights should be, subdued by the charms of the ladies, which no breast, however valiant, can with impunity dispute."

So saying, the Lord Scales led the count to a seat of honour near the Lord Rivers; and the actor was contented, perforce, to become a spectator of the ensuing contests. These were carried on till late at noon between the Burgundians and the English, the last maintaining the superiority of their principal champion; and among those in the melee, to which squires were admitted, not the least distinguished and conspicuous was our youthful friend, Master Marmaduke Nevile.

CHAPTER VIII. HOW THE BASTARD OF BURGUNDY PROSPERED MORE IN HIS POLICY THAN WITH THE POLE-AXE.-AND HOW KING EDWARD HOLDS HIS SUMMER CHASE IN THE FAIR GROVES OF SHENE.

It was some days after the celebrated encounter between the Bastard and Lord Scales, and the court had removed to the Palace of Shene. The Count de la Roche's favour with the Duchess of Bedford and the young princess had not rested upon his reputation for skill with the pole-axe, and it had now increased to a height that might well recompense the diplomatist for his discomfiture in the lists.

In the mean while, the arts of Warwick's enemies had been attended with signal success. The final preparations for the alliance now virtually concluded with Louis's brother still detained the earl at Rouen, and fresh accounts of the French king's intimacy with the ambassador were carefully forwarded to Rivers, and transmitted to Edward. Now, we have Edward's own authority for stating that his first grudge against Warwick originated in this displeasing intimacy, but the English king was too clear-sighted to interpret such courtesies into the gloss given them by Rivers. He did not for a moment conceive that Lord Warwick

was led into any absolute connection with Louis which could link him to the Lancastrians, for this was against common-sense; but Edward, with all his good humour, was implacable and vindictive, and he could not endure the thought that Warwick should gain the friendship of the man he deemed his foe. Putting aside his causes of hatred to Louis in the encouragement which that king had formerly given to the Lancastrian exiles, Edward's pride as sovereign felt acutely the slighting disdain with which the French king had hitherto treated his royalty and his birth. The customary nickname with which he was maligned in Paris was "the Son of the Archer," a taunt upon the fair fame of his mother, whom scandal accused of no rigid fidelity to the Duke of York. Besides this, Edward felt somewhat of the jealousy natural to a king, himself so spirited and able, of the reputation for profound policy and statecraft which Louis XI. was rapidly widening and increasing throughout the courts of Europe. And, what with the resentment and what with the jealousy, there had sprung up in his warlike heart a secret desire to advance the claims of England to the throne of France, and retrieve the conquests won by the Fifth Henry to be lost under the Sixth. Possessing these feelings and these views, Edward necessarily saw in the alliance with Burgundy all that could gratify both his hate and his ambition. The Count of Charolois had sworn to Louis the most deadly enmity, and would have every motive, whether of vengeance or of interest, to associate himself heart in hand with the arms of England in any invasion of France; and to these warlike objects Edward added, as we have so often had cause to remark, the more peaceful aims and interests of commerce. And, therefore, although he could not so far emancipate himself from that influence, which both awe and gratitude invested in the Earl of Warwick, as to resist his great minister's embassy to Louis; and though, despite all these reasons in favour of connection with Burgundy, he could not but reluctantly allow that Warwick urged those of a still larger and wiser policy, when showing that the infant dynasty of York could only be made secure by effectually depriving Margaret of the sole ally that could venture to assist her cause,—yet no sooner had Warwick fairly departed than he inly chafed at the concession he had made, and his mind was open to all the impressions which the earl's enemies sought to stamp upon it. As the wisdom of every man, however able, can but run through those channels which are formed by the soil of the character, so Edward with all his talents never possessed the prudence which fear of consequences inspires. He was so eminently fearless, so scornful of danger, that he absolutely forgot the arguments on which the affectionate zeal of Warwick had based the alliance with Louis,—arguments as to the unceasing peril, whether to his person or his throne, so long as the unprincipled and plotting genius of the French king had an interest against both; and thus he became only alive to the representations of his passions, his pride, and his mercantile interests. The Duchess of Bedford, the queen, and all the family of Woodville, who had but one object at heart,—the downfall of Warwick and his House,—knew enough of the earl's haughty nature to be aware that he would throw up the reins of government the moment he knew that Edward had discredited and dishonoured his embassy; and, despite the suspicions they sought to instil into their king's mind, they calculated upon the earl's love and near relationship to Edward, upon his utter and seemingly irreconcilable breach with the House of Lancaster, to render his wrath impotent, and to leave him only the fallen minister, not the mighty rebel.

Edward had been thus easily induced to permit the visit of the Count de la Roche, although he had by no means then resolved upon the course he should pursue. At all events, even if the alliance with Louis was to take place, the friendship of Burgundy was worth much to maintain. But De la Roche soon made aware by the Duchess of Bedford of the ground on which he stood, and instructed by his brother to spare no pains and to scruple no promise that might serve to alienate Edward from Louis and win the hand and dower of Margaret, found it a more facile matter than his most sanguine hopes had deemed to work upon the passions and the motives which inclined the king to the pretensions of the heir of Burgundy. And what more than all else favoured the envoy's mission was the very circumstance that should most have defeated it,—namely, the recollection of the Earl of Warwick; for in the absence of that powerful baron and master-minister, the king had seemed to breathe more freely. In his absence, he forgot his power. The machine of government, to his own surprise, seemed to go on as well; the Commons were as submissive, the mobs as noisy in their shouts, as if the earl were by. There was no longer any one to share with Edward the joys of popularity, the sweets of power.

Though Edward was not Diogenes, he loved the popular sunshine, and no Alexander now stood between him and its beams. Deceived by the representations of his courtiers, hearing nothing but abuse of Warwick and sneers at his greatness, he began to think the hour had come when he might reign alone, and he entered, though tacitly, and not acknowledging it even to himself, into the very object of the womankind about him,—namely, the dismissal of his minister.

The natural carelessness and luxurious indolence of Edward's temper did not however permit him to see all the ingratitude of the course he was about to adopt. The egotism a king too often acquires, and no king so easily as one like Edward IV., not born to a throne, made him consider that he alone was entitled to the prerogatives of pride. As sovereign and as brother, might he not give the hand of Margaret as he listed? If Warwick was offended, pest on his disloyalty and presumption! And so saying to himself, he dismissed the very thought of the absent earl, and glided unconsciously down the current of the hour. And yet, notwithstanding all these prepossessions and dispositions, Edward might no doubt have deferred at least the meditated breach with his great minister until the return of the latter, and then have acted with the delicacy and precaution that became a king bound by ties of gratitude and blood to the statesman he desired to discard, but for a habit,—which, while history mentions, it seems to forget, in the consequences it ever engenders,—the habit of intemperance. Unquestionably to that habit many of the imprudences and levities of a king possessed of so much ability are to be ascribed; and over his cups with the wary and watchful De la Roche Edward had contrived to entangle himself far more than in his cooler moments he would have been disposed to do.

Having thus admitted our readers into those recesses of that cor inscrutabile,—the heart of kings,—we summon them to a scene peculiar to the pastimes of the magnificent Edward. Amidst the shades of the vast park, or chase, which then appertained to the Palace of Shene, the noonday sun shone upon such a spot as Armida might have dressed for the subdued Rinaldo. A space had been cleared of trees and underwood, and made level as a bowling-green. Around this space the huge oak and the broad beech were hung with trellis-work, wreathed with jasmine, honeysuckle, and the white rose, trained in arches. Ever and anon through these arches extended long alleys, or vistas, gradually lost in the cool depth of foliage; amidst these alleys and around this space numberless arbours, quaint with all the flowers then known in England, were constructed. In the centre of the sward was a small artificial lake, long since dried up, and adorned then with a profusion of fountains, that seemed to scatter coolness around the glowing air. Pitched in various and appropriate sites were tents of silk and the white cloth of Rennes, each tent so placed as to command one of the alleys; and at the opening of each stood cavalier or dame, with the bow or crossbow, as it pleased the fancy or suited best the skill, looking for the quarry, which horn and hound drove fast and frequent across the alleys. Such was the luxurious "summer-chase" of the Sardanapalus of the North. Nor could any spectacle more thoroughly represent that poetical yet effeminate taste, which, borrowed from the Italians, made a short interval between the chivalric and the modern age. The exceeding beauty of the day, the richness of the foliage in the first suns of bright July, the bay of the dogs, the sound of the mellow horn, the fragrance of the air, heavy with noontide flowers, the gay tents, the rich dresses and fair faces and merry laughter of dame and donzell,—combined to take captive every sense, and to reconcile ambition itself, that eternal traveller through the future, to the enjoyment of the voluptuous hour. But there were illustrious exceptions to the contentment of the general company.

A courier had arrived that morning to apprise Edward of the unexpected debarkation of the Earl of Warwick, with the Archbishop of Narbonne and the Bastard of Bourbon,—the ambassadors commissioned by Louis to settle the preliminaries of the marriage between Margaret and his brother. This unwelcome intelligence reached Edward at the very moment he was sallying from his palace gates to his pleasant pastime. He took aside Lord Hastings, and communicated the news to his able favourite. "Put spurs to thy horse, Hastings, and hie thee fast to Baynard's Castle. Bring back Gloucester. In these difficult matters that boy's head is better than a council."

"Your Highness," said Hastings, tightening his girdle with one hand, while with the other he shortened his stirrups, "shall be obeyed. I foresaw, sire, that this coming would occasion much that my Lords Rivers and Worcester have overlooked. I rejoice that you summon the Prince Richard, who hath wisely forborne all countenance to the Burgundian envoy. But is this all, sire? Is it not well to assemble also your trustiest lords and most learned prelates, if not to overawe Lord Warwick's anger, at least to confer on the fitting excuses to be made to King Louis's ambassadors?"

"And so lose the fairest day this summer hath bestowed upon us? Tush!—the more need for pleasaunce to-day since business must come to-morrow. Away with you, dear Will!"

Hastings looked grave; but he saw all further remonstrance would be in vain, and hoping much from the intercession of Gloucester, put spurs to his steed and vanished. Edward mused a moment; and Elizabeth, who knew every expression and change of his countenance, rode from the circle of her ladies, and approached him timidly. Casting down her eyes, which she always affected in speaking to her lord, the queen said softly,—

"Something hath disturbed my liege and my life's life."

"Marry, yes, sweet Bessee. Last night, to pleasure thee and thy kin (and sooth to say, small gratitude ye owe me, for it also pleased myself), I promised Margaret's hand, through De la Roche, to the heir of Burgundy."

"O princely heart!" exclaimed Elizabeth, her whole face lighted up with triumph, "ever seeking to make happy those it cherishes. But is it that which disturbs thee, that which thou repentest?"

"No, sweetheart,—no. Yet had it not been for the strength of the clary, I should have kept the Bastard longer in suspense. But what is done is done. Let not thy roses wither when thou hearest Warwick is in England,—nay, nay, child, look not so appalled; thine Edward is no infant, whom ogre and goblin scare; and"—glancing his eye proudly round as he spoke, and saw the goodly cavalcade of his peers and knights, with his body-guard, tall and chosen veterans, filling up the palace-yard, with the show of casque and pike—"and if the struggle is to come between Edward of England and his subject, never an hour more ripe than this; my throne assured, the new nobility I have raised around it, London true, marrow and heart true, the provinces at peace, the ships and the steel of Burgundy mine allies! Let the white Bear growl as he list, the Lion of March is lord of the forest. And now, my Bessee," added the king, changing his haughty tone into a gay, careless laugh, "now let the lion enjoy his chase."

He kissed the gloved hand of his queen, gallantly bending over his saddle-bow, and the next moment he was by the side of a younger if not a fairer lady, to whom he was devoting the momentary worship of his inconstant heart. Elizabeth's eyes shot an angry gleam as she beheld her faithless lord thus engaged; but so accustomed to conceal and control the natural jealousy that it never betrayed itself to the court or to her husband, she soon composed her countenance to its ordinary smooth and artificial smile, and rejoining her mother she revealed what had passed. The proud and masculine spirit of the duchess felt only joy at the intelligence. In the anticipated humiliation of Warwick, she forgot all cause for fear. Not so her husband and son, the Lords Rivers and Scales, to whom the news soon travelled.

"Anthony," whispered the father, "in this game we have staked our heads."

"But our right hands can guard them well, sir," answered Anthony; "and so God and the ladies for our rights!"

Yet this bold reply did not satisfy the more thoughtful judgment of the lord treasurer, and even the brave Anthony's arrows that day wandered wide of their quarry.

Amidst this gay scene, then, there were anxious and thoughtful bosoms. Lord Rivers was silent and abstracted; his son's laugh was hollow and constrained; the queen, from her pavilion, cast, ever and anon, down the green alleys more restless and prying looks than the hare or the deer could call forth; her mother's brow was knit and flushed. And keenly were those illustrious persons watched by one deeply interested in the coming events. Affecting to discharge the pleasant duty assigned him by the king, the Lord Montagu glided from tent to tent, inquiring courteously into the accommodation of each group, lingering, smiling, complimenting, watching, heeding, studying, those whom he addressed. For the first time since the Bastard's visit he had joined in the diversions in its honour; and yet so well had Montagu played his part at the court that he did not excite amongst the queen's relatives any of the hostile feelings entertained towards his brother. No man, except Hastings, was so "entirely loved" by Edward; and Montagu, worldly as he was, and indignant against the king as he could not fail to be, so far repaid the affection, that his chief fear at that moment sincerely was not for Warwick but Edward. He alone of those present was aware of the cause of Warwick's hasty return, for he had privately despatched to him the news of the Bastard's visit, its real object, and the inevitable success of the intrigues afloat, unless the earl could return at once, his mission accomplished, and the ambassadors of France in his train; and even before the courier despatched to the king had arrived at Shene, a private hand had conveyed to Montagu the information that Warwick, justly roused and alarmed, had left the state procession behind at Dover, and was hurrying, fast as relays of steeds and his own fiery spirit could bear him, to the presence of the ungrateful king.

Meanwhile the noon had now declined, the sport relaxed, and the sound of the trumpet from the king's pavilion proclaimed that the lazy pastime was to give place to the luxurious banquet.

At this moment, Montagu approached a tent remote from the royal pavilions, and, as his noiseless footstep crushed the grass, he heard the sound of voices in which there was little in unison with the worldly thoughts that filled his breast.

"Nay, sweet mistress, nay," said a young man's voice, earnest with emotion, "do not misthink me, do not deem me bold and overweening. I have sought to smother my love, and to rate it, and bring pride to my aid, but in vain; and, now, whether you will scorn my suit or not, I remember, Sibyll—O Sibyll! I remember the days when we conversed together; and as a brother, if nothing else—nothing dearer—I pray you to pause well, and consider what manner of man this Lord Hastings is said to be!"

"Master Nevile, is this generous? Why afflict me thus; why couple my name with so great a lord's?"

"Because—beware—the young gallants already so couple it, and their prophecies are not to thine honour, Sibyll. Nay, do not frown on me. I know thou art fair and winsome, and deftly gifted, and thy father may, for aught I know, be able to coin thee a queen's dower out of his awsome engines. But Hastings will not wed thee, and his wooing, therefore, but stains thy fair repute; while I—"

"You!" said Montagu, entering suddenly—"you, kinsman, may look to higher fortunes than the Duchess of Bedford's waiting-damsel can bring to thy honest love. How now, mistress, say, wilt thou take this young gentleman for loving fere and plighted spouse? If so, he shall give thee a manor for jointure, and thou shalt wear velvet robe and gold chain, as a knight's wife."

This unexpected interference, which was perfectly in character with the great lords, who frequently wooed in very peremptory tones for their clients and kinsmen, [See, in Miss Strickland's "Life of Elizabeth Woodville," the curious letters which the Duke of York and the Earl of Warwick addressed to her, then a simple maiden, in favour of their protege, Sir R. Johnes.] completed the displeasure which the blunt Marmaduke had already called forth in Sibyll's gentle but proud nature. "Speak, maiden,—ay or no?" continued Montagu, surprised and angered at the haughty silence of one whom he just knew by sight and name, though he had never before addressed her.

"No, my lord," answered Sibyll, keeping down her indignation at this tone, though it burned in her cheek, flashed in her eye, and swelled in the heave of her breast. "No! and your kinsman might have spared this affront to one whom—but it matters not." She swept from the tent as she said this, and passed up the alley into that of the queen's mother.

"Best so; thou art too young for marriage, Marmaduke," said Montagu, coldly. "We will find thee a richer bride ere long. There is Mary of Winstown, the archbishop's ward, with two castles and seven knight's fees."

"But so marvellously ill-featured, my lord," said poor Marmaduke, sighing.

Montagu looked at him in surprise. "Wives, sir," he said, "are not made to look at,—unless, indeed, they be the wives of other men. But dismiss these follies for the nonce. Back to thy post by the king's pavilion; and by the way ask Lord Fauconberg and Aymer Nevile, whom thou wilt pass by yonder arbour, ask them, in my name, to be near the pavilion while the king banquets. A word in thine ear,—ere yon sun gilds the top of those green oaks, the Earl of Warwick will be with Edward IV.; and come what may, some brave hearts should be by to welcome him. Go!"

Without tarrying for an answer, Montagu turned into one of the tents, wherein Raoul de Fulke and the Lord St. John, heedless of hind and hart, conferred; and Marmaduke, much bewildered, and bitterly wroth with Sibyll, went his way.

CHAPTER IX. THE GREAT ACTOR RETURNS TO FILL THE STAGE.

And now in various groups these summer foresters were at rest in their afternoon banquet,—some lying on the smooth sward around the lake, some in the tents, some again in the arbours; here and there the forms of dame and cavalier might be seen, stealing apart from the rest, and gliding down the alleys till lost in the shade, for under that reign gallantry was universal. Before the king's pavilion a band of those merry jongleurs, into whom the ancient and honoured minstrels were fast degenerating, stood waiting for the signal to commence their sports, and listening to the laughter that came in frequent peals from the royal tent. Within feasted Edward, the Count de la Roche, the Lord Rivers; while in a larger and more splendid pavilion at some little distance, the queen, her mother, and the great dames of the court held their own slighter and less noisy repast.

"And here, then," said Edward, as he put his lips to a gold goblet, wrought with gems, and passed it to Anthony the Bastard,—"here, count, we take the first wassail to the loves of Charolois and Margaret!"

The count drained the goblet, and the wine gave him new fire.

"And with those loves, king," said he, "we bind forever Burgundy and England. Woe to France!"

"Ay, woe to France!" exclaimed Edward, his face lighting up with that martial joy which it ever took at the thoughts of war,—"for we will wrench her lands from this huckster Louis. By Heaven! I shall not rest in peace till York hath regained what Lancaster hath lost! and out of the parings of the realm which I will add to England thy brother of Burgundy shall have eno' to change his duke's diadem for a king's. How now, Rivers? Thou gloomest, father mine."

"My liege," said Rivers, wakening himself, "I did but think that if the Earl of Warwick—"

"Ah, I had forgotten," interrupted Edward; "and, sooth to say, Count Anthony, I think if the earl were by, he would not much mend our boon-fellowship!"

"Yet a good subject," said De la Roche, sneeringly, "usually dresses his face by that of his king."

"A subject! Ay, but Warwick is much such a subject to England as William of Normandy or Duke Rollo was to France. Howbeit, let him come,—our realm is at peace, we want no more his battle-axe; and in our new designs on France, thy brother, bold count, is an ally that might compensate for a greater loss than a sullen minister. Let him come!"

As the king spoke, there was heard gently upon the smooth turf the sound of the hoofs of steeds. A moment more, and from the outskirts of the scene of revel, where the king's guards were stationed, there arose a long, loud shout. Nearer and nearer came the hoofs of the steeds; they paused. Doubtless Richard of Gloucester by that shout! "The soldiers love that brave boy," said the king.

Marmaduke Nevile, as gentleman in waiting, drew aside the curtain of the pavilion; and as he uttered a name that paled the cheeks of all who heard, the Earl of Warwick entered the royal presence.

The earl's dress was disordered and soiled by travel; the black plume on his cap was broken, and hung darkly over his face; his horseman's boots, coming half way up the thigh, were sullied with the dust of the journey; and yet as he entered, before the majesty of his mien, the grandeur of his stature, suddenly De Roche, Rivers, even the gorgeous Edward himself, seemed dwarfed into common men! About the man—his air, his eye, his form, his attitude—there was THAT which, in the earlier times, made kings by the acclamation of the crowd,—an unmistakable sovereignty, as of one whom Nature herself had shaped and stamped for power and for rule. All three had risen as he entered; and to a deep silence succeeded an exclamation from Edward, and then again all was still.

The earl stood a second or two calmly gazing on the effect he had produced; and turning his dark eye from one to the other, till it rested full upon De la Roche, who, after vainly striving not to quail beneath the gaze, finally smiled with affected disdain, and, resting his hand on his dagger, sank back into his seat.

"My liege," then said Warwick, doffing his cap, and approaching the king with slow and grave respect, "I crave pardon for presenting myself to your Highness thus travel-worn and disordered; but I announce that news which insures my welcome. The solemn embassy of trust committed to me by your Grace has prospered with God's blessing; and the Fils de Bourbon and the Archbishop of Narbonne are on their way to your metropolis. Alliance between the two great monarchies of Europe is concluded on terms that insure the weal of England and augment the lustre of your crown. Your claims on Normandy and Guienne King Louis consents to submit to the arbitrement of the Roman Pontiff, [The Pope, moreover, was to be engaged to decide the question within four years. A more brilliant treaty for England, Edward's ambassador could not have effected.] and to pay to your treasury annual tribute; these advantages, greater than your Highness even empowered me to demand, thus obtained, the royal brother of your new ally joyfully awaits the hand of the Lady Margaret."

"Cousin," said Edward, who had thoroughly recovered himself, motioning the earl to a seat, "you are ever welcome, no matter what your news; but I marvel much that so deft a statesman should broach these matters of council in the unseasonable hour and before the gay comrades of a revel."

"I speak, sire," said Warwick, calmly, though the veins in his forehead swelled, and his dark countenance was much flushed—"I speak openly of that which hath been done nobly; and this truth has ceased to be

matter of council, since the meanest citizen who has ears and eyes ere this must know for what purpose the ambassadors of King Louis arrive in England with your Highness's representative."

Edward, more embarrassed at this tone than he could have foreseen, remained silent; but De la Roche, impatient to humble his brother's foe, and judging it also discreet to arouse the king, said carelessly,—

"It were a pity, Sir Earl, that the citizens, whom you thus deem privy to the thoughts of kings, had not prevised the Archbishop of Narbonne that if he desire to see a fairer show than even the palaces of Westminster and the Tower, he will hasten back to behold the banners of Burgundy and England waving from the spires of Notre Dame."

Ere the Bastard had concluded, Rivers, leaning back, whispered the king, "For Christ's sake, sire, select some fitter scene for what must follow! Silence your guest!"

But Edward, on the contrary, pleased to think that De la Roche was breaking the ice, and hopeful that some burst from Warwick would give him more excuse than he felt at present for a rupture, said sternly, "Hush, my lord, and meddle not!"

"Unless I mistake," said Warwick, coldly, "he who now accosts me is the Count de la Roche,—a foreigner."

"And the brother of the heir of Burgundy," interrupted De la Roche,—"brother to the betrothed and princely spouse of Margaret of England."

"Doth this man lie, sire?" said Warwick, who had seated himself a moment, and who now rose again.

The Bastard sprung also to his feet; but Edward, waving him back, and reassuming the external dignity which rarely forsook him, replied, "Cousin, thy question lacketh courtesy to our noble guest: since thy departure, reasons of state, which we will impart to thee at a meeter season, have changed our purpose, and we will now that our sister Margaret shall wed with the Count of Charolois."

"And this to me, king!" exclaimed the earl; all his passions at once released—"this to me! Nay, frown not, Edward,—I am of the race of those who, greater than kings, have built thrones and toppled them! I tell thee, thou hast misused mine honour, and belied thine own; thou hast debased thyself in juggling me, delegated as the representative of thy royalty!—Lord Rivers, stand back,—there are barriers eno' between truth and a king!"

"By Saint George and my father's head!" cried Edward, with a rage no less fierce than Warwick's,—"thou abusest, false lord, my mercy and our kindred blood. Another word, and thou leavest this pavilion for the Tower!"

"King," replied Warwick, scornfully, and folding his arms on his broad breast, "there is not a hair on this head which thy whole house, thy guards, and thine armies could dare to touch. ME to the Tower! Send me,—and when the third sun reddens the roof of prison-house and palace, look round broad England, and miss a throne!"

"What, ho there!" exclaimed Edward, stamping his foot; and at that instant the curtain of the pavilion was hastily torn aside, and Richard of Gloucester entered, followed by Lord Hastings, the Duke of Clarence, and Anthony Woodville.

"Ah," continued the king, "ye come in time. George of Clarence, Lord High Constable of England, arrest yon haughty man, who dares to menace his liege and suzerain!"

Gliding between Clarence, who stood dumb and thunder-stricken, and the Earl of Warwick, Prince Richard said, in a voice which, though even softer than usual, had in it more command over those who heard than when it rolled in thunder along the ranks of Barnet or of Bosworth, “Edward, my brother, remember Towton, and forbear! Warwick, my cousin, forget not thy king nor his dead father!”

At these last words the earl’s face fell, for to that father he had sworn to succour and defend the sons; his sense, recovering from his pride, showed him how much his intemperate anger had thrown away his advantages in the foul wrong he had sustained from Edward. Meanwhile the king himself, with flashing eyes and a crest as high as Warwick’s, was about perhaps to overthrow his throne by the attempt to enforce his threat, when Anthony Woodville, who followed Clarence, whispered to him, “Beware, sire! a countless crowd that seem to have followed the earl’s steps have already pierced the chase, and can scarcely be kept from the spot, so great is their desire to behold him. Beware!”—and Richard’s quick ear catching these whispered words, the duke suddenly backed them by again drawing aside the curtain of the tent. Along the sward, the guard of the king, summoned from their unseen but neighbouring post within the wood, were drawn up as if to keep back an immense multitude,—men, women, children, who swayed and rustled and murmured in the rear. But no sooner was the curtain drawn aside, and the guards themselves caught sight of the royal princes and the great earl towering amidst them, than supposing in their ignorance the scene thus given to them was intended for their gratification, from that old soldiery or Towton rose a loud and long “Hurrah! Warwick and the king!”—“The king and the stout earl!” The multitude behind caught the cry; they rushed forward, mingling with the soldiery, who no longer sought to keep them back.

“A Warwick! a Warwick!” they shouted. “God bless the people’s friend!”

Edward, startled and aghast, drew sullenly into the rear of the tent.

De la Roche grew pale; but with the promptness of a practised statesman, he hastily advanced, and drew the curtain. “Shall varlets,” he said to Richard, in French, “gloat over the quarrels of their lords?”

“You are right, Sir Count,” murmured Richard, meekly; his purpose was effected, and leaning on his riding staff, he awaited what was to ensue.

A softer shade had fallen over the earl’s face, at the proof of the love in which his name was held; it almost seemed to his noble though haughty and impatient nature, as if the affection of the people had reconciled him to the ingratitude of the king. A tear started to his proud eye; but he twinkled it away, and approaching Edward (who remained erect, and with all a sovereign’s wrath, though silent on his lip, lowering on his brow), he said, in a tone of suppressed emotion,—

“Sire, it is not for me to crave pardon of living man, but the grievous affront put upon my state and mine honour hath led my words to an excess which my heart repents. I grieve that your Grace’s highness hath chosen this alliance; hereafter you may find at need what faith is to be placed in Burgundy.”

“Darest thou gainsay it?” exclaimed De la Roche.

“Interrupt me not, sir!” continued Warwick, with a disdainful gesture. “My liege, I lay down mine offices, and I leave it to your Grace to account as it lists you to the ambassadors of France,—I shall vindicate myself to their king. And now, ere I depart for my hall of Middleham, I alone here, unarmed and unattended, save at least by a single squire, I, Richard Nevile, say, that if any man, peer or knight, can be found to execute your Grace’s threat, and arrest me, I will obey your royal pleasure, and attend him to the Tower.” Haughtily he bowed his head as he spoke, and raising it again, gazed around—“I await your Grace’s pleasure.”

"Begone where thou wilt, earl. From this day Edward IV. reigns alone," said the king. Warwick turned.

"My Lord Scales," said he, "lift the curtain; nay, sir, it misdemeans you not. You are still the son of the Woodville, I still the descendant of John of Gaunt."

"Not for the dead ancestor, but for the living warrior," said the Lord Scales, lifting the curtain, and bowing with knightly grace as the earl passed. And scarcely was Warwick in the open space than the crowd fairly broke through all restraint, and the clamour of their joy filled with its hateful thunders the royal tent.

"Edward," said Richard, whisperingly, and laying his finger on his brother's arm, "forgive me if I offended; but had you at such a time resolved on violence—"

"I see it all,—you were right. But is this to be endured forever?"

"Sire," returned Richard, with his dark smile, "rest calm; for the age is your best ally, and the age is outgrowing the steel and hauberk. A little while, and—"

"And what—"

"And—ah, sire, I will answer that question when our brother George (mark him!) either refrains from listening, or is married to Isabel Nevile, and hath quarrel with her father about the dowry. What, he, there!—let the jongleurs perform."

"The jongleurs!" exclaimed the king; "why, Richard, thou hast more levity than myself!"

"Pardon me! Let the jongleurs perform, and bid the crowd stay. It is by laughing at the mountebanks that your Grace can best lead the people to forget their Warwick!"

CHAPTER X. HOW THE GREAT LORDS COME TO THE KING-MAKER, AND WITH WHAT PROFFERS.

Mastering the emotions that swelled within him, Lord Warwick returned with his wonted cheerful courtesy the welcome of the crowd and the enthusiastic salutation of the king's guard; but as, at length, he mounted his steed, and attended but by the squire who had followed him from Dover, penetrated into the solitudes of the chase, the recollection of the indignity he had suffered smote his proud heart so sorely that he groaned aloud. His squire, fearing the fatigue he had undergone might have affected even that iron health, rode up at the sound of the groan, and Warwick's face was hueless as he said, with a forced smile, "It is nothing, Walter. But these heats are oppressive, and we have forgotten our morning draught, friend. Hark! I hear the brawl of a rivulet, and a drink of fresh water were more grateful now than the daintiest hippocras." So saying, he flung himself from his steed; following the sound of the rivulet, he gained its banks, and after quenching his thirst in the hollow of his hand, laid himself down upon the long grass, waving coolly over the margin, and fell into profound thought. From this revery he was aroused by a quick footstep, and as he lifted his gloomy gaze, he beheld Marmaduke Nevile by his side.

"Well, young man," said he, sternly, "with what messages art thou charged?"

"With none, my lord earl. I await now no commands but thine."

"Thou knowest not, poor youth, that I can serve thee no more. Go back to the court."

"Oh, Warwick," said Marmaduke, with simple eloquence, "send me not from thy side! This day I have been rejected by the maid I loved. I loved her well, and my heart chafed sorely, and bled within! but now, methinks, it consoles me to have been so cast off,—to have no faith, no love, but that which is best of all, to a brave man,—love and faith for a hero-chief! Where thy fortunes, there be my humble fate,—to rise or fall with thee!"

Warwick looked intently upon his young kinsman's face, and said, as to himself, "Why, this is strange! I gave no throne to this man, and he deserts me not! My friend," he added aloud, "have they told thee already that I am disgraced?"

"I heard the Lord Scales say to the young Lovell that thou wert dismissed from all thine offices; and I came hither; for I will serve no more the king who forgets the arm and heart to which he owes a kingdom."

"Man, I accept thy loyalty!" exclaimed Warwick, starting to his feet; "and know that thou hast done more to melt and yet to nerve my spirit than—But complaints in one are idle, and praise were no reward to thee."

"But see, my lord, if the first to join thee, I am not the sole one. See, brave Raoul de Fulke, the Lords of St. John, Bergavenny, and Fitzhugh, ay, and fifty others of the best blood of England, are on thy track."

And as he spoke, plumes and tunics were seen gleaming up the forest path, and in another moment a troop of knights and gentlemen, comprising the flower of such of the ancient nobility as yet lingered round the court, came up to Warwick, bareheaded.

"Is it possible," cried Raoul de Fulke, "that we have heard aright, noble earl? And has Edward IV. suffered the base Woodvilles to triumph over the bulwark of his realm?"

"Knights and gentles!" said Warwick, with a bitter smile, "is it so uncommon a thing that men in peace should leave the battle-axe and brand to rust? I am but a useless weapon, to be suspended at rest amongst the trophies of Towton in my hall of Middleham."

"Return with us," said the Lord of St. John, "and we will make Edward do thee justice, or, one and all, we will abandon a court where knaves and varlets have become mightier than English valour and nobler than Norman birth."

"My friends," said the earl, laying his hand on St. John's shoulder, "not even in my just wrath will I wrong my king. He is punished eno' in the choice he hath made. Poor Edward and poor England! What woes and wars await ye both, from the gold and the craft and the unsparing hate of Louis XI! No; if I leave Edward, he hath more need of you. Of mine own free will I have resigned mine offices."

"Warwick," interrupted Raoul de Fulke, "this deceives us not; and in disgrace to you the ancient barons of England behold the first blow at their own state. We have wrongs we endured in silence while thou wert the shield and sword of yon merchant-king. We have seen the ancient peers of England set aside for men of yesterday; we have seen our daughters, sisters,—nay, our very mothers, if widowed and dowered,—forced into disreputable and base wedlock with creatures dressed in titles, and gilded with wealth stolen from ourselves. Merchants and artificers tread upon our knightly heels, and the avarice of trade eats up our chivalry as a rust. We nobles, in our greater day, have had the crown at our disposal, and William the Norman dared not think what Edward Earl of March hath been permitted with impunity to do. We, Sir Earl—we knights and barons—would a king simple in his manhood and princely in his truth. Richard Earl

of Warwick, thou art of royal blood, the descendant of old John of Gaunt. In thee we behold the true, the living likeness of the Third Edward, and the Hero-Prince of Cressy. Speak but the word, and we make thee king!"

The descendant of the Norman, the representative of the mighty faction that no English monarch had ever braved in vain, looked round as he said these last words, and a choral murmur was heard through the whole of that august nobility, "We make thee king!"

"Richard, descendant of the Plantagenet, [By the female side, through Joan Beaufort, or Plantagenet, Warwick was third in descent from John of Gaunt, as Henry VII., through the male line, was fourth in descent.] speak the word," repeated Raoul de Fulke.

"I speak it not," interrupted Warwick; "nor shalt thou continue, brave Raoul de Fulke. What, my lords and gentlemen," he added, drawing himself up, and with his countenance animated with feelings it is scarcely possible in our times to sympathize with or make clear—"what! think you that Ambition limits itself to the narrow circlet of a crown Greater, and more in the spirit of our mighty fathers, is the condition of men like us, THE BARONS who make and unmake kings. What! who of us would not rather descend from the chiefs of Runnymede than from the royal craven whom they controlled and chid? By Heaven, my lords, Richard Nevile has too proud a soul to be a king! A king—a puppet of state and form; a king—a holiday show for the crowd, to hiss or hurrah, as the humour seizes; a king—a beggar to the nation, wrangling with his parliament for gold! A king!—Richard II. was a king, and Lancaster dethroned him. Ye would debase me to a Henry of Lancaster. Mort Dieu! I thank ye. The Commons and the Lords raised him, forsooth,—for what? To hold him as the creature they had made, to rate him, to chafe him, to pry into his very household, and quarrel with his wife's chamberlains and lavourers. [Laundresses. The parliamentary rolls, in the reign of Henry IV., abound in curious specimens of the interference of the Commons with the household of Henry's wife, Queen Joan.] What! dear Raoul de Fulke, is thy friend fallen now so low, that he—Earl of Salisbury and of Warwick, chief of the threefold race of Montagu, Monthermer, and Nevile, lord of a hundred baronies, leader of sixty thousand followers—is not greater than Edward of March, to whom we will deign still, with your permission, to vouchsafe the name and pageant of a king?"

This extraordinary address, strange to say, so thoroughly expressed the peculiar pride of the old barons, that when it ceased a sound of admiration and applause circled through that haughty audience, and Raoul de Fulke, kneeling suddenly, kissed the earl's hand. "Oh, noble earl," he said, "ever live as one of us, to maintain our order, and teach kings and nations what WE are."

"Fear it not, Raoul! fear it not,—we will have our rights yet. Return, I beseech ye. Let me feel I have such friends about the king. Even at Middleham my eye shall watch over our common cause; and till seven feet of earth suffice him, your brother baron, Richard Nevile, is not a man whom kings and courts can forget, much less dishonour. Sirs, our honour is in our bosoms,—and there is the only throne armies cannot shake, nor cozeners undermine."

With these words he gently waved his hand, motioned to his squire, who stood out of hearing with the steeds, to approach, and mounting, gravely rode on. Ere he had got many paces, he called to Marmaduke, who was on foot, and bade him follow him to London that night. "I have strange tidings to tell the French envoys, and for England's sake I must soothe their anger, if I can,—then to Middleham."

The nobles returned slowly to the pavilions. And as they gained the open space, where the gaudy tents still shone against the setting sun, they beheld the mob of that day, whom Shakspeare hath painted with such contempt, gathering, laughing and loud, around the mountebank and the conjurer, who had already replaced in their thoughts (as Gloucester had foreseen) the hero-idol of their worship.

BOOK V.

CHAPTER I. RURAL ENGLAND IN THE MIDDLE AGES—NOBLE VISITORS SEEK THE CASTLE OF MIDDLEHAM.

Autumn had succeeded to summer, winter to autumn, and the spring of 1468 was green in England, when a gallant cavalcade was seen slowly winding the ascent of a long and gradual hill, towards the decline of day. Different, indeed, from the aspect which that part of the country now presents was the landscape that lay around them, bathed in the smiles of the westering sun. In a valley to the left, a full view of which the steep road commanded (where now roars the din of trade through a thousand factories), lay a long, secluded village. The houses, if so they might be called, were constructed entirely of wood, and that of the more perishable kind,—willow, sallow, elm, and plum-tree. Not one could boast a chimney; but the smoke from the single fire in each, after duly darkening the atmosphere within, sent its surplusage lazily and fitfully through a circular aperture in the roof. In fact, there was long in the provinces a prejudice against chimneys! The smoke was considered good both for house and owner; the first it was supposed to season, and the last to guard "from rheums, catarrhs, and poses." [So worthy Hollinshed, Book II. c. 22.—"Then had we none but reredosses, and our heads did never ache. For as the smoke, in those days, was supposed to be a sufficient hardening for the timber of the house, so it was reputed a far better medicine to keep the goodman and his familie from the quacke, or pose, wherewith as then very few were oft acquainted."] Neither did one of these habitations boast the comfort of a glazed window, the substitute being lattice, or chequer-work,—even in the house of the franklin, which rose statelily above the rest, encompassed with barns and outsheds. And yet greatly should we err did we conceive that these deficiencies were an index to the general condition of the working class. Far better off was the labourer when employed, than now. Wages were enormously high, meat extremely low; [See Hallam: Middle Ages, Chap. xx. Part II. So also Hollinsbed, Book XI., c. 12, comments on the amazement of the Spaniards, in Queen Mary's time, when they saw "what large diet was used in these so homelie cottages," and reports one of the Spaniards to have said, "These English have their houses of sticks and dirt, but they fare commonlie so well as the king!"] and our motherland bountifully maintained her children.

On that greensward, before the village (now foul and reeking with the squalid population whom commerce rears up,—the victims, as the movers, of the modern world) were assembled youth and age; for it was a holiday evening, and the stern Puritan had not yet risen to sour the face of Mirth. Well clad in leathern jerkin, or even broadcloth, the young peasants vied with each other in quoits and wrestling; while the merry laughter of the girls, in their gay-coloured kirtles and ribboned hair, rose oft and cheerily to the ears of the cavalcade. From a gentle eminence beyond the village, and half veiled by trees, on which the first verdure of spring was budding (where now, around the gin-shop, gather the fierce and sickly children of toil and of discontent), rose the venerable walls of a monastery, and the chime of its heavy bell swung far and sweet over the pastoral landscape. To the right of the road (where now stands the sober meeting-house) was one of those small shrines so frequent in Italy, with an image of the Virgin gaudily painted, and before it each cavalier in the procession halted an instant to cross himself and mutter an ave. Beyond, still to the right, extended vast chains of woodland, interspersed with strips of pasture, upon which

numerous flocks were grazing, with horses, as yet unbroken to bit and selle, that neighed and snorted as they caught scent of their more civilized brethren pacing up the road.

In front of the cavalcade rode two, evidently of superior rank to the rest,—the one small and slight, with his long hair flowing over his shoulders; and the other, though still young, many years older, and indicating his clerical profession by the absence of all love-locks, compensated by a curled and glossy beard, trimmed with the greatest care. But the dress of the ecclesiastic was as little according to our modern notions of what beseems the Church as can well be conceived: his tunic and surcoat, of a rich amber, contrasted well with the clear darkness of his complexion; his piked shoes, or beakers, as they were called, turned up half-way to the knee; the buckles of his dress were of gold, inlaid with gems; and the housings of his horse, which was of great power, were edged with gold fringe. By the side of his steed walked a tall greyhound, upon which he ever and anon glanced with affection. Behind these rode two gentlemen, whose golden spurs announced knighthood; and then followed a long train of squires and pages, richly clad and accoutred, bearing generally the Nevile badge of the Bull; though interspersed amongst the retinue might be seen the grim Boar's head, which Richard of Gloucester, in right of his duchy, had assumed as his cognizance.

"Nay, sweet prince," said the ecclesiastic, "I pray thee to consider that a greyhound is far more of a gentleman than any other of the canine species. Mark his stately yet delicate length of limb, his sleek coat, his keen eye, his haughty neck."

"These are but the externals, my noble friend. Will the greyhound attack the lion, as our mastiff doth? The true character of the gentleman is to know no fear, and to rush through all danger at the throat of his foe; wherefore I uphold the dignity of the mastiff above all his tribe, though others have a daintier hide and a statelier crest. Enough of such matters, archbishop,—we are nearing Middleham."

"The saints be praised! for I am hungered," observed the archbishop, piously: "but, sooth to say, my cook at the More far excelleth what we can hope to find at the board of my brother. He hath some faults, our Warwick! Hasty and careless, he hath not thought eno' of the blessings he might enjoy, and many a poor abbot hath daintier fare on his humble table."

"Oh, George Nevile! who that heard thee, when thou talkest of hounds and interments, [entremets (side dishes)] would recognize the Lord Chancellor of England,—the most learned dignitary, the most subtle statesman?"

"And oh, Richard Plantagenet!" retorted the archbishop, dropping the mincing and affected tone, which he, in common with the coxcombs of that day, usually assumed, "who that heard thee when thou talkest of humility and devotion, would recognize the sternest heart and the most daring ambition God ever gave to prince?"

Richard started at these words, and his eye shot fire as it met the keen calm glance of the prelate.

"Nay, your Grace wrongs me," he said, gnawing his lip,—"or I should not say wrongs, but flatters; for sternness and ambition are no vices in a Nevile's eyes."

"Fairly answered, royal son," said the archbishop, laughing; "but let us be frank. Thou hast persuaded me to accompany thee to Lord Warwick as a mediator; the provinces in the North are disturbed; the intrigues of Margaret of Anjou are restless; the king reaps what he has sown in the Court of France, and, as Warwick foretold, the emissaries and gold of Louis are ever at work against his throne; the great barons are moody and discontented; and our liege King Edward is at last aware that, if the Earl of Warwick do not return to his councils, the first blast of a hostile trumpet may drive him from his throne. Well, I attend thee: my fortunes are woven with those of York, and my interest and my loyalty go hand in hand. Be

equally frank with me. Hast thou, Lord Richard, no interest to serve in this mission save that of the public weal?"

"Thou forgettest that the Lady Isabel is dearly loved by Clarence, and that I would fain see removed all barrier to his nuptial bliss. But yonder rise the towers of Middleham. Beloved walls, which sheltered my childhood! and, by holy Paul, a noble pile, which would resist an army, or hold one."

While thus conversed the prince and the archbishop, the Earl of Warwick, musing and alone, slowly paced the lofty terrace that crested the battlements of his outer fortifications.

In vain had that restless and powerful spirit sought content in retirement. Trained from his childhood to active life, to move mankind to and fro at his beck, this single and sudden interval of repose in the prime of his existence, at the height of his fame, served but to swell the turbulent and dangerous passions to which all vent was forbidden.

The statesman of modern days has at least food for intellect in letters when deprived of action; but with all his talents, and thoroughly cultivated as his mind was in the camp, the council, and the state, the great earl cared for nothing in book-lore except some rude ballad that told of Charlemagne or Rollo. The sports that had pleased the leisure of his earlier youth were tedious and flat to one snatched from so mighty a career. His hound lay idle at his feet, his falcon took holiday on the perch, his jester was banished to the page's table. Behold the repose of this great unlettered spirit! But while his mind was thus debarred from its native sphere, all tended to pamper Lord Warwick's infirmity of pride. The ungrateful Edward might forget him; but the king seemed to stand alone in that oblivion. The mightiest peers, the most renowned knights, gathered to his hall. Middleham,—not Windsor nor Shene nor Westminster nor the Tower—seemed the COURT OF ENGLAND. As the Last of the Barons paced his terrace, far as his eye could reach, his broad domains extended, studded with villages and towns and castles swarming with his retainers. The whole country seemed in mourning for his absence. The name of Warwick was in all men's mouths, and not a group gathered in market-place or hostel but what the minstrel who had some ballad in praise of the stout earl had a rapt and thrilling audience.

"And is the river of my life," muttered Warwick, "shrunk into this stagnant pool? Happy the man who hath never known what it is to taste of fame,—to have it is a purgatory, to want it is a hell!"

Rapt in this gloomy self-commune, he heard not the light step that sought his side, till a tender arm was thrown around him, and a face in which sweet temper and pure thought had preserved to matronly beauty all the bloom of youth, looked up smilingly to his own.

"My lord, my Richard," said the countess, "why didst thou steal so churlishly from me? Hath there, alas! come a time when thou deemest me unworthy to share thy thoughts, or soothe thy troubles?"

"Fond one! no," said Warwick, drawing the form still light, though rounded, nearer to his bosom. "For nineteen years hast thou been to me a leal and loving wife. Thou wert a child on our wedding-day, m'amie, and I but a beardless youth; yet wise enough was I then to see, at the first glance of thy blue eye, that there was more treasure in thy heart than in all the lordships thy hand bestowed."

"My Richard!" murmured the countess, and her tears of grateful delight fell on the hand she kissed.

"Yes, let us recall those early and sweet days," continued Warwick, with a tenderness of voice and manner that strangers might have marvelled at, forgetting how tenderness is almost ever a part of such peculiar manliness of character; "yes, sit we here under this spacious elm, and think that our youth has come back to us once more. For verily, m'amie, nothing in life has ever been so fair to me as those days when we

stood hand in hand on its threshold, and talked, boy-bridegroom and child-bride as we were, of the morrow that lay beyond."

"Ah, Richard, even in those days thy ambition sometimes vexed my woman's vanity, and showed me that I could never be all in all to so large a heart!"

"Ambition! No, thou mistakest,—Montagu is ambitious, I but proud. Montagu ever seeks to be higher than he is, I but assert the right to be what I am and have been; and my pride, sweet wife, is a part of my love for thee. It is thy title, Heiress of Warwick, and not my father's, that I bear; thy badge, and not the Nevile's, which I have made the symbol of my power. Shame, indeed, on my knighthood, if the fairest dame in England could not justify my pride! Ah, belle amie, why have we not a son?"

"Peradventure, fair lord," said the countess, with an arch yet half-melancholy smile, "because that pride, or ambition, name it as thou wilt, which thou excusest so gallantly, would become too insatiate and limitless if thou sawest a male heir to thy greatness; and God, perhaps, warns thee that, spread and increase as thou wilt,—yea, until half our native country becometh as the manor of one man,—all must pass from the Beauchamp and the Nevile into new Houses; thy glory indeed an eternal heirloom, but only to thy land,—thy lordships and thy wealth melting into the dowry of a daughter."

"At least no king hath daughters so dowried," answered Warwick; "and though I disdain for myself the hard vassalage of a throne, yet if the channel of our blood must pass into other streams, into nothing meaner than the veins of royalty should it merge." He paused a moment, and added with a sigh, "Would that Clarence were more worthy Isabel!"

"Nay," said the countess, gently, "he loveth her as she merits. He is comely, brave, gracious, and learned."

"A pest upon that learning,—it sicklies and womanizes men's minds!" exclaimed Warwick, bluntly. "Perhaps it is his learning that I am to thank for George of Clarence's fears and doubts and calculations and scruples. His brother forbids his marriage with any English donzell, for Edward dares not specialize what alone he dreads. His letters burn with love, and his actions freeze with doubts. It was not thus I loved thee, sweetheart. By all the saints in the calendar, had Henry V. or the Lion Richard started from the tomb to forbid me thy hand, it would but have made me a hotter lover! Howbeit Clarence shall decide ere the moon wanes, and but for Isabel's tears and thy entreaties, my father's grandchild should not have waited thus long the coming of so hesitating a wooer. But lo, our darlings! Anne hath thine eyes, m'amie; and she groweth more into my heart every day, since daily she more favours thee."

While he thus spoke, the fair sisters came lightly and gayly up the terrace: the arm of the statelier Isabel was twined round Anne's slender waist; and as they came forward in that gentle link, with their lithesome and bounding step, a happier blending of contrasted beauty was never seen. The months that had passed since the sisters were presented first to the reader had little changed the superb and radiant loveliness of Isabel, but had added surprisingly to the attractions of Anne. Her form was more rounded, her bloom more ripened; and though something of timidity and bashfulness still lingered about the grace of her movements and the glance of her dove-like eye, the more earnest thoughts of the awakening woman gave sweet intelligence to her countenance, and that divinest of all attractions—the touching and conscious modesty—to the shy but tender smile, and the blush that so came and went, so went and came, that it stirred the heart with a sort of delighted pity for one so evidently susceptible to every emotion of pleasure and of pain. Life seemed too rough a thing for so soft a nature, and gazing on her, one sighed to guess her future.

"And what brings ye hither, young truants?" said the earl, as Anne, leaving her sister, clung lovingly to his side (for it was ever her habit to cling to some one), while Isabel kissed her mother's hand, and then stood before her parents, colouring deeply, and with downcast eyes. "What brings ye hither, whom I left so

lately deep engaged in the loom, upon the helmet of Goliath, with my burgonet before you as a sample? Wife, you are to blame,—our rooms of state will be arrasless for the next three generations, if these rosy fingers are suffered thus to play the idlers."

"My father," whispered Anne, "guests are on their way hither,—a noble cavalcade; you note them not from this part of the battlements, but from our turret it was fair to see how their plumes and banners shone in the setting sun."

"Guests!" echoed the earl; "well, is that so rare an honour that your hearts should beat like village girls at a holiday? Ah, Isabel! look at her blushes. Is it George of Clarence at last? Is it?"

"We see the Duke of Gloucester's cognizance," whispered Anne, "and our own Nevile Bull. Perchance our cousin George, also, may—"

Here she was interrupted by the sound of the warder's horn, followed a moment after by the roar of one of the bombards on the keep.

"At least," said Warwick, his face lighting up, "that signal announces the coming of king's blood. We must honour it,—for it is our own. We will go forth and meet our guests—your hand, countess."

And gravely and silently, and in deep but no longer gloomy thought, Warwick descended from the terrace, followed by the fair sisters; and who that could have looked upon that princely pair and those lovely and radiant children, could have foreseen that in that hour, Fate, in tempting the earl once more to action, was busy on their doom!

CHAPTER II. COUNCILS AND MUSINGS.

The lamp shone through the lattice of Warwick's chamber at the unwonted hour of midnight, and the earl was still in deep commune with his guests. The archbishop, whom Edward, alarmed by the state of the country and the disaffection of his barons, had reluctantly commissioned to mediate with Warwick, was, as we have before said, one of those men peculiar to the early Church. There was nothing more in the title of Archbishop of York than in that of the Bishop of Osnaburg (borne by the royal son of George III.) [The late Duke of York.] to prevent him who enjoyed it from leading armies, guiding States, or indulging pleasure. But beneath the coxcombry of George Nevile, which was what he shared most in common with the courtiers of the laity, there lurked a true ecclesiastic's mind. He would have made in later times an admirable Jesuit, and no doubt in his own time a very brilliant Pope. His objects in his present mission were clear and perspicuous; any breach between Warwick and the king must necessarily weaken his own position, and the power of his House was essential to all his views. The object of Gloucester in his intercession was less defined, but not less personal: in smoothing the way to his brother's marriage with Isabel, he removed all apparent obstacle to his own with Anne. And it is probable that Richard, who, whatever his crimes, was far from inaccessible to affection, might have really loved his early playmate, even while his ambition calculated the wealth of the baronies that would swell the dower of the heiress and gild the barren coronet of his duchy. [Majerns, the Flemish chronicler, quoted by Bucke ("Life of Richard III"), mentions the early attachment of Richard to Anne. They were much together, as children, at Middleham.]

"God's truth!" said Warwick, as he lifted his eyes from the scroll in the king's writing, "ye know well, princely cousin, and thou, my brother, ye know well how dearly I have loved King Edward; and the mother's milk overflows my heart when I read these gentle and tender words which he deigns to bestow upon his servant. My blood is hasty and over-hot, but a kind thought from those I love puts out much fire. Sith he thus beseeches me to return to his councils, I will not be sullen enough to hold back; but, oh, Prince Richard! is it indeed a matter past all consideration that your sister, the Lady Margaret, must wed with the Duke of Burgundy?"

"Warwick," replied the prince, "thou mayest know that I never looked with favour on that alliance; that when Clarence bore the Bastard's helmet, I withheld my countenance from the Bastard's presence. I incurred Edward's anger by refusing to attend his court while the Count de la Roche was his guest. And therefore you may trust me when I say now that Edward, after promises, however rash, most solemn and binding, is dishonoured forever if he break off the contract. New circumstances, too, have arisen, to make what were dishonour danger also. By the death of his father, Charolois has succeeded to the Duke of Burgundy's diadem. Thou knowest his warlike temper; and though in a contest popular in England we need fear no foe, yet thou knowest also that no subsidies could be raised for strife with our most profitable commercial ally. Wherefore we earnestly implore thee magnanimously to forgive the past, accept Edward's assurance of repentance, and be thy thought—as it has been ever—the weal of our common country."

"I may add, also," said the archbishop, observing how much Warwick was touched and softened,—"that in returning to the helm of state, our gracious king permits me to say, that, save only in the alliance with Burgundy, which toucheth his plighted word, you have full liberty to name conditions, and to ask whatever grace or power a monarch can bestow."

"I name none but my prince's confidence," said Warwick, generously; "in that, all else is given, and in return for that, I will make the greatest sacrifice that my nature knoweth, or can conceive,—I will mortify my familiar demon, I will subdue my PRIDE. If Edward can convince me that it is for the good of England that his sister should wed with mine ancient and bitter foe, I will myself do honour to his choice. But of this hereafter. Enough now that I forget past wrongs in present favour; and that for peace or war, I return to the side of that man whom I loved as my son before I served him as my king."

Neither Richard nor the archbishop was prepared for a conciliation so facile, for neither quite understood that peculiar magnanimity which often belongs to a vehement and hasty temper, and which is as eager to forgive as prompt to take offence,—which, ever in extremes, is not contented with anything short of fiery aggression or trustful generosity, and where it once passes over an offence, seeks to oblige the offender. So, when, after some further conversation on the state of the country, the earl lighted Gloucester to his chamber, the young prince said to himself, musingly,—

"Does ambition besot and blind men? Or can Warwick think that Edward can ever view him but as one to be destroyed when the hour is ripe?"

Catesby, who was the duke's chamberlain, was in attendance as the prince unrobed.

"A noble castle this," said the duke, "and one in the midst of a warlike population,—our own countrymen of York."

"It would be no mean addition to the dowry of the Lady Isabel," said Catesby, with his bland, false smile.

"Methinks rather that the lordships of Salisbury (and this is the chief) pass to the Lady Anne," said Richard, musingly. "No, Edward were imprudent to suffer this stronghold to fall to the next heir to his throne. Marked you the Lady Anne?—her beauty is most excellent."

"Truly, your Highness," answered Catesby, unsuspiciously, "the Lady Isabel seems to me the taller and the statelier."

"When man's merit and woman's beauty are measured by the ell, Catesby, Anne will certainly be less fair than Isabel, and Richard a dolt compared to Clarence. Open the casement; my dressing-robe; good-night to you!"

CHAPTER III. THE SISTERS.

The next morning, at an hour when modern beauty falls into its first sickly sleep, Isabel and Anne conversed on the same terrace, and near the same spot, which had witnessed their father's meditations the day before. They were seated on a rude bench in an angle of the wall, flanked by a low, heavy bastion. And from the parapet their gaze might have wandered over a goodly sight, for on a broad space, covered with sand and sawdust, within the vast limits of the castle range, the numerous knights and youths who sought apprenticeship in arms and gallantry under the earl were engaged in those martial sports which, falling elsewhere in disuse, the Last of the Barons kinglily maintained. There, boys of fourteen, on their small horses, ran against each other with blunted lances. There, those of more advanced adolescence, each following the other in a circle, rode at the ring; sometimes (at the word of command from an old knight who had fought at Agincourt, and was the preceptor in these valiant studies) leaping from their horses at full speed, and again vaulting into the saddle. A few grim old warriors sat by to censure or applaud. Most skilled among the younger was the son of Lord Montagu; among the maturer, the name of Marmaduke Nevile was the most often shouted. If the eye turned to the left, through the barbican might be seen flocks of beeves entering to supply the mighty larder; and at a smaller postern, a dark crowd of mendicant friars, and the more destitute poor, waited for the daily crumbs from the rich man's table. What need of a poor-law then? The baron and the abbot made the parish! But not on these evidences of wealth and state turned the eyes, so familiar to them, that they woke no vanity, and roused no pride.

With downcast looks and a pouting lip, Isabel listened to the silver voice of Anne.

"Dear sister, be just to Clarence. He cannot openly defy his king and brother. Believe that he would have accompanied our uncle and cousin had he not deemed that their meditation would be more welcome, at least to King Edward, without his presence."

"But not a letter! not a line!"

"Yet when I think of it, Isabel, are we sure that he even knew of the visit of the archbishop and his brother?"

"How could he fail to know?"

"The Duke of Gloucester last evening told me that the king had sent him southward."

"Was it about Clarence that the duke whispered to thee so softly by the oriel window?"

"Surely, yes," said Anne, simply. "Was not Richard as a brother to us when we played as children on yon greensward?"

"Never as a brother to me,—never was Richard of Gloucester one whom I could think of without fear and even loathing," answered Isabel, quickly.

It was at this turn in the conversation that the noiseless step of Richard himself neared the spot, and hearing his own name thus discourteously treated, he paused, screened from their eyes by the bastion in the angle.

"Nay, nay, sister," said Anne; "what is there in Richard that misbeseems his princely birth?"

"I know not, but there is no youth in his eye and in his heart. Even as a child he had the hard will and the cold craft of gray hairs. Pray Saint Mary you give me not Gloucester for a brother!"

Anne sighed and smiled. "Ah, no," she said, after a short pause, "when thou art Princess of Clarence may I—"

"May thou what?"

"Pray for thee and thine in the house of God! Ah, thou knowest not, sweet Isabel, how often at morn and even mine eyes and heart turn to the spires of yonder convent!" She rose as she said this, her lip quivered, and she moved on in the opposite direction to that in which Richard stood, still unseen, and no longer within his hearing. Isabel rose also, and hastening after her, threw her arms round Anne's neck, and kissed away the tears that stood in those meek eyes.

"My sister, my Anne! Ah, trust in me, thou hast some secret, I know it well,—I have long seen it. Is it possible that thou canst have placed thy heart, thy pure love—Thou blushest! Ah, Anne! Anne! thou canst not have loved beneath thee?"

"Nay," said Anne, with a spark of her ancestral fire lighting her meek eyes through its tears, "not beneath me, but above. What do I say! Isabel, ask me no more. Enough that it is a folly, a dream, and that I could smile with pity at myself to think from what light causes love and grief can spring."

"Above thee!" repeated Isabel, in amaze; "and who in England is above the daughter of Earl Warwick? Not Richard of Gloucester? If so, pardon my foolish tongue."

"No, not Richard,—though I feel kindly towards him, and his sweet voice soothes me when I listen,—not Richard. Ask no more."

"Oh, Anne, speak, speak!—we are not both so wretched? Thou lovest not Clarence? It is—it must be!"

"Canst thou think me so false and treacherous,—a heart pledged to thee? Clarence! Oh, no!"

"But who then—who then?" said Isabel, still suspiciously. "Nay, if thou wilt not speak, blame thyself if I must still wrong thee."

Thus appealed to, and wounded to the quick by Isabel's tone and eye, Anne at last with a strong effort suppressed her tears, and, taking her sister's hand, said in a voice of touching solemnity, "Promise, then, that the secret shall be ever holy; and, since I know that it will move thine anger—perhaps thy scorn—strive to forget what I will confess to thee."

Isabel for answer pressed her lips on the hand she held; and the sisters, turning under the shadow of a long row of venerable oaks, placed themselves on a little mound, fragrant with the violets of spring. A different part of the landscape beyond was now brought in view; calmly slept in the valley the roofs of the subject

town of Middleham, calmly flowed through the pastures the noiseless waves of Ure. Leaning on Isabel's bosom, Anne thus spake, "Call to mind, sweet sister, that short breathing-time in the horrors of the Civil War, when a brief peace was made between our father and Queen Margaret. We were left in the palace—mere children that we were—to play with the young prince, and the children in Margaret's train."

"I remember."

"And I was unwell and timid, and kept aloof from the sports with a girl of my own years, whom I think—see how faithful my memory!—they called Sibyll; and Prince Edward, Henry's son, stealing from the rest, sought me out; and we sat together, or walked together alone, apart from all, that day and the few days we were his mother's guests. Oh, if you could have seen him and heard him then,—so beautiful, so gentle, so wise beyond his years, and yet so sweetly sad; and when we parted, he bade me ever love him, and placed his ring on my finger, and wept,—as we kissed each other, as children will."

"Children! ye were infants!" exclaimed Isabel, whose wonder seemed increased by this simple tale.

"Infant though I was, I felt as if my heart would break when I left him; and then the wars ensued; and do you not remember how ill I was, and like to die, when our House triumphed, and the prince and heir of Lancaster was driven into friendless exile? From that hour my fate was fixed. Smile if you please at such infant folly, but children often feel more deeply than later years can weet of."

"My sister, this is indeed a wilful invention of sorrow for thine own scourge. Why, ere this, believe me, the boy-prince hath forgotten thy very name."

"Not so, Isabel," said Anne, colouring, and quickly, "and perchance, did all rest here, I might have outgrown my weakness. But last year, when we were at Rouen with my father—"

"Well?"

"One evening on entering my chamber, I found a packet,—how left I know not, but the French king and his suite, thou rememberest, made our house almost their home,—and in this packet was a picture, and on its back these words, Forget not the exile who remembers thee!"

"And that picture was Prince Edward's?"

Anne blushed, and her bosom heaved beneath the slender and high-laced gorget. After a pause, looking round her, she drew forth a small miniature, which lay on the heart that beat thus sadly, and placed it in her sister's hands.

"You see I deceive you not, Isabel. And is not this a fair excuse for—"

She stopped short, her modest nature shrinking from comment upon the mere beauty that might have won the heart. And fair indeed was the face upon which Isabel gazed admiringly, in spite of the stiff and rude art of the limner; full of the fire and energy which characterized the countenance of the mother, but with a tinge of the same profound and inexpressible melancholy that gave its charm to the pensive features of Henry VI.,—a face, indeed, to fascinate a young eye, even if not associated with such remembrances of romance and pity.

Without saying a word, Isabel gave back the picture; but she pressed the hand that took it, and Anne was contented to interpret the silence into sympathy.

"And now you know why I have so often incurred your anger by compassion for the adherents of Lancaster; and for this, also, Richard of Gloucester hath been endeared to me,—for fierce and stern as he may be called, he hath ever been gentle in his mediation for that unhappy House."

"Because it is his policy to be well with all parties. My poor Anne, I cannot bid you hope; and yet, should I ever wed with Clarence, it may be possible—that—that—but you in turn will chide me for ambition."

"How?"

"Clarence is heir to the throne of England, for King Edward has no male children; and the hour may arrive when the son of Henry of Windsor may return to his native land, not as sovereign, but as Duke of Lancaster, and thy hand may reconcile him to the loss of a crown."

"Would love reconcile thee to such a loss, proud Isabel?" said Anne, shaking her head, and smiling mournfully.

"No," answered Isabel, emphatically.

"And are men less haught than we?" said Anne. "Ah, I know not if I could love him so well could he resign his rights, or even could he regain them. It is his position that gives him a holiness in my eyes. And this love, that must be hopeless, is half pity and half respect."

At this moment a loud shout arose from the youths in the yard, or sporting-ground, below, and the sisters, startled, and looking up, saw that the sound was occasioned by the sight of the young Duke of Gloucester, who was standing on the parapet near the bench the demoiselles had quitted, and who acknowledged the greeting by a wave of his plumed cap, and a lowly bend of his head; at the same time the figures of Warwick and the archbishop, seemingly in earnest conversation, appeared at the end of the terrace. The sisters rose hastily, and would have stolen away, but the archbishop caught a glimpse of their robes, and called aloud to them. The reverent obedience, at that day, of youth to relations left the sisters no option but to advance towards their uncle, which they did with demure reluctance.

"Fair brother," said the archbishop, "I would that Gloucester were to have my stately niece instead of the gaudy Clarence."

"Wherefore?"

"Because he can protect those he loves, and Clarence will ever need a protector."

"I like George not the less for that," said Warwick, "for I would not have my son-in-law my master."

"Master!" echoed the archbishop, laughing; "the Soldan of Babylon himself, were he your son-in-law, would find Lord Warwick a tolerably stubborn servant!"

"And yet," said Warwick, also laughing, but with a franker tone, "beshrew me, but much as I approve young Gloucester, and deem him the hope of the House of York, I never feel sure, when we are of the same mind, whether I agree with him, or whether he leadeth me. Ah, George! Isabel should have wedded the king, and then Edward and I would have had a sweet mediator in all our quarrels. But not so hath it been decreed."

There was a pause.

"Note how Gloucester steals to the side of Anne. Thou mayst have him for a son-in-law, though no rival to Clarence. Montagu hath hinted that the duke so aspires."

"He has his father's face—well," said the earl, softly. "But yet," he added, in an altered and reflective tone, "the boy is to me a riddle. That he will be bold in battle and wise in council I foresee; but would he had more of a young man's honest follies! There is a medium between Edward's wantonness and Richard's sanctimony; and he who in the heyday of youth's blood scowls alike upon sparkling wine and smiling woman, may hide in his heart darker and more sinful fancies. But fie on me! I will not wrongfully mistrust his father's son. Thou spokest of Montagu; he seems to have been mighty cold to his brother's wrongs,—ever at the court, ever sleek with Villein and Woodville."

"But the better to watch thy interests,—I so counselled him."

"A priest's counsel! Hate frankly or love freely is a knight's and soldier's motto. A murrain on all doubledealing!"

The archbishop shrugged his shoulders, and applied to his nostrils a small pouncet-box of dainty essences.

"Come hither, my haughty Isabel," said the prelate, as the demoiselles now drew near. He placed his niece's arm within his own, and took her aside to talk of Clarence; Richard remained with Anne, and the young cousins were joined by Warwick. The earl noted in silence the soft address of the eloquent prince, and his evident desire to please Anne. And strange as it may seem, although he had hitherto regarded Richard with admiration and affection, and although his pride for both daughters coveted alliances not less than royal, yet, in contemplating Gloucester for the first time as a probable suitor to his daughter (and his favourite daughter), the anxiety of a father sharpened his penetration, and placed the character of Richard before him in a different point from that in which he had hitherto looked only on the fearless heart and accomplished wit of his royal godson.

CHAPTER IV. THE DESTRIER.

It was three days afterwards that the earl, as, according to custom, Anne knelt to him for his morning blessing in the oratory where the Christian baron at matins and vespers offered up his simple worship, drew her forth into the air, and said abruptly,—

"Wouldst thou be happy if Richard of Gloucester were thy betrothed?"

Anne started, and with more vivacity than usually belonged to her, exclaimed, "Oh, no, my father!"

"This is no maiden's silly coyness, Anne? It is a plain yea or nay that I ask from thee!"

"Nay, then," answered Anne, encouraged by her father's tone,—"nay, if it so please you."

"It doth please me," said the earl, shortly; and after a pause, he added, "Yes, I am well pleased. Richard gives promise of an illustrious manhood; but, Anne, thou growest so like thy mother, that whenever my pride seeks to see thee great, my heart steps in, and only prays that it may see thee happy!—so much so, that I would not have given thee to Clarence, whom it likes me well to view as Isabel's betrothed, for, to

her, greatness and bliss are one; and she is of firm nature, and can rule in her own house; but thou—where out of romaunt can I find a lord loving enough for thee, soft child?"

Inexpressibly affected, Anne threw herself on her father's breast and wept. He caressed and soothed her fondly; and before her emotion was well over, Gloucester and Isabel joined them.

"My fair cousin," said the duke, "hath promised to show me thy renowned steed, Saladin; and since, on quitting thy halls, I go to my apprenticeship in war on the turbulent Scottish frontier, I would fain ask thee for a destrier of the same race as that which bears the thunderbolt of Warwick's wrath through the storm of battle."

"A steed of the race of Saladin," answered the earl, leading the way to the destrier's stall, apart from all other horses, and rather a chamber of the castle than a stable, "were indeed a boon worthy a soldier's gift and a prince's asking. But, alas! Saladin, like myself, is sonless,—the last of a long line."

"His father, methinks, fell for us on the field of Towton. Was it not so? I have heard Edward say that when the archers gave way, and the victory more than wavered, thou, dismounting, didst slay thy steed with thine own hand, and kissing the cross of thy sword, swore on that spot to stem the rush of the foe, and win Edward's crown or Warwick's grave." ["Every Palm Sunday, the day on which the battle of Towton was fought, a rough figure, called the Red Horse, on the side of a hill in Warwickshire, is scoured out. This is suggested to be done in commemoration of the horse which the Earl of Warwick slew on that day, determined to vanquish or die."—Roberts: York and Lancaster, vol. i. p. 429.]

"It was so; and the shout of my merry men, when they saw me amongst their ranks on foot—all flight forbid—was Malech's death-dirge. It is a wondrous race,—that of Malech and his son Saladin," continued the earl, smiling. "When my ancestor, Aymer de Nevile, led his troops to the Holy Land, under Coeur de Lion, it was his fate to capture a lady beloved by the mighty Saladin. Need I say that Aymer, under a flag of truce, escorted her ransomless, her veil never raised from her face, to the tent of the Saracen king? Saladin, too gracious for an infidel, made him tarry a while, an honoured guest; and Aymer's chivalry became sorely tried, for the lady he had delivered loved and tempted him; but the good knight prayed and fasted, and defied Satan and all his works. The lady (so runs the legend) grew wroth at the pious crusader's disdainful coldness; and when Aymer returned to his comrades, she sent, amidst the gifts of the soldan, two coal-black steeds, male and mare, over which some foul and weird spells had been duly muttered. Their beauty, speed, art, and fierceness were a marvel. And Aymer, unsuspecting, prized the boon, and selected the male destrier for his war-horse. Great were the feats, in many a field, which my forefather wrought, bestriding his black charger. But one fatal day, on which the sudden war-trump made him forget his morning ave, the beast had power over the Christian, and bore him, against bit and spur, into the thickest of the foe. He did all a knight can do against many (pardon his descendant's vaunting,—so runs the tale), and the Christians for a while beheld him solitary in the melee, mowing down moon and turban. Then the crowd closed, and the good knight was lost to sight. 'To the rescue!' cried bold King Richard, and on rushed the crusaders to Aymer's help; when lo! and suddenly the ranks severed, and the black steed emerged! Aymer still on the selle, but motionless, and his helm battered and plumeless, his brand broken, his arm drooping. On came man and horse, on,—charging on, not against Infidel but Christian. On dashed the steed, I say, with fire bursting from eyes and nostrils, and the pike of his chaffron bent lance-like against the crusaders' van. The foul fiend seemed in the destrier's rage and puissance. He bore right against Richard's standard-bearer, and down went the lion and the cross. He charged the king himself; and Richard, unwilling to harm his own dear soldier Aymer, halted wondering, till the pike of the destrier pierced his own charger through the barding, and the king lay rolling in the dust. A panic seized the cross-men; they fled, the Saracens pursued, and still with the Saracens came the black steed and the powerless rider. At last, when the crusaders reached the camp, and the flight ceased, there halted, also, Aymer. Not a man dared near him. He spoke not, none spoke to him, till a holy priest and palmer approached and sprinkled the good knight and the black barb with holy water, and exorcised both; the

spell broke, and Aymer dropped to the earth. They unbraced his helm,—he was cold and stark. The fierce steed had but borne a dead man."

"Holy Paul!" cried Gloucester, with seeming sanctimony, though a covert sneer played round the firm beauty of his pale lips, "a notable tale, and one that proveth much of Sacred Truth, now lightly heeded. But, verily, lord earl, I should have little loved a steed with such a pedigree."

"Hear the rest," said Isabel. "King Richard ordered the destrier to be slain forthwith; but the holy palmer who had exorcised it forbade the sacrifice. 'Mighty shall be the service,' said the reverend man, 'which the posterity of this steed shall render to thy royal race, and great glory shall they give to the sons of Nevile. Let the war-horse, now duly exorcised from infidel spells, live long to bear a Christian warrior!'"

"And so," quoth the earl, taking up the tale—"so mare and horse were brought by Aymer's squires to his English hall; and Aymer's son, Sir Reginald, bore the cross, and bestrode the fatal steed, without fear and without scathe. From that hour the House of Nevile rose amain, in fame and in puissance; and the legend further saith, that the same palmer encountered Sir Reginald at Joppa, bade him treasure that race of war-steeds as his dearest heritage, for with that race his own should flourish and depart; and the sole one of the Infidel's spells which could not be broken was that which united the gift—generation after generation, for weal or for woe, for honour or for doom—to the fate of Aymer and his House. 'And,' added the palmer, 'as with woman's love and woman's craft was woven the indissoluble charm, so shall woman, whether in craft or in love, ever shape the fortunes of thee and thine.'"

"As yet," said the prince, "the prophecy is fulfilled in a golden sense, for nearly all thy wide baronies, I trow, have come to thee through the female side. A woman's hand brought to the Nevile this castle and its lands; [Middleham Castle was built by Robert Fitz Ranulph, grandson of Ribald, younger brother of the Earl of Bretagne and Richmond, nephew to the Conqueror. The founder's line failed in male heirs, and the heiress married Robert Nevile, son of Lord Raby. Warwick's father held the earldom of Salisbury in right of his wife, the heiress of Thomas de Montacute.] from a woman came the heritage of Monthermer and Montagu, and Salisbury's famous earldom; and the dower of thy peerless countess was the broad domains of Beauchamp."

"And a woman's craft, young prince, wrought my king's displeasure! But enough of these dissour's tales; behold the son of poor Malech, whom, forgetting all such legends, I slew at Towton. Ho, Saladin, greet thy master!"

They stood now in the black steed's stall.—an ample and high-vaulted space, for halter never insulted the fierce destrier's mighty neck, which the God of Battles had clothed in thunder. A marble cistern contained his limpid drink, and in a gilded manger the finest wheaten bread was mingled with the oats of Flanders. On entering, they found young George, Montagu's son, with two or three boys, playing familiarly with the noble animal, who had all the affectionate docility inherited from an Arab origin. But at the sound of Warwick's voice, its ears rose, its mane dressed itself, and with a short neigh it came to his feet, and kneeling down, in slow and stately grace, licked its master's hand. So perfect and so matchless a steed never had knight bestrode! Its hide without one white hair, and glossy as the sheenest satin; a lady's tresses were scarcely finer than the hair of its noble mane; the exceeding smallness of its head, its broad frontal, the remarkable and almost human intelligence of its eye, seemed actually to elevate its conformation above that of its species. Though the race had increased, generation after generation, in size and strength, Prince Richard still marvelled (when, obedient to a sign from Warwick, the destrier rose, and leaned its head, with a sort of melancholy and quiet tenderness, upon the earl's shoulder) that a horse, less in height and bulk than the ordinary battle-steed, could bear the vast weight of the giant earl in his ponderous mail. But his surprise ceased when the earl pointed out to him the immense strength of the steed's ample loins, the sinewy cleanness, the iron muscle, of the stag-like legs, the bull-like breadth of chest, and the swelling power of the shining neck.

"And after all," added the earl, "both in man and beast, the spirit and the race, not the stature and the bulk, bring the prize. Mort Dieu, Richard! it often shames me of mine own thews and broad breast,—I had been more vain of laurels had I been shorter by the head!"

"Nevertheless," said young George of Montagu, with a page's pertness, "I had rather have thine inches than Prince Richard's, and thy broad breast than his grace's short neck."

The Duke of Gloucester turned as if a snake had stung him. He gave but one glance to the speaker, but that glance lived forever in the boy's remembrance, and the young Montagu turned pale and trembled, even before he heard the earl's stern rebuke.

"Young magpies chatter, boy,—young eagles in silence measure the space between the eyry and the sun!"

The boy hung his head, and would have slunk off, but Richard detained him with a gentle hand. "My fair young cousin," said he, "thy words gall no sore, and if ever thou and I charge side by side into the foeman's ranks, thou shalt comprehend what thy uncle designed to say,—how, in the hour of strait and need, we measure men's stature not by the body but the soul!"

"A noble answer," whispered Anne, with something like sisterly admiration.

"Too noble," said the more ambitious Isabel, in the same voice, "for Clarence's future wife not to fear Clarence's dauntless brother."

"And so," said the prince, quitting the stall with Warwick, while the girls still lingered behind, "so Saladin hath no son! Wherefore? Can you mate him with no bride?"

"Faith," answered the earl, "the females of his race sleep in yonder dell, their burial-place, and the proud beast disdains all meaner loves. Nay, were it not so, to continue the breed, if adulterated, were but to mar it."

"You care little for the legend, meseems."

"Pardieu! at times, yes, over much; but in sober moments I think that the brave man who does his duty lacks no wizard prophecy to fulfil his doom; and whether in prayer or in death, in fortune or defeat, his soul goes straight to God!"

"Umph," said Richard, musingly; and there was a pause. "Warwick," resumed the prince, "doubtless, even on your return to London, the queen's enmity and her mother's will not cease. Clarence loves Isabel, but Clarence knows not how to persuade the king and rule the king's womankind. Thou knowest how I have stood aloof from all the factions of the court. Unhappily I go to the Borders, and can but slightly serve thee. But—" (he stopped short, and sighed heavily).

"Speak on, Prince."

"In a word, then, if I were thy son, Anne's husband, I see—I see—I see—" (thrice repeated the prince, with a vague dreaminess in his eye, and stretching forth his hand)—"a future that might defy all foes, opening to me and thee!"

Warwick hesitated in some embarrassment.

"My gracious and princely cousin," he said at length, "this proffer is indeed sweet incense to a father's pride. But pardon me, as yet, noble Richard, thou art so young that the king and the world would blame

me did I suffer my ambition to listen to such temptation. Enough, at present, if all disputes between our House and the king can be smoothed and laid at rest without provoking new ones. Nay, pardon me, prince, let this matter cease—at least, till thy return from the Borders."

"May I take with me hope?"

"Nay," said Warwick, "thou knowest that I am a plain man; to bid thee hope were to plight my word. And," he added seriously, "there be reasons grave and well to be considered why both the daughters of a subject should not wed with their king's brothers. Let this cease now, I pray thee, sweet lord."

Here the demoiselles joined their father, and the conference was over; but when Richard, an hour after, stood musing alone on the battlements, he muttered to himself, "Thou art a fool, stout earl, not to have welcomed the union between thy power and my wit. Thou goest to a court where without wit power is nought. Who may foresee the future? Marry, that was a wise ancient fable, that he who seized and bound Proteus could extract from the changeful god the prophecy of the days to come. Yea! the man who can seize Fate can hear its voice predict to him. And by my own heart and brain, which never yet relinquished what affection yearned for, or thought aspired to, I read, as in a book, Anne, that thou shalt be mine; and that where wave on yon battlements the ensigns of Beauchamp, Monthermer, and Nevile, the Boar of Gloucester shall liege it over their broad baronies and hardy vassals."

BOOK VI

WHEREIN ARE OPENED SOME GLIMPSES OF THE FATE BELOW THAT ATTENDS THOSE WHO ARE BETTER THAN OTHERS, AND THOSE WHO DESIRE TO MAKE OTHERS BETTER. LOVE, DEMAGOGY, AND SCIENCE ALL EQUALLY OFF-SPRING OF THE SAME PROLIFIC DELUSION,—NAMELY, THAT MEAN SOULS (THE EARTH'S MAJORITY) ARE WORTH THE HOPE AND THE AGONY OF NOBLE SOULS, THE EVERLASTING SUFFERING AND ASPIRING FEW.

CHAPTER I. NEW DISSENSIONS.

We must pass over some months. Warwick and his family had returned to London, and the meeting between Edward and the earl had been cordial and affectionate. Warwick was reinstated in the offices which gave him apparently the supreme rule in England. The Princess Margaret had left England as the bride of Charles the Bold; and the earl had attended the procession in honour of her nuptials. The king, agreeably with the martial objects he had had long at heart, had then declared war on Louis XI., and parliament was addressed and troops were raised for that impolitic purpose. [Parliamentary Rolls, 623. The fact in the text has been neglected by most historians.] To this war, however, Warwick was inflexibly opposed. He pointed out the madness of withdrawing from England all her best-affected chivalry, at a time when the adherents of Lancaster, still powerful, would require no happier occasion to raise the Red Rose banner. He showed how hollow was the hope of steady aid from the hot but reckless and unprincipled Duke of Burgundy, and how different now was the condition of France under a king of consummate sagacity and with an overflowing treasury to its distracted state in the former conquests of

the English. This opposition to the king's will gave every opportunity for Warwick's enemies to renew their old accusation of secret and treasonable amity with Louis. Although the proud and hasty earl had not only forgiven the affront put upon him by Edward, but had sought to make amends for his own intemperate resentment, by public attendance on the ceremonials that accompanied the betrothal of the princess, it was impossible for Edward ever again to love the minister who had defied his power and menaced his crown. His humour and his suspicions broke forth despite the restraint that policy dictated to him: and in the disputes upon the invasion of France, a second and more deadly breach between Edward and his minister must have yawned, had not events suddenly and unexpectedly proved the wisdom of Warwick's distrust of Burgundy. Louis XI. bought off the Duke of Bretagne, patched up a peace with Charles the Bold, and thus frustrated all the schemes and broke all the alliances of Edward at the very moment his military preparations were ripe. [W. Wyr, 518.]

Still the angry feelings that the dispute had occasioned between Edward and the earl were not removed with the cause; and under pretence of guarding against hostilities from Louis, the king requested Warwick to depart to his government of Calais, the most important and honourable post, it is true, which a subject could then hold: but Warwick considered the request as a pretext for his removal from the court. A yet more irritating and insulting cause of offence was found in Edward's withholding his consent to Clarence's often-urged demand for permission to wed with the Lady Isabel. It is true that this refusal was accompanied with the most courteous protestations of respect for the earl, and placed only upon the general ground of state policy.

"My dear George," Edward would say, "the heiress of Lord Warwick is certainly no mal-alliance for a king's brother; but the safety of the throne imperatively demands that my brothers should strengthen my rule by connections with foreign potentates. I, it is true, married a subject, and see all the troubles that have sprung from my boyish passion! No, no! Go to Bretagne. The duke hath a fair daughter, and we will make up for any scantiness in the dower. Weary me no more, George. Fiat voluntas mea!"

But the motives assigned were not those which influenced the king's refusal. Reasonably enough, he dreaded that the next male heir to his crown should wed the daughter of the subject who had given that crown, and might at any time take it away. He knew Clarence to be giddy, unprincipled, and vain. Edward's faith in Warwick was shaken by the continual and artful representations of the queen and her family. He felt that the alliance between Clarence and the earl would be the union of two interests almost irresistible if once arrayed against his own.

But Warwick, who penetrated into the true reason for Edward's obstinacy, was yet more resentful against the reasons than the obstinacy itself. The one galled him through his affections, the other through his pride; and the first were as keen as the last was morbid. He was the more chafed, inasmuch as his anxiety of father became aroused. Isabel was really attached to Clarence, who, with all his errors, possessed every superficial attraction that graced his House,—gallant and handsome, gay and joyous, and with manners that made him no less popular than Edward himself.

And if Isabel's affections were not deep, disinterested, and tender, like those of Anne, they were strengthened by a pride which she inherited from her father, and a vanity which she took from her sex. It was galling in the extreme to feel that the loves between her and Clarence were the court gossip, and the king's refusal the court jest. Her health gave way, and pride and love both gnawed at her heart.

It happened, unfortunately for the king and for Warwick, that Gloucester, whose premature acuteness and sagacity would have the more served both, inasmuch as the views he had formed in regard to Anne would have blended his interest in some degree with that of the Duke of Clarence, and certainly with the object of conciliation between Edward and his minister,—it happened, we say, unfortunately, that Gloucester was still absent with the forces employed on the Scottish frontier, whither he had repaired on quitting Middleham, and where his extraordinary military talents found their first brilliant opening; and he was

therefore absent from London during all the disgusts he might have removed and the intrigues he might have frustrated.

But the interests of the House of Warwick, during the earl's sullen and indignant sojourn at his government of Calais, were not committed to unskilful hands; and Montagu and the archbishop were well fitted to cope with Lord Rivers and the Duchess of Bedford.

Between these able brothers, one day, at the More, an important conference took place.

"I have sought you," said Montagu, with more than usual care upon his brow—"I have sought you in consequence of an event that may lead to issues of no small moment, whether for good or evil. Clarence has suddenly left England for Calais."

"I know it, Montagu; the duke confided to me his resolution to proclaim himself old enough to marry,—and discreet enough to choose for himself."

"And you approved?"

"Certes; and, sooth to say, I brought him to that modest opinion of his own capacities. What is more still, I propose to join him at Calais."

"George!"

"Look not so scared, O valiant captain, who never lost a battle,—where the Church meddles, all prospers. Listen!" And the young prelate gathered himself up from his listless posture, and spoke with earnest unction. "Thou knowest that I do not much busy myself in lay schemes; when I do, the object must be great. Now, Montagu, I have of late narrowly and keenly watched that spidery web which ye call a court, and I see that the spider will devour the wasp, unless the wasp boldly break the web,—for woman-craft I call the spider, and soldier-pride I style the wasp. To speak plainly, these Woodvilles must be bravely breasted and determinately abashed. I do not mean that we can deal with the king's wife and her family as with any other foes; but we must convince them that they cannot cope with us, and that their interests will best consist in acquiescing in that condition of things which places the rule of England in the hands of the Neviles."

"My own thought, if I saw the way!"

"I see the way in this alliance; the Houses of York and Warwick must become so indissolubly united, that an attempt to injure the one must destroy both. The queen and the Woodvilles plot against us; we must raise in the king's family a counterpoise to their machinations. It brings no scandal on the queen to conspire against Warwick, but it would ruin her in the eyes of England to conspire against the king's brother; and Clarence and Warwick must be as one. This is not all! If our sole aid was in giddy George, we should but buttress our House with a weathercock. This connection is but as a part of the grand scheme on which I have set my heart,—Clarence shall wed Isabel, Gloucester wed Anne, and (let thy ambitious heart beat high, Montagu) the king's eldest daughter shall wed thy son,—the male representative of our triple honours. Ah, thine eyes sparkle now! Thus the whole royalty of England shall centre in the Houses of Nevile and York; and the Woodvilles will be caught and hampered in their own meshes, their resentment impotent; for how can Elizabeth stir against us, if her daughter be betrothed to the son of Montagu, the nephew of Warwick? Clarence, beloved by the shallow commons; [Singular as it may seem to those who know not that popularity is given to the vulgar qualities of men, and that where a noble nature becomes popular (a rare occurrence), it is despite the nobleness,—not because of it. Clarence was a popular idol even to the time of his death.—Croyl., 562.] Gloucester, adored both by the army and the

Church; and Montagu and Warwick, the two great captains of the age,—is not this a combination of power that may defy Fate?"

"O George!" said Montagu, admiringly, "what pity that the Church should spoil such a statesman!"

"Thou art profane, Montagu; the Church spoils no man,—the Church leads and guides ye all; and, mark, I look farther still. I would have intimate league with France; I would strengthen ourselves with Spain and the German Emperor; I would buy or seduce the votes of the sacred college; I would have thy poor brother, whom thou so pitiest because he has no son to marry a king's daughter, no daughter to wed with a king's son—I would have thy unworthy brother, Montagu, the father of the whole Christian world, and, from the chair of the Vatican, watch over the weal of kingdoms. And now, seest thou why with to-morrow's sun I depart for Calais, and lend my voice in aid of Clarence's for the first knot in this complicated bond?"

"But will Warwick consent while the king opposes? Will his pride—"

"His pride serves us here; for so long as Clarence did not dare to gainsay the king, Warwick in truth might well disdain to press his daughter's hand upon living man. The king opposes, but with what right? Warwick's pride will but lead him, if well addressed, to defy affront and to resist dictation. Besides, our brother has a woman's heart for his children; and Isabel's face is pale, and that will plead more than all my eloquence."

"But can the king forgive your intercession and Warwick's contumacy?"

"Forgive!—the marriage once over, what is left for him to do? He is then one with us, and when Gloucester returns all will be smooth again,—smooth for the second and more important nuptials; and the second shall preface the third; meanwhile, you return to the court. To these ceremonials you need be no party: keep but thy handsome son from breaking his neck in over-riding his hobby, and 'bide thy time!'"

Agreeably with the selfish but sagacious policy thus detailed, the prelate departed the next day for Calais, where Clarence was already urging his suit with the ardent impatience of amorous youth. The archbishop found, however, that Warwick was more reluctant than he had anticipated, to suffer his daughter to enter any House without the consent of its chief; nor would the earl, in all probability, have acceded to the prayers of the princely suitor, had not Edward, enraged at the flight of Clarence, and worked upon by the artful queen, committed the imprudence of writing an intemperate and menacing letter to the earl, which called up all the passions of the haughty Warwick.

"What!" he exclaimed, "thinks this ungrateful man not only to dishonour me by his method of marrying his sisters, but will he also play the tyrant with me in the disposal of mine own daughter! He threats! he!—enough. It is due to me to show that there lives no man whose threats I have not the heart to defy!" And the prelate finding him in this mood had no longer any difficulty in winning his consent. This ill-omened marriage was, accordingly, celebrated with great and regal pomp at Calais, and the first object of the archbishop was attained.

While thus stood affairs between the two great factions of the state, those discontents which Warwick's presence at court had a while laid at rest again spread, broad and far, throughout the land. The luxury and indolence of Edward's disposition in ordinary times always surrendered him to the guidance of others. In the commencement of his reign he was eminently popular, and his government, though stern, suited to the times; for then the presiding influence was that of Lord Warwick. As the queen's counsels prevailed over the consummate experience and masculine vigour of the earl, the king's government lost both popularity and respect, except only in the metropolis; and if, at the close of his reign, it regained all its earlier favour with the people, it must be principally ascribed to the genius of Hastings, then England's most powerful

subject, and whose intellect calmly moved all the springs of action. But now everywhere the royal authority was weakened; and while Edward was feasting at Shene and Warwick absent at Calais, the provinces were exposed to all the abuses which most gall a population. The poor complained that undue exactions were made on them by the hospitals, abbeys, and barons; the Church complained that the queen's relations had seized and spent Church moneys; the men of birth and merit complained of the advancement of new men who had done no service: and all these several discontents fastened themselves upon the odious Woodvilles, as the cause of all. The second breach, now notorious, between the king and the all-beloved Warwick, was a new aggravation of the popular hatred to the queen's family, and seemed to give occasion for the malcontents to appear with impunity, at least so far as the earl was concerned: it was, then, at this critical time that the circumstances we are about to relate occurred.

CHAPTER II. THE WOULD-BE IMPROVERS OF JOVE'S FOOTBALL, EARTH.—THE SAD FATHER AND THE SAD CHILD.—THE FAIR RIVALS.

Adam Warner was at work on his crucible when the servitor commissioned to attend him opened the chamber door, and a man dressed in the black gown of a student entered.

He approached the alchemist, and after surveying him for a moment in a silence that seemed not without contempt, said, "What, Master Warner, are you so wedded to your new studies that you have not a word to bestow on an old friend?"

Adam turned, and after peevishly gazing at the intruder a few moments, his face brightened up into recognition.

"En iterum!" he said. "Again, bold Robin Hilyard, and in a scholar's garb! Ha! doubtless thou hast learned ere this that peaceful studies do best insure man's weal below, and art come to labour with me in the high craft of mind-work!"

"Adam," quoth Hilyard, "ere I answer, tell me this: Thou with thy science wouldst change the world: art thou a jot nearer to thy end?"

"Well-a-day," said poor Adam, "you know little what I have undergone. For danger to myself by rack and gibbet I say nought. Man's body is fair prey to cruelty, and what a king spares to-day the worm shall gnaw to-morrow. But mine invention—my Eureka—look!" and stepping aside, he lifted a cloth, and exhibited the mangled remains of the unhappy model.

"I am forbid to restore it," continued Adam, dolefully. "I must work day and night to make gold, and the gold comes not; and my only change of toil is when the queen bids me construct little puppet-boxes for her children! How, then, can I change the world? And thou," he added, doubtingly and eagerly—"thou, with thy plots and stratagem, and active demagogy, thinkest thou that thou hast changed the world, or extracted one drop of evil out of the mixture of gall and hyssop which man is born to drink?"

Hilyard was silent, and the two world-betterers—the philosopher and the demagogue—gazed on each other, half in sympathy, half in contempt. At last Robin said,—

"Mine old friend, hope sustains us both; and in the wilderness we yet behold the Pisgah! But to my business. Doubtless thou art permitted to visit Henry in his prison."

"Not so," replied Adam; "and for the rest, since I now eat King Edward's bread, and enjoy what they call his protection, ill would it beseem me to lend myself to plots against his throne."

"Ah, man, man, man," exclaimed Hilyard, bitterly, "thou art like all the rest,—scholar or serf, the same slave; a king's smile bribes thee from a people's service!"

Before Adam could reply, a panel in the wainscot slid back and the bald head of a friar peered into the room. "Son Adam," said the holy man, "I crave your company an instant, oro vestrem aurem;" and with this abominable piece of Latinity the friar vanished.

With a resigned and mournful shrug of the shoulders, Adam walked across the room, when Hilyard, arresting his progress, said, crossing himself, and in a subdued and fearful whisper, "Is not that Friar Bungey, the notable magician?"

"Magician or not," answered Warner, with a lip of inexpressible contempt and a heavy sigh, "God pardon his mother for giving birth to such a numskull!" and with this pious and charitable ejaculation Adam disappeared in the adjoining chamber, appropriated to the friar.

"Hum," soliloquized Hilyard, "they say that Friar Bungey is employed by the witch duchess in everlasting diabolisms against her foes. A peep into his den might suffice me for a stirring tale to the people."

No sooner did this daring desire arise than the hardy Robin resolved to gratify it; and stealing on tiptoe along the wall, he peered cautiously through the aperture made by the sliding panel. An enormous stuffed lizard hung from the ceiling, and various strange reptiles, dried into mummy, were ranged around, and glared at the spy with green glass eyes. A huge book lay open on a tripod stand, and a caldron seethed over a slow and dull fire. A sight yet more terrible presently awaited the rash beholder.

"Adam," said the friar, laying his broad palm on the student's reluctant shoulders, "inter sapentes."

"Sapientes, brother," groaned Adam.

"That's the old form, Adam," quoth the friar, superciliously,—"sapentes is the last improvement. I say, between wise men there is no envy. Our noble and puissant patroness, the Duchess of Bedford, hath committed to me a task that promiseth much profit. I have worked at it night and day stotis filibus."

"O man, what lingo speakest thou?—stotis filibus!"

"Tush, if it is not good Latin, it does as well, son Adam. I say I have worked at it night and day, and it is now advanced eno' for experiment. But thou art going to sleep."

"Despatch! speak out! speak on!" said Adam, desperately,—"what is thy achievement?"

"See!" answered the friar, majestically; and drawing aside a black pall, he exhibited to the eyes of Adam, and to the more startled gaze of Robin Hilyard, a pale, cadaverous, corpse-like image, of pigmy proportions, but with features moulded into a coarse caricature of the lordly countenance of the Earl of Warwick.

"There," said the friar, complacently, and rubbing his hands, "that is no piece of bungling, eh? As like the stout earl as one pea to another."

"And for what hast thou kneaded up all this waste of wax?" asked Adam. "Forsooth, I knew not you had so much of ingenious art; algates, the toy is somewhat ghastly."

"Ho, ho!" quoth the friar, laughing so as to show a set of jagged, discoloured fangs from ear to ear, "surely thou, who art so notable a wizard and scholar, knowest for what purpose we image forth our enemies. Whatever the duchess inflicts upon this figure, the Earl of Warwick, whom it representeth, will feel through his bones and marrow,—waste wax, waste man!"

"Thou art a devil to do this thing, and a blockhead to think it, O miserable friar!" exclaimed Adam, roused from all his gentleness.

"Ha!" cried the friar, no less vehemently, and his burly face purple with passion, "dost thou think to bandy words with me? Wretch! I will set goblins to pinch thee black and blue! I will drag thee at night over all the jags of Mount Pepanon, at the tail of a mad nightmare! I will put aches in all thy bones, and the blood in thy veins shall run into sores and blotches. Am I not Friar Bungey? And what art thou?"

At these terrible denunciations, the sturdy Robin, though far less superstitious than most of his contemporaries, was seized with a trembling from head to foot; and expecting to see goblins and imps start forth from the walls, he retired hastily from his hiding-place, and, without waiting for further commune with Warner, softly opened the chamber door and stole down the stairs. Adam, however, bore the storm unquailingly, and when the holy man paused to take breath, he said calmly,—

"Verily, if thou canst do these things, there must be secrets in Nature which I have not yet discovered. Howbeit, though thou art free to try all thou canst against me, thy threats make it necessary that this communication between us should be nailed up, and I shall so order."

The friar, who was ever in want of Adam's aid, either to construe a bit of Latin, or to help him in some chemical illusion, by no means relished this quiet retort; and holding out his huge hand to Adam, said, with affected cordiality,—

"Pooh! we are brothers, and must not quarrel. I was over hot, and thou too provoking; but I honour and love thee, man,—let it pass. As for this figure, doubtless we might pink it all over, and the earl be never the worse. But if our employers order these things and pay for them, we cunning men make profit by fools!"

"It is men like thee that bring shame on science," answered Adam, sternly; "and I will not listen to thee longer."

"Nay, but you must," said the friar, clutching Adam's robe, and concealing his resentment by an affected grin. "Thou thinkest me a mere ignoramus—ha! ha!—I think the same of thee. Why, man, thou hast never studied the parts of the human body, I'll swear."

"I'm no leech," said Adam. "Let me go."

"No, not yet. I will convict thee of ignorance. Thou dost not even know where the liver is placed."

"I do," answered Adam, shortly; "but what then?"

"Thou dost?—I deny it. Here is a pin; stick it into this wax, man, where thou sayest the liver lies in the human frame."

Adam unsuspiciously obeyed.

"Well! the liver is there, eh? Ah, but where are the lungs?"

"Why, here."

"And the midriff?"

"Here, certes."

"Right!—thou mayest go now," said the friar, dryly. Adam disappeared through the aperture, and closed the panel.

"Now I know where the lungs, midriff, and liver are," said the friar to himself, "I shall get on famously. 'T is a useful fellow, that, or I should have had him hanged long ago!"

Adam did not remark on his re-entrance that his visitor, Hilyard, had disappeared, and the philosopher was soon reimmersed in the fiery interest of his thankless labours.

It might be an hour afterwards, when, wearied and exhausted by perpetual hope and perpetual disappointment, he flung himself on his seat; and that deep sadness, which they who devote themselves in this noisy world to wisdom and to truth alone can know, suffused his thoughts, and murmured from his feverish lips.

"Oh, hard condition of my life!" groaned the sage,—"ever to strive, and never to accomplish. The sun sets and the sun rises upon my eternal toils, and my age stands as distant from the goal as stood my youth! Fast, fast the mind is wearing out the frame, and my schemes have but woven the ropes of sand, and my name shall be writ in water. Golden dreams of my young hope, where are ye? Methought once, that could I obtain the grace of royalty, the ear of power, the command of wealth, my path to glory was made smooth and sure; I should become the grand inventor of my time and land; I should leave my lore a heritage and blessing wherever labour works to civilize the round globe. And now my lodging is a palace, royalty my patron; they give me gold at my desire; my wants no longer mar my leisure. Well, and for what? On condition that I forego the sole task for which patronage, wealth, and leisure were desired! There stands the broken iron, and there simmers the ore I am to turn to gold,—the iron worth more than all the gold, and the gold never to be won! Poor, I was an inventor, a creator, the true magician; protected, patronized, enriched, I am but the alchemist, the bubble, the dupe or duper, the fool's fool. God, brace up my limbs! Let me escape! give me back my old dream, and die at least, if accomplishing nothing, hoping all!"

He rose as he spoke; he strode across the chamber with majestic step, with resolve upon his brow. He stopped short, for a sharp pain shot across his heart. Premature age and the disease that labour brings were at their work of decay within: the mind's excitement gave way to the body's weakness, and he sank again upon his seat, breathing hard, gasping, pale, the icy damps upon his brow. Bubblingly seethed the molten metals, redly glowed the poisonous charcoal, the air of death was hot within the chamber where the victim of royal will pandered to the desire of gold. Terrible and eternal moral for Wisdom and for Avarice, for sages and for kings,—ever shall he who would be the maker of gold breathe the air of death!

"Father," said the low and touching voice of one who had entered unperceived, and who now threw her arms round Adam's neck, "Father, thou art ill, and sorely suffering—"

"At heart—yes, Sibyll. Give me thine arm; let us forth and taste the fresher air."

It was so seldom that Warner could be induced to quit his chamber, that these words almost startled Sibyll, and she looked anxiously in his face, as she wiped the dews from his forehead.

"Yes—air—air!" repeated Adam, rising.

Sibyll placed his bonnet over his silvered locks, drew his gown more closely round him, and slowly and in silence they left the chamber, and took their way across the court to the ramparts of the fortress-palace.

The day was calm and genial, with a low but fresh breeze stirring gently through the warmth of noon. The father and child seated themselves on the parapet, and saw, below, the gay and numerous vessels that glided over the sparkling river, while the dark walls of Baynard's Castle, the adjoining bulwark and battlements of Montfichet, and the tall watch-tower of Warwick's mighty mansion frowned in the distance against the soft blue sky. "There," said Adam, quietly, and pointing to the feudal roofs, "there seems to rise power, and yonder (glancing to the river), yonder seems to flow Genius! A century or so hence the walls shall vanish, but the river shall roll on. Man makes the castle, and founds the power,—God forms the river and creates the Genius. And yet, Sibyll, there may be streams as broad and stately as yonder Thames, that flow afar in the waste, never seen, never heard by man. What profits the river unmarked; what the genius never to be known?"

It was not a common thing with Adam Warner to be thus eloquent. Usually silent and absorbed, it was not his gift to moralize or declaim. His soul must be deeply moved before the profound and buried sentiment within it could escape into words.

Sibyll pressed her father's hand, and, though her own heart was very heavy, she forced her lips to smile and her voice to soothe. Adam interrupted her.

"Child, child, ye women know not what presses darkest and most bitterly on the minds of men. You know not what it is to form out of immaterial things some abstract but glorious object,—to worship, to serve it, to sacrifice to it, as on an altar, youth, health, hope, life,—and suddenly in old age to see that the idol was a phantom, a mockery, a shadow laughing us to scorn, because we have sought to clasp it."

"Oh, yes, Father, women have known that illusion."

"What! Do they study?"

"No, Father, but they feel!"

"Feel! I comprehend thee not."

"As man's genius to him is woman's heart to her," answered Sibyll, her dark and deep eyes suffused with tears. "Doth not the heart create, invent? Doth it not dream? Doth it not form its idol out of air? Goeth it not forth into the future, to prophesy to itself? And sooner or later, in age or youth, doth it not wake at last, and see how it hath wasted its all on follies? Yes, Father, my heart can answer, when thy genius would complain."

"Sibyll," said Warner, roused and surprised, and gazing on her wistfully, "time flies apace. Till this hour I have thought of thee but as a child, an infant. Thy words disturb me now."

"Think not of them, then. Let me never add one grief to thine."

"Thou art brave and gay in thy silken sheen," said Adam, curiously stroking down the rich, smooth stuff of Sibyll's tunic; "her grace the duchess is generous to us. Thou art surely happy here!"

"Happy!"

"Not happy!" exclaimed Adam, almost joyfully, "wouldst thou that we were back once more in our desolate, ruined home?"

"Yes, ob, yes!—but rather away, far away, in some quiet village, some green nook; for the desolate, ruined home was not safe for thine old age."

"I would we could escape, Sibyll," said Adam, earnestly, in a whisper, and with a kind of innocent cunning in his eye, "we and the poor Eureka! This palace is a prison-house to me. I will speak to the Lord Hastings, a man of great excellence, and gentle too. He is ever kind to us."

"No, no, Father, not to him," cried Sibyll, turning pale,—"let him not know a word of what we would propose, nor whither we would fly."

"Child, he loves me, or why does he seek me so often, and sit and talk not?"

Sibyll pressed her clasped hands tightly to her bosom, but made no answer; and while she was summoning courage to say something that seemed to oppress her thoughts with intolerable weight, a footstep sounded gently near, and the Lady of Bonville (then on a visit to the queen), unseen and unheard by the two, approached the spot. She paused, and gazed at Sibyll, at first haughtily; and then, as the deep sadness of that young face struck her softer feelings, and the pathetic picture of father and child, thus alone in their commune, made its pious and sweet effect, the gaze changed from pride to compassion, and the lady said courteously,—

"Fair mistress, canst thou prefer this solitary scene to the gay company about to take the air in her grace's gilded barge?"

Sibyll looked up in surprise, not unmixed with fear. Never before had the great lady spoken to her thus gently. Adam, who seemed for a while restored to the actual life, saluted Katherine with simple dignity, and took up the word,—

"Noble lady, whoever thou art, in thine old age, and thine hour of care, may thy child, like this poor girl, forsake all gayer comrades for a parent's side!"

The answer touched the Lady of Bonville, and involuntarily she extended her hand to Sibyll. With a swelling heart, Sibyll, as proud as herself, bent silently over that rival's hand. Katherine's marble cheek coloured, as she interpreted the girl's silence.

"Gentle sir," she said, after a short pause, "wilt thou permit me a few words with thy fair daughter? And if in aught, since thou speakest of care, Lord Warwick's sister can serve thee, prithee bid thy young maiden impart it, as to a friend."

"Tell her, then, my Sibyll,—tell Lord Warwick's sister to ask the king to give back to Adam Warner his poverty, his labour, and his hope," said the scholar, and his noble head sank gloomily on his bosom.

The Lady of Bonville, still holding Sibyll's hand, drew her a few paces up the walk, and then she said suddenly, and with some of that blunt frankness which belonged to her great brother, "Maiden, can there be confidence between thee and me?"

"Of what nature, lady?"

Again Katherine blushed, but she felt the small hand she held tremble in her clasp, and was emboldened,—

"Maiden, thou mayst resent and marvel at my words; but when I had fewer years than thou, my father said, 'There are many carks in life which a little truth could end.' So would I heed his lesson. William de Hastings has followed thee with an homage that has broken, perchance, many as pure a heart,—nay, nay, fair child, hear me on. Thou hast heard that in youth he wooed Katherine Nevile,—that we loved, and were severed. They who see us now marvel whether we hate or love,—no, not love—that question were an insult to Lord Bonville's wife!—Ofttimes we seem pitiless to each other,—why? Lord Hastings would have wooed me, an English matron, to forget mine honour and my House's. He chafes that he moves me not. I behold him debasing a great nature to unworthy triflings with man's conscience and a knight's bright faith. But mark me!—the heart of Hastings is everlastingly mine, and mine alone! What seek I in this confidence? To warn thee. Wherefore? Because for months, amidst all the vices of this foul court-air, amidst the flatteries of the softest voice that ever fell upon woman's ear, amidst, peradventure, the pleadings of thine own young and guileless love, thine innocence is unscathed. And therefore Katherine of Bonville may be the friend of Sibyll Warner."

However generous might be the true spirit of these words, it was impossible that they should not gall and humiliate the young and flattered beauty to whom they were addressed. They so wholly discarded all belief in the affection of Hastings for Sibyll; they so haughtily arrogated the mastery over his heart; they so plainly implied that his suit to the poor maiden was but a mockery or dishonour, that they made even the praise for virtue an affront to the delicate and chaste ear on which they fell. And, therefore, the reader will not be astonished, though the Lady of Bonville certainly was, when Sibyll, drawing her hand from Katherine's clasp, stopping short, and calmly folding her arms upon her bosom, said,—

"To what this tends, lady, I know not. The Lord Hastings is free to carry his homage where he will. He has sought me,—not I Lord Hastings. And if to-morrow he offered me his hand, I would reject it, if I were not convinced that the heart—"

"Damsel," interrupted the Lady Bonville, in amazed contempt, "the hand of Lord Hastings! Look ye indeed so high, or has he so far paltered with your credulous youth as to speak to you, the daughter of the alchemist, of marriage? If so, poor child, beware!

"I knew not," replied Sibyll, bitterly, "that Sibyll Warner was more below the state of Lord Hastings than Master Hastings was once below the state of Lady Katherine Nevile."

"Thou art distraught with thy self-conceit," answered the dame, scornfully; and, losing all the compassion and friendly interest she had before felt, "my rede is spoken,—reject it if thou wilt in pride. Rue thy folly thou wilt in shame!"

She drew her wimple round her face as she said these words, and, gathering up her long robe, swept slowly on.

CHAPTER III. WHEREIN THE DEMAGOGUE SEEKS THE COURTIER.

On quitting Adam's chamber, Hilyard paused not till he reached a stately house, not far from Warwick Lane, which was the residence of the Lord Montagu.

That nobleman was employed in reading, or rather, in pondering over, two letters, with which a courier from Calais had just arrived, the one from the archbishop, the other from Warwick. In these epistles were two passages, strangely contradictory in their counsel. A sentence in Warwick's letter ran thus:—

"It hath reached me that certain disaffected men meditate a rising against the king, under pretext of wrongs from the queen's kin. It is even said that our kinsmen, Copiers and Fitzhugh, are engaged therein. Need I caution thee to watch well that they bring our name into no disgrace or attaint? We want no aid to right our own wrongs; and if the misguided men rebel, Warwick will best punish Edward by proving that he is yet of use."

On the other hand, thus wrote the prelate:—

"The king, wroth with my visit to Calais, has taken from me the chancellor's seal. I humbly thank him, and shall sleep the lighter for the fardel's loss. Now, mark me, Montagu: our kinsman, Lord Fitzhugh's son, and young Henry Nevile, aided by old Sir John Copiers, meditate a fierce and well-timed assault upon the Woodvilles. Do thou keep neuter,—neither help nor frustrate it. Howsoever it end, it will answer our views, and shake our enemies."

Montagu was yet musing over these tidings, and marvelling that he in England should know less than his brethren in Calais of events so important, when his page informed him that a stranger, with urgent messages from the north country, craved an audience. Imagining that these messages would tend to illustrate the communications just received, he ordered the visitor to be admitted.

He scarcely noticed Hilyard on his entrance, and said abruptly, "Speak shortly, friend,—I have but little leisure."

"And yet, Lord Montagu, my business may touch thee home."

Montagu, surprised, gazed more attentively on his visitor: "Surely, I know thy face, friend,—we have met before."

"True; thou wert then on thy way to the More."

"I remember me; and thou then seemedst, from thy bold words, on a still shorter road to the gallows."

"The tree is not planted," said Robin, carelessly, "that will serve for my gibbet. But were there no words uttered by me that thou couldst not disapprove? I spoke of lawless disorders, of shameful malfaisance throughout the land, which the Woodvilles govern under a lewd tyrant—"

"Traitor, hold!"

"A tyrant," continued Robin, heeding not the interruption nor the angry gesture of Montagu, "a tyrant who at this moment meditates the destruction of the House of Nevile. And not contented with this world's weapons, palters with the Evil One for the snares and devilries of witchcraft."

"Hush, man! Not so loud," said Montagu, in an altered voice. "Approach nearer,—nearer yet. They who talk of a crowned king, whose right hand raises armies, and whose left hand reposes on the block, should beware how they speak above their breath. Witchcraft, sayest thou? Make thy meaning clear."

Here Robin detailed, with but little exaggeration, the scene he had witnessed in Friar Bungey's chamber,—the waxen image, the menaces against the Earl of Warwick, and the words of the friar, naming the Duchess of Bedford as his employer. Montagu listened in attentive silence. Though not perfectly free

from the credulities of the time, shared even by the courageous heart of Edward and the piercing intellect of Gloucester, he was yet more alarmed by such proofs of determined earthly hostility in one so plotting and so near to the throne as the Duchess of Bedford, than by all the pins and needles that could be planted into the earl's waxen counterpart.

"A devilish malice, indeed," said he, when Hilyard had concluded; "and yet this story, if thou wilt adhere to it, may serve us well at need. I thank thee, trusty friend, for thy confidence, and beseech thee to come at once with me to the king. There will I denounce our foe, and, with thine evidence, we will demand her banishment."

"By your leave, not a step will I budge, my Lord Montagu," quoth Robin, bluntly,—"I know how these matters are managed at court. The king will patch up a peace between the duchess and you, and chop off my ears and nose as a liar and common scandal-maker. No, no; denounce the duchess and all the Woodvilles I will; but it shall not be in the halls of the Tower, but on the broad plains of Yorkshire, with twenty thousand men at my back."

"Ha! thou a leader of armies,—and for what end,—to dethrone the king?"

"That as it may be,—but first for justice to the people; it is the people's rising that I will head, and not a faction's. Neither White Rose nor Red shall be on my banner; but our standard shall be the gory head of the first oppressor we can place upon a pole."

"What is it the people, as you word it, would demand?"

"I scarce know what we demand as yet,—that must depend upon how we prosper," returned Hilyard, with a bitter laugh; "but the rising will have some good, if it shows only to you lords and Normans that a Saxon people does exist, and will turn when the iron heel is upon its neck. We are taxed, ground, pillaged, plundered,—sheep, maintained to be sheared for your peace or butchered for your war. And now will we have a petition and a charter of our own, Lord Montagu. I speak frankly. I am in thy power; thou canst arrest me, thou canst strike off the head of this revolt. Thou art the king's friend,—wilt thou do so? No, thou and thy House have wrongs as well as we, the people. And a part at least of our demands and our purpose is your own."

"What part, bold man?"

"This: we shall make our first complaint the baneful domination of the queen's family; and demand the banishment of the Woodvilles, root and stem."

"Hem!" said Montagu, involuntarily glancing over the archbishop's letter,—"hem, but without outrage to the king's state and person?"

"Oh, trust me, my lord, the franklin's head contains as much north-country cunning as the noble's. They who would speed well must feel their way cautiously."

"Twenty thousand men—impossible! Who art thou, to collect and head them?"

"Plain Robin of Redesdale."

"Ha!" exclaimed Montagu, "is it indeed as I was taught to suspect? Art thou that bold, strange, mad fellow, whom, by pike and brand—a soldier's oath—I, a soldier, have often longed to see. Let me look at thee. 'Fore Saint George, a tall man, and well knit, with dareiment on thy brow. Why, there are as many

tales of thee in the North as of my brother the earl. Some say thou art a lord of degree and birth, others that thou art the robber of Hexham to whom Margaret of Anjou trusted her own life and her son's."

"Whatever they say of me," returned Robin, "they all agree in this,—that I am a man of honest word and bold deed; that I can stir up the hearts of men, as the wind stirreth fire; that I came an unknown stranger into the parts where I abide; and that no peer in this roiaulme, save Warwick himself, can do more to raise an army or shake a throne."

"But by what spell?"

"By men's wrongs, lord," answered Robin, in a deep voice; "and now, ere this moon wanes, Redesdale is a camp!"

"What the immediate cause of complaint?"

"The hospital of St. Leonard's has compelled us unjustly to render them a thrave of corn."

"Thou art a cunning knave! Pinch the belly if you would make Englishmen rise."

"True," said Robin, smiling grimly; "and now—what say you—will you head us?"

"Head you! No!"

"Will you betray us?"

"It is not easy to betray twenty thousand men; if ye rise merely to free yourselves from a corn-tax and England from the Woodvilles, I see no treason in your revolt."

"I understand you, Lord Montagu," said Robin, with a stern and half-scornful smile,—"you are not above thriving by our danger; but we need now no lord and baron,—we will suffice for ourselves. And the hour will come, believe me, when Lord Warwick, pursued by the king, must fly to the Commons. Think well of these things and this prophecy, when the news from the North startles Edward of March in the lap of his harlots."

Without saying another word, he turned and quitted the chamber as abruptly as he had entered.

Lord Montagu was not, for his age, a bad man; though worldly, subtle, and designing, with some of the craft of his prelate brother he united something of the high soul of his brother soldier. But that age had not the virtue of later times, and cannot be judged by its standard. He heard this bold dare-devil menace his country with civil war upon grounds not plainly stated nor clearly understood,—he aided not, but he connived: "Twenty thousand men in arms," he muttered to himself,—"say half-well, ten thousand—not against Edward, but the Woodvilles! It must bring the king to his senses; must prove to him how odious the mushroom race of the Woodvilles, and drive him for safety and for refuge to Montagu and Warwick. If the knaves presume too far," (and Montagu smiled), "what are undisciplined multitudes to the eye of a skilful captain? Let the storm blow, we will guide the blast. In this world man must make use of man."

CHAPTER IV. SIBYLL.

While Montagu in anxious forethought awaited the revolt that Robin of Redesdale had predicted; while Edward feasted and laughed, merry-made with his courtiers, and aided the conjugal duties of his good citizens in London; while the queen and her father, Lord Rivers, more and more in the absence of Warwick encroached on all the good things power can bestow and avarice seize; while the Duchess of Bedford and Friar Bungey toiled hard at the waxen effigies of the great earl, who still held his royal son-in-law in his court at Calais,—the stream of our narrative winds from its noisier channels, and lingers, with a quiet wave, around the temple of a virgin's heart. Wherefore is Sibyll sad? Some short month since and we beheld her gay with hope and basking in the sunny atmosphere of pleasure and of love. The mind of this girl was a singular combination of tenderness and pride,—the first wholly natural, the last the result of circumstance and position. She was keenly conscious of her gentle birth and her earlier prospects in the court of Margaret; and the poverty and distress and solitude in which she had grown up from the child into the woman had only served to strengthen what, in her nature, was already strong, and to heighten whatever was already proud. Ever in her youngest dreams of the future ambition had visibly blent itself with the vague ideas of love. The imagined wooer was less to be young and fair than renowned and stately. She viewed him through the mists of the future, as the protector of her persecuted father, as the rebuilder of a fallen House, as the ennobler of a humbled name; and from the moment in which her girl's heart beat at the voice of Hastings, the ideal of her soul seemed found. And when, transplanted to the court, she learned to judge of her native grace and loveliness by the common admiration they excited, her hopes grew justified to her inexperienced reason. Often and ever the words of Hastings, at the house of Lady Longueville, rang in her ear, and thrilled through the solitude of night,—"Whoever is fair and chaste, gentle and loving, is in the eyes of William de Hastings the mate and equal of a king." In visits that she had found opportunity to make to the Lady Longueville, these hopes were duly fed; for the old Lancastrian detested the Lady Bonville, as Lord Warwick's sister, and she would have reconciled her pride to view with complacency his alliance with the alchemist's daughter, if it led to his estrangement from the memory of his first love; and, therefore, when her quick eye penetrated the secret of Sibyll's heart, and when she witnessed—for Hastings often encountered (and seemed to seek the encounter) the young maid at Lady Longueville's house—the unconcealed admiration which justified Sibyll in her high-placed affection, she scrupled not to encourage the blushing girl by predictions in which she forced her own better judgment to believe. Nor, when she learned Sibyll's descent from a family that had once ranked as high as that of Hastings, would she allow that there was any disparity in the alliance she foretold. But more, far more than Lady Longueville's assurances, did the delicate and unceasing gallantries of Hastings himself flatter the fond faith of Sibyll. True, that he spoke not actually of love, but every look implied, every whisper seemed to betray it. And to her he spoke as to an equal, not in birth alone, but in mind; so superior was she in culture, in natural gifts, and, above all, in that train of high thought and elevated sentiment, in which genius ever finds a sympathy, to the court-flutterers of her sex, that Hastings, whether or not he cherished a warmer feeling, might well take pleasure in her converse, and feel the lovely infant worthy the wise man's trust. He spoke to her without reserve of the Lady Bonville, and he spoke with bitterness. "I loved her," he said, "as woman is rarely loved. She deserted me for another—rather should she have gone to the convent than the altar; and now, forsooth, she deems she hath the right to taunt and to rate me, to dictate to me the way I should walk, and to flaunt the honours I have won."

"May that be no sign of a yet tender interest?" said Sibyll, timidly.

The eyes of Hastings sparkled for a moment, but the gleam vanished. "Nay, you know her not. Her heart is marble, as hard and as cold; her very virtue but the absence of emotion,—I would say, of gentler emotion; for, pardieu, such emotions as come from ire and pride and scorn are the daily growth of that stern soil. Oh, happy was my escape! Happy the desertion which my young folly deemed a curse! No!" he added, with a sarcastic quiver of his lip—"no; what stings and galls the Lady of Harrington and Bonville, what makes her countenance change in my presence, and her voice sharpen at my accost, is plainly this: in wedding her dull lord and rejecting me, Katherine Nevile deemed she wedded power and rank and station; and now, while we are both young, how proves her choice? The Lord of Harrington and Bonville is so

noted a dolt, that even the Neviles cannot help him to rise,—the meanest office is above his mind's level; and, dragged down by the heavy clay to which her wings are yoked, Katherine, Lady of Harrington and Bonville—oh, give her her due titles!—is but a pageant figure in the court. If the war-trump blew, his very vassals would laugh at a Bonville's banner, and beneath the flag of poor William Hastings would gladly march the best chivalry of the land. And this it is, I say, that galls her. For evermore she is driven to compare the state she holds as the dame of the accepted Bonville with that she lost as the wife of the disdained Hastings."

And if, in the heat and passion that such words betrayed, Sibyll sighed to think that something of the old remembrance yet swelled and burned, they but impressed her more with the value of a heart in which the characters once writ endured so long, and roused her to a tender ambition to heal and to console.

Then looking into her own deep soul, Sibyll beheld there a fund of such generous, pure, and noble affection, such reverence as to the fame, such love as to the man, that she proudly felt herself worthier of Hastings than the haughty Katherine. She entered then, as it were, the lists with this rival,—a memory rather, so she thought, than a corporeal being; and her eye grew brighter, her step statelier, in the excitement of the contest, the anticipation of the triumph. For what diamond without its flaw? What rose without its canker? And bedded deep in that exquisite and charming nature lay the dangerous and fatal weakness which has cursed so many victims, broken so many hearts,—the vanity of the sex. We may now readily conceive how little predisposed was Sibyll to the blunt advances and displeasing warnings of the Lady Bonville, and the more so from the time in which they chanced. For here comes the answer to the question, "Why was Sibyll sad?"

The reader may determine for himself what were the ruling motives of Lord Hastings in the court he paid to Sibyll. Whether to pique the Lady Bonville, and force upon her the jealous pain he restlessly sought to inflict; whether, from the habit of his careless life, seeking the pleasure of the moment, with little forethought of the future, and reconciling itself to much cruelty, by that profound contempt for human beings, man, and still more for woman, which sad experience often brings to acute intellect; or whether, from the purer and holier complacency with which one whose youth has fed upon nobler aspirations than manhood cares to pursue, suns itself back to something of its earlier lustre in the presence and the converse of a young bright soul,—whatever, in brief, the earlier motives of gallantries to Sibyll, once begun, constantly renewed, by degrees wilder and warmer and guiltier emotions roused up in the universal and all-conquering lover the vice of his softer nature. When calm and unimpassioned, his conscience had said to him, "Thou shalt spare that flower." But when once the passion was roused within him, the purity of the flower was forgotten in the breath of its voluptuous sweetness.

And but three days before the scene we have described with Katherine, Sibyll's fabric of hope fell to the dust. For Hastings spoke for the first time of love, for the first time knelt at her feet, for the first time, clasping to his heart that virgin hand, poured forth the protestation and the vow. And oh! woe—woe! for the first time she learned how cheaply the great man held the poor maiden's love, how little he deemed that purity and genius and affection equalled the possessor of fame and wealth and power; for plainly visible, boldly shown and spoken, the love that she had foreseen as a glory from the heaven sought but to humble her to the dust.

The anguish of that moment was unspeakable,—and she spoke it not. But as she broke from the profaning clasp, as escaping to the threshold she cast on the unworthy wooer one look of such reproachful sorrow as told at once all her love and all her horror, the first act in the eternal tragedy of man's wrong and woman's grief was closed. And therefore was Sibyll sad!

CHAPTER V. KATHERINE.

For several days Hastings avoided Sibyll; in truth, he felt remorse for his design, and in his various, active, and brilliant life he had not the leisure for obstinate and systematic siege to a single virtue, nor was he, perhaps, any longer capable of deep and enduring passion; his heart, like that of many a chevalier in the earlier day, had lavished itself upon one object, and sullenly, upon regrets and dreams, and vain anger and idle scorn, it had exhausted those sentiments which make the sum of true love. And so, like Petrarch, whom his taste and fancy worshipped, and many another votary of the gentil Dieu, while his imagination devoted itself to the chaste and distant ideal—the spiritual Laura—his senses, ever vagrant and disengaged, settled without scruple upon the thousand Cynthias of the minute. But then those Cynthias were, for the most part, and especially of late years, easy and light-won nymphs; their coyest were of another clay from the tender but lofty Sibyll. And Hastings shrunk from the cold-blooded and deliberate seduction of one so pure, while he could not reconcile his mind to contemplate marriage with a girl who could give nothing to his ambition; and yet it was not in this last reluctance only his ambition that startled and recoiled. In that strange tyranny over his whole soul which Katherine Bonville secretly exercised, he did not dare to place a new barrier evermore between her and himself. The Lord Bonville was of infirm health; he had been more than once near to death's door; and Hastings, in every succeeding fancy that beguiled his path, recalled the thrill of his heart when it had whispered "Katherine, the loved of thy youth, may yet be thine!" And then that Katherine rose before him, not as she now swept the earth, with haughty step and frigid eye and disdainful lip, but as—in all her bloom of maiden beauty, before the temper was soured or the pride aroused—she had met him in the summer twilight, by the trysting-tree, broken with him the golden ring of faith, and wept upon his bosom.

And yet, during his brief and self-inflicted absence from Sibyll, this wayward and singular personage, who was never weak but to women, and ever weak to them, felt that she had made herself far dearer to him than he had at first supposed it possible. He missed that face, ever, till the last interview, so confiding in the unconsciously betrayed affection. He felt how superior in sweetness and yet in intellect Sibyll was to Katherine; there was more in common between her mind and his in all things, save one. But oh, that one exception!—what a world lies within it,—the memory of the spring of life! In fact, though Hastings knew it not, he was in love with two objects at once; the one, a chimera, a fancy, an ideal, an Eidolon, under the name of Katherine; the other, youth and freshness and mind and heart and a living shape of beauty, under the name of Sibyll. Often does this double love happen to men; but when it does, alas for the human object! for the shadowy and the spiritual one is immortal,—until, indeed, it be possessed!

It might be, perhaps, with a resolute desire to conquer the new love and confirm the old that Hastings, one morning, repaired to the house of the Lady Bonville, for her visit to the court had expired. It was a large mansion, without the Lud Gate.

He found the dame in a comely chamber, seated in the sole chair the room contained, to which was attached a foot-board that served as a dais, while around her, on low stools, sat some spinning, others broidering—some ten or twelve young maidens of good family, sent to receive their nurturing under the high-born Katherine, [And strange as it may seem to modern notions, the highest lady who received such pensioners accepted a befitting salary for their board and education.] while two other and somewhat elder virgins sat a little apart, but close under the eye of the lady, practising the courtly game of "prime:" for the diversion of cards was in its zenith of fashion under Edward IV., and even half a century later was considered one of the essential accomplishments of a well-educated young lady. [So the Princess Margaret, daughter of Henry VIL, at the age of fourteen, exhibits her skill, in prime or trump, to her betrothed husband, James IV. of Scotland; so, among the womanly arts of the unhappy Katherine of Arragon, it is mentioned that she could play at "cards and dyce." (See Strutt: Games and Pastimes, Hones' edition, p. 327.) The legislature was very anxious to keep these games sacred to the aristocracy, and very wroth with 'prentices and the vulgar for imitating the ruinous amusements of their betters.] The exceeding

stiffness, the solemn silence of this female circle, but little accorded with the mood of the graceful visitor. The demoiselles stirred not at his entrance, and Katherine quietly motioned him to a seat at some distance.

“By your leave, fair lady,” said Hastings, “I rebel against so distant an exile from such sweet company;” and he moved the tabouret close to the formidable chair of the presiding chieftainess.

Katherine smiled faintly, but not in displeasure.

“So gay a presence,” she said, “must, I fear me, a little disturb these learners.”

Hastings glanced at the prim demureness written on each blooming visage, and replied,—

“You wrong their ardour in such noble studies. I would wager that nothing less than my entering your bower on horseback, with helm on head and lance in rest, could provoke even a smile from one pair of the twenty rosy lips round which, methinks, I behold Cupido hovering in vain!”

The baroness bent her stately brows, and the twenty rosy lips were all tightly pursed up, to prevent the indecorous exhibition which the wicked courtier had provoked. But it would not do: one and all the twenty lips broke into a smile,—but a smile so tortured, constrained, and nipped in the bud, that it only gave an expression of pain to the features it was forbidden to enliven.

“And what brings the Lord Hastings hither?” asked the baroness, in a formal tone.

“Can you never allow for motive the desire of pleasure, fair dame?”

That peculiar and exquisite blush, which at moments changed the whole physiognomy of Katherine, flitted across her smooth cheek, and vanished. She said gravely,—

“So much do I allow it in you, my lord, that hence my question.”

“Katherine!” exclaimed Hastings, in a voice of tender reproach, and attempting to seize her hand, forgetful of all other presence save that to which the blush, that spoke of old, gave back the ancient charm.

Katherine cast a hurried and startled glance over the maiden group, and her eye detected on the automaton faces one common expression of surprise. Humbled and deeply displeased, she rose from the awful chair, and then, as suddenly reseating herself, she said, with a voice and lip of the most cutting irony, “My lord chamberlain is, it seems, so habituated to lackey his king amidst the goldsmiths and grocers, that he forgets the form of language and respect of bearing which a noblewoman of repute is accustomed to consider seemly.”

Hastings bit his lip, and his falcon eye shot indignant fire.

“Pardon, my Lady of Bonville and Harrington, I did indeed forget what reasons the dame of so wise and so renowned a lord hath to feel pride in the titles she hath won. But I see that my visit hath chanced out of season. My business, in truth, was rather with my lord, whose counsel in peace is as famous as his truncheon in war!”

“It is enough,” replied Katherine, with a dignity that rebuked the taunt, “that Lord Bonville has the name of an honest man,—who never rose at court.”

“Woman, without one soft woman-feeling!” muttered Hastings, between his ground teeth, as he approached the lady and made his profound obeisance. The words were intended only for Katherine’s ear,

and they reached it. Her bosom swelled beneath the brocaded gorget, and when the door closed on Hastings, she pressed her hands convulsively together, and her dark eyes were raised upward.

“My child, thou art entangling thy skein,” said the lady of Bonville, as she passed one of the maidens, towards the casement, which she opened,—“the air to-day weighs heavily!”

CHAPTER VI. JOY FOR ADAM, AND HOPE FOR SIBYLL—AND POPULAR FRIAR BUNGEY!

Leaping on his palfrey, Hastings rode back to the Tower, dismounted at the gate, passed on to the little postern in the inner court, and paused not till he was in Warner’s room. “How now, friend Adam? Thou art idle.”

“Lord Hastings, I am ill.”

“And thy child not with thee?”

“She is gone to her grace the duchess, to pray her to grant me leave to go home, and waste no more life on making gold.”

“Home! Go hence! We cannot hear it! The duchess must not grant it. I will not suffer the king to lose so learned a philosopher.”

“Then pray the king to let the philosopher achieve that which is in the power of labour.” He pointed to the Eureka. “Let me be heard in the king’s council, and prove to sufficing judges what this iron can do for England.”

“Is that all? So be it. I will speak to his highness forthwith. But promise that thou wilt think no more of leaving the king’s palace.”

“Oh, no, no! If I may enter again into mine own palace, mine own royalty of craft and hope, the court or the dungeon all one to me!”

“Father,” said Sibyll, entering, “be comforted. The duchess forbids thy departure, but we will yet flee—” She stopped short as she saw Hastings. He approached her timidly, and with so repentant, so earnest a respect in his mien and gesture, that she had not the heart to draw back the fair hand he lifted to his lips.

“No, flee not, sweet donzell; leave not the desert court, without the flower and the laurel, the beauty and the wisdom, that scent the hour, and foretype eternity. I have conferred with thy father,—I will obtain his prayer from the king. His mind shall be free to follow its own impulse, and thou”—he whispered—“pardon—pardon an offence of too much love. Never shall it wound again.”

Her eyes, swimming with delicious tears, were fixed upon the floor. Poor child! with so much love, how could she cherish anger? With so much purity, how distrust herself? And while, at least, he spoke, the dangerous lover was sincere. So from that hour peace was renewed between Sibyll and Lord Hastings.—Fatal peace! alas for the girl who loves—and has no mother!

True to his word, the courtier braved the displeasure of the Duchess of Bedford, in inducing the king to consider the expediency of permitting Adam to relinquish alchemy, and repair his model. Edward summoned a deputation from the London merchants and traders, before whom Adam appeared and explained his device. But these practical men at first ridiculed the notion as a madman's fancy, and it required all the art of Hastings to overcome their contempt, and appeal to the native acuteness of the king. Edward, however, was only caught by Adam's incidental allusions to the application of his principle to ships. The merchant-king suddenly roused himself to attention, when it was promised to him that his galleys should cross the seas without sail, and against wind and tide.

"By Saint George!" said he, then, "let the honest man have his whim. Mend thy model, and every saint in the calendar speed thee! Master Heyford, tell thy comely wife that I and Hastings will sup with her to-morrow, for her hippocras is a rare dainty. Good day to you, worshipful my masters. Hastings, come hither; enough of these trifles,—I must confer with thee on matters really pressing,—this damnable marriage of gentle George's!"

And now Adam Warner was restored to his native element of thought; now the crucible was at rest, and the Eureka began to rise from its ruins. He knew not the hate that he had acquired in the permission he had gained; for the London deputies, on their return home, talked of nothing else for a whole week but the favour the king had shown to a strange man, half-maniac, half-conjuror, who had undertaken to devise a something which would throw all the artisans and journeymen out of work! From merchant to mechanic travelled the news, and many an honest man cursed the great scholar, as he looked at his young children, and wished to have one good blow at the head that was hatching such devilish malice against the poor! The name of Adam Warner became a byword of scorn and horror. Nothing less than the deep ditch and strong walls of the Tower could have saved him from the popular indignation; and these prejudices were skilfully fed by the jealous enmity of his fellow-student, the terrible Friar Bungey. This man, though in all matters of true learning and science worthy the utmost contempt Adam could heap upon him, was by no means of despicable abilities in the arts of imposing upon men. In his youth he had been an itinerant mountebank, or, as it was called, tregetour. He knew well all the curious tricks of juggling that then amazed the vulgar, and, we fear, are lost to the craft of our modern necromancers. He could clothe a wall with seeming vines, that vanished as you approached; he could conjure up in his quiet cell the likeness of a castle manned with soldiers, or a forest tenanted by deer. [See Chaucer, House of Time, Book III.; also the account given by Baptista Porta, of his own Magical Delusions, of which an extract may be seen in the "Curiosities of Literature" Art., Dreams at the Dawn of Philosophy.] Besides these illusions, probably produced by more powerful magic lanterns than are now used, the friar had stumbled upon the wondrous effects of animal magnetism, which was then unconsciously practised by the alchemists and cultivators of white or sacred magic. He was an adept in the craft of fortune-telling; and his intimate acquaintance with all noted characters in the metropolis, their previous history and present circumstances, enabled his natural shrewdness to hit the mark, at least now and then, in his oracular predictions. He had taken, for safety and for bread, the friar's robes, and had long enjoyed the confidence of the Duchess of Bedford, the traditional descendant of the serpent-witch, Melusina. Moreover, and in this the friar especially valued himself, Bungey had, in the course of his hardy, vagrant early life, studied, as shepherds and mariners do now, the signs of the weather; and as weather-glasses were then unknown, nothing could be more convenient to the royal planners of a summer chase or a hawking company than the neighbourhood of a skilful predictor of storm and sunshine. In fact, there was no part in the lore of magic which the popular seers found so useful and studied so much as that which enabled them to prognosticate the humours of the sky, at a period when the lives of all men were principally spent in the open air.

The fame of Friar Bungey had travelled much farther than the repute of Adam Warner: it was known in the distant provinces: and many a northern peasant grew pale as he related to his gaping listeners the tales he had heard of the Duchess Jacquetta's dread magician.

And yet, though the friar was an atrocious knave and a ludicrous impostor, on the whole he was by no means unpopular, especially in the metropolis, for he was naturally a jolly, social fellow; he often ventured boldly forth into the different hostelries and reunions of the populace, and enjoyed the admiration he there excited, and pocketed the groats he there collected. He had no pride,—none in the least, this Friar Bungey!—and was as affable as a magician could be to the meanest mechanic who crossed his broad horn palm. A vulgar man is never unpopular with the vulgar. Moreover, the friar, who was a very cunning person, wished to keep well with the mob: he was fond of his own impudent, cheating, burly carcass, and had the prudence to foresee that a time might come when his royal patrons might forsake him, and a mob might be a terrible monster to meet in his path; therefore he always affected to love the poor, often told their fortunes gratis, now and then gave them something to drink, and was esteemed a man exceedingly good-natured, because he did not always have the devil at his back.

Now Friar Bungey had naturally enough evinced from the first a great distaste and jealousy of Adam Warner; but occasionally profiting by the science of the latter, he suffered his resentment to sleep latent till it was roused into fury by learning the express favour shown to Adam by the king, and the marvellous results expected from his contrivance. His envy, then, forbade all tolerance and mercy; the world was not large enough to contain two such giants,—Bungey and Warner, the genius and the quack. To the best of our experience, the quacks have the same creed to our own day. He vowed deep vengeance upon his associate, and spared no arts to foment the popular hatred against him. Friar Bungey would have been a great critic in our day!

But besides his jealousy, the fat friar had another motive for desiring poor Adam's destruction; he coveted his model! True, he despised the model, he jeered the model, he abhorred the model; but, nevertheless, for the model every string in his bowels fondly yearned. He believed that if that model were once repaired, and in his possession, he could do—what he knew not, but certainly all that was wanting to complete his glory, and to bubble the public.

Unconscious of all that was at work against him, Adam threw his whole heart and soul into his labour; and happy in his happiness, Sibyll once more smiled gratefully upon Hastings, from whom the rapture came.

CHAPTER VII. A LOVE SCENE.

More than ever chafed against Katherine, Hastings surrendered himself without reserve to the charm he found in the society of Sibyll. Her confidence being again restored, again her mind showed itself to advantage, and the more because her pride was further roused to assert the equality with rank and gold which she took from nature and from God.

It so often happens that the first love of woman is accompanied with a bashful timidity, which overcomes the effort, while it increases the desire, to shine, that the union of love and timidity has been called inseparable, in the hackneyed language of every love-tale. But this is no invariable rule, as Shakspeare has shown us in the artless Miranda, in the eloquent Juliet, in the frank and healthful Rosalind;—and the love of Sibyll was no common girl's spring-fever of sighs and blushes. It lay in the mind, the imagination, the intelligence, as well as in the heart and fancy. It was a breeze that stirred from the modest leaves of the rose all their diviner odour. It was impossible but what this strong, fresh young nature—with its free gayety when happy, its earnest pathos when sad, its various faculties of judgment and sentiment, and covert play of innocent wit—should not contrast forcibly, in the mind of a man who had the want to be amused and interested, with the cold pride of Katherine, the dull atmosphere in which her stiff, unbending

virtue breathed unintellectual air, and still more with the dressed puppets, with painted cheeks and barren talk, who filled up the common world, under the name of women.

His feelings for Sibyll, therefore, took a more grave and respectful colour, and his attentions, if gallant ever, were those of a man wooing one whom he would make his wife, and studying the qualities to which he was disposed to intrust his happiness; and so pure was Sibyll's affection, that she could have been contented to have lived forever thus,—have seen and heard him daily, have talked but the words of friendship though with the thoughts of love; for some passions refine themselves through the very fire of the imagination into which the senses are absorbed, and by the ideal purification elevated up to spirit. Rapt in the exquisite happiness she now enjoyed, Sibyll perceived not, or, if perceiving, scarcely heeded; that the admirers, who had before fluttered round her, gradually dropped off; that the ladies of the court, the damsels who shared her light duties, grew distant and silent at her approach; that strange looks were bent on her; that sometimes when she and Hastings were seen together, the stern frowned and the godly crossed themselves.

The popular prejudices had reacted on the court. The wizard's daughter was held to share the gifts of her sire, and the fascination of beauty was imputed to evil spells. Lord Hastings was regarded—especially by all the ladies he had once courted and forsaken—as a man egregiously bewitched!

One day it chanced that Sibyll encountered Hastings in the walk that girded the ramparts of the Tower. He was pacing musingly, with folded arms, when he raised his eyes and beheld her.

"And whither go you thus alone, fair mistress?"

"The duchess bade me seek the queen, who is taking the air yonder. My lady has received some tidings she would impart to her highness."

"I was thinking of thee, fair damsel, when thy face brightened on my musings; and I was comparing thee to others who dwell in the world's high places, and marvelling at the whims of fortune."

Sibyll smiled faintly, and answered, "Provoke not too much the aspiring folly of my nature. Content is better than ambition."

"Thou ownest thy ambition?" asked Hastings, curiously.

"Ah, sir, who hath it not?"

"But for thy sweet sex ambition has so narrow and cribbed a field."

"Not so; for it lives in others. I would say," continued Sibyll, colouring, fearful that she had betrayed herself, "for example, that so long as my father toils for fame, I breathe in his hope, and am ambitious for his honour."

"And so, if thou wert wedded to one worthy of thee, in his ambition thou wouldst soar and dare?"

"Perhaps," answered Sibyll, coyly.

"But if thou wert wedded to sorrow and poverty and troublous care, thine ambition, thus struck dead, would of consequence strike dead thy love?"

"Nay, noble lord, nay; canst thou so wrong womanhood in me unworthy? for surely true ambition lives not only in the goods of fortune. Is there no nobler ambition than that of the vanity? Is there no ambition

of the heart,—an ambition to console, to cheer the griefs of those who love and trust us; an ambition to build a happiness out of the reach of fate; an ambition to soothe some high soul, in its strife with a mean world,—to lull to sleep its pain, to smile to serenity its cares? Oh, methinks a woman's true ambition would rise the bravest when, in the very sight of death itself, the voice of him in whom her glory had dwelt through life should say, 'Thou fearest not to walk to the grave and to heaven by my side!'"

Sweet and thrilling were the tones in which these words were said, lofty and solemn the upward and tearful look with which they closed.

And the answer struck home to the native and original heroism of the listener's nature, before debased into the cynic sourness of worldly wisdom. Never had Katherine herself more forcibly recalled to Hastings the pure and virgin glory of his youth.

"Oh, Sibyll!" he exclaimed passionately, and yielding to the impulse of the moment,—"oh, that for me, as to me, such high words were said! Oh, that all the triumphs of a life men call prosperous were excelled by the one triumph of waking such an ambition in such a heart!"

Sibyll stood before him transformed,—pale, trembling, mute,—and Hastings, clasping her hand and covering it with kisses, said,—

"Dare I arede thy silence? Sibyll, thou lovest me—O Sibyll, speak!"

With a convulsive effort, the girl's lips moved, then closed, then moved again, into low and broken words.

"Why this, why this? Thou hadst promised not to—not to—"

"Not to insult thee by unworthy vows! Nor do I. But as my wife." He paused abruptly, alarmed at his own impetuous words, and scared by the phantom of the world that rose like a bodily thing before the generous impulse, and grinned in scorn of his folly.

But Sibyll heard only that one holy word of WIFE, and so sudden and so great was the transport it called forth, that her senses grew faint and dizzy, and she would have fallen to the earth but for the arms that circled her, and the breast upon which, now, the virgin might veil the blush that did not speak of shame.

With various feelings, both were a moment silent. But oh, that moment! what centuries of bliss were crowded into it for the nobler and fairer nature!

At last, gently releasing herself, she put her hands before her eyes, as if to convince herself she was awake, and then, turning her lovely face full upon the wooer, Sibyll said ingenuously,—

"Oh, my lord—oh, Hastings! if thy calmer reason repent not these words, if thou canst approve in me what thou didst admire in Elizabeth the queen, if thou canst raise one who has no dower but her heart to the state of thy wife and partner, by this hand, which I place fearlessly in thine, I pledge thee to such a love as minstrel hath never sung. No!" she continued, drawing loftily up her light stature,—"no, thou shalt not find me unworthy of thy name,—mighty though it is, mightier though it shall be. I have a mind that can share thine objects, I have pride that can exult in thy power, courage to partake thy dangers, and devotion—" she hesitated, with the most charming blush—"but of that, sweet lord, thou shalt judge hereafter! This is my dowry,—it is all!"

"And all I ask or covet," said Hastings. But his cheek had lost its first passionate glow. Lord of many a broad land and barony, victorious captain in many a foughten field, wise statesman in many a thoughtful stratagem, high in his king's favour, and linked with a nation's history,—William de Hastings at that hour

was as far below as earth is to heaven the poor maiden whom he already repented to have so honoured, and whose sublime answer woke no echo from his heart.

Fortunately, as he deemed it, at that very instant he heard many steps rapidly approaching, and his own name called aloud by the voice of the king's body-squire.

"Hark! Edward summons me," he said, with a feeling of reprieve. "Farewell, dear Sibyll, farewell for a brief while,—we shall meet anon."

At this time they were standing in that part of the rampart walk which is now backed by the barracks of a modern soldiery, and before which, on the other side of the moat, lay a space that had seemed solitary and deserted; but as Hastings, in speaking his adieu, hurriedly pressed his lips on Sibyll's forehead, from a tavern without the fortress, and opposite the spot on which they stood, suddenly sallied a disorderly troop of half-drunken soldiers, with a gang of the wretched women that always continue the classic associations of a false Venus with a brutal Mars; and the last words of Hastings were scarcely spoken, before a loud laugh startled both himself and Sibyll, and a shudder came over her when she beheld the tinsel robes of the tymbesteres glittering in the sun, and heard their leader sing, as she darted from the arms of a reeling soldier,—

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          "Ha! death to the dove
           Is the falcon's love.
Oh, sharp is the kiss of the falcon's beak!"
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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 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 Neviles 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 mislike, 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 clerkly 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 mime 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 Neviles, 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 bead; 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, 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 Neviles. 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 Nevile!" 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 supples 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 cramousin, 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 yon 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 be 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 raftered 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 ofttimes 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 conceder."

"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!”

BOOK VIII. IN WHICH THE LAST LINK BETWEEN KING-MAKER AND KING SNAPS ASUNDER.

CHAPTER I. THE LADY ANNE VISITS THE COURT.

It was some weeks after the date of the events last recorded. The storm that hung over the destinies of King Edward was dispersed for the hour, though the scattered clouds still darkened the horizon: the Earl of Warwick had defeated the Lancastrians on the frontier, [Croyl. 552] and their leader had perished on the scaffold; but Edward's mighty sword had not shone in the battle. Chained by an attraction yet more powerful than slaughter, he had lingered at Middleham, while Warwick led his army to York; and when the earl arrived at the capital of Edward's ancestral duchy, he found that the able and active Hastings—having heard, even before he reached the Duke of Gloucester's camp, of Edward's apparent seizure by the earl and the march to Middleham—had deemed it best to halt at York, and to summon in all haste a council of such of the knights and barons as either love to the king or envy to Warwick could collect. The report was general that Edward was retained against his will at Middleham; and this rumour Hastings gravely demanded Warwick, on the arrival of the latter at York, to disprove. The earl, to clear himself from a suspicion that impeded all his military movements, despatched Lord Montagu to Middleham, who returned not only with the king, but the countess and her daughters, whom Edward, under pretence of proving the complete amity that existed between Warwick and himself, carried in his train. The king's appearance at York reconciled all differences; but he suffered Warwick to march alone against the enemy, and not till after the decisive victory, which left his reign for a while without an open foe, did he return to London.

Thither the earl, by the advice of his friends, also repaired, and in a council of peers, summoned for the purpose, deigned to refute the rumours still commonly circulated by his foes, and not disbelieved by the vulgar, whether of his connivance at the popular rising or his forcible detention of the king at Middleham. To this, agreeably to the counsel of the archbishop, succeeded a solemn interview of the heads of the Houses of York and Warwick, in which the once fair Rose of Raby (the king's mother) acted as mediator and arbiter. The earl's word to the commons at Olney was ratified. Edward consented to the temporary retirement of the Woodvilles, though the gallant Anthony yet delayed his pilgrimage to Compostella. The vanity of Clarence was contented by the government of Ireland, but, under various pretences, Edward deferred his brother's departure to that important post. A general amnesty was proclaimed, a parliament summoned for the redress of popular grievances, and the betrothal of the king's daughter to Montagu's heir was proclaimed: the latter received the title of Duke of Bedford; and the whole land rejoiced in the recovered peace of the realm, the retirement of the Woodvilles, and the reconciliation of the young king with his all-beloved subject. Never had the power of the Neviles seemed so secure; never did the throne of Edward appear so stable.

It was at this time that the king prevailed upon the earl and his countess to permit the Lady Anne to accompany the Duchess of Clarence in a visit to the palace of the Tower. The queen had submitted so graciously to the humiliation of her family, that even the haughty Warwick was touched and softened; and the visit of his daughter at such a time became a homage to Elizabeth which it suited his chivalry to render.

The public saw in this visit, which was made with great state and ceremony, the probability of a new and popular alliance. The archbishop had suffered the rumour of Gloucester's attachment to the Lady Anne to get abroad, and the young prince's return from the North was anxiously expected by the gossips of the day.

It was on this occasion that Warwick showed his gratitude for Marmaduke Nevile's devotion. "My dear and gallant kinsman," he said, "I forget not that when thou didst leave the king and the court for the discredited minister and his gloomy hall,—I forget not that thou didst tell me of love to some fair maiden, which had not prospered according to thy merits. At least it shall not be from lack of lands, or of the gold spur, which allows the wearer to ride by the side of king or kaisar, that thou canst not choose thy bride as the heart bids thee. I pray thee, sweet cousin, to attend my child Anne to the court, where the king will show thee no ungracious countenance; but it is just to recompense thee for the loss of thy post in his highness's chamber. I hold the king's commission to make knights of such as can pay the fee, and thy

lands shall suffice for the dignity. Kneel down and rise up, Sir Marmaduke Nevile, lord of the Manor of Borrodaile, with its woodlands and its farms, and may God and our Lady render thee puissant in battle and prosperous in love!"

Accordingly, in his new rank, and entitled to ruffle it with the bravest, Sir Marmaduke Nevile accompanied the earl and the Lady Anne to the palace of the Tower.

As Warwick, leaving his daughter amidst the brilliant circle that surrounded Elizabeth, turned to address the king, he said, with simple and unaffected nobleness,—

"Ah, my liege, if you needed a hostage of my faith, think that my heart is here, for verily its best blood were less dear to me than that slight girl,—the likeness of her mother, when her lips first felt the touch of mine!"

Edward's bold brow fell, and he blushed as he answered, "My Elizabeth will hold her as a sister. But, cousin, part you not now for the North?"

"By your leave I go first to Warwick."

"Ah, you do not wish to approve of my seeming preparations against France?"

"Nay, your Highness is not in earnest. I promised the commons that you would need no supplies for so thriftless a war."

"Thou knowest I mean to fulfil all thy pledges. But the country so swarms with disbanded soldiers, that it is politic to hold out to them a hope of service, and so let the clouds gradually pass away."

"Alack, my liege," said Warwick, gravely, "I suppose that a crown teaches the brow to scheme; but hearty peace or open war seems ever the best to me."

Edward smiled, and turned aside. Warwick glanced at his daughter, whom Elizabeth flatteringly caressed, stifled a sigh, and the air seemed lighter to the insects of the court as his proud crest bowed beneath the doorway, and, with the pomp of his long retinue, he vanished from the scene.

"And choose, fair Anne," said the queen, "choose from my ladies whom you will have for your special train. We would not that your attendance should be less than royal."

The gentle Anne in vain sought to excuse herself from an honour at once arrogant and invidious, though too innocent to perceive the cunning so characteristic of the queen; for, under the guise of a special compliment, Anne had received the royal request to have her female attendants chosen from the court, and Elizabeth now desired to force upon her a selection which could not fail to mortify those not preferred. But glancing timidly round the circle, the noble damsel's eye rested on one fair face, and in that face there was so much that awoke her own interest, and stirred up a fond and sad remembrance, that she passed involuntarily to the stranger's side, and artlessly took her hand. The high-born maidens, grouped around, glanced at each other with a sneer, and slunk back. Even the queen looked surprised; but recovering herself, inclined her head graciously, and said, "Do we read your meaning aright, Lady Anne, and would you this gentlewoman, Mistress Sibyll Warner, as one of your chamber?"

"Sibyll, ah, I knew that my memory failed me not," murmured Anne; and, after bowing assent to the queen, she said, "Do you not also recall, fair demoiselle, our meeting, when children long years ago?"

"Well, noble dame," [The title of dame was at that time applied indiscriminately to ladies whether married or single, if of high birth.] answered Sibyll. And as Anne turned, with her air of modest gentleness, yet of lofty birth and breeding, to explain to the queen that she had met Sibyll in earlier years, the king approached to monopolize his guest's voice and ear. It seemed natural to all present that Edward should devote peculiar attention to the daughter of Warwick and the sister of the Duchess of Clarence; and even Elizabeth suspected no guiltier gallantry in the subdued voice, the caressing manner, which her handsome lord adopted throughout that day, even to the close of the nightly revel, towards a demoiselle too high (it might well appear) for licentious homage.

But Anne herself, though too guileless to suspect the nature of Edward's courtesy, yet shrank from it in vague terror. All his beauty, all his fascination, could not root from her mind the remembrance of the exiled prince; nay, the brilliancy of his qualities made her the more averse to him. It darkened the prospects of Edward of Lancaster that Edward of York should wear so gracious and so popular a form. She hailed with delight the hour when she was conducted to her chamber, and dismissing gently the pompous retinue allotted to her, found herself alone with the young maiden whom she had elected to her special service.

"And you remember me, too, fair Sibyll?" said Anne, with her dulcet and endearing voice.

"Truly, who would not? for as you, then, noble lady, glided apart from the other children, hand in hand with the young prince, in whom all dreamed to see their future king, I heard the universal murmur of—a false prophecy!"

"Ah! and of what?" asked Anne.

"That in the hand the prince clasped with his small rosy fingers—the hand of great Warwick's daughter—lay the best defence of his father's throne."

Anne's breast heaved, and her small foot began to mark strange characters on the floor.

"So," she said musingly, "so even here, amidst a new court, you forget not Prince Edward of Lancaster. Oh, we shall find hours to talk of the past days. But how, if your childhood was spent in Margaret's court, does your youth find a welcome in Elizabeth's?"

"Avarice and power had need of my father's science. He is a scholar of good birth, but fallen fortunes, even now, and ever while night lasts, he is at work. I belonged to the train of her grace of Bedford; but when the duchess quitted the court, and the king retained my father in his own royal service, her highness the queen was pleased to receive me among her maidens. Happy that my father's home is mine!—who else could tend him?"

"Thou art his only child?—he must—love thee dearly?"

"Yet not as I love him; he lives in a life apart from all else that live. But after all, peradventure it is sweeter to love than to be loved."

Anne, whose nature was singularly tender and woman-like, was greatly affected by this answer. She drew nearer to Sibyll; she twined her arm round her slight form, and kissed her forehead.

"Shall I love thee, Sibyll?" she said, with a girl's candid simplicity, "and wilt thou love me?"

"Ah, lady! there are so many to love thee,—father, mother, sister,—all the world; the very sun shines more kindly upon the great!"

"Nay!" said Anne, with that jealousy of a claim to suffering to which the gentler natures are prone, "I may have sorrows from which thou art free. I confess to thee, Sibyll, that something I know not how to explain draws me strangely towards thy sweet face. Marriage has lost me my only sister, for since Isabel is wed she is changed to me—would that her place were supplied by thee! Shall I steal thee from the queen when I depart? Ah, my mother—at least thou wilt love her! for verily, to love my mother you have but to breathe the same air. Kiss me, Sibyll."

Kindness, of late, had been strange to Sibyll, especially from her own sex, one of her own age; it came like morning upon the folded blossom. She threw her arms round the new friend that seemed sent to her from heaven; she kissed Anne's face and hands with grateful tears.

"Ah!" she said at last, when she could command a voice still broken with emotion—"if I could ever serve—ever repay thee—though those gracious words were the last thy lips should ever deign to address to me!"

Anne was delighted; she had never yet found one to protect; she had never yet found one in whom thoroughly to confide. Gentle as her mother was, the distinction between child and parent was, even in the fond family she belonged to, so great in that day, that she could never have betrayed to the countess the wild weakness of her young heart.

The wish to communicate, to reveal, is so natural to extreme youth, and in Anne that disposition was so increased by a nature at once open and inclined to lean on others, that she had, as we have seen, sought a confidante in Isabel; but with her, even at the first, she found but the half-contemptuous pity of a strong and hard mind; and lately, since Edward's visit to Middleham, the Duchess of Clarence had been so rapt in her own imperious egotism and discontented ambition, that the timid Anne had not even dared to touch, with her, upon those secrets which it flushed her own bashful cheek to recall. And this visit to the court, this new, unfamiliar scene, this estrangement from all the old accustomed affections, had produced in her that sense of loneliness which is so irksome, till grave experience of real life accustoms us to the common lot. So with the exaggerated and somewhat morbid sensibility that belonged to her, she turned at once, and by impulse, to this sudden, yet graceful friendship. Here was one of her own age, one who had known sorrow, one whose voice and eyes charmed her, one who would not chide even folly, one, above all, who had seen her beloved prince, one associated with her fondest memories, one who might have a thousand tales to tell of the day when the outlaw boy was a monarch's heir. In the childishness of her soft years, she almost wept at another channel for so much natural tenderness. It was half the woman gaining a woman-friend, half the child clinging to a new playmate.

"Ah, Sibyll," she whispered, "do not leave me to-night; this strange place daunts me, and the figures on the arras seem so tall and spectre-like, and they say the old tower is haunted. Stay, dear Sibyll!"

And Sibyll stayed.

CHAPTER II. THE SLEEPING INNOCENCE—THE WAKEFUL CRIME.

While these charming girls thus innocently conferred; while, Anne's sweet voice running on in her artless fancies, they helped each other to undress; while hand in hand they knelt in prayer by the crucifix in the dim recess; while timidly they extinguished the light, and stole to rest; while, conversing in whispers,

growing gradually more faint and low, they sank into guileless sleep,—the unholy king paced his solitary chamber, parched with the fever of the sudden and frantic passion that swept away from a heart in which every impulse was a giant all the memories of honour, gratitude, and law.

The mechanism of this strong man's nature was that almost unknown to the modern time; it belonged to those earlier days which furnish to Greece the terrible legends Ovid has clothed in gloomy fire, which a similar civilization produced no less in the Middle Ages, whether of Italy or the North,—that period when crime took a grandeur from its excess; when power was so great and absolute that its girth burst the ligaments of conscience; when a despot was but the incarnation of WILL; when honour was indeed a religion, but its faith was valour, and it wrote its decalogue with the point of a fearless sword.

The youth of Edward IV. was as the youth of an ancient Titan, of an Italian Borgia; through its veins the hasty blood rolled as a devouring flame. This impetuous and fiery temperament was rendered yet more fearful by the indulgence of every intemperance; it fed on wine and lust; its very virtues strengthened its vices,—its courage stifled every whisper of prudence; its intellect, uninured to all discipline, taught it to disdain every obstacle to its desires. Edward could, indeed, as we have seen, be false and crafty, a temporizer, a dissimulator; but it was only as the tiger creeps,—the better to spring, undetected, on its prey. If detected, the cunning ceased, the daring rose, and the mighty savage had fronted ten thousand foes, secure in its fangs and talons, its bold heart and its deadly spring. Hence, with all Edward's abilities, the astonishing levities and indiscretions of his younger years. It almost seemed, as we have seen him play fast and loose with the might of Warwick, and with that power, whether of barons or of people, which any other prince of half his talents would have trembled to arouse against an unrooted throne,—it almost seemed as if he loved to provoke a danger for the pleasure it gave the brain to baffle or the hand to crush it. His whole nature coveting excitement, nothing was left to the beautiful, the luxurious Edward, already wearied with pomp and pleasure, but what was unholy and forbidden. In his court were a hundred ladies, perhaps not less fair than Anne, at least of a beauty more commanding the common homage, but these he had only to smile on with ease to win. No awful danger, no inexpiable guilt, attended those vulgar frailties, and therefore they ceased to tempt. But here the virgin guest, the daughter of his mightiest subject, the beloved treasure of the man whose hand had built a throne, whose word had dispersed an army—here, the more the reason warned, the conscience started, the more the hell-born passion was aroused.

Like men of his peculiar constitution, Edward was wholly incapable of pure and steady love. His affection for his queen the most resembled that diviner affection; but when analyzed, it was composed of feelings widely distinct. From a sudden passion, not otherwise to be gratified, he had made the rashest sacrifices for an unequal marriage. His vanity, and something of original magnanimity, despite his vices, urged him to protect what he himself had raised,—to secure the honour of the subject who was honoured by the king. In common with most rude and powerful natures, he was strongly alive to the affections of a father, and the faces of his children helped to maintain the influence of the mother. But in all this, we need scarcely say that that true love, which is at once a passion and a devotion, existed not. Love with him cared not for the person loved, but solely for its own gratification; it was desire for possession,—nothing more. But that desire was the will of a king who never knew fear or scruple; and, pampered by eternal indulgence, it was to the feeble lusts of common men what the storm is to the west wind. Yet still, as in the solitude of night he paced his chamber, the shadow of the great crime advancing upon his soul appalled even that dauntless conscience. He gasped for breath; his cheeks flushed crimson, and the next moment grew deadly pale. He heard the loud beating of his heart. He stopped still. He flung himself on a seat, and hid his face with his hands; then starting up, he exclaimed, "No, no! I cannot shut out that sweet face, those blue eyes from my gaze. They haunt me to my destruction and her own. Yet why say destruction? If she love me, who shall know the deed? If she love me not, will she dare to reveal her shame? Shame!—nay, a king's embrace never dishonours. A king's bastard is a House's pride. All is still,—the very moon vanishes from heaven. The noiseless rushes in the gallery give no echo to the footstep. Fie on me! Can a Plantagenet know fear?" He allowed himself no further time to pause; he opened the door gently and stole along the gallery. He

knew well the chamber, for it was appointed by his command, and, besides the usual door from the corridor, a small closet conducted to a secret panel behind the arras. It was the apartment occupied, in her visits to the court, by the queen's rival, the Lady Elizabeth Lucy. He passed into the closet; he lifted the arras; he stood in that chamber, which gratitude and chivalry and hospitable faith should have made sacred as a shrine. And suddenly, as he entered, the moon, before hid beneath a melancholy cloud, broke forth in awful splendour, and her light rushed through the casement opposite his eye, and bathed the room with the beams of a ghostlier day.

The abruptness of the solemn and mournful glory scared him as the rebuking face of a living thing; a presence as if not of earth seemed to interpose between the victim and the guilt. It was, however, but for a moment that his step halted. He advanced: he drew aside the folds of the curtain heavy with tissue of gold, and the sleeping face of Anne lay hushed before him. It looked pale in the moonlight, but ineffably serene, and the smile on its lips seemed still sweeter than that which it wore awake. So fixed was his gaze, so ardently did his whole heart and being feed through his eyes upon that exquisite picture of innocence and youth, that he did not see for some moments that the sleeper was not alone. Suddenly an exclamation rose to his lips. He clenched his hand in jealous agony; he approached; he bent over; he heard the regular breathing which the dreams of guilt never know; and then, when he saw that pure and interlaced embrace,—the serene yet somewhat melancholy face of Sibyll, which seemed hueless as marble in the moonlight, bending partially over that of Anne, as if even in sleep watchful; both charming forms so linked and woven that the two seemed as one life, the very breath in each rising and ebbing with the other; the dark ringlets of Sibyll mingling with the auburn gold of Anne's luxuriant hair, and the darkness and the gold, tress within tress, falling impartially over either neck, that gleamed like ivory beneath that common veil,—when he saw this twofold loveliness, the sentiment, the conviction of that mysterious defence which exists in purity, thrilled like ice through his burning veins. In all his might of monarch and of man, he felt the awe of that unlooked-for protection,—maidenhood sheltering maidenhood, innocence guarding innocence. The double virtue appalled and baffled him; and that slight arm which encircled the neck he would have perilled his realm to clasp, shielded his victim more effectually than the bucklers of all the warriors that ever gathered round the banner of the lofty Warwick. Night and the occasion befriended him; but in vain. While Sibyll was there, Anne was saved. He ground his teeth, and muttered to himself. At that moment Anne turned restlessly. This movement disturbed the light sleep of her companion. She spoke half inaudibly, but the sound was as the hoot of shame in the ear of the guilty king. He let fall the curtain, and was gone. And if one who lived afterwards to hear and to credit the murderous doom which, unless history lies, closed the male line of Edward, had beheld the king stealing, felon-like, from the chamber,—his step reeling to and fro the gallery floors, his face distorted by stormy passion, his lips white and murmuring, his beauty and his glory dimmed and humbled,—the spectator might have half believed that while Edward gazed upon those harmless sleepers, A VISION OF THE TRAGEDY TO COME had stricken down his thought of guilt, and filled up its place with horror,—a vision of a sleep as pure, of two forms wrapped in an embrace as fond, of intruders meditating a crime scarce fouler than his own; and the sins of the father starting into grim corporeal shapes, to become the deathsmen of the sons!

CHAPTER III. NEW DANGERS TO THE HOUSE OF YORK—AND THE KING'S HEART ALLIES ITSELF WITH REBELLION AGAINST THE KING'S THRONE.

Oh, beautiful is the love of youth to youth, and touching the tenderness of womanhood to woman; and fair in the eyes of the happy sun is the waking of holy sleep, and the virgin kiss upon virgin lips smiling and murmuring the sweet "Good-morrow!"

Anne was the first to wake; and as the bright winter morn, robust with frosty sunbeams shone cheerily upon Sibyll's face, she was struck with a beauty she had not sufficiently observed the day before; for in the sleep of the young the traces of thought and care vanish, the aching heart is lulled in the body's rest, the hard lines relax into flexile ease, a softer, warmer bloom steals over the cheek, and, relieved from the stiff restraints of dress, the rounded limbs repose in a more alluring grace! Youth seems younger in its slumber, and beauty more beautiful, and purity more pure. Long and dark, the fringe of the eyelash rested upon the white lids, and the freshness of the parting pouted lips invited the sister kiss that wakened up the sleeper.

"Ah, lady," said Sibyll, parting her tresses from her dark blue eyes, "you are here, you are safe!—blessed be the saints and our Lady! for I had a dream in the night that startled and appalled me."

"And my dreams were all blithe and golden," said Anne. "What was thine?"

"Methought you were asleep and in this chamber, and I not by your side, but watching you at a little distance; and lo! a horrible serpent glided from yon recess, and, crawling to your pillow, I heard its hiss, and strove to come to your aid, but in vain; a spell seemed to chain my limbs. At last I found voice, I cried aloud, I woke; and mock me not, but I surely heard a parting footstep, and the low grating of some sliding door."

"It was the dream's influence, enduring beyond the dream. I have often felt it so,—nay, even last night; for I, too, dreamed of another, dreamed that I stood by the altar with one far away, and when I woke—for I woke also—it was long before I could believe it was thy hand I held, and thine arm that embraced me."

The young friends rose, and their toilet was scarcely ended, when again appeared in the chamber all the stateliness of retinue allotted to the Lady Anne. Sibyll turned to depart. "And whither go you?" asked Anne.

"To visit my father; it is my first task on rising," returned Sibyll, in a whisper.

"You must let me visit him, too, at a later hour. Find me here an hour before noon, Sibyll."

The early morning was passed by Anne in the queen's company. The refection, the embroidery frame, the closheys, filled up the hours. The Duchess of Clarence had left the palace with her lord to visit the king's mother at Baynard's Castle; and Anne's timid spirits were saddened by the strangeness of the faces round her, and Elizabeth's habitual silence. There was something in the weak and ill-fated queen that ever failed to conciliate friends. Though perpetually striving to form and create a party, she never succeeded in gaining confidence or respect. And no one raised so high was ever left so friendless as Elizabeth, when, in her awful widowhood, her dowry home became the sanctuary. All her power was but the shadow of her husband's royal sun, and vanished when the orb prematurely set; yet she had all gifts of person in her favour, and a sleek smoothness of manner that seemed to the superficial formed to win; but the voice was artificial, and the eye cold and stealthy. About her formal precision there was an eternal consciousness of self, a breathing egotism. Her laugh was displeasing,—cynical, not mirthful; she had none of that forgetfulness of self, that warmth when gay, that earnestness when sad, which create sympathy. Her beauty was without loveliness, her character without charm; every proportion in her form might allure the sensualist; but there stopped the fascination. The mind was trivial, though cunning and dissimulating; and the very evenness of her temper seemed but the clockwork of a heart insensible to its own movements. Vain in prosperity, what wonder that she was so abject in misfortune? What wonder that even while, in

later and gloomier years, [Grafton, 806] accusing Richard III. of the murder of her royal sons, and knowing him, at least, the executioner of her brother and her child by the bridegroom of her youth, [Anthony Lord Rivers, and Lord Richard Gray. Not the least instance of the frivolity of Elizabeth's mind is to be found in her willingness, after all the woes of her second widowhood, and when she was not very far short of sixty years old, to take a third husband, James III., of Scotland,—a marriage prevented only by the death of the Scotch king.] she consented to send her daughters to his custody, though subjected to the stain of illegitimacy, and herself only recognized as the harlot?

The king, meanwhile, had ridden out betimes alone, and no other of the male sex presumed in his absence to invade the female circle. It was with all a girl's fresh delight that Anne escaped at last to her own chamber, where she found Sibyll; and, with her guidance, she threaded the gloomy mazes of the Tower. "Let me see," she whispered, "before we visit your father, let me see the turret in which the unhappy Henry is confined."

And Sibyll led her through the arch of that tower, now called "The Bloody," and showed her the narrow casement deep sunk in the mighty wall, without which hung the starling in the cage, basking its plumes in the wintry sun. Anne gazed with that deep interest and tender reverence which the parent of the man she loves naturally excites in a woman; and while thus standing sorrowful and silent, the casement was unbarred, and she saw the mild face of the human captive; he seemed to talk to the bird, which, in shrill tones and with clapping wings, answered his address. At that time a horn sounded at a little distance off; a clangour of arms, as the sentries saluted, was heard; the demoiselles retreated through the arch, and mounted the stair conducting to the very room, then unoccupied, in which tradition records the murder of the Third Richard's nephews; and scarcely had they gained this retreat, ere towards the Bloody Gate, and before the prison tower, rode the king who had mounted the captive's throne. His steed, gaudy with its housing, his splendid dress, the knights and squires who started forward from every corner to hold his gilded stirrup, his vigorous youth, so blooming and so radiant,—all contrasted, with oppressive force, the careworn face that watched him meekly through the little casement of the Wakefield tower. Edward's large, quick blue eye caught sudden sight of the once familiar features. He looked up steadily, and his gaze encountered the fallen king's. He changed countenance: but with the external chivalry that made the surface of his hollow though brilliant character, he bowed low to his saddle-bow as he saw his captive, and removed the plumed cap from his high brow.

Henry smiled sadly, and shook his reverend head, as if gently to rebuke the mockery; then he closed the casement; and Edward rode into the yard.

"How can the king hold here a court and here a prison? Oh, hard heart!" murmured Anne, as, when Edward had disappeared, the damsels bent their way to Adam's chamber.

"Would the Earl Warwick approve thy pity, sweet Lady Anne?" asked Sibyll.

"My father's heart is too generous to condemn it," returned Anne, wiping the tears from her eyes; "how often in the knight's galliard shall I see that face!"

The turret in which Warner's room was placed flanked the wing inhabited by the royal family and their more distinguished guests (namely, the palace, properly speaking, as distinct from the fortress), and communicated with the regal lodge by a long corridor, raised above cloisters and open to a courtyard. At one end of this corridor a door opened upon the passage, in which was situated the chamber of the Lady Anne; the other extremity communicated with a rugged stair of stone, conducting to the rooms tenanted by Warner. Leaving Sibyll to present her learned father to the gentle Anne, we follow the king into the garden, which he entered on dismounting. He found here the Archbishop of York, who had come to the palace in his barge, and with but a slight retinue, and who was now conversing with Hastings in earnest whispers.

The king, who seemed thoughtful and fatigued, approached the two, and said, with a forced smile, “What learned sententiary engages you two scholars?”

“Your Grace,” said the archbishop, “Minerva was not precisely the goddess most potent over our thoughts at that moment. I received a letter last evening from the Duke of Gloucester, and as I know the love borne by the prince to the Lord Hastings, I inquired of your chamberlain how far he would have foreguessed the news it announced.”

“And what may the tidings be?” asked Edward, absently.

The prelate hesitated.

“Sire,” he said gravely, “the familiar confidence with which both your Highness and the Duke of Gloucester distinguish the chamberlain, permits me to communicate the purport of the letter in his presence. The young duke informs me that he hath long conceived an affection which he would improve into marriage, but before he address either the demoiselle or her father, he prays me to confer with your Grace, whose pleasure in this, as in all things, will be his sovereign law.”

“Ah, Richard loves me with a truer love than George of Clarence! But who can he have seen on the Borders worthy to be a prince’s bride?”

“It is no sudden passion, sire, as I before hinted; nay, it has been for some time sufficiently notorious to his friends and many of the court; it is an affection for a maiden known to him in childhood, connected to him by blood,—my niece, Anne Nevile.”

As if stung by a scorpion, Edward threw off the prelate’s arm, on which he had been leaning with his usual caressing courtesy.

“This is too much!” said he, quickly, and his face, before somewhat pale, grew highly flushed. “Is the whole royalty of England to be one Nevile? Have I not sufficiently narrowed the basis of my throne? Instead of mating my daughter to a foreign power,—to Spain or to Bretagne,—she is betrothed to young Montagu! Clarence weds Isabel, and now Gloucester—no, prelate, I will not consent!”

The archbishop was so little prepared for this burst, that he remained speechless. Hastings pressed the king’s arm, as if to caution him against so imprudent a display of resentment; but the king walked on, not heeding him, and in great disturbance. Hastings interchanged looks with the archbishop, and followed his royal master.

“My king,” he said, in an earnest whisper, “whatever you decide, do not again provoke unhappy feuds laid at rest. Already this morning I sought your chamber, but you were abroad, to say that I have received intelligence of a fresh rising of the Lancastrians in Lincolnshire, under Sir Robert Welles, and the warlike knight of Scrivelsby, Sir Thomas Dymoke. This is not yet an hour to anger the pride of the Neviles!”

“O Hastings! Hastings!” said the king, in a tone of passionate emotion, “there are moments when the human heart cannot dissemble! Howbeit your advice is wise and honest! No, we must not anger the Neviles!”

He turned abruptly; rejoined the archbishop, who stood on the spot on which the king had left him, his arms folded on his breast, his face calm, but haughty.

“My most worshipful cousin,” said Edward, “forgive the well-known heat of my hasty moods! I had hoped that Richard would, by a foreign alliance, have repaired the occasion of confirming my dynasty

abroad, which Clarence lost. But no matter! Of these things we will speak anon. Say naught to Richard till time ripens maturer resolutions: he is a youth yet. What strange tidings are these from Lincolnshire?"

"The house of your purveyor, Sir Robert de Burgh, is burned, his lands wasted. The rebels are headed by lords and knights. Robin of Redesdale, who, methinks, bears a charmed life, has even ventured to rouse the disaffected in my brother's very shire of Warwick."

"O Henry," exclaimed the king, casting his eyes towards the turret that held his captive, "well mightest then call a crown 'a wreath of thorns!'"

"I have already," said the archbishop, "despatched couriers to my brother, to recall him from Warwick, whither he went on quitting your Highness. I have done more; prompted by a zeal that draws me from the care of the Church to that of the State, I have summoned the Lords St. John, De Fulke, and others, to my house of the More,—praying your Highness to deign to meet them, and well sure that a smile from your princely lips will regain their hearts and confirm heir allegiance, at a moment when new perils require all strong arms."

"You have done most wisely. I will come to your palace,—appoint your own day."

"It will take some days for the barons to arrive from their castles. I fear not ere the tenth day from this."

"Ah," said the king, with a vivacity that surprised his listeners, aware of his usual impetuous energy, "the delay will but befriend us; as for Warwick, permit me to alter your arrangements; let him employ the interval, not in London, where he is useless, but in raising men in the neighbourhood of his castle, and in defeating the treason of this Redesdale knave. We will give commission to him and to Clarence to levy troops; Hastings, see to this forthwith. Ye say Sir Robert Welles leads the Lincolnshire varlets; I know the nature of his father, the Lord Welles,—a fearful and timorous one; I will send for him, and the father's head shall answer for the son's faith. Pardon me, dear cousin, that I leave you to attend these matters. Prithee visit our queen, meanwhile, she holds you our guest."

"Nay, your Highness must vouchsafe my excuse; I also have your royal interests too much at heart to while an hour in my pleasurement. I will but see the friends of our House now in London, and then back to the More, and collect the force of my tenants and retainers."

"Ever right, fair speed to you, cardinal that shall be! Your arm, Hastings."

The king and his favourite took their way into the state chambers.

"Abet not Gloucester in this alliance,—abet him not!" said the king, solemnly.

"Pause, sire! This alliance gives to Warwick a wise counsellor, instead of the restless Duke of Clarence. Reflect what danger may ensue if an ambitious lord, discontented with your reign, obtains the hand of the great earl's coheiress, and the half of a hundred baronies that command an army larger than the crown's."

Though these reasonings at a calmer time might well have had their effect on Edward, at that moment they were little heeded by his passions. He stamped his foot violently on the floor. "Hastings!" he exclaimed, "be silent! or—" He stopped short, mastered his emotion. "Go, assemble our privy council. We have graver matters than a boy's marriage now to think of."

It was in vain that Edward sought to absorb the fire of his nature in state affairs, in all needful provisions against the impending perils, in schemes of war and vengeance. The fatal frenzy that had seized him haunted him everywhere, by day and by night. For some days after the unsuspected visit which he had so

criminally stolen to his guest's chamber, something of knightly honour, of religious scruple, of common reason,—awakened in him the more by the dangers which had sprung up and which the Neviles were now actively employed in defeating,—struggled against his guilty desire, and roused his conscience to a less feeble resistance than it usually displayed when opposed to passion; but the society of Anne, into which he was necessarily thrown so many hours in the day, and those hours chiefly after the indulgences of the banquet, was more powerful than all the dictates of a virtue so seldom exercised as to have none of the strength of habit. And as the time drew near when he must visit the archbishop, head his army against the rebels (whose force daily increased, despite the captivity of Lord Welles and Sir Thomas Dymoke, who, on the summons of the king, had first taken sanctuary, and then yielded their persons on the promise of pardon and safety), and restore Anne to her mother,—as this time drew near, his perturbation of mind became visible to the whole court; but, with the instinct of his native craft, he contrived to conceal its cause. For the first time in his life he had no confidant—he did not dare trust his secret to Hastings. His heart gnawed itself. Neither, though constantly stealing to Anne's side, could he venture upon language that might startle and enlighten her. He felt that even those attentions, which on the first evening of her arrival had been noticed by the courtiers, could not be safely renewed. He was grave and constrained, even when by her side, and the etiquette of the court allowed him no opportunity for unwitnessed conference. In this suppressed and unequal struggle with himself the time passed, till it was now but the day before that fixed for his visit to the More. And, as he rose at morning from his restless couch, the struggle was over, and the soul resolved to dare the crime. His first thought was to separate Anne from Sibyll. He affected to rebuke the queen for giving to his high-born guest an associate below her dignity, and on whose character, poor girl, rested the imputation of witchcraft; and when the queen replied that Lady Anne herself had so chosen, he hit upon the expedient of visiting Warner himself, under pretence of inspecting his progress,—affected to be struck by the sickly appearance of the sage, and sending for Sibyll, told her, with an air of gracious consideration, that her first duty was to attend her parent; that the queen released her for some days from all court duties; and that he had given orders to prepare the room adjoining Master Warner's, and held by Friar Bungey, till that worthy had retired with his patroness from the court, to which she would for the present remove.

Sibyll, wondering at this novel mark of consideration in the careless king, yet imputing it to the high value set on her father's labours, thanked Edward with simple earnestness, and withdrew. In the anteroom she encountered Hastings, on his way to the king. He started in surprise, and with a jealous pang: "What! thou, Sibyll! and from the king's closet! What led thee thither?"

"His grace's command." And too noble for the pleasure of exciting the distrust that delights frivolous minds as the proof of power, Sibyll added, "The king has been kindly speaking to me of my father's health." The courtier's brow cleared; he mused a moment, and said, in a whisper, "I beseech thee to meet me an hour hence at the eastern rampart."

Since the return of Lord Hastings to the palace there had been an estrangement and distance in his manner, ill suiting one who enjoyed the rights of an accepted suitor, and wounding alike to Sibyll's affection and her pride; but her confidence in his love and truth was entire. Her admiration for him partook of worship, and she steadily sought to reason away any causes for alarm by recalling the state cares which pressed heavily upon him, and whispering to herself that word of "wife," which, coming in passionate music from those beloved lips, had thrown a mist over the present, a glory over the future! and in the king's retention of Adam Warner, despite the Duchess of Bedford's strenuous desire to carry him off with Friar Bungey, and restore him to his tasks of alchemist and multiplier, as well as in her own promotion to the queen's service, Sibyll could not but recognize the influence of her powerful lover. His tones now were tender, though grave and earnest. Surely, in the meeting he asked, all not comprehended would be explained. And so, with a light heart, she passed on.

Hastings sighed as his eye followed her from the room, and thus said he to himself, "Were I the obscure gentleman I once was, how sweet a lot would that girl's love choose to me from the urn of fate! But, oh!

when we taste of power and greatness, and master the world's dark wisdom, what doth love shrink to?—an hour's bliss and a life's folly." His delicate lip curled, and breaking from his soliloquy, he entered the king's closet. Edward was resting his face upon the palms of his hands, and his bright eyes dwelt upon vacant space, till they kindled into animation as they lighted on his favourite.

"Dear Will," said the king, "knowest thou that men say thou art bewitched?"

"Beau sire, often have men, when a sweet face hath captured thy great heart, said the same of thee!"

"It may be so with truth, for verily love is the arch-devil's birth."

The king rose, and strode his chamber with a quick step; at last pausing,—

"Hastings," he said, "so thou lovest the multiplier's pretty daughter? She has just left me. Art thou jealous?"

"Happily your Highness sees no beauty in looks that have the gloss of the raven, and eyes that have the hue of the violet."

"No, I am a constant man, constant to one idea of beauty in a thousand forms,—eyes like the summer's light-blue sky, and locks like its golden sunbeams! But to set thy mind at rest, Will, know that I have but compassionated the sickly state of the scholar, whom thou prizest so highly; and I have placed thy fair Sibyll's chamber near her father's. Young Lovell says thou art bent on wedding the wizard's daughter."

"And if I were, beau sire?"

Edward looked grave.

"If thou wert, my poor Will, thou wouldst lose all the fame for shrewd wisdom which justifies thy sudden fortunes. No, no; thou art the flower and prince of my new seignorie,—thou must mate thyself with a name and a barony that shall be worthy thy fame and thy prospects. Love beauty, but marry power, Will. In vain would thy king draw thee up, if a despised wife draw thee down!"

Hastings listened with profound attention to these words. The king did not wait for his answer, but added laughingly,—

"It is thine own fault, crafty gallant, if thou dost not end all her spells."

"What ends the spells of youth and beauty, beau sire?"

"Possession!" replied the king, in a hollow and muttered voice.

Hastings was about to answer, when the door opened, and the officer in waiting announced the Duke of Clarence. "Ha!" said Edward, "George comes to importune me for leave to depart to the government of Ireland, and I have to make him weet that I think my Lord Worcester a safer viceroy of the two."

"Your Highness will pardon me; but, though I deemed you too generous in the appointment, it were dangerous now to annul it."

"More dangerous to confirm it. Elizabeth has caused me to see the folly of a grant made over the malmsey,—a wine, by the way, in which poor George swears he would be content to drown himself.

Viceroy of Ireland! My father had that government, and once tasting the sweets of royalty, ceased to be a subject! No, no, Clarence—"

"Can never meditate treason against a brother's crown. Has he the wit or the energy or the genius for so desperate an ambition?"

"No; but he hath the vanity. And I will wager thee a thousand marks to a silver penny that my jester shall talk giddie Georgie into advancing a claim to be soldan of Egypt or Pope of Rome!"

CHAPTER IV. THE FOSTER-BROTHERS.

Sir Marmaduke Nevile was sunning his bravery in the Tower Green, amidst the other idlers of the court, proud of the gold chain and the gold spurs which attested his new rank, and not grieved to have exchanged the solemn walls of Middleham for the gay delights of the voluptuous palace, when to his pleasure and surprise, he perceived his foster-brother enter the gateway; and no sooner had Nicholas entered, than a bevy of the younger courtiers hastened eagerly towards him.

"Gramercy!" quoth Sir Marmaduke, to one of the bystanders, "what hath chanced to make Nick Alwyn a man of such note, that so many wings of satin and pile should flutter round him like sparrows round an owl?—which, by the Holy Rood, his wise face somewhat resembleth."

"Know you not that Master Alwyn, since he hath commenced trade for himself, hath acquired already the repute of the couthliest goldsmith in London? No dague-hilts, no buckles are to be worn, save those that he fashions; and—an he live, and the House of York prosper—verily, Master Alwyn the goldsmith will ere long be the richest and best man from Mile-end to the Sanctuary."

"Right glad am I to hear it," said honest Marmaduke, heartily; and approaching Alwyn, he startled the precise trader by a friendly slap on the shoulder.

"What, man, art thou too proud to remember Marmaduke Nevile? Come to my lodgment yonder, and talk of old days over the king's canary."

"I crave your pardon, dear Master Nevile."

"Master—avaunt! Sir Marmaduke,—knighted by the hand of Lord Warwick,—Sir Marmaduke Nevile, lord of a manor he hath never yet seen, sober Alwyn."

Then drawing his foster-brother's arm in his, Marmaduke led him to the chamber in which he lodged.

The young men spent some minutes in congratulating each other on their respective advances in life: the gentleman who had attained competence and station simply by devotion to a powerful patron, the trader who had already won repute and the prospect of wealth by ingenuity, application, and toil; and yet, to do justice, as much virtue went to Marmaduke's loyalty to Warwick as to Alwyn's capacities for making a fortune. Mutual compliments over, Alwyn said hesitatingly,—

"And dost thou find Mistress Sibyll more gently disposed to thee than when thou didst complain to me of her cruelty?"

"Marry, good Nicholas, I will be frank with thee. When I left the court to follow Lord Warwick, there were rumours of the gallantries of Lord Hastings to the girl, which grieved me to the heart. I spoke to her thereof bluntly and honourably, and got but high looks and scornful words in return. Good fellow, I thank thee for that squeeze of the hand and that doleful sigh. In my absence at Middleham, I strove hard to forget one who cared so little for me. My dear Alwyn, those Yorkshire lasses are parlously comely, and mighty douce and debonaire. So I stormed cruel Sibyll out of my heart perforce of numbers."

"And thou lovest her no more?"

"Not I, by this goblet! On coming back, it is true, I felt pleased to clank my gold spurs in her presence, and curious to see if my new fortunes would bring out a smile of approval; and verily, to speak sooth, the donzell was kind and friendly, and spoke to me so cheerly of the pleasure she felt in my advancement, that I adventured again a few words of the old folly. But my lassie drew up like a princess, and I am a cured man."

"By your troth?"

"By my troth!"

Alwyn's head sank on his bosom in silent thought. Sir Marmaduke emptied his goblet; and really the young knight looked so fair and so gallant, in his new surcoat of velvet, that it was no marvel if he should find enough food for consolation in a court where men spent six hours a day in making love,—nor in vain.

"And what say they still of the Lord Hastings?" asked Alwyn, breaking silence. "Nothing, I trow and trust, that arraigns the poor lady's honour, though much that may scoff at her simple faith in a nature so vain and fickle. 'The tongue's not steel, yet it cuts,' as the proverb saith of the slanderer."

"No! scandal spares her virtue as woman, to run down her cunning as witch! They say that Hastings hath not prevailed, nor sought to prevail,—that he is spell-bound. By Saint Thomas, from a maid of such character Marmaduke Nevile is happily rescued!"

"Sir Marmaduke," then said Alwyn, in a grave and earnest voice, "it behooves me, as true friend, though humble, and as honest man, to give thee my secret, in return for thine own. I love this girl. Ay, ay! thou thinkest that love is a strange word on a craftsman's lips, but 'cold flint hides hot fire.' I would not have been thy rival, Heaven forefend! hadst thou still cherished a hope, or if thou now wilt forbid my aspiring; but if thou wilt not say me nay, I will try my chance in delivering a pure soul from a crafty wooer."

Marmaduke stared in great surprise at his foster-brother; and though, no doubt, he spoke truth when he said he was cured of his love for Sibyll, he yet felt a sort of jealousy at Alwyn's unexpected confession, and his vanity was hurt at the notion that the plain-visaged trader should attempt where the handsome gentleman had failed.—However, his blunt, generous, manly nature after a brief struggle got the better of these sore feelings; and holding out his hand to Alwyn, he said, "My dear foster-brother, try the hazard and cast thy dice, if thou wilt. Heaven prosper thee, if success be for thine own good! But if she be given to witchcraft (plague on thee, man, sneer not at the word), small comfort to bed and hearth can such practices bring!"

"Alas!" said Alwyn, "the witchcraft is on the side of Hastings,—the witchcraft of fame and rank, and a glozing tongue and experienced art. But she shall not fall, if a true arm can save her; and 'though Hope be a small child; she can carry a great anchor.'"

These words were said so earnestly, that they opened new light into Marmaduke's mind; and his native generosity standing in lieu of intellect, he comprehended sympathetically the noble motives which actuated the son of commerce.

"My poor Alwyn," he said, "if thou canst save this young maid,—whom by my troth I loved well, and who tells me yet that she loveth me as a sister loves,—right glad shall I be. But thou stakest thy peace of mind against hers! Fair luck to thee, say I again,—and if thou wilt risk thy chance at once (for suspense is love's purgatory), seize the moment. I saw Sibyll, just ere we met, pass to the ramparts, alone; at this sharp season the place is deserted; go."

"I will, this moment!" said Alwyn, rising and turning very pale; but as he gained the door, he halted—"I had forgot, Master Nevile, that I bring the king his signet-ring, new set, of the falcon and fetter-lock."

"They will keep thee three hours in the anteroom. The Duke of Clarence is now with the king. Trust the ring to me, I shall see his highness ere he dines."

Even in his love, Alwyn had the Saxon's considerations of business; he hesitated—"May I not endanger thereby the king's favour and loss of custom?" said the trader.

"Tush, man! little thou knowest King Edward; he cares naught for the ceremonies: moreover, the Neviles are now all-puissant in favour. I am here in attendance on sweet Lady Anne, whom the king loves as a daughter, though too young for sire to so well-grown a donzell; and a word from her lip, if need be, will set all as smooth as this gorget of lawn!"

Thus assured, Alwyn gave the ring to his friend, and took his way at once to the ramparts. Marmaduke remained behind to finish the canary and marvel how so sober a man should form so ardent a passion. Nor was he much less surprised to remark that his friend, though still speaking with a strong provincial accent, and still sowing his discourse with rustic saws and proverbs, had risen in language and in manner with the rise of his fortunes. "An he go on so, and become lord mayor," muttered Marmaduke, "verily he will half look like a gentleman!"

To these meditations the young knight was not long left in peace. A messenger from Warwick House sought and found him, with the news that the earl was on his road to London, and wished to see Sir Marmaduke the moment of his arrival, which was hourly expected. The young knight's hardy brain somewhat flustered by the canary, Alwyn's secret, and this sudden tidings, he hastened to obey his chief's summons, and forgot, till he gained the earl's mansion, the signet ring intrusted to him by Alwyn. "What matters it?" said he then, philosophically,—"the king hath rings eno' on his fingers not to miss one for an hour or so, and I dare not send any one else with it. Marry, I must plunge my head in cold water, to get rid of the fumes of the wine."

CHAPTER V. THE LOVER AND THE GALLANT—WOMAN'S CHOICE.

Alwyn bent his way to the ramparts, a part of which then resembled the boulevards of a French town, having rows of trees, green sward, a winding walk, and seats placed at frequent intervals for the repose of the loungers. During the summer evenings, the place was a favourite resort of the court idlers; but now, in winter, it was usually deserted, save by the sentries, placed at distant intervals. The trader had not gone far

in his quest when he perceived, a few paces before him, the very man he had most cause to dread; and Lord Hastings, hearing the sound of a footfall amongst the crisp, faded leaves that strewed the path, turned abruptly as Alwyn approached his side.

At the sight of his formidable rival, Alwyn had formed one of those resolutions which occur only to men of his decided, plain-spoken, energetic character. His distinguishing shrewdness and penetration had given him considerable insight into the nobler as well as the weaker qualities of Hastings; and his hope in the former influenced the determination to which he came. The reflections of Hastings at that moment were of a nature to augur favourably to the views of the humbler lover; for, during the stirring scenes in which his late absence from Sibyll had been passed, Hastings had somewhat recovered from her influence; and feeling the difficulties of reconciling his honour and his worldly prospects to further prosecution of the love, rashly expressed but not deeply felt, he had determined frankly to cut the Gordian knot he could not solve, and inform Sibyll that marriage between them was impossible. With that view he had appointed this meeting, and his conference with the king but confirmed his intention. It was in this state of mind that he was thus accosted by Alwyn:—

"My lord, may I make bold to ask for a few moments your charitable indulgence to words you may deem presumptuous?"

"Be brief, then, Master Alwyn,—I am waited for."

"Alas, my lord! I can guess by whom,—by the one whom I seek myself,—by Sibyll Warner."

"How, Sir Goldsmith!" said Hastings, haughtily, "what knowest thou of my movements, and what care I for thine?"

"Hearken, my Lord Hastings,—hearken!" said Alwyn, repressing his resentment, and in a voice so earnest that it riveted the entire attention of the listener—"hearken, and judge not as noble judges craftsman, but as man should judge man. As the saw saith, 'We all lie alike in our graves.' From the first moment I saw this Sibyll Warner I loved her. Yes; smile disdainfully, but listen still. She was obscure and in distress. I loved her not for her fair looks alone; I loved her for her good gifts, for her patient industry, for her filial duty, for her struggles to give bread to her father's board. I did not say to myself, 'This girl will make a comely fere, a delicate paramour!' I said, 'This good daughter will make a wife whom an honest man may take to his heart and cherish!'" Poor Alwyn stopped, with tears in his voice, struggled with his emotions, and pursued: "My fortunes were more promising than hers; there was no cause why I might not hope. True, I had a rival then; young as myself, better born, comelier; but she loved him not. I foresaw that his love for her—if love it were—would cease. Methought that her mind would understand mine; as mine—verily I say it—yearned for hers! I could not look on the maidens of mine own rank, and who had lived around me, but what—oh, no, my lord, again I say, not the beauty, but the gifts, the mind, the heart of Sibyll, threw them all into the shade. You may think it strange that I—a plain, steadfast, trading, working, careful man—should have all these feelings; but I will tell you wherefore such as I sometimes have them, nurse them, brood on them, more than you lords and gentlemen, with all your graceful arts in pleasing. We know no light loves! no brief distractions to the one arch passion! We sober sons of the stall and the ware are no general gallants,—we love plainly, we love but once, and we love heartily. But who knows not the proverb, 'What's a gentleman but his pleasure?'—and what's pleasure but change? When Sibyll came to the palace, I soon heard her name linked with yours; I saw her cheek blush when you spoke. Well, well, well! after all, as the old wives tell us, 'Blushing is virtue's livery.' I said, 'She is a chaste and high-hearted girl.' This will pass, and the time will come when she can compare your love and mine. Now, my lord, the time has come. I know that you seek her. Yea, at this moment, I know that her heart beats for your footstep. Say but one word,—say that you love Sibyll Warner with the thought of wedding her,—say that, on your honour, noble Hastings, as gentleman and peer, and I will kneel at your feet, and beg your pardon for my vain follies, and go back to my ware, and work, and not repine. Say it! You are silent?

Then I implore you, still as peer and gentleman, to let the honest love save the maiden from the wooing that will blight her peace and blast her name! And now, Lord Hastings, I wait your gracious answer."

The sensations experienced by Hastings, as Alwyn thus concluded, were manifold and complicated; but, at the first, admiration and pity were the strongest.

"My poor friend," said he, kindly, "if you thus love a demoiselle deserving all my reverence, your words and your thoughts bespeak you no unworthy pretender; but take my counsel, good Alwyn. Come not—thou from the Chepe—come not to the court for a wife. Forget this fantasy."

"My lord, it is impossible! Forget I cannot, regret I may.

"Thou canst not succeed, man," resumed the nobleman, more coldly, "nor couldst if William Hastings had never lived. The eyes of women accustomed to gaze on the gorgeous externals of the world are blinded to plain worth like thine. It might have been different had the donzell never abided in a palace; but as it is, brave fellow, learn how these wounds of the heart scar over, and the spot becomes hard and callous evermore. What art thou, Master Nicholas Alwyn," continued Hastings, gloomily, and with a withering smile—"what art thou, to ask for a bliss denied to me—to all of us,—the bliss of carrying poetry into life, youth into manhood, by winning—the FIRST LOVED? But think not, sir lover, that I say this in jealousy or disparagement. Look yonder, by the leafless elm, the white robe of Sibyll Warner. Go and plead thy suit."

"Do I understand you, my lord?" said Alwyn, somewhat confused and perplexed by the tone and the manner Hastings adopted. "Does report err, and you do not love this maiden?"

"Fair master," returned Hastings, scornfully, "thou hast no right that I trow of to pry into my thoughts and secrets; I cannot acknowledge my judge in thee, good jeweller and goldsmith,—enough, surely, in all courtesy, that I yield thee the precedence. Tell thy tale, as movingly, if thou wilt, as thou hast told it to me; say of me all that thou fanciest thou hast reason to suspect; and if, Master Alwyn, thou woo and win the lady, fail not to ask me to thy wedding!"

There was in this speech and the bearing of the speaker that superb levity, that inexpressible and conscious superiority, that cold, ironical tranquillity, which awe and humble men more than grave disdain or imperious passion. Alwyn ground his teeth as he listened, and gazed in silent despair and rage upon the calm lord. Neither of these men could strictly be called handsome. Of the two, Alwyn had the advantage of more youthful prime, of a taller stature, of a more powerful, though less supple and graceful, frame. In their very dress, there was little of that marked distinction between classes which then usually prevailed, for the dark cloth tunic and surcoat of Hastings made a costume even simpler than the bright-coloured garb of the trader, with its broad trimmings of fur, and its aiglettes of elaborate lace. Between man and man, then, where was the visible, the mighty, the insurmountable difference in all that can charm the fancy and captivate the eye, which, as he gazed, Alwyn confessed to himself there existed between the two? Alas! how the distinctions least to be analyzed are ever the sternest! What lofty ease in that high-bred air; what histories of triumph seemed to speak in that quiet eye, sleeping in its own imperious lustre; what magic of command in that pale brow; what spells of persuasion in that artful lip! Alwyn muttered to himself, bowed his head involuntarily, and passed on at once from Hastings to Sibyll, who now, at the distance of some yards, had arrested her steps, in surprise to see the conference between the nobleman and the burgher.

But as he approached Sibyll, poor Alwyn felt all the firmness and courage he had exhibited with Hastings melt away. And the trepidation which a fearful but deep affection ever occasions in men of his character, made his movements more than usually constrained and awkward, as he cowered beneath the looks of the maid he so truly loved.

"Seekest thou me, Master Alwyn?" asked Sibyll, gently, seeing that, though he paused by her side, he spoke not.

"I do," returned Alwyn, abruptly, and again he was silent. At length, lifting his eyes and looking round him, he saw Hastings at the distance, leaning against the rampart, with folded arms; and the contrast of his rival's cold and arrogant indifference, and his own burning veins and bleeding heart, roused up his manly spirit, and gave to his tongue the eloquence which emotion gains when it once breaks the fetters it forges for itself.

"Look, look, Sibyll!" he said, pointing to Hastings "look! that man you believe loves you. If so—if he loved thee,—would he stand yonder—mark him—aloof, contemptuous, careless—while he knew that I was by your side?"

Sibyll turned upon the goldsmith eyes full of innocent surprise,—eyes that asked, plainly as eyes could speak, "And wherefore not, Master Alwyn?"

Alwyn so interpreted the look, and replied, as if she had spoken: "Because he must know how poor and tame is that feeble fantasy which alone can come from a soul worn bare with pleasure, to that which I feel and now own for thee,—the love of youth, born of the heart's first vigour; because he ought to fear that that love should prevail with thee; because that love ought to prevail. Sibyll, between us there are not imparity and obstacle. Oh, listen to me,—listen still! Frown not, turn not away." And, stung and animated by the sight of his rival, fired by the excitement of a contest on which the bliss of his own life and the weal of Sibyll's might depend, his voice was as the cry of a mortal agony, and affected the girl to the inmost recesses of her soul. "Oh, Alwyn, I frown not!" she said sweetly; "oh, Alwyn, I turn not away! Woe is me to give pain to so kind and brave a heart; but—"

"No, speak not yet. I have studied thee, I have read thee as a scholar would read a book. I know thee proud; I know thee aspiring; I know thou art vain of thy gentle blood, and distasteful of my yeoman's birth. There, I am not blind to thy faults, but I love thee despite them; and to please those faults I have toiled, schemed, dreamed, risen. I offer to thee the future with the certainty of a man who can command it. Wouldst thou wealth?—be patient (as ambition ever is): in a few years thou shalt have more gold than the wife of Lord Hastings can command; thou shalt lodge more statelily, fare more sumptuously; [This was no vain promise of Master Alwyn. At that time a successful trader made a fortune with signal rapidity, and enjoyed greater luxuries than most of the barons. All the gold in the country flowed into the coffers of the London merchants.] thou shalt walk on cloth-of-gold if thou wilt! Wouldst thou titles?—I will win them. Richard de la Pole, who founded the greatest duchy in the realm, was poorer than I, when he first served in a merchant's ware. Gold buys all things now. Oh, would to Heaven it could but buy me thee!"

"Master Alwyn, it is not gold that buys love. Be soothed. What can I say to thee to soften the harsh word 'Nay'?"

"You reject me, then, and at once? I ask not your hand now. I will wait, tarry, hope,—I care not if for years; wait till I can fulfil all I promise thee!"

Sibyll, affected to tears, shook her head mournfully; and there was a long and painful silence. Never was wooing more strangely circumstanced than this,—the one lover pleading while the other was in view; the one, ardent, impassioned, the other, calm and passive; and the silence of the last, alas! having all the success which the words of the other lacked. It might be said that the choice before Sibyll was a type of the choice ever given, but in vain, to the child of genius. Here a secure and peaceful life, an honoured home, a tranquil lot, free from ideal visions, it is true, but free also from the doubt and the terror, the storms of passion; there, the fatal influence of an affection, born of imagination, sinister, equivocal, ominous, but irresistible. And the child of genius fulfilled her destiny!

"Master Alwyn," said Sibyll, rousing herself to the necessary exertion, "I shall never cease gratefully to recall thy generous friendship, never cease to pray fervently for thy weal below. But forever and forever let this content thee,—I can no more."

Impressed by the grave and solemn tone of Sibyll, Alwyn hushed the groan that struggled to his lips, and gloomily replied: "I obey you, fair mistress, and I return to my workday life; but ere I go, I pray you misthink me not if I say this much: not alone for the bliss of hoping for a day in which I might call thee mine have I thus importuned, but, not less—I swear not less—from the soul's desire to save thee from what I fear will but lead to woe and wayment, to peril and pain, to weary days and sleepless nights. 'Better a little fire that warms than a great that burns.' Dost thou think that Lord Hastings, the vain, the dissolute—"

"Cease, sir!" said Sibyll, proudly; "me reprove if thou wilt, but lower not my esteem for thee by slander against another!"

"What!" said Alwyn, bitterly; "doth even one word of counsel chafe thee? I tell thee that if thou dreamest that Lord Hastings loves Sibyll Warner as man loves the maiden he would wed, thou deceivest thyself to thine own misery. If thou wouldst prove it, go to him now,—go and say, 'Wilt thou give me that home of peace and honour, that shelter for my father's old age under a son's roof which the trader I despise proffers me in vain?"

"If it were already proffered me—by him?" said Sibyll, in a low voice, and blushing deeply.

Alwyn started. "Then I wronged him; and—and—" he added generously, though with a faint sickness at his heart, "I can yet be happy in thinking thou art so. Farewell, maiden, the saints guard thee from one memory of regret at what hath passed between us!"

He pulled his bonnet hastily over his brows, and departed with unequal and rapid strides. As he passed the spot where Hastings stood leaning his arm upon the wall, and his face upon his hand, the nobleman looked up, and said,—

"Well, Sir Goldsmith, own at least that thy trial hath been a fair one!" Then struck with the anguish written upon Alwyn's face, he walked up to him, and, with a frank, compassionate impulse, laid his hand on his shoulder. "Alwyn," he said, "I have felt what you feel now; I have survived it, and the world hath not prospered with me less! Take with you a compassion that respects, and does not degrade you."

"Do not deceive her, my lord,—she trusts and loves you! You never deceived man,—the wide world says it,—do not deceive woman! Deeds kill men, words women!" Speaking thus simply, Alwyn strode on, and vanished.

Hastings slowly and silently advanced to Sibyll. Her rejection of Alwyn had by no means tended to reconcile him to the marriage he himself had proffered. He might well suppose that the girl, even if unguided by affection, would not hesitate between a mighty nobleman and an obscure goldsmith. His pride was sorely wounded that the latter should have even thought himself the equal of one whom he had proposed, though but in a passionate impulse, to raise to his own state. And yet as he neared Sibyll, and, with a light footstep, she sprang forward to meet him, her eyes full of sweet joy and confidence, he shrank from an avowal which must wither up a heart opening thus all its bloom of youth and love to greet him.

"Ah, fair lord," said the maiden, "was it kindly in thee to permit poor Alwyn to inflict on me so sharp a pain, and thou to stand calmly distant? Sure, alas! that had thy humble rival proffered a crown, it had been the same to Sibyll! Oh, how the grief it was mine to cause grieved me; and yet, through all, I had one

selfish, guilty gleam of pleasure,—to think that I had not been loved so well, if I were all unworthy the sole love I desire or covet!"

"And yet, Sibyll, this young man can in all, save wealth and a sounding name, give thee more than I can,—a heart undarkened by moody memories, a temper unsoured by the world's dread and bitter lore of man's frailty and earth's sorrow. Ye are not far separated by ungenial years, and might glide to a common grave hand in hand; but I, older in heart than in age, am yet so far thine elder in the last, that these hairs will be gray, and this form bent, while thy beauty is in its prime, and—but thou weepest!"

"I weep that thou shouldst bring one thought of time to sadden my thoughts, which are of eternity. Love knows no age, it foresees no grave! its happiness and its trust behold on the earth but one glory, melting into the hues of heaven, where they who love lastingly pass calmly on to live forever! See, I weep not now!"

"And did not this honest burgher," pursued Hastings, softened and embarrassed, but striving to retain his cruel purpose, "tell thee to distrust me; tell thee that my vows were false?"

"Methinks, if an angel told me so, I should disbelieve!"

"Why, look thee, Sibyll, suppose his warning true; suppose that at this hour I sought thee with intent to say that that destiny which ambition weaves for itself forbade me to fulfil a word hotly spoken; that I could not wed thee,—should I not seem to thee a false wooer, a poor trifler with thy earnest heart; and so, couldst thou not recall the love of him whose truer and worthier homage yet lingers in thine ear, and with him be happy?"

Sibyll lifted her dark eyes, yet humid, upon the unrevealing face of the speaker, and gazed on him with wistful and inquiring sadness; then, shrinking from his side, she crossed her arms meekly on her bosom, and thus said,—

"If ever, since we parted, one such thought hath glanced across thee—one thought of repentance at the sacrifice of pride, or the lessening of power—which (she faltered, broke off the sentence, and resumed)—in one word, if thou wouldst retract, say it now, and I will not accuse thy falsehood, but bless thy truth."

"Thou couldst be consoled, then, by thy pride of woman, for the loss of an unworthy lover?"

"My lord, are these questions fair?"

Hastings was silent. The gentler part of his nature struggled severely with the harder. The pride of Sibyll moved him no less than her trust; and her love in both was so evident, so deep, so exquisitely contrasting the cold and frivolous natures amidst which his lot had fallen, that he recoiled from casting away forever a heart never to be replaced. Standing on that bridge of life, with age before and youth behind, he felt that never again could he be so loved, or, if so loved by one so worthy of whatever of pure affection, of young romance, was yet left to his melancholy and lonely soul.

He took her hand, and, as she felt its touch, her firmness forsook her, her head drooped upon her bosom, and she burst into an agony of tears.

"Oh, Sibyll, forgive me! Smile on me again, Sibyll!" exclaimed Hastings, subdued and melted. But, alas! the heart once bruised and galled recovers itself but slowly, and it was many minutes before the softest words the eloquent lover could shape to sound sufficed to dry those burning tears, and bring back the enchanting smile,—nay, even then the smile was forced and joyless. They walked on for some moments, both in thought, till Hastings said: "Thou lovest me, Sibyll, and art worthy of all the love that man can feel

for maid; and yet, canst thou solve me this question, nor chide me that I ask it, Dost thou not love the world and the world's judgments more than me? What is that which women call honour? What makes them shrink from all love that takes not the form and circumstance of the world's hollow rites? Does love cease to be love, unless over its wealth of trust and emotion the priest mouths his empty blessing? Thou in thy graceful pride art angered if I, in wedding thee, should remember the sacrifice which men like me—I own it fairly—deem as great as man can make; and yet thou wouldst fly my love if it wooed thee to a sacrifice of thine own."

Artfully was the question put, and Hastings smiled to himself in imagining the reply it must bring; and then Sibyll answered, with the blush which the very subject called forth,

"Alas, my lord, I am but a poor casuist, but I feel that if I asked thee to forfeit whatever men respect,—honour and repute for valour, to be traitor and dastard,—thou couldst love me no more; and marvel you if, when man woos woman to forfeit all that her sex holds highest,—to be in woman what dastard and traitor is in man,—she hears her conscience and her God speak in a louder voice than can come from a human lip? The goods and pomps of the world we are free to sacrifice, and true love heeds and counts them not; but true love cannot sacrifice that which makes up love,—it cannot sacrifice the right to be loved below; the hope to love on in the realm above; the power to pray with a pure soul for the happiness it yearns to make; the blessing to seem ever good and honoured in the eyes of the one by whom alone it would be judged. And therefore, sweet lord, true love never contemplates this sacrifice; and if once it believes itself truly loved, it trusts with a fearless faith in the love on which it leans."

"Sibyll, would to Heaven I had seen thee in my youth! Would to Heaven I were more worthy of thee!" And in that interview Hastings had no heart to utter what he had resolved, "Sibyll, I sought thee but to say Farewell."

CHAPTER VI. WARWICK RETURNS—APPEASES A DISCONTENTED PRINCE—AND CONFERS WITH A REVENGEFUL CONSPIRATOR.

It was not till late in the evening that Warwick arrived at his vast residence in London, where he found not only Marmaduke Nevile ready to receive him, but a more august expectant, in George Duke of Clarence. Scarcely had the earl crossed the threshold, when the duke seized his arm, and leading him into the room that adjoined the hall, said,—

"Verily, Edward is besotted no less than ever by his wife's leech-like family. Thou knowest my appointment to the government of Ireland; Isabel, like myself, cannot endure the subordinate vassalage we must brook at the court, with the queen's cold looks and sour words. Thou knowest, also, with what vain pretexts Edward has put me of; and now, this very day, he tells me that he hath changed his humour,—that I am not stern enough for the Irish kernes; that he loves me too well to banish me, forsooth; and that Worcester, the people's butcher but the queen's favourite, must have the post so sacredly pledged to me. I see in this Elizabeth's crafty malice. Is this struggle between king's blood and queen's kith to go on forever?"

"Calm thyself, George; I will confer with the king tomorrow, and hope to compass thy not too arrogant desire. Certes, a king's brother is the fittest vice-king for the turbulent kernes of Ireland, who are ever

flattered into obeisance by ceremony and show. The government was pledged to thee—Edward can scarcely be serious. Moreover, Worcester, though forsooth a learned man—Mort-Dieu! methinks that same learning fills the head to drain the heart!—is so abhorred for his cruelties that his very landing in Ireland will bring a new rebellion to add to our already festering broils and sores. Calm thyself, I say. Where didst thou leave Isabel?"

"With my mother."

"And Anne?—the queen chills not her young heart with cold grace?"

"Nay, the queen dare not unleash her malice against Edward's will; and, to do him justice, he hath shown all honour to Lord Warwick's daughter."

"He is a gallant prince, with all his faults," said the father, heartily, "and we must bear with him, George; for verily he hath bound men by a charm to love him. Stay thou and share my hasty repast, and over the wine we will talk of thy views. Spare me now for a moment; I have to prepare work eno' for a sleepless night. This Lincolnshire rebellion promises much trouble. Lord Willoughby has joined it; more than twenty thousand men are in arms. I have already sent to convene the knights and barons on whom the king can best depend, and must urge their instant departure for their halls, to raise men and meet the foe. While Edward feasts, his minister must toil. Tarry a while till I return." The earl re-entered the hall, and beckoned to Marmaduke, who stood amongst a group of squires.

"Follow me; I may have work for thee." Warwick took a taper from one of the servitors, and led the way to his own more private apartment. On the landing of the staircase, by a small door, stood his body-squire—"Is the prisoner within?"

"Yes, my lord."

"Good!"—The earl opened the door by which the squire had mounted guard, and bade Marmaduke wait without.

The inmate of the chamber, whose dress bore the stains of fresh travel and hard riding, lifted his face hastily as the earl entered.

"Robin Hilyard," said Warwick, "I have mused much how to reconcile my service to the king with the gratitude I owe to a man who saved me from great danger. In the midst of thy unhappy and rebellious designs thou wert captured and brought to me; the papers found on thee attest a Lancastrian revolt, so ripening towards a mighty gathering, and so formidable from the adherents whom the gold and intrigues of King Louis have persuaded to risk land and life for the Red Rose, that all the king's friends can do to save his throne is now needed. In this revolt thou hast been the scheming brain, the master hand, the match to the bombard, the fire brand to the flax. Thou smilest, man! Alas! seest thou not that it is my stern duty to send thee bound hand and foot before the king's council, for the brake to wring from thee thy guilty secrets, and the gibbet to close thy days?"

"I am prepared," said Hilyard; "when the bombard explodes, the match has become useless; when the flame smites the welkin, the firebrand is consumed!"

"Bold man! what seest thou in this rebellion that can profit thee?"

"I see, looming through the chasms and rents made in the feudal order by civil war, the giant image of a free people."

“And thou wouldst be a martyr for the multitude, who deserted thee at Olney?”

“As thou for the king who dishonoured thee at Shene!”

Warwick frowned, and there was a moment’s pause; at last, said the earl: “Look you, Robin, I would fain not have on my hands the blood of a man who saved my life. I believe thee, though a fanatic and half madman,—I believe thee true in word as rash of deed. Swear to me on the cross of this dagger that thou wilt lay aside all scheme and plot for this rebellion, all aid and share in civil broil and dissension, and thy life and liberty are restored to thee. In that intent, I have summoned my own kinsman, Marmaduke Nevile. He waits without the door; he shall conduct thee safely to the seashore; thou shalt gain in peace my government of Calais, and my seneschal there shall find thee all thou canst need,—meat for thy hunger and moneys for thy pastime. Accept my mercy, take the oath, and begone.”

“My lord,” answered Hilyard, much touched and affected, “blame not thyself if this carcass feed the crows—my blood be on mine own head! I cannot take this oath; I cannot live in peace; strife and broil are grown to me food and drink. Oh, my lord! thou knowest not what dark and baleful memories made me an agent in God’s hand against this ruthless Edward!” and then passionately, with whitening lips and convulsive features, Hilyard recounted to the startled Warwick the same tale which had roused the sympathy of Adam Warner.

The earl, whose affections were so essentially homely and domestic, was even more shocked than the scholar by the fearful narrative.

“Unhappy man!” he said with moistened eyes, “from the core of my heart I pity thee. But thou, the scathed sufferer from civil war, wilt thou be now its dread reviver?”

“If Edward had wronged thee, great earl, as me, poor franklin, what would be thine answer? In vain moralize to him whom the spectre of a murdered child and the shriek of a maniac wife haunt and hound on to vengeance! So send me to rack and halter. Be there one curse more on the soul of Edward!”

“Thou shalt not die through my witness,” said the earl, abruptly; and he quitted the chamber.

Securing the door by a heavy bolt on the outside, he gave orders to his squire to attend to the comforts of the prisoner; and then turning into his closet with Marmaduke, said: “I sent for thee, young cousin, with design to commit to thy charge one whose absence from England I deemed needful—that design I must abandon. Go back to the palace, and see, if thou canst, the king before he sleeps; say that this rising in Lincolnshire is more than a riot,—it is the first burst of a revolution! that I hold council here to-night, and every shire, ere the morrow, shall have its appointed captain. I will see the king at morning. Yet stay—gain sight of my child Anne; she will leave the court to-morrow. I will come for her; bid her train be prepared; she and the countess must away to Calais,—England again hath ceased to be a home for women! What to do with this poor rebel?” muttered the earl, when alone; “release him I cannot; slay him I will not. Hum, there is space enough in these walls to inclose a captive.”

CHAPTER VII. THE FEAR AND THE FLIGHT.

King Edward feasted high, and Sibyll sat in her father’s chamber,—she silent with thought of love, Adam silent in the toils of science. The Eureka was well-nigh finished, rising from its ruins more perfect, more

elaborate, than before. Maiden and scholar, each seeming near to the cherished goal,—one to love's genial altar, the other to fame's lonely shrine.

Evening advanced, night began, night deepened. King Edward's feast was over, but still in his perfumed chamber the wine sparkled in the golden cup. It was announced to him that Sir Marmaduke Nevile, just arrived from the earl's house, craved an audience. The king, pre-occupied in deep revery, impatiently postponed it till the morrow.

"To-morrow," said the gentleman in attendance, "Sir Marmaduke bids me say, fearful that the late hour would forbid his audience, that Lord Warwick himself will visit your Grace. I fear, sire, that the disturbances are great indeed, for the squires and gentlemen in Lady Anne's train have orders to accompany her to Calais to-morrow."

"To-morrow, to-morrow!" repeated the king—"well, sir, you are dismissed."

The Lady Anne (to whom Sibyll had previously communicated the king's kindly consideration for Master Warner) had just seen Marmaduke, and learned the new dangers that awaited the throne and the realm. The Lancastrians were then openly in arms for the prince of her love, and against her mighty father!

The Lady Anne sat a while, sorrowful and musing, and then, before yon crucifix, the Lady Anne knelt in prayer. Sir Marmaduke Nevile descends to the court below, and some three or four busy, curious gentlemen, not yet a-bed, seize him by the arm, and pray him to say what storm is in the wind.

The night deepened still. The wine is drained in King Edward's goblet; King Edward has left his chamber; and Sibyll, entreating her father, but in vain, to suspend his toil, has kissed the damps from his brow, and is about to retire to her neighbouring room. She has turned to the threshold, when, hark! a faint—a distant cry, a woman's shriek, the noise of a clapping door! The voice—it is the voice of Anne! Sibyll passed the threshold, she is in the corridor; the winter moon shines through the open arches, the air is white and cold with frost. Suddenly the door at the farther end is thrown wide open, a form rushes into the corridor, it passes Sibyll, halts, turns round. "Oh, Sibyll!" cried the Lady Anne, in a voice wild with horror, "save me—aid—help! Merciful Heaven, the king!"

Instinctively, wonderingly, tremblingly, Sibyll drew Anne into the chamber she had just quitted, and as they gained its shelter, as Anne sank upon the floor, the gleam of cloth-of-gold flashed through the dim atmosphere, and Edward, yet in the royal robe in which he had dazzled all the eyes at his kingly feast, stood within the chamber. His countenance was agitated with passion, and its clear hues flushed red with wine. At his entrance Anne sprang from the floor, and rushed to Warner, who, in dumb bewilderment, had suspended his task, and stood before the Eureka, from which steamed and rushed the dark, rapid smoke, while round and round, labouring and groaning, rolled its fairy wheels. [The gentle reader will doubtless bear in mind that Master Warner's complicated model had but little resemblance to the models of the steam-engine in our own day, and that it was usually connected with other contrivances, for the better display of the principle it was intended to illustrate.]

"Sir," cried Anne, clinging to him convulsively, "you are a father; by your child's soul, protect Lord Warwick's daughter!"

Roused from his abstraction by this appeal, the poor scholar wound his arm round the form thus clinging to him, and raising his head with dignity, replied, "Thy name, youth, and sex protect thee!"

"Unhand that lady, vile sorcerer," exclaimed the king, "I am her protector. Come, Anne, sweet Anne, fair lady, thou mistakest,—come!" he whispered. "Give not to these low natures matter for guesses that do but shame thee. Let thy king and cousin lead thee back to thy sweet rest."

He sought, though gently, to loosen the arms that wound themselves round the old man; but Anne, not heeding, not listening, distracted by a terror that seemed to shake her whole frame and to threaten her very reason, continued to cry out loudly upon her father's name,—her great father, wakeful, then, for the baffled ravisher's tottering throne!

Edward had still sufficient possession of his reason to be alarmed lest some loiterer or sentry in the outer court might hear the cries which his attempts to soothe but the more provoked. Grinding his teeth, and losing patience, he said to Adam, "Thou knowest me, friend,—I am thy king. Since the Lady Anne, in her bewilderment, prefers thine aid to mine, help to bear her back to her apartment; and thou, young mistress, lend thine arm. This wizard's den is no fit chamber for our high-born guest."

"No, no; drive me not hence, Master Warner—that man—that king—give me not up to his—his—"

"Beware!" exclaimed the king.

It was not till now that Adam's simple mind comprehended the true cause of Anne's alarm, which Sibyll still conjectured not, but stood trembling by her friend's side, and close to her father.

"Do not fear, maiden;" said Adam Warner, laying his hand upon the loosened locks that swept over his bosom, "for though I am old and feeble, God and his angels are in every spot where virtue trembles and resists. My lord king, thy sceptre extends not over a human soul!"

"Dotard, prate not to me!" said Edward, laying his hand on his dagger. Sibyll saw the movement, and instinctively placed herself between her father and the king. That slight form, those pure, steadfast eyes, those features, noble at once and delicate, recalled to Edward the awe which had seized him in his first dark design; and again that awe came over him. He retreated.

"I mean harm to none," said he, almost submissively; "and if I am so unhappy as to scare with my presence the Lady Anne, I will retire, praying you, donzell, to see to her state, and lead her back to her chamber when it so pleases herself. Saying this much, I command you, old man, and you, maiden, to stand back while I but address one sentence to the Lady Anne."

With these words he gently advanced to Anne, and took her hand; but, snatching it from him, the poor lady broke from Adam, rushed to the casement, opened it, and seeing some figures indistinct and distant in the court below, she called out in a voice of such sharp agony that it struck remorse and even terror into Edward's soul.

"Alas!" he muttered, "she will not listen to me! her mind is distraught! What frenzy has been mine! Pardon—pardon, Anne,—oh, pardon!"

Adam Warner laid his hand on the king's arm, and he drew the imperious despot away as easily as a nurse leads a docile child.

"King!" said the brave old man, "may God pardon thee; for if the last evil hath been wrought upon this noble lady, David sinned not more heavily than thou."

"She is pure, inviolate,—I swear it!" said the king, humbly. "Anne, only say that I am forgiven."

But Anne spoke not: her eyes were fixed, her lips had fallen; she was insensible as a corpse,—dumb and frozen with her ineffable dread. Suddenly steps were heard upon the stairs; the door opened, and Marmaduke Nevile entered abruptly.

"Surely I heard my lady's voice,—surely! What marvel this?—the king! Pardon, my liege!" and he bent his knee.

The sight of Marmaduke dissolved the spell of awe and repentant humiliation which had chained a king's dauntless heart. His wonted guile returned to him with his self-possession.

"Our wise craftsman's strange and weird invention"—and Edward pointed to the Eureka—"has scared our fair cousin's senses, as, by sweet Saint George, it well might! Go back, Sir Marmaduke, we will leave Lady Anne for the moment to the care of Mistress Sibyll. Donzell, remember my command. Come, sir"—(and he drew the wondering Marmaduke from the chamber); but as soon as he had seen the knight descend the stairs and regain the court, he returned to the room, and in a low, stern voice, said, "Look you, Master Warner, and you, damsel, if ever either of ye breathe one word of what has been your dangerous fate to hear and witness, kings have but one way to punish slanderers, and silence but one safeguard!—trifle not with death!"

He then closed the door, and resought his own chamber. The Eastern spices, which were burned in the sleeping-rooms of the great, still made the air heavy with their feverish fragrance. The king seated himself, and strove to recollect his thoughts, and examine the peril he had provoked. The resistance and the terror of Anne had effectually banished from his heart the guilty passion it had before harboured; for emotions like his, and in such a nature, are quick of change. His prevailing feeling was one of sharp repentance and reproachful shame. But as he roused himself from a state of mind which light characters ever seek to escape, the image of the dark-browed earl rose before him, and fear succeeded to mortification; but even this, however well-founded, could not endure long in a disposition so essentially scornful of all danger. Before morning the senses of Anne must return to her. So gentle a bosom could be surely reasoned out of resentment, or daunted, at least, from betraying to her stern father a secret that, if told, would smear the sward of England with the gore of thousands. What woman will provoke war and bloodshed? And for an evil not wrought, for a purpose not fulfilled? The king was grateful that his victim had escaped him. He would see Anne before the earl could, and appease her anger, obtain her silence! For Warner and for Sibyll, they would not dare to reveal; and, if they did, the lips that accuse a king soon belie themselves, while a rack can torture truth, and the doomsman be the only judge between the subject and the head that wears a crown.

Thus reasoning with himself, his soul faced the solitude. Meanwhile Marmaduke regained the courtyard, where, as we have said, he had been detained in conferring with some of the gentlemen in the king's service, who, hearing that he brought important tidings from the earl, had abstained from rest till they could learn if the progress of the new rebellion would bring their swords into immediate service. Marmaduke, pleased to be of importance, had willingly satisfied their curiosity, as far as he was able, and was just about to retire to his own chamber, when the cry of Anne had made him enter the postern-door which led up the stairs to Adam's apartment, and which was fortunately not locked; and now, on returning, he had again a new curiosity to allay. Having briefly said that Master Warner had taken that untoward hour to frighten the women with a machine that vomited smoke and howled piteously, Marmaduke dismissed the group to their beds, and was about to seek his own, when, looking once more towards the casement, he saw a white hand gleaming in the frosty moonlight, and beckoning to him.

The knight crossed himself, and reluctantly ascended the stairs, and re-entered the wizard's den.

The Lady Anne had so far recovered herself, that a kind of unnatural calm had taken possession of her mind, and changed her ordinary sweet and tractable nature into one stern, obstinate resolution,—to escape, if possible, that unholy palace. And as soon as Marmaduke re-entered, Anne met him at the threshold, and laying her hand convulsively on his arm, said, "By the name you bear, by your love to my father, aid me to quit these walls."

In great astonishment, Marmaduke stared, without reply. “Do you deny me, sir?” said Anne, almost sternly.

“Lady and mistress mine,” answered Marmaduke, “I am your servant in all things. Quit these walls, the palace!—How?—the gates are closed. Nay, and what would my lord say, if at night—”

“If at night!” repeated Anne, in a hollow voice; and then pausing, burst into a terrible laugh. Recovering herself abruptly, she moved to the door, “I will go forth alone, and trust in God and Our Lady.”

Sibyll sprang forward to arrest her steps, and Marmaduke hastened to Adam, and whispered, “Poor lady, is her mind unsettled? Hast thou, in truth, distracted her with thy spells and glamour?”

“Hush!” answered the old man; and he whispered in Nevile’s ear.

Scarcely had the knight caught the words, than his cheek paled, his eyes flashed fire. “The great earl’s daughter!” he exclaimed. “Infamy—horror—she is right!” He broke from the student, approached Anne, who still struggled with Sibyll, and kneeling before her, said, in a voice choked with passions at once fierce and tender,—

“Lady, you are right. Unseemly it may be for one of your quality and sex to quit this place with me, and alone; but at least I have a man’s heart, a knight’s honour. Trust to me your safety, noble maiden, and I will cut your way, even through yon foul king’s heart, to your great father’s side!”

Anne did not seem quite to understand his words; but she smiled on him as he knelt, and gave him her hand. The responsibility he had assumed quickened all the intellect of the young knight. As he took and kissed the hand extended to him, he felt the ring upon his finger,—the ring intrusted to him by Alwyn, the king’s signet-ring, before which would fly open every gate. He uttered a joyous exclamation, loosened his long night-cloak, and praying Anne to envelop her form in its folds, drew the hood over her head; he was about to lead her forth when he halted suddenly.

“Alack,” said he, turning to Sibyll, “even though we may escape the Tower, no boatman now can be found on the river. The way through the streets is dark and perilous, and beset with midnight ruffians.”

“Verily,” said Warner, “the danger is past now. Let the noble demoiselle rest here till morning. The king dare not again—”

“Dare not!” interrupted Marmaduke. “Alas! you little know King Edward.”

At that name Anne shuddered, opened the door, and hurried down the stairs; Sibyll and Marmaduke followed her.

“Listen, Sir Marmaduke,” said Sibyll. “Close without the Tower is the house of a noble lady, the dame of Longueville, where Anne may rest in safety, while you seek Lord Warwick. I will go with you, if you can obtain egress for us both.”

“Brave damsel!” said Marmaduke, with emotion; “but your own safety—the king’s anger—no—besides a third, your dress not concealed, would create the warder’s suspicion. Describe the house.”

“The third to the left, by the river’s side, with an arched porch, and the fleur-de-lis embossed on the walls.”

“It is not so dark but we shall find it. Fare you well, gentle mistress.”

While they yet spoke, they had both reached the side of Anne. Sibyll still persisted in the wish to accompany her friend; but Marmaduke's representation of the peril to life itself that might befall her father, if Edward learned she had abetted Anne's escape, finally prevailed. The knight and his charge gained the outer gate.

"Haste, haste, Master Warder!" he cried, beating at the door with his dagger till it opened jealously,—"messages of importance to the Lord Warwick. We have the king's signet. Open!"

The sleepy warder glanced at the ring; the gates were opened; they were without the fortress, they hurried on. "Cheer up, noble lady; you are safe, you shall be avenged!" said Marmaduke, as he felt the steps of his companion falter. But the reaction had come. The effort Anne had hitherto made was for escape, for liberty; the strength ceased, the object gained; her head drooped, she muttered a few incoherent words, and then sense and life left her. Marmaduke paused in great perplexity and alarm. But lo, a light in a house before him! That house the third to the river,—the only one with the arched porch described by Sibyll. He lifted the light and holy burden in his strong arms, he gained the door; to his astonishment it was open; a light burned on the stairs; he heard, in the upper room, the sound of whispered voices, and quick, soft footsteps hurrying to and fro. Still bearing the insensible form of his companion, he ascended the staircase, and entered at once upon a chamber, in which, by a dim lamp, he saw some two or three persons assembled round a bed in the recess. A grave man advanced to him, as he paused at the threshold.

"Whom seek you?"

"The Lady Longueville."

"Hush?"

"Who needs me?" said a faint voice, from the curtained recess.

"My name is Nevile," answered Marmaduke, with straightforward brevity. "Mistress Sibyll Warner told me of this house, where I come for an hour's shelter to my companion, the Lady Anne, daughter of the Earl of Warwick."

Marmaduke resigned his charge to an old woman, who was the nurse in that sick-chamber, and who lifted the hood and chafed the pale, cold hands of the young maiden; the knight then strode to the recess. The Lady of Longueville was on the bed of death—an illness of two days had brought her to the brink of the grave; but there was in her eye and countenance a restless and preternatural animation, and her voice was clear and shrill, as she said,—

"Why does the daughter of Warwick, the Yorkist, seek refuge in the house of the fallen and childless Lancastrian?"

"Swear by thy hopes in Christ that thou will tend and guard her while I seek the earl, and I reply."

"Stranger, my name is Longueville, my birth noble,—those pledges of hospitality and trust are stronger than hollow oaths. Say on!"

"Because, then," whispered the knight, after waving the bystanders from the spot, "because the earl's daughter flies dishonour in a king's palace, and her insulter is the king!"

Before the dying woman could reply, Anne, recovered by the cares of the experienced nurse, suddenly sprang to the recess, and kneeling by the bedside, exclaimed wildly,—"Save me! bide me! save me!"

"Go and seek the earl, whose right hand destroyed my house and his lawful sovereign's throne,—go! I will live till he arrives!" said the childless widow, and a wild gleam of triumph shot over her haggard features.

CHAPTER VIII. THE GROUP ROUND THE DEATH-BED OF THE LANCASTRIAN WIDOW.

The dawning sun gleamed through gray clouds upon a small troop of men, armed in haste, who were grouped round a covered litter by the outer door of the Lady Longueville's house; while in the death-chamber, the Earl of Warwick, with a face as pale as the dying woman's, stood beside the bed, Anne calmly leaning on his breast, her eyes closed, and tears yet moist on her long fringes.

"Ay, ay, ay!" said the Lancastrian noblewoman, "ye men of wrath and turbulence should reap what ye have sown! This is the king for whom ye dethroned the sainted Henry! this the man for whom ye poured forth the blood of England's best! Ha! ha! Look down from heaven, my husband, my martyr-sons! The daughter of your mightiest foe flies to this lonely hearth,—flies to the death-bed of the powerless woman for refuge from the foul usurper whom that foe placed upon the throne!"

"Spare me," muttered Warwick, in a low voice, and between his grinded teeth. The room had been cleared, and Dr. Godard (the grave man who had first accosted Marmaduke, and who was the priest summoned to the dying) alone—save the scarce conscious Anne herself—witnessed the ghastly and awful conference.

"Hush, daughter," said the man of peace, lifting the solemn crucifix,—"calm thyself to holier thoughts."

The lady impatiently turned from the priest, and grasping the strong right arm of Warwick with her shrivelled and trembling fingers, resumed in a voice that struggled to repress the gasps which broke its breath,—

"But thou—oh, thou wilt bear this indignity! thou, the chief of England's barons, wilt see no dishonour in the rank love of the vilest of England's kings! Oh, yes, ye Yorkists have the hearts of varlets, not of men and fathers!"

"By the symbol from which thou turnest, woman!" exclaimed the earl, giving vent to the fury which the presence of death had before suppressed, "by Him to whom, morning and night, I have knelt in grateful blessing for the virtuous life of this beloved child, I will have such revenge on the recreant whom I kinged, as shall live in the rolls of England till the trump of the Judgment Angel!"

"Father," said Anne, startled by her father's vehemence from her half-swoon, half-sleep—"Father, think no more of the past,—take me to my mother! I want the clasp of my mother's arms!"

"Leave us,—leave the dying, Sir Earl and son," said Godard. "I too am Lancastrian; I too would lay down my life for the holy Henry; but I shudder, in the hour of death, to hear yon pale lips, that should pray for pardon, preach to thee of revenge."

"Revenge!" shrieked out the dame of Longueville, as, sinking fast and fast, she caught the word—"revenge! Thou hast sworn revenge on Edward of York, Lord Warwick,—sworn it in the chamber of

death, in the ear of one who will carry that word to the hero-dead of a hundred battlefields! Ha! the sun has risen! Priest—Godard—thine arms—support—raise—bear me to the casement! Quick—quick! I would see my king once more! Quick—quick! and then—then—I will hear thee pray!"

The priest, half chiding, yet half in pity, bore the dying woman to the casement. She motioned to him to open it; he obeyed. The sun, just above the welkin, shone over the lordly Thames, gilded the gloomy fortress of the Tower, and glittered upon the window of Henry's prison.

"There—there! It is he,—it is my king! Hither,—lord, rebel earl,—hither. Behold your sovereign. Repent, revenge!"

With her livid and outstretched hand, the Lancastrian pointed to the huge Wakefield tower. The earl's dark eye beheld in the dim distance a pale and reverend countenance, recognized even from afar. The dying woman fixed her glazing eyes upon the wronged and mighty baron, and suddenly her arm fell to her side, the face became set as into stone, the last breath of life gurgled within, and fled; and still those glazing eyes were fixed on the earl's hueless face, and still in his ear, and echoed by a thousand passions in his heart, thrilled the word which had superseded prayer, and in which the sinner's soul had flown,—REVENGE!

BOOK IX. THE WANDERERS AND THE EXILES.

CHAPTER I. HOW THE GREAT BARON BECOMES AS GREAT A REBEL.

Hilyard was yet asleep in the chamber assigned to him as his prison, when a rough grasp shook off his slumbers, and he saw the earl before him, with a countenance so changed from its usual open majesty, so dark and sombre, that he said involuntarily, "You send me to the doomsman,—I am ready!"

"Hist, man! Thou hatest Edward of York?"

"An it were my last word, yes!"

"Give me thy hand—we are friends! Stare not at me with those eyes of wonder, ask not the why nor wherefore! This last night gave Edward a rebel more in Richard Nevile! A steed waits thee at my gates; ride fast to young Sir Robert Welles with this letter. Bid him not be dismayed; bid him hold out, for ere many days are past, Lord Warwick, and it may be also the Duke of Clarence, will join their force with his. Mark, I say not that I am for Henry of Lancaster,—I say only that I am against Edward of York. Farewell, and when we meet again, blessed be the arm that first cuts its way to a tyrant's heart!"

Without another word, Warwick left the chamber. Hilyard at first could not believe his senses; but as he dressed himself in haste, he pondered over all those causes of dissension which had long notoriously subsisted between Edward and the earl, and rejoiced that the prophecy that he had long so shrewdly

hazarded was at last fulfilled. Descending the stairs he gained the gate, where Marmaduke awaited him, while a groom held a stout haquenee (as the common riding-horse was then called), whose points and breeding promised speed and endurance.

“Mount, Master Robin,” said Marmaduke; “I little thought we should ever ride as friends together! Mount!—our way for some miles out of London is the same. You go into Lincolnshire, I into the shire of Hertford.”

“And for the same purpose?” asked Hilyard, as he sprang upon his horse, and the two men rode briskly on.

“Yes!”

“Lord Warwick is changed at last?”

“At last!”

“For long?”

“Till death!”

“Good, I ask no more!”

A sound of hoofs behind made the franklin turn his head, and he saw a goodly troop, armed to the teeth, emerge from the earl’s house and follow the lead of Marmaduke. Meanwhile Warwick was closeted with Montagu.

Worldly as the latter was, and personally attached to Edward, he was still keenly alive to all that touched the honour of his House; and his indignation at the deadly insult offered to his niece was even more loudly expressed than that of the fiery earl.

“To deem,” he exclaimed, “to deem Elizabeth Woodville worthy of his throne, and to see in Anne Nevile the only worthy to be his leman!”

“Ay!” said the earl, with a calmness perfectly terrible, from its unnatural contrast to his ordinary heat, when but slightly chafed, “ay! thou sayest it! But be tranquil; cold,—cold as iron, and as hard! We must scheme now, not storm and threaten—I never schemed before! You are right,—honesty is a fool’s policy! Would I had known this but an hour before the news reached me! I have already dismissed our friends to their different districts, to support King Edward’s cause—he is still king,—a little while longer king! Last night, I dismissed them—last night, at the very hour when—O God, give me patience!” He paused, and added in a low voice, “Yet—yet—how long the moments are how long! Ere the sun sets, Edward, I trust, will be in my power!”

“How?”

“He goes, to-day, to the More,—he will not go the less for what hath chanced; he will trust to the archbishop to make his peace with me,—churchmen are not fathers! Marmaduke Nevile hath my orders; a hundred armed men, who would march against the fiend himself, if I said the word, will surround the More, and seize the guest!”

“But what then? Who, if Edward, I dare not say the word—who is to succeed him?”

“Clarence is the male heir.”

"But with what face to the people proclaim—"

"There—there it is!" interrupted Warwick. "I have thought of that,—I have thought of all things; my mind seems to have traversed worlds since daybreak! True! all commotion to be successful must have a cause that men can understand. Nevertheless, you, Montagu—you have a smoother tongue than I; go to our friends—to those who hate Edward—seek them, sound them!"

"And name to them Edward's infamy?"

"'S death, dost thou think it? Thou, a Monthermer and Montagu: proclaim to England the foul insult to the hearth of an English gentleman and peer! feed every ribald Bourdour with song and roundel of Anne's virgin shame! how King Edward stole to her room at the dead of night, and wooed and pressed, and swore, and—God of Heaven, that this hand were on his throat! No, brother, no! there are some wrongs we may not tell,—tumours and swellings of the heart which are eased not till blood can flow!"

During this conference between the brothers, Edward, in his palace, was seized with consternation and dismay on hearing that the Lady Anne could not be found in her chamber. He sent forthwith to summon Adam Warner to his presence, and learned from the simple sage, who concealed nothing, the mode in which Anne had fled from the Tower. The king abruptly dismissed Adam, after a few hearty curses and vague threats; and awaking to the necessity of inventing some plausible story, to account to the wonder of the court for the abrupt disappearance of his guest, he saw that the person who could best originate and circulate such a tale was the queen; and he sought her at once, with the resolution to choose his confidant in the connection most rarely honoured by marital trust in similar offences. He, however, so softened his narrative as to leave it but a venial error. He had been indulging over-freely in the wine-cup, he had walked into the corridor for the refreshing coolness of the air, he had seen the figure of a female whom he did not recognize; and a few gallant words, he scarce remembered what, had been misconstrued. On perceiving whom he had thus addressed, he had sought to soothe the anger or alarm of the Lady Anne; but still mistaking his intention, she had hurried into Warner's chamber; he had followed her thither, and now she had fled the palace. Such was his story, told lightly and laughingly, but ending with a grave enumeration of the dangers his imprudence had incurred.

Whatever Elizabeth felt, or however she might interpret the confession, she acted with her customary discretion; affected, after a few tender reproaches, to place implicit credit in her lord's account, and volunteered to prevent all scandal by the probable story that the earl, being prevented from coming in person for his daughter, as he had purposed, by fresh news of the rebellion which might call him from London with the early day, had commissioned his kinsman Marmaduke to escort her home. The quick perception of her sex told her that, whatever license might have terrified Anne into so abrupt a flight, the haughty earl would shrink no less than Edward himself from making public an insult which slander could well distort into the dishonour of his daughter; and that whatever pretext might be invented, Warwick would not deign to contradict it. And as, despite Elizabeth's hatred to the earl, and desire of permanent breach between Edward and his minister, she could not, as queen, wife, and woman, but be anxious that some cause more honourable in Edward, and less odious to the people, should be assigned for quarrel, she earnestly recommended the king to repair at once to the More, as had been before arranged, and to spare no pains, disdain no expressions of penitence and humiliation, to secure the mediation of the archbishop. His mind somewhat relieved by this interview and counsel, the king kissed Elizabeth with affectionate gratitude, and returned to his chamber to prepare for his departure to the archbishop's palace. But then, remembering that Adam and Sibyll possessed his secret, he resolved at once to banish them from the Tower. For a moment he thought of the dungeons of his fortress, of the rope of his doomsman; but his conscience at that hour was sore and vexed. His fierceness humbled by the sense of shame, he shrank from a new crime; and, moreover, his strong common-sense assured him that the testimony of a shunned and abhorred wizard ceased to be of weight the moment it was deprived of the influence it took from the protection of a king. He gave orders for a boat to be in readiness by the gate of St. Thomas, again

summoned Adam into his presence, and said briefly, “Master Warner, the London mechanics cry so loudly against thine invention for lessening labour and starving the poor, the sailors on the wharfs are so mutinous at the thought of vessels without rowers, that, as a good king is bound, I yield to the voice of my people. Go home, then, at once; the queen dispenses with thy fair daughter’s service, the damsel accompanies thee. A boat awaits ye at the stairs; a guard shall attend ye to your house. Think what has passed within these walls has been a dream,—a dream that, if told, is deathful, if concealed and forgotten hath no portent!”

Without waiting a reply, the king called from the anteroom one of his gentlemen, and gave him special directions as to the departure and conduct of the worthy scholar and his gentle daughter. Edward next summoned before him the warder of the gate, learned that he alone was privy to the mode of his guest’s flight, and deeming it best to leave at large no commentator on the tale he had invented, sentenced the astonished warder to three months’ solitary imprisonment,—for appearing before him with soiled hosen! An hour afterwards, the king, with a small though gorgeous retinue, was on his way to the More.

The archbishop had, according to his engagement, assembled in his palace the more powerful of the discontented seigneurs; and his eloquence had so worked upon them, that Edward beheld, on entering the hall, only countenances of cheerful loyalty and respectful welcome. After the first greetings, the prelate, according to the custom of the day, conducted Edward into a chamber, that he might refresh himself with a brief rest and the bath, previous to the banquet.

Edward seized the occasion, and told his tale; but however softened, enough was left to create the liveliest dismay in his listener. The lofty scaffolding of hope upon which the ambitious prelate was to mount to the papal throne seemed to crumble into the dust. The king and the earl were equally necessary to the schemes of George Nevile. He chid the royal layman with more than priestly unction for his offence; but Edward so humbly confessed his fault, that the prelate at length relaxed his brow, and promised to convey his penitent assurances to the earl.

“Not an hour should be lost,” he said; “the only one who can soothe his wrath is your Highness’s mother, our noble kinswoman. Permit me to despatch to her grace a letter, praying her to seek the earl, while I write by the same courier to himself.”

“Be it all as you will,” said Edward, doffing his surcoat, and dipping his hands in a perfumed ewer; “I shall not know rest till I have knelt to the Lady Anne, and won her pardon.”

The prelate retired, and scarcely had he left the room when Sir John Ratcliffe, [Afterwards Lord Fitzwalter. See Lingard (note, vol. iii. p. 507, quarto edition), for the proper date to be assigned to this royal visit to the More,—a date we have here adopted, not, as Sharon Turner and others place (namely, upon the authority of Hearne’s Fragm., 302, which subsequent events disprove), after the open rebellion of Warwick, but just before it; that is, not after Easter, but before Lent.] one of the king’s retinue, and in waiting on his person, entered the chamber, pale and trembling.

“My liege,” he said, in a whisper, “I fear some deadly treason awaits you. I have seen, amongst the trees below this tower, the gleam of steel; I have crept through the foliage, and counted no less than a hundred armed men,—their leader is Sir Marmaduke Nevile, Earl Warwick’s kinsman!”

“Ha!” muttered the king, and his bold face fell, “comes the earl’s revenge so soon?”

“And,” continued Ratcliffe, “I overheard Sir Marmaduke say, ‘The door of the Garden Tower is unguarded,—wait the signal!’ Fly, my liege! Hark! even now I hear the rattling of arms!”

The king stole to the casement; the day was closing; the foliage grew thick and dark around the wall; he saw an armed man emerge from the shade,—a second, and a third.

“You are right, Ratcliffe! Flight—but how?”

“This way, my liege. By the passage I entered, a stair winds to a door on the inner court; there I have already a steed in waiting. Deign, for precaution, to use my hat and manteline.”

The king hastily adopted the suggestion, followed the noiseless steps of Ratcliffe, gained the door, sprang upon his steed, and dashing right through a crowd assembled by the gate, galloped alone and fast, untracked by human enemy, but goaded by the foe that mounts the rider’s steed, over field, over fell, over dyke, through hedge, and in the dead of night reined in at last before the royal towers of Windsor.

CHAPTER II. MANY THINGS BRIEFLY TOLD.

The events that followed the king’s escape were rapid and startling. The barons assembled at the More, enraged at Edward’s seeming distrust of them, separated in loud anger. The archbishop learned the cause from one of his servitors, who detected Marmaduke’s ambush, but he was too wary to make known a circumstance suspicious to himself. He flew to London, and engaged the mediation of the Duchess of York to assist his own. [Lingard. See for the dates, Fabyan, 657.]

The earl received their joint overtures with stern and ominous coldness, and abruptly repaired to Warwick, taking with him the Lady Anne. There he was joined, the same day, by the Duke and Duchess of Clarence.

The Lincolnshire rebellion gained head: Edward made a dexterous feint in calling, by public commission, upon Clarence and Warwick to aid in dispersing it; if they refused, the odium of first aggression would seemingly rest with them. Clarence, more induced by personal ambition than sympathy with Warwick’s wrong, incensed by his brother’s recent slights, looking to Edward’s resignation and his own consequent accession to the throne, and inflamed by the ambition and pride of a wife whom he at once feared and idolized, went hand in heart with the earl; but not one lord and captain whom Montagu had sounded lent favour to the deposition of one brother for the advancement of the next. Clarence, though popular, was too young to be respected: many there were who would rather have supported the earl, if an aspirant to the throne; but that choice forbidden by the earl himself, there could be but two parties in England,—the one for Edward IV., the other for Henry VI. Lord Montagu had repaired to Warwick Castle to communicate in person this result of his diplomacy. The earl, whose manner was completely changed, no longer frank and hearty, but close and sinister, listened in gloomy silence.

“And now,” said Montagu, with the generous emotion of a man whose nobler nature was stirred deeply, “if you resolve on war with Edward, I am willing to renounce my own ambition, the hand of a king’s daughter for my son, so that I may avenge the honour of our common name. I confess that I have so loved Edward that I would fain pray you to pause, did I not distrust myself, lest in such delay his craft should charm me back to the old affection. Nathless, to your arm and your great soul I have owed all, and if you are resolved to strike the blow, I am ready to share the hazard.”

The earl turned away his face, and wrung his brother’s hand.

"Our father, methinks, hears thee from the grave!" said he, solemnly, and there was a long pause. At length Warwick resumed: "Return to London; seem to take no share in my actions, whatever they be; if I fail, why drag thee into my ruin?—and yet, trust me, I am rash and fierce no more. He who sets his heart on a great object suddenly becomes wise. When a throne is in the dust, when from St. Paul's Cross a voice goes forth to Carlisle and the Land's End, proclaiming that the reign of Edward the Fourth is past and gone, then, Montagu, I claim thy promise of aid and fellowship,—not before!"

Meanwhile, the king, eager to dispel thought in action, rushed in person against the rebellious forces. Stung by fear into cruelty, he beheaded, against all kingly faith, his hostages, Lord Welles and Sir Thomas Dymoke, summoned Sir Robert Welles, the leader of the revolt, to surrender; received for answer, that Sir Robert Welles would not trust the perfidy of the man who had murdered his father!—pushed on to Erpingham, defeated the rebels in a signal battle, and crowned his victory by a series of ruthless cruelties, committed to the fierce and learned Earl of Worcester, "Butcher of England." [Stowe. "Warkworth Chronicle"—Cont. Croyl. Lord Worcester ordered Clapham (a squire to Lord Warwick) and nineteen others, gentlemen and yeomen, to be impaled, and from the horror the spectacle inspired, and the universal odium it attached to Worcester, it is to be feared that the unhappy men were still sensible to the agony of this infliction, though they appear first to have been drawn, and partially hanged,—outrage confined only to the dead bodies of rebels being too common at that day to have excited the indignation which attended the sentence Worcester passed on his victims. It is in vain that some writers would seek to cleanse the memory of this learned nobleman from the stain of cruelty by rhetorical remarks on the improbability that a cultivator of letters should be of a ruthless disposition. The general philosophy of this defence is erroneous. In ignorant ages a man of superior acquirements is not necessarily made humane by the cultivation of his intellect, on the contrary, he too often learns to look upon the uneducated herd as things of another clay. Of this truth all history is pregnant,—witness the accomplished tyrants of Greece, the profound and cruel intellect of the Italian Borgias. Richard III. and Henry VIII. were both highly educated for their age. But in the case of Tiptoft, Lord Worcester, the evidence of his cruelty is no less incontestable than that which proves his learning—the Croyland historian alone is unimpeachable. Worcester's popular name of "the Butcher" is sufficient testimony in itself. The people are often mistaken, to be sure, but can scarcely be so upon the one point, whether a man who has sat in judgment on themselves be merciful or cruel.]

With the prompt vigour and superb generalship which Edward ever displayed in war, he then cut his gory way to the force which Clarence and Warwick (though their hostility was still undeclared) had levied, with the intent to join the defeated rebels. He sent his herald, Garter King-at-arms, to summon the earl and the duke to appear before him within a certain day. The time expired; he proclaimed them traitors, and offered rewards for their apprehension. [One thousand pounds in money, or one hundred pounds a year in land; an immense reward for that day.]

So sudden had been Warwick's defection, so rapid the king's movements, that the earl had not time to mature his resources, assemble his vassals, consolidate his schemes. His very preparations, upon the night on which Edward had repaid his services by such hideous ingratitude, had manned the country with armies against himself. Girt but with a scanty force collected in haste (and which consisted merely of his retainers in the single shire of Warwick), the march of Edward cut him off from the counties in which his name was held most dear, in which his trumpet could raise up hosts. He was disappointed in the aid he had expected from his powerful but self-interested brother-in-law, Lord Stanley. Revenge had become more dear to him than life: life must not be hazarded, lest revenge be lost. On still marched the king; and the day that his troops entered Exeter, Warwick, the females of his family, with Clarence, and a small but armed retinue, took ship from Dartmouth, sailed for Calais (before which town, while at anchor, Isabel was confined of her first-born). To the earl's rage and dismay his deputy Vauclerc fired upon his ships. Warwick then steered on towards Normandy, captured some Flemish vessels by the way, in token of defiance to the earl's old Burgundian foe, and landed at Harfleur, where he and his companions were

received with royal honours by the Admiral of France, and finally took their way to the court of Louis XI. at Amboise.

"The danger is past forever!" said King Edward, as the wine sparkled in his goblet. "Rebellion hath lost its head,—and now, indeed, and for the first time, a monarch I reign alone!" [Before leaving England, Warwick and Clarence are generally said to have fallen in with Anthony Woodville and Lord Audley, and ordered them to execution, from which they were saved by a Dorsetshire gentleman. Carte, who, though his history is not without great mistakes, is well worth reading by those whom the character of Lord Warwick may interest, says, that the earl had "too much magnanimity to put them to death immediately, according to the common practice of the times, and only imprisoned them in the castle of Wardour, from whence they were soon rescued by John Thornhill, a gentleman of Dorsetshire." The whole of this story is, however, absolutely contradicted by the "Warkworth Chronicle" (p. 9, edited by Mr. Halliwell), according to which authority Anthony Woodville was at that time commanding a fleet upon the Channel, which waylaid Warwick on his voyage; but the success therein attributed to the gallant Anthony, in dispersing or seizing all the earl's ships, save the one that bore the earl himself and his family, is proved to be purely fabulous, by the earl's well-attested capture of the Flemish vessels, as he passed from Calais to the coasts of Normandy, an exploit he could never have performed with a single vessel of his own. It is very probable that the story of Anthony Woodville's capture and peril at this time originates in a misadventure many years before, and recorded in the "Paston Letters," as well as in the "Chronicles."—In the year 1459, Anthony Woodville and his father, Lord Rivers (then zealous Lancastrians), really did fall into the hands of the Earl of March (Edward IV.), Warwick and Salisbury, and got off with a sound "rating" upon the rude language which such "knaves' sons" and "little squires" had held to those "who were of king's blood."]

CHAPTER III. THE PLOT OF THE HOSTELRY—THE MAID AND THE SCHOLAR IN THEIR HOME.

The country was still disturbed, and the adherents, whether of Henry or the earl, still rose in many an outbreak, though prevented from swelling into one common army by the extraordinary vigour not only of Edward, but of Gloucester and Hastings,—when one morning, just after the events thus rapidly related, the hostelry of Master Sancroft, in the suburban parish of Marybone, rejoiced in a motley crowd of customers and topers.

Some half-score soldiers, returned in triumph from the royal camp, sat round a table placed agreeably enough in the deep recess made by the large jutting lattice; with them were mingled about as many women, strangely and gaudily clad. These last were all young; one or two, indeed, little advanced from childhood. But there was no expression of youth in their hard, sinister features: coarse paint supplied the place of bloom; the very youngest had a wrinkle on her brow; their forms wanted the round and supple grace of early years. Living principally in the open air, trained from infancy to feats of activity, their muscles were sharp and prominent, their aspects had something of masculine audacity and rudeness; health itself seemed in them more loathsome than disease. Upon those faces of bronze, vice had set its ineffable, unmistaken seal. To those eyes never had sprung the tears of compassion or woman's gentle sorrow; on those brows never had flushed the glow of modest shame: their very voices half belied their sex,—harsh and deep and hoarse, their laughter loud and dissonant. Some amongst them were not destitute of a certain beauty, but it was a beauty of feature with a common hideousness of expression,—an expression at once cunning, bold, callous, licentious. Womanless through the worst vices of woman, passionless through the premature waste of passion, they stood between the sexes like foul and monstrous

anomalies, made up and fashioned from the rank depravities of both. These creatures seemed to have newly arrived from some long wayfaring; their shoes and the hems of their robes were covered with dust and mire; their faces were heated, and the veins in their bare, sinewy, sunburned arms were swollen by fatigue. Each had beside her on the floor a timbrel, each wore at her girdle a long knife in its sheath: well that the sheaths hid the blades, for not one—not even that which yon cold-eyed child of fifteen wore—but had on its steel the dark stain of human blood!

The presence of soldiers fresh from the scene of action had naturally brought into the hostelry several of the idle gossips of the suburb, and these stood round the table, drinking into their large ears the boasting narratives of the soldiers. At a small table, apart from the revellers, but evidently listening with attention to all the news of the hour, sat a friar, gravely discussing a mighty tankard of huffcap, and ever and anon, as he lifted his head for the purpose of drinking, glancing a wanton eye at one of the tymbesteres.

"But an' you had seen," said a trooper, who was the mouthpiece of his comrades—"an' you had seen the raptrils run when King Edward himself led the charge! Marry, it was like a cat in a rabbit burrow! Easy to see, I trow, that Earl Warwick was not amongst them! His men, at least, fight like devils!"

"But there was one tall fellow," said a soldier, setting down his tankard, "who made a good fight and dour, and, but for me and my comrades, would have cut his way to the king."

"Ay, ay, true; we saved his highness, and ought to have been knighted,—but there's no gratitude nowadays!"

"And who was this doughty warrior?" asked one of the bystanders, who secretly favoured the rebellion.

"Why, it was said that he was Robin of Redesdale,—he who fought my Lord Montagu off York."

"Our Robin!" exclaimed several voices. "Ay, he was ever a brave fellow—poor Robin!"

"'Your Robin,' and 'poor Robin,' varlets!" cried the principal trooper. "Have a care! What do ye mean by your Robin?"

"Marry, sir soldier," quoth a butcher, scratching his head, and in a humble voice, "craving your pardon and the king's, this Master Robin sojourned a short time in this hamlet, and was a kind neighbour, and mighty glib of the tongue. Don't ye mind, neighbours," he added rapidly, eager to change the conversation, "how he made us leave off when we were just about burning Adam Warner, the old nigromancer, in his den yonder? Who else could have done that? But an' we had known Robin had been a rebel to sweet King Edward, we'd have roasted him along with the wizard!"

One of the timbrel-girls, the leader of the choir, her arm round a soldier's neck, looked up at the last speech, and her eye followed the gesture of the butcher, as he pointed through the open lattice to the sombre, ruinous abode of Adam Warner.

"Was that the house ye would have burned?" she asked abruptly.

"Yes; but Robin told us the king would hang those who took on them the king's blessed privilege of burning nigromancers; and, sure enough, old Adam Warner was advanced to be wizard-in-chief to the king's own highness a week or two afterwards."

The friar had made a slight movement at the name of Warner; he now pushed his stool nearer to the principal group, and drew his hood completely over his countenance.

"Yea!" exclaimed the mechanic, whose son had been the innocent cause of the memorable siege to poor Adam's dilapidated fortress, related in the first book of this narrative"—yea; and what did he when there? Did he not devise a horrible engine for the destruction of the poor,—an engine that was to do all the work in England by the devil's help?—so that if a gentleman wanted a coat of mail, or a cloth tunic; if his dame needed a Norwich worsted; if a yeoman lacked a plough or a wagon, or his good wife a pot or a kettle; they were to go, not to the armourer, and the draper, and the tailor, and the weaver, and the wheelwright, and the blacksmith,—but, hey presto! Master Warner set his imps a-churning, and turned ye out mail and tunic, worsted and wagon, kettle and pot, spick and span new, from his brewage of vapour and sea-coal. Oh, have I not heard enough of the sorcerer from my brother, who works in the Chepe for Master Stokton, the mercer!—and Master Stokton was one of the worshipful deputies to whom the old nigromancer had the front to boast his devices."

"It is true," said the friar, suddenly.

"Yes, reverend father, it is true," said the mechanic, doffing his cap, and inclining his swarthy face to this unexpected witness of his veracity. A murmur of wrath and hatred was heard amongst the bystanders. The soldiers indifferently turned to their female companions. There was a brief silence; and, involuntarily, the gossips stretched over the table to catch sight of the house of so demoniac an oppressor of the poor.

"See," said the baker, "the smoke still curls from the rooftop! I heard he had come back. Old Madge, his handmaid, has bought cimnel-cakes of me the last week or so; nothing less than the finest wheat serves him now, I trow. However, right's right, and—"

"Come back!" cried the fierce mechanic; "the owl hath kept close in his roost! An' it were not for the king's favour, I would soon see how the wizard liked to have fire and water brought to bear against himself!"

"Sit down, sweetheart," whispered one of the young tymbesteres to the last speaker—

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"Come, kiss me, my darling,
   Warm kisses I trade for."
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"Avaunt!" quoth the mechanic, gruffly, and shaking off the seductive arm of the tymbestere—"avaunt! I have neither liefe nor halfpence for thee and thine. Out on thee!—a child of thy years! a rope's end to thy back were a friend's best kindness!"

The girl's eyes sparkled, she instinctively put her hand to her knife; then turning to a soldier by her side, she said, "Hear you that, and sit still?"

"Thunder and wounds!" growled the soldier thus appealed to, "more respect to the sex, knave; if I don't break thy fool's costard with my sword-hilt, it is only because Red Grisell can take care of herself against twenty such lozels as thou. These honest girls have been to the wars with us; King Edward grudges no man his jolly fere. Speak up for thyself, Grisell! How many tall fellows didst thou put out of their pain after the battle of Losecote?"

"Only five, Hal," replied the cold-eyed girl, and showing her glittering teeth with the grin of a young tigress; "but one was a captain. I shall do better next time; it was my first battle, thou knowest!"

The more timid of the bystanders exchanged a glance of horror, and drew back. The mechanic resumed sullenly,—"I seek no quarrel with lass or lover. I am a plain, blunt man, with a wife and children, who are dear to me; and if I have a grudge to the nigromancer, it is because he glamoured my poor boy Tim.

See!"—and he caught up a blue-eyed, handsome boy, who had been clinging to his side, and baring the child's arm, showed it to the spectators; there was a large scar on the limb, and it was shrunk and withered.

"It was my own fault," said the little fellow, deprecatingly. The affectionate father silenced the sufferer with a cuff on the cheek, and resumed: "Ye note, neighbours, the day when the foul wizard took this little one in his arms: well, three weeks afterwards—that very day three weeks—as he was standing like a lamb by the fire, the good wife's caldron seethed over, without reason or rhyme, and scalded his arm till it rivelled up like a leaf in November; and if that is not glamour, why have we laws against witchcraft?"

"True, true!" groaned the chorus.

The boy, who had borne his father's blow without a murmur, now again attempted remonstrance. "The hot water went over the gray cat, too, but Master Warner never bewitched her, daddy."

"He takes his part!—You hear the daff laddy? He takes the old nigromancer's part,—a sure sign of the witchcraft; but I'll leather it out of thee, I will!" and the mechanic again raised his weighty arm. The child did not this time await the blow; he dodged under the butcher's apron, gained the door, and disappeared. "And he teaches our own children to fly in our faces!" said the father, in a kind of whimper. The neighbours sighed in commiseration.

"Oh," he exclaimed in a fiercer tone, grinding his teeth, and shaking his clenched fist towards Adam Warner's melancholy house, "I say again, if the king did not protect the vile sorcerer, I would free the land from his devilries ere his black master could come to his help."

"The king cares not a straw for Master Warner or his inventions, my son," said a rough, loud voice. All turned, and saw the friar standing in the midst of the circle. "Know ye not, my children, that the king sent the wretch neck and crop out of the palace for having bewitched the Earl of Warwick and his grace the Lord Clarence, so that they turned unnaturally against their own kinsman, his highness? But 'Manus malorum suos bonos breaket,'—that is to say, the fists of wicked men only whack their own bones. Ye have all heard tell of Friar Bungey, my children?"

"Ay, ay!" answered two or three in a breath,—"a wizard, it's true, and a mighty one; but he never did harm to the poor; though they do say he made a quaint image of the earl, and—"

"Tut, tut!" interrupted the friar, "all Bungey did was to try to disenchant the Lord Warwick, whom yon miscreant had spellbound. Poor Bungey! he is a friend to the people: and when he found that Master Adam was making a device for their ruin, he spared no toil, I assure ye, to frustrate the iniquity. Oh, how he fasted and watched! Oh, how many a time he fought, tooth and nail, with the devil in person, to get at the infernal invention! for if he had that invention once in his hands, he could turn it to good account, I can promise ye: and give ye rain for the green blade and sun for the ripe sheaf. But the fiend got the better at first; and King Edward, bewitched himself for the moment, would have hanged Friar Bungey for crossing old Adam, if he had not called three times, in a loud voice, 'Presto pepranxenon!' changed himself into a bird, and flown out of the window. As soon as Master Adam Warner found the field clear to himself, he employed his daughter to bewitch the Lord Hastings; he set brother against brother, and made the king and Lord George fall to loggerheads; he stirred up the rebellion; and where he would have stopped the foul fiend only knows, if your friend Friar Bungey, who, though a wizard as you say, is only so for your benefit (and a holy priest into the bargain), had not, by aid of a good spirit, whom he conjured up in the island of Tartary, disenchanted the king, and made him see in a dream what the villanous Warner was devising against his crown and his people,—whereon his highness sent Master Warner and his daughter back to their roost, and, helped by Friar Bungey, beat his enemies out of the kingdom. So, if ye have a mind to save your children from mischief and malice, ye may set to work with good heart, always

provided that ye touch not old Adam's iron invention. Woe betide ye, if ye think to destroy that! Bring it safe to Friar Bungey, whom ye will find returned to the palace, and journeyman's wages will be a penny a day higher for the next ten years to come!" With these words the friar threw down his reckoning, and moved majestically to the door.

"An' I might trust you!" said Tim's father, laying hold of the friar's serge.

"Ye may, ye may!" cried the leader of the tymbesteres, starting up from the lap of her soldier, "for it is Friar Bungey himself!"

A movement of astonishment and terror was universal. "Friar Bungey himself!" repeated the burly impostor. "Right, lassie, right; and he now goes to the palace of the Tower, to mutter good spells in King Edward's ear,—spells to defeat the malignant ones, and to lower the price of beer. Wax wobiscum!"

With that salutation, more benevolent than accurate, the friar vanished from the room; the chief of the tymbesteres leaped lightly on the table, put one foot on the soldier's shoulder, and sprang through the open lattice. She found the friar in the act of mounting a sturdy mule, which had been tied to a post by the door.

"Fie, Graul Skellet! Fie, Graul!" said the conjurer "Respect for my serge. We must not be noted together out of door in the daylight. There's a groat for thee. Vade, execrabilis,—that is, good-day to thee, pretty rogue!"

"A word, friar, a word. Wouldst thou have the old man burned, drowned, or torn piecemeal? He hath a daughter too, who once sought to mar our trade with her gittern; a daughter, then in a kirtle that I would not have nimmed from a hedge, but whom I last saw in sarcenet and lawn, with a great lord for her fere." The tymbestere's eyes shone with malignant envy, as she added, "Graul Skellet loves not to see those who have worn worsted and say walk in sarcenet and lawn. Graul Skellet loves not wenches who have lords for their feres, and yet who shrink from Graul and her sisters as the sound from the leper."

"Fegs," answered the friar, impatiently, "I know naught against the daughter,—a pretty lass, but too high for my kisses. And as for the father, I want not the man's life,—that is, not very specially,—but his model, his mechanical. He may go free, if that can be compassed; if not, why, the model at all risks. Serve me in this."

"And thou wilt teach me the last tricks of the cards, and thy great art of making phantoms glide by on the wall?"

"Bring the model intact, and I will teach thee more, Graul,—the dead man's candle, and the charm of the newt; and I'll give thee, to boot, the Gaul of the parricide that thou hast prayed me so oft for. Hum! thou hast a girl in thy troop who hath a blinking eye that well pleases me; but go now, and obey me. Work before play, and grace before pudding!"

The tymbestere nodded, snapped her fingers in the air, and humming no holy ditty, returned to the house through the doorway.

This short conference betrays to the reader the relations, mutually advantageous, which subsisted between the conjuror and the tymbesteres. Their troop (the mothers, perchance, of the generation we treat of) had been familiar to the friar in his old capacity of mountebank, or tregetour, and in his clerical and courtly elevation, he did not disdain an ancient connection that served him well with the populace; for these grim children of vice seemed present in every place, where pastime was gay, or strife was rampant,—in peace, at the merry-makings and the hostelries; in war, following the camp, and seen, at night, prowling through

the battlefields to dispatch the wounded and to rifle the slain: in merrymaking, hostelry, or in camp, they could thus still spread the fame of Friar Bungey, and uphold his repute both for terrible lore and for hearty love of the commons.

Nor was this all; both tymbesteres and conjuror were fortune-tellers by profession. They could interchange the anecdotes each picked up in their different lines. The tymbestere could thus learn the secrets of gentle and courtier, the conjuror those of the artisan and mechanic.

Unconscious of the formidable dispositions of their neighbours, Sibyll and Warner were inhaling the sweet air of the early spring in their little garden. His disgrace had affected the philosopher less than might be supposed. True, that the loss of the king's favour was the deferring indefinitely—perhaps for life—any practical application of his adored theory; and yet, somehow or other, the theory itself consoled him. At the worst, he should find some disciple, some ingenious student, more fortunate than himself, to whom he could bequeath the secret, and who, when Adam was in his grave, would teach the world to revere his name. Meanwhile, his time was his own; he was lord of a home, though ruined and desolate; he was free, with his free thoughts; and therefore, as he paced the narrow garden, his step was lighter, his mind less absent than when parched with feverish fear and hope for the immediate practical success of a principle which was to be tried before the hazardous tribunal of prejudice and ignorance.

"My child," said the sage, "I feel, for the first time for years, the distinction of the seasons. I feel that we are walking in the pleasant spring. Young days come back to me like dreams; and I could almost think thy mother were once more by my side!"

Sibyll pressed her father's hand, and a soft but melancholy sigh stirred her rosy lips. She, too, felt the balm of the young year; yet her father's words broke upon sad and anxious musings. Not to youth as to age, not to loving fancy as to baffled wisdom, has seclusion charms that compensate for the passionate and active world! On coming back to the old house, on glancing round its mildewed walls, comfortless and bare, the neglected, weed-grown garden, Sibyll had shuddered in dismay. Had her ambition fallen again into its old abject state? Were all her hopes to restore her ancestral fortunes, to vindicate her dear father's fame, shrunk into this slough of actual poverty,—the butterfly's wings folded back into the chrysalis shroud of torpor? The vast disparity between herself and Hastings had not struck her so forcibly at the court; here, at home, the very walls proclaimed it. When Edward had dismissed the unwelcome witnesses of his attempted crime, he had given orders that they should be conducted to their house through the most private ways. He naturally desired to create no curious comment upon their departure. Unperceived by their neighbours, Sibyll and her father had gained access by the garden gate. Old Madge received them in dismay; for she had been in the habit of visiting Sibyll weekly at the palace, and had gained, in the old familiarity subsisting, then, between maiden and nurse, some insight into her heart. She had cherished the fondest hopes for the fate of her young mistress; and now, to labour and to penury had the fate returned! The guard who accompanied them, according to Edward's orders, left some pieces of gold, which Adam rejected, but Madge secretly received and judiciously expended. And this was all their wealth. But not of toil nor of penury in themselves thought Sibyll; she thought but of Hastings,—wildly, passionately, trustfully, unceasingly, of the absent Hastings. Oh, he would seek her, he would come, her reverse would but the more endear her to him! Hastings came not. She soon learned the wherefore. War threatened the land,—he was at his post, at the head of armies.

Oh, with what panoply of prayer she sought to shield that beloved breast! And now the old man spoke of the blessed spring, the holiday time of lovers and of love, and the young girl, sighing, said to her mournful heart, "The world hath its sun,—where is mine?"

The peacock strutted up to his poor protectors, and spread his plumes to the gilding beams. And then Sibyll recalled the day when she had walked in that spot with Marmaduke, and he had talked of his youth, ambition, and lusty hopes, while, silent and absorbed, she had thought within herself, "Could the world be

open to me as to him,—I too have ambition, and it should find its goal." Now what contrast between the two,—the man enriched and honoured, if to-day in peril or in exile, to-morrow free to march forward still on his career, the world the country to him whose heart was bold and whose name was stainless! and she, the woman, brought back to the prison-home, scorn around her, impotent to avenge, and forbidden to fly! Wherefore?—Sibyll felt her superiority of mind, of thought, of nature,—wherefore the contrast? The success was that of man, the discomfiture that of woman. Woe to the man who precedes his age; but never yet has an age been in which genius and ambition are safe to woman!

The father and the child turned into their house. The day was declining. Adam mounted to his studious chamber, Sibyll sought the solitary servant.

"What tidings, oh, what tidings? The war, you say, is over; the great earl, his sweet daughter, safe upon the seas, but Hastings—ob, Hastings! what of him?"

"My bonnibell, my lady-bird, I have none but good tales to tell thee. I saw and spoke with a soldier who served under Lord Hastings himself; he is unscathed, he is in London. But they say that one of his bands is quartered in the suburb, and that there is a report of a rising in Hertfordshire."

"When will peace come to England and to me!" sighed Sibyll.

CHAPTER IV. THE WORLD'S JUSTICE, AND THE WISDOM OF OUR ANCESTORS.

The night had now commenced, and Sibyll was still listening—or, perhaps, listening not—to the soothing babble of the venerable servant. They were both seated in the little room that adjoined the hall, and their only light came through the door opening on the garden,—a gray, indistinct twilight, relieved by the few earliest stars. The peacock, his head under his wing, roosted on the balustrade, and the song of the nightingale, from amidst one of the neighbouring copses, which studded the ground towards the chase of Marybone, came soft and distant on the serene air. The balm and freshness of spring were felt in the dews, in the skies, in the sweet breath of young herb and leaf; through the calm of ever-watchful nature, it seemed as if you might mark, distinct and visible, minute after minute, the blessed growth of April into May.

Suddenly Madge uttered a cry of alarm, and pointed towards the opposite wall. Sibyll, startled from her revery, looked up, and saw something dusk and dwarf-like perched upon the crumbling eminence. Presently this apparition leaped lightly into the garden, and the alarm of the women was lessened on seeing a young boy creep stealthily over the grass and approach the open door.

"Hey, child!" said Madge, rising. "What wantest thou?"

"Hist, gammer, hist! Ah, the young mistress? That's well. Hist! I say again." The boy entered the room. "I'm in time to save you. In half an hour your house will be broken into, perhaps burned. The boys are clapping their hands now at the thoughts of the bonfire. Father and all the neighbours are getting ready. Hark! hark! No, it is only the wind! The tymbesteres are to give note. When you hear their bells tinkle, the mob will meet. Run for your lives, you and the old man, and don't ever say it was poor Tim who told you this, for Father would beat me to death. Ye can still get through the garden into the fields. Quick!"

"I will go to the master," exclaimed Madge, hurrying from the room.

The child caught Sibyll's cold hand through the dark. "And I say, mistress, if his worship is a wizard, don't let him punish Father and Mother, or poor Tim, or his little sister; though Tim was once naughty, and hooted Master Warner. Many, many, many a time and oft have I seen that kind, mild face in my sleep, just as when it bent over me, while I kicked and screamed, and the poor gentleman said, 'Thinkest thou I would harm thee?' But he'll forgive me now, will he not? And when I turned the seething water over myself, and they said it was all along of the wizard, my heart pained more than the arm. But they whip me, and groan out that the devil is in me, if I don't say that the kettle upset of itself! Oh, those tymbesteres! Mistress, did you ever see them? They fright me. If you could hear how they set on all the neighbours! And their laugh—it makes the hair stand on end! But you will get away, and thank Tim too? Oh, I shall laugh then, when they find the old house empty!"

"May our dear Lord bless thee—bless thee, child," sobbed Sibyll, clasping the boy in her arms, and kissing him, while her tears bathed his cheeks.

A light gleamed on the threshold; Madge, holding a candle, appeared with Warner, his hat and cloak thrown on in haste. "What is this?" said the poor scholar. "Can it be true? Is mankind so cruel? What have I done, woe is me! what have I done to deserve this?"

"Come, dear father, quick," said Sibyll, drying her tears, and wakened by the presence of the old man into energy and courage. "But put thy hand on this boy's head, and bless him; for it is he who has, haply, saved us."

The boy trembled a moment as the long-bearded face turned towards him, but when he caught and recognized those meek, sweet eyes, his superstition vanished, and it was but a holy and grateful awe that thrilled his young blood, as the old man placed both withered hands over his yellow hair, and murmured,—

"God shield thy youth! God make thy manhood worthy! God give thee children in thine old age with hearts like thine!" Scarcely had the prayer ceased when the clash of timbrels, with their jingling bells, was heard in the street. Once, twice, again, and a fierce yell closed in chorus,—caught up and echoed from corner to corner, from house to house.

"Run! run!" cried the boy, turning white with terror.

"But the Eureka—my hope—my mind's child!" exclaimed Adam, suddenly, and halting at the door.

"Eh, eh!" said Madge, pushing him forward. "It is too heavy to move; thou couldst not lift it. Think of thine own flesh and blood, of thy daughter, of her dead mother! Save her life, if thou carest not for thine own!"

"Go, Sibyll, go, and thou, Madge; I will stay. What matters my life,—it is but the servant of a thought! Perish master, perish slave!"

"Father, unless you come with me, I stir not. Fly or perish, your fate is mine! Another minute—Oh, Heaven of mercy, that roar again! We are both lost!"

"Go, sir, go; they care not for your iron,—iron cannot feel. They will not touch that! Have not your daughter's life upon your soul!"

"Sibyll, Sibyll, forgive me! Come!" said Warner, conscience-stricken at the appeal.

Madge and the boy ran forwards; the old woman unbarred the garden-gate; Sibyll and her father went forth; the fields stretched before them calm and solitary; the boy leaped up, kissed Sibyll's pale cheek, and then bounded across the grass, and vanished.

"Loiter not, Madge. Come!" cried Sibyll.

"Nay," said the old woman, shrinking back, "they bear no grudge to me; I am too old to do aught but burthen ye. I will stay, and perchance save the house and the chattels, and poor master's deft contrivance. Whist! thou knowest his heart would break if none were by to guard it."

With that the faithful servant thrust the broad pieces that yet remained of the king's gift into the gipsire Sibyll wore at her girdle, and then closed and rebarred the door before they could detain her.

"It is base to leave her," said the scholar-gentleman.

The noble Sibyll could not refute her father. Afar they heard the tramping of feet; suddenly, a dark red light shot up into the blue air, a light from the flame of many torches.

"The wizard, the wizard! Death to the wizard, who would starve the poor!" yelled forth, and was echoed by a stern hurrah.

Adam stood motionless, Sibyll by his side.

"The wizard and his daughter!" shrieked a sharp single voice, the voice of Graul the tymbestere.

Adam turned. "Fly, my child,—they now threaten thee. Come, come, come!" and, taking her by the hand, he hurried her across the fields, skirting the hedge, their shadows dodging, irregular and quaint, on the starlit sward. The father had lost all thought, all care but for the daughter's life. They paused at last, out of breath and exhausted: the sounds at the distance were lulled and hushed. They looked towards the direction of the home they had abandoned, expecting to see the flames destined to consume it reddening the sky; but all was dark,—or, rather, no light save the holy stars and the rising moon offended the majestic heaven.

"They cannot harm the poor old woman; she hath no lore. On her gray hairs has fallen not the curse of men's hate!" said Warner.

"Right, Father! when they found us flown, doubtless the cruel ones dispersed. But they may search yet for thee. Lean on me, I am strong and young. Another effort, and we gain the safe coverts of the Chase."

While yet the last word hung on her lips, they saw, on the path they had left, the burst of torch-light, and heard the mob hounding on their track. But the thick copses, with their pale green just budding into life, were at hand. On they fled. The deer started from amidst the entangled fern, but stood and gazed at them without fear; the playful hares in the green alleys ceased not their nightly sports at the harmless footsteps; and when at last, in the dense thicket, they sunk down on the mossy roots of a giant oak, the nightingales overhead chanted as if in melancholy welcome. They were saved!

But in their home, fierce fires glared amidst the tossing torch-light; the crowd, baffled by the strength of the door, scaled the wall, broke through the lattice-work of the hall window, and streaming through room after room, roared forth, "Death to the wizard!" Amidst the sordid dresses of the men, the soiled and faded tinsel of the tymbesteres gleamed and sparkled. It was a scene the she-fiends revelled in,—dear are outrage and malice, and the excitement of turbulent passions, and the savage voices of frantic men, and

the thirst of blood to those everlasting furies of a mob, under whatever name we know them, in whatever time they taint with their presence,—women in whom womanhood is blasted!

Door after door was burst open with cries of disappointed rage; at last they ascended the turret-stairs, they found a small door barred and locked. Tim's father, a huge axe in his brawny arm, shivered the panels; the crowd rushed in, and there, seated amongst a strange and motley litter, they found the devoted Madge. The poor old woman had collected into this place, as the stronghold of the mansion, whatever portable articles seemed to her most precious, either from value or association. Sibyll's gittern (Marmaduke's gift) lay amidst a lumber of tools and implements; a faded robe of her dead mother's, treasured by Madge and Sibyll both, as a relic of holy love; a few platters and cups of pewter, the pride of old Madge's heart to keep bright and clean; odds and ends of old hangings; a battered silver brooch (a love-gift to Madge herself when she was young),—these, and suchlike scraps of finery, hoards inestimable to the household memory and affection, lay confusedly heaped around the huge grim model, before which, mute and tranquil, sat the brave old woman.

The crowd halted, and stared round in superstitious terror and dumb marvel.

The leader of the tymbesteres sprang forward.

"Where is thy master, old hag, and where the bonny maid who glamours lords, and despises us bold lasses?"

"Alack! master and the damsel have gone hours ago! I am alone in the house; what's your will?"

"The crone looks parlous witchlike!" said Tim's father; crossing himself, and somewhat retreating from her gray, unquiet eyes. And, indeed, poor Madge, with her wrinkled face, bony form, and high cap, corresponded far more with the vulgar notions of a dabbler in the black art than did Adam Warner, with his comely countenance and noble mien.

"So she doth, indeed, and verily," said a hump-backed tinker; "if we were to try a dip in the horsepool yonder it could do no harm."

"Away with her, away!" cried several voices at that humane suggestion.

"Nay, nay," quoth the baker, "she is a douce creature after all, and hath dealt with me many years. I don't care what becomes of the wizard,—every one knows," he added with pride, "that I was one of the first to set fire to his house when Robin gainsayed it! but right's right—burn the master, not the drudge!"

This intercession might have prevailed, but unhappily, at that moment Graul Skellet, who had secured two stout fellows to accomplish the object so desired by Friar Bungey, laid hands on the model, and, at her shrill command, the men advanced and dislodged it from its place. At the same tine the other tymbesteres, caught by the sight of things pleasing to their wonted tastes, threw themselves, one upon the faded robe Sibyll's mother had worn in her chaste and happy youth; another, upon poor Madge's silver brooch; a third, upon the gittern.

These various attacks roused up all the spirit and wrath of the old woman: her cries of distress as she darted from one to the other, striking to the right and left with her feeble arms, her form trembling with passion, were at once ludicrous and piteous; and these were responded to by the shrill exclamations of the fierce tymbesteres, as they retorted scratch for scratch, and blow for blow. The spectators grew animated by the sight of actual outrage and resistance; the humpbacked tinker, whose unwholesome fancy one of the aggrieved tymbesteres had mightily warmed, hastened to the relief of his virago; and rendered furious by finding ten nails fastened suddenly on his face, he struck down the poor creature by a blow that stunned

her, seized her in his arms,—for deformed and weakly as the tinker was, the old woman, now sense and spirit were gone, was as light as skin and bone could be,—and followed by half a score of his comrades, whooping and laughing, bore her down the stairs. Tim's father, who, whether from parental affection, or, as is more probable, from the jealous hatred and prejudice of ignorant industry, was bent upon Adam's destruction, hallooed on some of his fierce fellows into the garden, tracked the footsteps of the fugitives by the trampled grass, and bounded over the wall in fruitless chase. But on went the more giddy of the mob, rather in sport than in cruelty, with a chorus of drunken apprentices and riotous boys, to the spot where the humpbacked tinker had dragged his passive burden. The foul green pond near Master Sancroft's hostel reflected the glare of torches; six of the tymbesteres, leaping and wheeling, with doggerel song and discordant music, gave the signal for the ordeal of the witch,—

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"Lake or river, dyke or ditch,
 Water never drowns the witch.
 Witch or wizard would ye know?
 Sink or swim, is ay or no.
 Lift her, swing her, once and twice,
   Lift her, swing her o'er the brim,—
 Lille—lera—twice and thrice
   Ha! ha! mother, sink or swim!"
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And while the last line was chanted, amidst the full jollity of laughter and clamour and clattering timbrels, there was a splash in the sullen water; the green slough on the surface parted with an oozing gurgle, and then came a dead silence.

"A murrain on the hag! she does not even struggle!" said, at last, the hump-backed tinker.

"No,—no! she cares not for water. Try fire! Out with her! out!" cried Red Grisell.

"Aroint her! she is sullen!" said the tinker, as his lean fingers clutched up the dead body, and let it fall upon the margin. "Dead!" said the baker, shuddering; "we have done wrong,—I told ye so! She dealt with me many a year. Poor Madge! Right's right. She was no witch!"

"But that was the only way to try it," said the humpbacked tinker; "and if she was not a witch, why did she look like one? I cannot abide ugly folks!"

The bystanders shook their heads. But whatever their remorse, it was diverted by a double sound: first, a loud hurrah from some of the mob who had loitered for pillage, and who now emerged from Adam's house, following two men, who, preceded by the terrible Graul, dancing before them, and tossing aloft her timbrel, bore in triumph the captured Eureka; and, secondly, the blast of a clarion at the distance, while up the street marched—horse and foot, with pike and banner—a goodly troop. The Lord Hastings in person led a royal force, by a night march, against a fresh outbreak of the rebels, not ten miles from the city, under Sir Geoffrey Gates, who had been lately arrested by the Lord Howard at Southampton, escaped, collected a disorderly body of such restless men as are always disposed to take part in civil commotion, and now menaced London itself. At the sound of the clarion the valiant mob dispersed in all directions, for even at that day mobs had an instinct of terror at the approach of the military, and a quick reaction from outrage to the fear of retaliation.

But, at the sound of martial music, the tymbesteres silenced their own instruments, and instead of flying, they darted through the crowd, each to seek the other, and unite as for counsel. Graul, pointing to Mr. Sancroft's hostelry, whispered the bearers of the Eureka to seek refuge there for the present, and to bear their trophy with the dawn to Friar Bungey at the Tower; and then, gliding nimbly through the fugitive rioters, sprang into the centre of the circle formed by her companions.

“Ye scent the coming battle?” said the arch-tymbestere.

“Ay, ay, ay!” answered the sisterhood.

“But we have gone miles since noon,—I am faint and weary!” said one amongst them.

Red Grisell, the youngest of the band, struck her comrade on the cheek—“Faint and weary, ronion, with blood and booty in the wind!”

The tymbesteres smiled grimly on their young sister; but the leader whispered “Hush!” and they stood for a second or two with outstretched throats, with dilated nostrils, with pent breath, listening to the clarion and the hoofs and the rattling armour, the human vultures foretasting their feast of carnage; then, obedient to a sign from their chieftainess, they crept lightly and rapidly into the mouth of a neighbouring alley, where they cowered by the squalid huts, concealed. The troop passed on,—a gallant and serried band, horse and foot, about fifteen hundred men. As they filed up the thoroughfare, and the tramp of the last soldiers fell hollow on the starlit ground, the tymbesteres stole from their retreat, and, at the distance of some few hundred yards, followed the procession, with long, silent, stealthy strides,—as the meaner beasts, in the instinct of hungry cunning, follow the lion for the garbage of his prey.

CHAPTER V. THE FUGITIVES ARE CAPTURED—THE TYMBESTERES REAPPEAR—MOONLIGHT ON THE REVEL OF THE LIVING—MOONLIGHT ON THE SLUMBER OF THE DEAD.

The father and child made their resting-place under the giant oak. They knew not whither to fly for refuge; the day and the night had become the same to them,—the night menaced with robbers, the day with the mob. If return to their home was forbidden, where in the wide world a shelter for the would-be world-improver? Yet they despaired not, their hearts failed them not. The majestic splendour of the night, as it deepened in its solemn calm; as the shadows of the windless trees fell larger and sharper upon the silvery earth; as the skies grew mellower and more luminous in the strengthening starlight, inspired them with the serenity of faith,—for night, to the earnest soul, opens the Bible of the universe, and on the leaves of Heaven is written, “God is everywhere.”

Their hands were clasped each in each, their pale faces were upturned; they spoke not, neither were they conscious that they prayed, but their silence was thought, and the thought was worship.

Amidst the grief and solitude of the pure, there comes, at times, a strange and rapt serenity,—a sleep-awake,—over which the instinct of life beyond the grave glides like a noiseless dream; and ever that heaven that the soul yearns for is coloured by the fancies of the fond human heart, each fashioning the above from the desires unsatisfied below.

“There,” thought the musing maiden, “cruelty and strife shall cease; there, vanish the harsh differences of life; there, those whom we have loved and lost are found, and through the Son, who tasted of mortal sorrow, we are raised to the home of the Eternal Father!”

"And there," thought the aspiring sage, "the mind, dungeoned and chained below, rushes free into the realms of space; there, from every mystery falls the veil; there, the Omniscient smiles on those who, through the darkness of life, have fed that lamp, the soul; there, Thought, but the seed on earth, bursts into the flower and ripens to the fruit!"

And on the several hope of both maid and sage the eyes of the angel stars smiled with a common promise.

At last, insensibly, and while still musing, so that slumber but continued the revery into visions, father and daughter slept.

The night passed away; the dawn came slow and gray; the antlers of the deer stirred above the fern; the song of the nightingale was hushed; and just as the morning star waned back, while the reddening east announced the sun, and labour and trouble resumed their realm of day, a fierce band halted before those sleeping forms.

These men had been Lancastrian soldiers, and, reduced to plunder for a living, had, under Sir Geoffrey Gates, formed the most stalwart part of the wild, disorderly force whom Hilyard and Coniers had led to Olney. They had heard of the new outbreak, headed by their ancient captain, Sir Geoffrey (who was supposed to have been instigated to his revolt by the gold and promises of the Lancastrian chiefs), and were on their way to join the rebels; but as war for them was but the name for booty, they felt the wonted instinct of the robber, when they caught sight of the old man and the fair maid.

Both Adam and his daughter wore, unhappily, the dresses in which they had left the court, and Sibyll's especially was that which seemed to betoken a certain rank and station.

"Awake, rouse ye!" said the captain of the band, roughly shaking the arm which encircled Sibyll's slender waist. Adam started, opened his eyes, and saw himself begirt by figures in rusty armour, with savage faces peering under their steel sallets.

"How came you hither? Yon oak drops strange acorns," quoth the chief.

"Valiant sir," replied Adam, still seated, and drawing his gown instinctively over Sibyll's face, which nestled on his bosom, in slumber so deep and heavy, that the gruff voice had not broken it, "valiant sir! we are forlorn and houseless, an old man and a simple girl. Some evil-minded persons invaded our home; we fled in the night, and—"

"Invaded your house! ha, it is clear," said the chief. "We know the rest."

At this moment Sibyll woke, and starting to her feet in astonishment and terror at the sight on which her eyes opened, her extreme beauty made a sensible effect upon the bravoes.

"Do not be daunted, young demoiselle," said the captain, with an air almost respectful; "it is necessary thou and Sir John should follow us, but we will treat you well, and consult later on the ransom ye will pay us. Jock, discharge the young sumpter mule; put its load on the black one. We have no better equipment for thee, lady; but the first haquenee we find shall replace the mule, and meanwhile my knaves will heap their cloaks for a pillion."

"But what mean you?—you mistake us!" exclaimed Sibyll. "We are poor; we cannot ransom ourselves."

"Poor!—tut!" said the captain, pointing significantly to the costly robe of the maiden—"moreover his worship's wealth is well known. Mount in haste,—we are pressed." And without heeding the

expostulations of Sibyll and the poor scholar, the rebel put his troop into motion, and marched himself at their head, with his lieutenant.

Sibyll found the subalterns sterner than their chief; for as Warner offered to resist, one of them lifted his gisarme, with a frightful oath, and Sibyll was the first to persuade her father to submit. She mildly, however, rejected the mule, and the two captives walked together in the midst of the troop.

“Pardie!” said the lieutenant, “I see little help to Sir Geoffrey in these recruits, captain!”

“Fool!” said the chief, disdainfully, “if the rebellion fail, these prisoners may save our necks. Will Somers last night was to break into the house of Sir John Bourchier, for arms and moneys, of which the knight hath a goodly store. Be sure, Sir John slinked off in the siege, and this is he and his daughter. Thou knowest he is one of the greatest knights, and the richest, whom the Yorkists boast of; and we may name our own price for his ransom.”

“But where lodge them while we go to the battle?”

“Ned Porpustone hath a hostelry not far from the camp, and Ned is a good Lancastrian, and a man to be trusted.”

“We have not searched the prisoners,” said the lieutenant; “they may have some gold in their pouches.”

“Marry, when Will Somers storms a hive, little time does he leave to the bees to fly away with much money. Nathless, thou mayest search the old knight, but civilly, and with gentle excuses.”

“And the damsel?”

“Nay! that were unmannerly, and the milder our conduct, the larger the ransom,—when we have great folks to deal with.”

The lieutenant accordingly fell back to search Adam’s gipsire, which contained only a book and a file, and then rejoined his captain, without offering molestation to Sibyll.

The mistake made by the bravo was at least so far not wholly unfortunate that the notion of the high quality of the captives—for Sir John Bourchier was indeed a person of considerable station and importance (a notion favoured by the noble appearance of the scholar and the delicate and highborn air of Sibyll)—procured for them all the respect compatible with the circumstances. They had not gone far before they entered a village, through which the ruffians marched with the most perfect impunity; for it was a strange feature in those civil wars that the mass of the population, except in the northern districts, remained perfectly supine and neutral. And as the little band halted at a small inn to drink, the gossips of the village collected round them, with the same kind of indolent, careless curiosity which is now evinced in some hamlet at the halt of a stage-coach. Here the captain learned, however, some intelligence important to his objects,—namely, the night march of the troop under Lord Hastings, and the probability that the conflict was already begun. “If so,” muttered the rebel, “we can see how the tide turns, before we endanger ourselves; and at the worst, our prisoners will bring something of prize-money.”

While thus soliloquizing, he spied one of those cumbrous vehicles of the day called whirlicotes [Whirlicotes were in use from a very early period, but only among the great, till, in the reign of Richard II., his queen, Anne, introduced side-saddles, when the whirlicote fell out of fashion, but might be found at different hostelries on the main roads for the accommodation of the infirm or aged.] standing in the yard of the hostelry; and seizing upon it, vi et armis, in spite of all the cries and protestations of the unhappy landlord, he ordered his captives to enter, and recommenced his march.

As the band proceeded farther on their way, they were joined by fresh troops of the same class as themselves, and they pushed on gayly, till, about the hour of eight, they halted before the hostelry the captain had spoken of. It stood a little out of the high road, not very far from the village of Hadley, and the heath or chase of Gladsmore, on which was fought, some time afterwards, the battle of Barnet. It was a house of good aspect, and considerable size, for it was much frequented by all caravanserais and travellers from the North to the metropolis. The landlord, at heart a stanch Lancastrian, who had served in the French wars, and contrived, no one knew how, to save moneys in the course of an adventurous life, gave to his hostelry the appellation and sign of the Talbot, in memory of the old hero of that name; and, hiring a tract of land, joined the occupation of a farmer to the dignity of a host. The house, which was built round a spacious quadrangle, represented the double character of its owner, one side being occupied by barns and a considerable range of stabling, while cows, oxen, and ragged colts grouped amicably together in a space railed off in the centre of the yard. At another side ran a large wooden staircase, with an open gallery, propped on wooden columns, conducting to numerous chambers, after the fashion of the Tabard in Southwark, immortalized by Chaucer. Over the archway, on entrance, ran a labyrinth of sleeping lofts for foot passengers and muleteers; and the side facing the entrance was nearly occupied by a vast kitchen, the common hall, and the bar, with the private parlour of the host, and two or three chambers in the second story. The whirlicote jolted and rattled into the yard. Sibyll and her father were assisted out of the vehicle, and, after a few words interchanged with the host, conducted by Master Porpustone himself up the spacious stairs into a chamber, well furnished and fresh littered, with repeated assurances of safety, provided they maintained silence, and attempted no escape.

“Ye are in time,” said Ned Porpustone to the captain. “Lord Hastings made proclamation at daybreak that he gave the rebels two hours to disperse.”

“Pest! I like not those proclamations. And the fellows stood their ground?”

“No; for Sir Geoffrey, like a wise soldier, mended the ground by retreating a mile to the left, and placing the wood between the Yorkists and himself. Hastings, by this, must have remarshalled his men. But to pass the wood is slow work, and Sir Geoffrey’s crossbows are no doubt doing damage in the covert. Come in, while your fellows snatch a morsel without; five minutes are not thrown away on filling their bellies.”

“Thanks, Ned, thou art a good fellow; and if all else fail, why, Sir John’s ransom shall pay the reckoning. Any news of bold Robin?”

“Ay, he has ‘scaped with a whole skin, and gone back to the North,” answered the host, leading the way to his parlour, where a flask of strong wine and some cold meat awaited his guest. “If Sir Geoffrey Gates can beat off the York troopers, tell him, from me, not to venture to London, but to fall back into the marshes. He will be welcome there, I foreguess; for every northman is either for Warwick or for Lancaster, and the two must unite now, I trow.”

“But Warwick is flown!” quoth the captain.

“Tush! he has only flown as the falcon flies when he has a heron to fight with,—wheeling and soaring. Woe to the heron when the falcon swoops! But you drink not!”

“No; I must keep the head cool to-day; for Hastings is a perilous captain. Thy fist, friend! If I fall, I leave you Sir John and his girl to wipe off old scores; if we beat off the Yorkists I vow to Our Lady of Walsingham an image of wax of the weight of myself.” The marauder then started up, and strode to his men, who were snatching a hasty meal on the space before the hostel. He paused a moment or so, while his host whispered,—

“Hastings was here before daybreak: but his men only got the sour beer; yours fight upon huffcap.”

"Up, men! to your pikes! Dress to the right!" thundered the captain, with a sufficient pause between each sentence. "The York lozels have starved on stale beer,—shall they beat huffcap and Lancaster? Frisk and fresh-up with the Antelope banner [The antelope was one of the Lancastrian badges. The special cognizance of Henry VI. was two feathers in saltire.], and long live Henry the Sixth!"

The sound of the shout that answered this harangue shook the thin walls of the chamber in which the prisoners were confined, and they heard with joy the departing tramp of the soldiers. In a short time, Master Porpustone himself, a corpulent, burly fellow, with a face by no means unprepossessing, mounted to the chamber, accompanied by a comely housekeeper, linked to him, as scandal said, by ties less irksome than Hymen's, and both bearing ample provisions, with rich pigment and lucid clary [clary was wine clarified], which they spread with great formality on an oak table before their involuntary guest.

"Eat, your worship, eat!" cried mine host, heartily. "Eat, lady-bird,—nothing like eating to kill time and banish care. Fortune of war, Sir John,—fortune of war, never be daunted! Up to-day, down to-morrow. Come what may—York or Lancaster—still a rich man always falls on his legs. Five hundred or so to the captain; a noble or two, out of pure generosity, to Ned Porpustone (I scorn extortion), and you and the fair young dame may breakfast at home to-morrow, unless the captain or his favourite lieutenant is taken prisoner; and then, you see, they will buy off their necks by letting you out of the bag. Eat, I say,—eat!"

"Verily," said Adam, seating himself solemnly, and preparing to obey, "I confess I'm a hungered, and the pasty hath a savoury odour; but I pray thee to tell me why I am called Sir John. Adam is my baptismal name."

"Ha! ha! good—very good, your honour—to be sure, and your father's name before you. We are all sons of Adam, and every son, I trow, has a just right and a lawful to his father's name."

With that, followed by the housekeeper, the honest landlord, chuckling heartily, rolled his goodly bulk from the chamber, which he carefully locked.

"Comprehendest thou yet, Sibyll?"

"Yes, dear sir and father, they mistake us for fugitives of mark and importance; and when they discover their error, no doubt we shall go free. Courage, dear father!"

"Me seemeth," quoth Adam, almost merrily, as the good man filled his cup from the wine flagon, "me seemeth that, if the mistake could continue, it would be no weighty misfortune; ha! ha!" He stopped abruptly in the unwonted laughter, put down the cup; his face fell. "Ah, Heaven forgive me!—and the poor Eureka and faithful Madge!"

"Oh, Father! fear not; we are not without protection. Lord Hastings is returned to London,—we will seek him; he will make our cruel neighbours respect thee. And Madge—poor Madge!—will be so happy at our return, for they could not harm her,—a woman, old and alone; no, no, man is not fierce enough for that."

"Let us so pray; but thou eatest not, child."

"Anon, Father, anon; I am sick and weary. But, nay—nay, I am better now,—better. Smile again, Father. I am hungered, too; yes, indeed and in sooth, yes. Ah, sweet Saint Mary, give me life and strength, and hope and patience, for his dear sake!"

The stirring events which had within the last few weeks diversified the quiet life of the scholar had somewhat roused him from his wonted abstraction, and made the actual world a more sensible and living thing than it had hitherto seemed to his mind; but now, his repast ended, the quiet of the place (for the inn

was silent and almost deserted) with the fumes of the wine—a luxury he rarely tasted—operated soothingly upon his thought and fancy, and plunged him into those reveries, so dear alike to poet and mathematician. To the thinker the most trifling external object often suggests ideas, which, like Homer's chain, extend, link after link; from earth to heaven. The sunny motes, that in a glancing column came through the lattice, called Warner from the real day,—the day of strife and blood, with thousands hard by driving each other to the Hades,—and led his scheming fancy into the ideal and abstract day,—the theory of light itself; and the theory suggested mechanism, and mechanism called up the memory of his oracle, old Roger Bacon; and that memory revived the great friar's hints in the Opus magnus,—hints which outlined the grand invention of the telescope; and so, as over some dismal precipice a bird swings itself to and fro upon the airy bough, the schoolman's mind played with its quivering fancy, and folded its calm wings above the verge of terror.

Occupied with her own dreams, Sibyll respected those of her father; and so in silence, not altogether mournful, the morning and the noon passed, and the sun was sloping westward, when a confused sound below called Sibyll's gaze to the lattice, which looked over the balustrade of the staircase into the vast yard. She saw several armed men, their harness hewed and battered, quaffing ale or wine in haste, and heard one of them say to the landlord,—

"All is lost! Sir Geoffrey Gates still holds out, but it is butcher work. The troops of Lord Hastings gather round him as a net round the fish!"

Hastings!—that name!—he was at hand! he was near! they would be saved! Sibyll's heart beat loudly.

"And the captain?" asked Porpustone.

"Alive, when I last saw him; but we must be off. In another hour all will be hurry and skurry, flight and chase." At this moment from one of the barns there emerged, one by one, the female vultures of the battle. The tymbesteres, who had tramped all night to the spot, had slept off their fatigue during the day, and appeared on the scene as the neighbouring strife waxed low, and the dead and dying began to cumber the gory ground. Graul Skellet, tossing up her timbrel, darted to the fugitives and grinned a ghastly grin when she heard the news,—for the tymbesteres were all loyal to a king who loved women, and who had a wink and a jest for every tramping wench! The troopers tarried not, however, for further converse, but, having satisfied their thirst, hurried and clattered from the yard. At the sight of the ominous tymbesteres Sibyll had drawn back, without daring to close the lattice she had opened; and the women, seating themselves on a bench, began sleeking their long hair and smoothing their garments from the scraps of straw and litter which betokened the nature of their resting-place.

"Ho, girls!" said the fat landlord, "ye will pay me for board and bed, I trust, by a show of your craft. I have two right worshipful lodgers up yonder, whose lattice looks on the yard, and whom ye may serve to divert."

Sibyll trembled, and crept to her father's side.

"And," continued the landlord, "if they like the clash of your musicals, it may bring ye a groat or so, to help ye on your journey. By the way, whither wend ye, wenches?"

"To a bonny, jolly fair," answered the sinister voice of Graul,—

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"Where a mighty SHOWMAN dyes
   The greenery into red;
 Where, presto! at the word
   Lies his Fool without a head;
 Where he gathers in the crowd
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  To the trumpet and the drum,
With a jingle and a tinkle,
  Graul's merry lasses come!"
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As the two closing lines were caught by the rest of the tymbesteres, striking their timbrels, the crew formed themselves into a semicircle, and commenced their dance. Their movements, though wanton and fantastic, were not without a certain wild grace; and the address with which, from time to time, they cast up their instruments and caught them in descending, joined to the surprising agility with which, in the evolutions of the dance, one seemed now to chase, now to fly from, the other, darting to and fro through the ranks of her companions, winding and wheeling,—the chain now seemingly broken in disorder, now united link to link, as the whole force of the instruments clashed in chorus,—made an exhibition inexpressibly attractive to the vulgar.

The tymbesteres, however, as may well be supposed, failed to draw Sibyll or Warner to the window; and they exchanged glances of spite and disappointment.

"Marry," quoth the landlord, after a hearty laugh at the diversion, "I do wrong to be so gay, when so many good friends perhaps are lying stark and cold. But what then? Life is short,—laugh while we can!"

"Hist!" whispered his housekeeper; "art wode, Ned? Wouldst thou have it discovered that thou hast such quality birds in the cage—noble Yorkists—at the very time when Lord Hastings himself may be riding this way after the victory?"

"Always right, Meg,—and I'm an ass!" answered the host, in the same undertone. "But my good nature will be the death of me some day. Poor gentlefolks, they must be unked dull, yonder!"

"If the Yorkists come hither,—which we shall soon know by the scouts,—we must shift Sir John and the damsel to the back of the house, over thy tap-room."

"Manage it as thou wilt, Meg; but thou seest they keep quiet and snug. Ho, ho, ho! that tall tymbestere is supple enough to make an owl hold his sides with laughing. Ah! hollo, there, tymbesteres, ribaudes, tramps, the devil's chickens,—down, down!"

The host was too late in his order. With a sudden spring, Graul, who had long fixed her eye on the open lattice of the prisoners, had wreathed herself round one of the pillars that supported the stairs, swung lightly over the balustrade; and with a faint shriek the startled Sibyll beheld the tymbestere's hard, fierce eyes, glaring upon her through the lattice, as her long arm extended the timbrel for largess. But no sooner had Sibyll raised her face than she was recognized.

"Ho, the wizard and the wizard's daughter! Ho, the girl who glamours lords, and wears sarcenet and lawn! Ho, the nigromancer who starves the poor!"

At the sound of their leader's cry, up sprang, up climbed the hellish sisters! One after the other, they darted through the lattice into the chamber.

"The ronions! the foul fiend has distraught them!" groaned the landlord, motionless with astonishment; but the more active Meg, calling to the varlets and scullions, whom the tymbesteres had collected in the yard, to follow her, bounded up the stairs, unlocked the door, and arrived in time to throw herself between the captives and the harpies, whom Sibyll's rich super-tunic and Adam's costly gown had inflamed into all the rage of appropriation.

"What mean ye, wretches?" cried the bold Meg, purple with anger. "Do ye come for this into honest folk's hostelries, to rob their guests in broad day—noble guests—guests of mark! Oh, Sir John! Sir John! what will ye think of us?"

"Oh, Sir John! Sir John!" groaned the landlord, who had now moved his slow bulk into the room. "They shall be scourged, Sir John! They shall be put in the stocks, they shall be brent with hot iron, they—"

"Ha, ha!" interrupted the terrible Graul, "guests of mark! noble guests, trow ye! Adam Warner, the wizard, and his daughter, whom we drove last night from their den, as many a time, sisters, and many, we have driven the rats from charnel and cave."

"Wizard! Adam! Blood of my life!" stammered the landlord, "is his name Adam after all?"

"My name is Adam Warner," said the old man, with dignity, "no wizard—a humble scholar, and a poor gentleman, who has injured no one. Wherefore, women—if women ye are—would ye injure mine and me?"

"Faugh, wizard!" returned Graul, folding her arms. "Didst thou not send thy spawn, yonder, to spoil our mart with her gittern? Hast thou not taught her the spells to win love from the noble and young? Ho, how daintily the young witch robes herself! Ho, laces and satins, and we shiver with the cold, and parch with the heat—and—doff thy tunic, minion!"

And Graul's fierce gripe was on the robe, when the landlord interposed his huge arm, and held her at bay.

"Softly, my sucking dove, softly! Clear the room and be off!"

"Look to thyself, man. If thou harbourest a wizard against law,—a wizard whom King Edward hath given up to the people,—look to thy barns,—they shall burn; look to thy cattle,—they shall rot; look to thy secrets,—they shall be told. Lancastrian, thou shalt hang! We go! we go! We have friends amongst the mailed men of York. We go,—we will return! Woe to thee, if thou harbourest the wizard and the succuba!"

With that Graul moved slowly to the door. Host and housekeeper, varlet, groom, and scullion made way for her in terror; and still, as she moved, she kept her eyes on Sibyll, till her sisters, following in successive file, shut out the hideous aspect: and Meg, ordering away her gaping train, closed the door.

The host and the housekeeper then gazed gravely at each other. Sibyll lay in her father's arms breathing hard and convulsively. The old man's face bent over her in silence. Meg drew aside her master. "You must rid the house at once of these folks. I have heard talk of yon tymbesteres; they are awsome in spite and malice. Every man to himself!"

"But the poor old gentleman, so mild, and the maid, so winsome!"

The last remark did not over-please the comely Meg. She advanced at once to Adam, and said shortly,—

"Master, whether wizard or not is no affair of a poor landlord, whose house is open to all; but ye have had food and wine,—please to pay the reckoning, and God speed ye; ye are free to depart."

"We can pay you, mistress!" exclaimed Sibyll, springing up. "We have moneys yet. Here, here!" and she took from her gipsire the broad pieces which poor Madge's precaution had placed therein, and which the bravoes had fortunately spared.

The sight of the gold somewhat softened the housewife. “Lord Hastings is known to us,” continued Sibyll, perceiving the impression she had made; “suffer us to rest here till he pass this way, and ye will find yourselves repaid for the kindness.”

“By my troth,” said the landlord, “ye are most welcome to all my poor house containeth; and as for these tymbesteres, I value them not a straw. No one can say Ned Porpustone is an ill man or inhospitable. Whoever can pay reasonably is sure of good wine and civility at the Talbot.”

With these and many similar protestations and assurances, which were less heartily re-echoed by the housewife, the landlord begged to conduct them to an apartment not so liable to molestation; and after having led them down the principal stairs, through the bar, and thence up a narrow flight of steps, deposited them in a chamber at the back of the house, and lighted a sconce therein, for it was now near the twilight. He then insisted on seeing after their evening meal, and vanished with his assistant. The worthy pair were now of the same mind; for guests known to Lord Hastings it was worth braving the threats of the tymbesteres; especially since Lord Hastings, it seems, had just beaten the Lancastrians.

But alas! while the active Meg was busy on the hippocras, and the worthy landlord was inspecting the savoury operations of the kitchen, a vast uproar was heard without. A troop of disorderly Yorkist soldiers, who had been employed in dispersing the flying rebels, rushed helter-skelter into the house, and poured into the kitchen, bearing with them the detested tymbesteres, who had encountered them on their way. Among these soldiers were those who had congregated at Master Sancroft’s the day before, and they were well prepared to support the cause of their griesly paramours. Lord Hastings himself had retired for the night to a farmhouse nearer the field of battle than the hostel; and as in those days discipline was lax enough after a victory, the soldiers had a right to license. Master Porpustone found himself completely at the mercy of these brawling customers, the more rude and disorderly from the remembrance of the sour beer in the morning, and Graul Skellet’s assurances that Master Porpustone was a malignant Lancastrian. They laid hands on all the provisions in the house, tore the meats from the spit, devouring them half raw; set the casks running over the floors; and while they swilled and swore, and filled the place with the uproar of a hell broke loose, Graul Skellet, whom the lust for the rich garments of Sibyll still fired and stung, led her followers up the stairs towards the deserted chamber. Mine host perceived, but did not dare openly to resist the foray; but as he was really a good-natured knave, and as, moreover, he feared ill consequences might ensue if any friends of Lord Hastings were spoiled, outraged,—nay, peradventure murdered,—in his house, he resolved, at all events, to assist the escape of his guests. Seeing the ground thus clear of the tymbesteres, he therefore stole from the riotous scene, crept up the back stairs, gained the chamber to which he had so happily removed his persecuted lodgers, and making them, in a few words, sensible that he was no longer able to protect them, and that the tymbesteres were now returned with an armed force to back their malice, conducted them safely to a wide casement only some three or four feet from the soil of the solitary garden, and bade them escape and save themselves.

“The farm,” he whispered, “where they say my Lord Hastings is quartered is scarcely a mile and a half away; pass the garden wicket, leave Gladsmore Chase to the left hand, take the path to the right, through the wood, and you will see its roof among the apple-blossoms. Our Lady protect you, and say a word to my lord on behalf of poor Ned.”

Scarce had he seen his guests descend into the garden before he heard the yell of the tymbesteres, in the opposite part of the house, as they ran from room to room after their prey. He hastened to regain the kitchen; and presently the tymbesteres, breathless and panting, rushed in, and demanded their victims.

“Marry,” quoth the landlord, with the self-possession of a cunning old soldier-“think ye I cumbered my house with such cattle after pretty lasses like you had given me the inkling of what they were? No wizard shall fly away with the sign of the Talbot, if I can help it. They skulked off I can promise ye, and did not even mount a couple of broomsticks which I handsomely offered for their ride up to London.”

“Thunder and bombards!” cried a trooper, already half-drunk, and seizing Graul in his iron arms, “put the conjuror out of thine head now, and buss me, Graul, buss me!”

Then the riot became hideous; the soldiers, following their comrade’s example, embraced the grim glee-women, tearing and hauling them to and fro, one from the other, round and round, dancing, hallooing, chanting, howling, by the blaze of a mighty fire,—many a rough face and hard hand smeared with blood still wet, communicating the stain to the cheeks and garb of those foul feres, and the whole revel becoming so unutterably horrible and ghastly, that even the veteran landlord fled from the spot, trembling and crossing himself. And so, streaming athwart the lattice, and silvering over that fearful merry-making, rose the moon.

But when fatigue and drunkenness had done their work, and the soldiers fell one over the other upon the floor, the tables, the benches, into the heavy sleep of riot, Graul suddenly rose from amidst the huddled bodies, and then, silently as ghouls from a burial-ground, her sisters emerged also from their resting-places beside the sleepers. The dying light of the fire contended but feebly with the livid rays of the moon, and played fantastically over the gleaming robes of the tymbesteres. They stood erect for a moment, listening, Graul with her finger on her lips; then they glided to the door, opened and reclosed it, darted across the yard, scaring the beasts that slept there; the watch-dog barked, but drew back, bristling, and showing his fangs, as Red Grisell, undaunted, pointed her knife, and Graul flung him a red peace-sop of meat. They launched themselves through the open entrance, gained the space beyond, and scoured away to the battlefield.

Meanwhile, Sibyll and her father were still under the canopy of heaven, they had scarcely passed the garden and entered the fields, when they saw horsemen riding to and fro in all directions. Sir Geoffrey Gates, the rebel leader, had escaped; the reward of three hundred marks was set on his head, and the riders were in search of the fugitive. The human form itself had become a terror to the hunted outcasts; they crept under a thick hedge till the horsemen had disappeared, and then resumed their way. They gained the wood; but there again they halted at the sound of voices, and withdrew themselves under covert of some entangled and trampled bushes. This time it was but a party of peasants, whom curiosity had led to see the field of battle, and who were now returning home. Peasants and soldiers both were human, and therefore to be shunned by those whom the age itself put out of the pale of law. At last the party also left the path free; and now it was full night. They pursued their way, they cleared the wood; before them lay the field of battle; and a deeper silence seemed to fall over the world! The first stars had risen, but not yet the moon. The gleam of armour from prostrate bodies, which it had mailed in vain, reflected the quiet rays; here and there flickered watchfires, where sentinels were set, but they were scattered and remote. The outcasts paused and shuddered, but there seemed no holier way for their feet; and the roof of the farmer’s homestead slept on the opposite side of the field, amidst white orchard blossoms, whitened still more by the stars. They went on, hand in hand,—the dead, after all, were less terrible than the living. Sometimes a stern, upturned face, distorted by the last violent agony, the eyes unclosed and glazed, encountered them with its stony stare; but the weapon was powerless in the stiff hand, the menace and the insult came not from the hueless lips; persecution reposed, at last, in the lap of slaughter. They had gone midway through the field, when they heard from a spot where the corpses lay thickest piled, a faint voice calling upon God for pardon; and, suddenly, it was answered by a tone of fiercer agony,—that did not pray, but curse.

By a common impulse, the gentle wanderers moved silently to the spot.

The sufferer in prayer was a youth scarcely passed from boyhood: his helm had been cloven, his head was bare, and his long light hair, clotted with gore, fell over his shoulders. Beside him lay a strong-built, powerful form, which writhed in torture, pierced under the arm by a Yorkist arrow, and the shaft still projecting from the wound,—and the man’s curse answered the boy’s prayer.

“Peace to thy parting soul, brother!” said Warner, bending over the man.

"Poor sufferer!" said Sibyll to the boy; "cheer thee, we will send succour; thou mayest live yet!"

"Water! water!—hell and torture!—water, I say!" groaned the man; "one drop of water!"

It was the captain of the maurauders who had captured the wanderers.

"Thine arm! lift me! move me! That evil man scares my soul from heaven!" gasped the boy.

And Adam preached penitence to the one that cursed, and Sibyll knelt down and prayed with the one that prayed. And up rose the moon!

Lord Hastings sat with his victorious captains—over mead, morat, and wine—in the humble hall of the farm.

"So," said he, "we have crushed the last embers of the rebellion! This Sir Geoffrey Gates is a restless and resolute spirit; pity he escapes again for further mischief. But the House of Nevile, that overshadowed the rising race, hath fallen at last,—a waisall, brave sirs, to the new men!"

The door was thrown open, and an old soldier entered abruptly.

"My lord! my lord! Oh, my poor son! he cannot be found! The women, who ever follow the march of soldiers, will be on the ground to despatch the wounded, that they may rifle the corpses! O God! if my son, my boy, my only son—"

"I wist not, my brave Mervil, that thou hadst a son in our bands; yet I know each man by name and sight. Courage! Our wounded have been removed, and sentries are placed to guard the field."

"Sentries! O my lord, knowest thou not that they wink at the crime that plunders the dead? Moreover, these corpse-riflers creep stealthily and unseen, as the red earth-worms, to the carcass. Give me some few of thy men, give me warrant to search the field! My son, my boy—not sixteen summers—and his mother!"

The man stopped, and sobbed.

"Willingly!" said the gentle Hastings, "willingly! And woe to the sentries if it be as thou sayest! I will go myself and see! Torches there—what ho!—the good captain careth even for his dead!—Thy son! I marvel I knew him not! Whom served he under?"

"My lord! my lord! pardon him! He is but a boy—they misled him! he fought for the rebels. He crossed my path to-day, my arm was raised; we knew each other, and he fled from his father's sword! Just as the strife was ended I saw him again, I saw him fall!—Oh, mercy, mercy! do not let him perish of his wounds or by the rifler's knife, even though a rebel!"

"Homo sum!" quoth the noble chief; "I am a man; and, even in these bloody times, Nature commands when she speaks in a father's voice! Mervil, I marked thee to-day! Thou art a brave fellow. I meant thee advancement; I give thee, instead, thy son's pardon, if he lives; ten Masses if he died as a soldier's son should die, no matter under what flag,—antelope or lion, pierced manfully in the breast, his feet to the foe! Come, I will search with thee!"

The boy yielded up his soul while Sibyll prayed, and her sweet voice soothed the last pang; and the man ceased to curse while Adam spoke of God's power and mercy, and his breath ebbed, gasp upon gasp, away. While thus detained, the wanderers saw not pale, fleeting figures, that had glided to the ground, and

moved, gleaming, irregular, and rapid, as marsh-fed vapours, from heap to heap of the slain. With a loud, wild cry, the robber Lancastrian half sprung to his feet, in the paroxysm of the last struggle, and then fell on his face, a corpse!

The cry reached the tymbesteres, and Graul rose from a body from which she had extracted a few coins smeared with blood, and darted to the spot; and so, as Adam raised his face from contemplating the dead, whose last moments he had sought to soothe, the Alecto of the battlefield stood before him, her knife bare in her gory arm. Red Grisell, who had just left (with a spurn of wrath—for the pouch was empty) the corpse of a soldier, round whose neck she had twined her hot clasp the day before, sprang towards Sibyll; the rest of the sisterhood flocked to the place, and laughed in glee as they beheld their unexpected prey. The danger was horrible and imminent; no pity was seen in those savage eyes. The wanderers prepared for death—when, suddenly, torches flashed over the ground. A cry was heard, "See, the riflers of the dead!" Armed men bounded forward, and the startled wretches uttered a shrill, unearthly scream, and fled from the spot, leaping over the carcasses, and doubling and winding, till they had vanished into the darkness of the wood.

"Provost!" said a commanding voice, "hang me up those sentinels at day-break!"

"My son! my boy! speak, Hal,—speak to me. He is here, he is found!" exclaimed the old soldier, kneeling beside the corpse at Sibyll's feet.

"My lord! my beloved! my Hastings!" And Sibyll fell insensible before the chief.

CHAPTER VI. THE SUBTLE CRAFT OF RICHARD OF GLOUCESTER.

It was some weeks after the defeat of Sir Geoffrey Gates, and Edward was at Shene, with his gay court. Reclined at length within a pavilion placed before a cool fountain, in the royal gardens, and surrounded by his favourites, the king listened indolently to the music of his minstrels, and sleeked the plumage of his favourite falcon, perched upon his wrist. And scarcely would it have been possible to recognize in that lazy voluptuary the dauntless soldier, before whose lance, as deer before the hound, had so lately fled, at bloody Erpingham, the chivalry of the Lancastrian Rose; but remote from the pavilion, and in one of the deserted bowling alleys, Prince Richard and Lord Montagu walked apart, in earnest conversation. The last of these noble personages had remained inactive during these disturbances, and Edward had not seemed to entertain any suspicion of his participation in the anger and revenge of Warwick. The king took from him, it is true, the lands and earldom of Northumberland, and restored them to the Percy, but he had accompanied this act with gracious excuses, alleging the necessity of conciliating the head of an illustrious House, which had formally entered into allegiance to the dynasty of York, and bestowed upon his early favourite, in compensation, the dignity of marquis. [Montagu said bitterly of this new dignity, "He takes from me the Earldom and domains of Northumberland, and makes me a Marquis, with a pie's nest to maintain it withal."—STOWE: Edward IV.—Warkworth Chronicle.] The politic king, in thus depriving Montagu of the wealth and the retainers of the Percy, reduced him, as a younger brother, to a comparative poverty and insignificance, which left him dependent on Edward's favour, and deprived him, as he thought, of the power of active mischief; at the same time more than ever he insisted on Montagu's society, and summoning his attendance at the court, kept his movements in watchful surveillance.

"Nay, my lord," said Richard, pursuing with much unction the conversation he had commenced, "you wrong me much, Holy Paul be my witness, if you doubt the deep sorrow I feel at the unhappy events which have led to the severance of my kinsmen! England seems to me to have lost its smile in losing the glory of Earl Warwick's presence, and Clarence is my brother, and was my friend; and thou knowest, Montagu, thou knowest, how dear to my heart was the hope to win for my wife and lady the gentle Anne."

"Prince," said Montagu, abruptly, "though the pride of Warwick and the honour of our House may have forbidden the public revelation of the cause which fired my brother to rebellion, thou, at least, art privy to a secret—"

"Cease!" exclaimed Richard, in great emotion, probably sincere, for his face grew livid, and its muscles were nervously convulsed. "I would not have that remembrance stirred from its dark repose. I would fain forget a brother's hasty frenzy, in the belief of his lasting penitence." He paused and turned his face, gasped for breath, and resumed: "The cause justified the father; it had justified me in the father's cause, had Warwick listened to my suit, and given me the right to deem insult to his daughter injury to myself."

"And if, my prince," returned Montagu, looking round him, and in a subdued whisper, "if yet the hand of Lady Anne were pledged to you?"

"Tempt me not, tempt me not!" cried the prince, crossing himself. Montagu continued,—

"Our cause, I mean Lord Warwick's cause, is not lost, as the king deems it."

"Proceed," said Richard, casting down his eyes, while his countenance settled back into its thoughtful calm.

"I mean," renewed Montagu, "that in my brother's flight, his retainers were taken by surprise. In vain the king would confiscate his lands,—he cannot confiscate men's hearts. If Warwick to-morrow set his armed heel upon the soil, trowest thou, sagacious and clear-judging prince, that the strife which would follow would be but another field of Losecote? [The battle of Erpingham, so popularly called, in contempt of the rebel lions runaways.] Thou hast heard of the honours with which King Louis has received the earl. Will that king grudge him ships and moneys? And meanwhile, thinkest thou that his favourers sleep?"

"But if he land, Montagu," said Richard, who seemed to listen with an attention that awoke all the hopes of Montagu, coveting so powerful an ally—"if he land, and make open war on Edward—we must say the word boldly—what intent can he proclaim? It is not enough to say King Edward shall not reign; the earl must say also what king England should elect!"

"Prince," answered Montagu, "before I reply to that question, vouchsafe to hear my own hearty desire and wish. Though the king has deeply wronged my brother, though he has despoiled me of the lands, which were, peradventure, not too large a reward for twenty victories in his cause, and restored them to the House that ever ranked amongst the strongholds of his Lancastrian foe, yet often when I am most resentful, the memory of my royal seigneur's past love and kindness comes over me,—above all, the thought of the solemn contract between his daughter and my son; and I feel (now the first heat of natural anger at an insult offered to my niece is somewhat cooled) that if Warwick did land, I could almost forget my brother for my king."

"Almost!" repeated Richard, smiling.

"I am plain with your Highness, and say but what I feel. I would even now fain trust that, by your mediation, the king may be persuaded to make such concessions and excuses as in truth would not

misbeseem him, to the father of Lady Anne, and his own kinsman; and that yet, ere it be too late, I may be spared the bitter choice between the ties of blood and my allegiance to the king."

"But failing this hope (which I devoutly share),—and Edward, it must be owned, could scarcely trust to a letter,—still less to a messenger, the confession of a crime,—failing this, and your brother land, and I side with him for love of Anne, pledged to me as a bride,—what king would he ask England to elect?"

"The Duke of Clarence loves you dearly, Lord Richard," replied Montagu. "Knowest thou not how often he hath said, 'By sweet Saint George, if Gloucester would join me, I would make Edward know we were all one man's sons, who should be more preferred and promoted than strangers of his wife's blood?'" [Hall.]

Richard's countenance for a moment evinced disappointment; but he said dryly: "Then Warwick would propose that Clarence should be king?—and the great barons and the honest burghers and the sturdy yeomen would, you think, not stand aghast at the manifesto which declares, not that the dynasty of York is corrupt and faulty, but that the younger son should depose the elder,—that younger son, mark me! not only unknown in war and green in council, but gay, giddy, vacillating; not subtle of wit and resolute of deed, as he who so aspires should be!—Montagu, a vain dream!"—Richard paused and then resumed, in a low tone, as to himself, "Oh, not so—not so are kings cozened from their thrones! a pretext must blind men,—say they are illegitimate, say they are too young, too feeble, too anything, glide into their place, and then, not war—not war. You slay them not,—they disappear!" The duke's face, as he muttered, took a sinister and a dark expression, his eyes seemed to gaze on space. Suddenly recovering himself as from a revery, he turned, with his wonted sleek and gracious aspect, to the startled Montagu, and said, "I was but quoting from Italian history, good my lord,—wise lore, but terrible and murderous. Return we to the point. Thou seest Clarence could not reign, and as well," added the prince, with a slight sigh,—"as well or better (for, without vanity, I have more of a king's mettle in me), might I—even I—aspire to my brother's crown!" Here he paused, and glanced rapidly and keenly at the marquis; but whether or not in these words he had sought to sound Montagu, and that glance sufficed to show him it were bootless or dangerous to speak more plainly, he resumed with an altered voice, "Enough of this: Warwick will discover the idleness of such design; and if he land, his trumpets must ring to a more kindling measure. John Montagu, thinkest thou that Margaret of Anjou and the Lancastrians will not rather win thy brother to their side? There is the true danger to Edward,—none elsewhere."

"And if so?" said Montagu, watching his listener's countenance. Richard started, and gnawed his lip. "Mark me," continued the marquis, "I repeat that I would fain hope yet that Edward may appease the earl; but if not, and, rather than rest dishonoured and aggrieved, Warwick link himself with Lancaster, and thou join him as Anne's betrothed and lord, what matters who the puppet on the throne?—we and thou shall be the rulers; or, if thou reject," added the marquis, artfully, as he supposed, exciting the jealousy of the duke, "Henry has a son—a fair, and they say, a gallant prince—carefully tutored in the knowledge of our English laws, and who my lord of Oxford, somewhat in the confidence of the Lancastrians, assures me would rejoice to forget old feuds, and call Warwick 'father,' and my niece 'Lady and Princess of Wales.'"

With all his dissimulation, Richard could ill conceal the emotions of fear, of jealousy, of dismay, which these words excited.

"Lord Oxford!" he cried, stamping his foot. "Ha, John de Vere, pestilent traitor, plottest thou thus? But we can yet seize thy person, and will have thy head."

Alarmed at this burst, and suddenly made aware that he had laid his breast too bare to the boy, whom he had thought to dazzle and seduce to his designs, Montagu said falteringly, "But, my lord, our talk is but in confidence: at your own prayer, with your own plighted word of prince and of kinsman, that whatever my frankness may utter should not pass farther. Take," added the nobleman, with proud dignity—"take my

head rather than Lord Oxford's; for I deserve death, if I reveal to one who can betray the loose words of another's intimacy and trust!"

"Forgive me, my cousin," said Richard, meekly; "my love to Anne transported me too far. Lord Oxford's words, as you report them, had conjured up a rival, and—but enough of this. And now," added the prince, gravely, and with a steadiness of voice and manner that gave a certain majesty to his small stature, "now as thou hast spoken openly, openly also will I reply. I feel the wrong to the Lady Anne as to myself; deeply, burningly, and lastingly, will it live in my mind; it may be, sooner or later, to rise to gloomy deeds, even against Edward and Edward's blood. But no, I have the king's solemn protestations of repentance; his guilty passion has burned into ashes, and he now sighs—gay Edward—for a lighter fere. I cannot join with Clarence, less can I join with the Lancastrians. My birth makes me the prop of the throne of York,—to guard it as a heritage (who knows?) that may descend to mine,—nay, to me! And, mark me well if Warwick attempt a war of fratricide, he is lost; if, on the other hand, he can submit himself to the hands of Margaret, stained with his father's gore, the success of an hour will close in the humiliation of a life. There is a third way left, and that way thou hast piously and wisely shown. Let him, like me, resign revenge, and, not exacting a confession and a cry of peccavi, which no king, much less King Edward the Plantagenet, can whimper forth, let him accept such overtures as his liege can make. His titles and castles shall be restored, equal possessions to those thou hast lost assigned to thee, and all my guerdon (if I can so negotiate) as all my ambition, his daughter's hand. Muse on this, and for the peace and weal of the realm so limit all thy schemes, my lord and cousin!"

With these words the prince pressed the hand of the marquis, and walked slowly towards the king's pavilion.

"Shame on my ripe manhood and lore of life," muttered Montagu, enraged against himself, and deeply mortified. "How sentence by sentence and step by step yon crafty pigmy led me on, till all our projects, all our fears and hopes, are revealed to him who but views them as a foe. Anne betrothed to one who even in fiery youth can thus beguile and dupe! Warwick decoyed hither upon fair words, at the will of one whom Italy (boy, there thou didst forget thy fence of cunning!) has taught how the great are slain not, but disappear! no, even this defeat instructs me now. But right, right! the reign of Clarence is impossible, and that of Lancaster is ill-omened and portentous; and after all, my son stands nearer to the throne than any subject, in his alliance with the Lady Elizabeth. Would to Heaven the king could yet—But out on me! this is no hour for musing on mine own aggrandizement; rather let me fly at once and warn Oxford—imperilled by my imprudence—against that dark eye which hath set watch upon his life."

At that thought, which showed that Montagu, with all his worldliness, was not forgetful of one of the first duties of knight and gentleman, the marquis hastened up the alley, in the opposite direction to that taken by Gloucester, and soon found himself in the courtyard, where a goodly company were mounting their haquenees and palfreys, to enjoy a summer ride through the neighbouring chase. The cold and half-slighting salutations of these minions of the hour, which now mortified the Nevile, despoiled of the possessions that had rewarded his long and brilliant services, contrasting forcibly the reverential homage he had formerly enjoyed, stung Montagu to the quick.

"Whither ride you, brother Marquis?" said young Lord Dorset (Elizabeth's son by her first marriage), as Montagu called to his single squire, who was in waiting with his horse. "Some secret expedition, methinks, for I have known the day when the Lord Montagu never rode from his king's palace with less than thirty squires."

"Since my Lord Dorset prides himself on his memory," answered the scornful lord, "he may remember also the day when, if a Nevile mounted in haste, he bade the first Woodville he saw hold the stirrup."

And regarding "the brother marquis" with a stately eye that silenced and awed retort, the long-descended Montagu passed the courtiers, and rode slowly on till out of sight of the palace; he then pushed into a hand-gallop, and halted not till he had reached London, and gained the house in which then dwelt the Earl of Oxford, the most powerful of all the Lancastrian nobles not in exile, and who had hitherto temporized with the reigning House.

Two days afterwards the news reached Edward that Lord Oxford and Jasper of Pembroke—uncle to the boy afterwards Henry VII.—had sailed from England.

The tidings reached the king in his chamber, where he was closeted with Gloucester. The conference between them seemed to have been warm and earnest, for Edward's face was flushed, and Gloucester's brow was perturbed and sullen.

"Now Heaven be praised!" cried the king, extending to Richard the letter which communicated the flight of the disaffected lords. "We have two enemies the less in our roiaulme, and many a barony the more to confiscate to our kingly wants. Ha, ha! these Lancastrians only serve to enrich us. Frowning still, Richard? smile, boy!"

"Foi de mon ame, Edward," said Richard, with a bitter energy, strangely at variance with his usual unctious deference to the king, "your Highness's gayety is ill-seasoned; you reject all the means to assure your throne, you rejoice in all the events that imperil it. I prayed you to lose not a moment in conciliating, if possible, the great lord whom you own you have wronged, and you replied that you would rather lose your crown than win back the arm that gave it you."

"Gave it me! an error, Richard! that crown was at once the heritage of my own birth and the achievement of my own sword. But were it as you say, it is not in a king's nature to bear the presence of a power more formidable than his own, to submit to a voice that commands rather than counsels; and the happiest chance that ever befell me is the exile of this earl. How, after what hath chanced, can I ever see his face again without humiliation, or he mine without resentment?"

"So you told me anon, and I answered, if that be so, and your Highness shrinks from the man you have injured, beware at least that Warwick, if he may not return as a friend, come not back as an irresistible foe. If you will not conciliate, crush! Hasten by all arts to separate Clarence from Warwick. Hasten to prevent the union of the earl's popularity and Henry's rights. Keep eye upon all the Lancastrian lords, and see that none quit the realm where they are captives, to join a camp where they can rise into leaders. And at the very moment I urge you to place strict watch upon Oxford, to send your swiftest riders to seize Jasper of Pembroke, you laugh with glee to hear that Oxford and Pembroke are gone to swell the army of your foes!"

"Better foes out of my realm than in it," answered Edward, dryly.

"My liege, I say no more," and Richard rose. "I would forestall a danger; it but remains for me to share it."

The king was touched. "Tarry yet, Richard," he said; and then, fixing his brother's eye, he continued, with a half smile and a heightened colour, "though we knew thee true and leal to us, we yet know also, Richard, that thou hast personal interest in thy counsels. Thou wouldst by one means or another soften or constrain the earl into giving thee the hand of Anne. Well, then, grant that Warwick and Clarence expel King Edward from his throne, they may bring a bride to console thee for the ruin of a brother."

"Thou hast no right to taunt or to suspect me, my liege," returned Richard, with a quiver in his lip. "Thou hast included me in thy meditated wrong to Warwick; and had that wrong been done—"

"Peradventure it had made thee espouse Warwick's quarrel?"

"Bluntly, yes!" exclaimed Richard, almost fiercely, and playing with his dagger. "But" (he added, with a sudden change of voice) "I understand and know thee better than the earl did or could. I know what in thee is but thoughtless impulse, haste of passion, the habit kings form of forgetting all things save the love or hate, the desire or anger, of a moment. Thou hast told me thyself, and with tears, of thy offence; thou hast pardoned my boy's burst of anger; I have pardoned thy evil thought; thou hast told me thyself that another face has succeeded to the brief empire of Anne's blue eye, and hast further pledged me thy kingly word, that if I can yet compass the hand of a cousin dear to me from childhood, thou wilt confirm the union."

"It is true," said Edward. "But if thou wed thy bride, keep her aloof from the court,—nay, frown not, my boy, I mean simply that I would not blush before my brother's wife!"

Richard bowed low in order to conceal the expression of his face, and went on without further notice of the explanation. "And all this considered, Edward, I swear by Saint Paul, the holiest saint to thoughtful men, and by Saint George, the noblest patron to high-born warriors, that thy crown and thine honour are as dear to me as if they were mine own. Whatever sins Richard of Gloucester may live to harbour and repent, no man shall ever say of him that he was a recreant to the honour of his country [so Lord Bacon observes of Richard, with that discrimination, even in the strongest censure, of which profound judges of mankind are alone capable, that he was "a king jealous of the honor of the English nation"], or slow to defend the rights of his ancestors from the treason of a vassal or the sword of a foreign foe. Therefore, I say again, if thou reject my honest counsels; if thou suffer Warwick to unite with Lancaster and France; if the ships of Louis bear to your shores an enemy, the might of whom your reckless daring undervalues, foremost in the field in battle, nearest to your side in exile, shall Richard Plantagenet be found!" These words, being uttered with sincerity, and conveying a promise never forfeited, were more impressive than the subtlest eloquence the wily and accomplished Gloucester ever employed as the cloak to guile, and they so affected Edward, that he threw his arms around his brother; and after one of those bursts of emotion which were frequent in one whose feelings were never deep and lasting, but easily aroused and warmly spoken, he declared himself really to listen to and adopt all means which Richard's art could suggest for the better maintenance of their common weal and interests.

And then, with that wondrous, if somewhat too restless and over-refining energy which belonged to him, Richard rapidly detailed the scheme of his profound and dissimulating policy. His keen and intuitive insight into human nature had shown him the stern necessity which, against their very will, must unite Warwick with Margaret of Anjou. His conversation with Montagu had left no doubt of that peril on his penetrating mind. He foresaw that this union might be made durable and sacred by the marriage of Anne and Prince Edward; and to defeat this alliance was his first object, partly through Clarence, partly through Margaret herself. A gentlewoman in the Duchess of Clarence's train had been arrested on the point of embarking to join her mistress. Richard had already seen and conferred with this lady, whose ambition, duplicity, and talent for intrigue were known to him. Having secured her by promises of the most lavish dignities and rewards, he proposed that she should be permitted to join the duchess with secret messages to Isabel and the duke, warning them both that Warwick and Margaret would forget their past feud in present sympathy, and that the rebellion against King Edward, instead of placing them on the throne, would humble them to be subordinates and aliens to the real profiters, the Lancastrians. [Comines, 3, c. 5; Hall; Hollinshed] He foresaw what effect these warnings would have upon the vain duke and the ambitious Isabel, whose character was known to him from childhood. He startled the king by insisting upon sending, at the same time, a trusty diplomatist to Margaret of Anjou, proffering to give the princess Elizabeth (betrothed to Lord Montagu's son) to the young Prince Edward. ["Original Letters from Harleian Manuscripts." Edited by Sir H. Ellis (second series).] Thus, if the king, who had, as yet, no son, were to die, Margaret's son, in right of his wife, as well as in that of his own descent, would peaceably ascend the throne. "Need I say that I mean not this in sad and serious earnest?" observed Richard,

interrupting the astonished king. “I mean it but to amuse the Anjouite, and to deafen her ears to any overtures from Warwick. If she listen, we gain time; that time will inevitably renew irreconcilable quarrel between herself and the earl. His hot temper and desire of revenge will not brook delay. He will land, unsupported by Margaret and her partisans, and without any fixed principle of action which can strengthen force by opinion.”

“You are right, Richard,” said Edward, whose faithless cunning comprehended the more sagacious policy it could not originate. “All be it as you will.”

“And in the mean while,” added Richard, “watch well, but anger not, Montagu and the archbishop. It were dangerous to seem to distrust them till proof be clear; it were dull to believe them true. I go at once to fulfil my task.”

CHAPTER VII. WARWICK AND HIS FAMILY IN EXILE.

We now summon the reader on a longer if less classic journey than from Thebes to Athens, and waft him on a rapid wing from Shene to Amboise. We must suppose that the two emissaries of Gloucester have already arrived at their several destinations,—the lady has reached Isabel, the envoy Margaret.

In one of the apartments appropriated to the earl in the royal palace, within the embrasure of a vast Gothic casement, sat Anne of Warwick; the small wicket in the window was open, and gave a view of a wide and fair garden, interspersed with thick bosquets and regular alleys, over which the rich skies of the summer evening, a little before sunset, cast alternate light and shadow. Towards this prospect the sweet face of the Lady Anne was turned musingly. The riveted eye, the bended neck, the arms reclining on the knee, the slender fingers interlaced,—gave to her whole person the character of revery and repose.

In the same chamber were two other ladies; the one was pacing the floor with slow but uneven steps, with lips moving from time to time, as if in self-commune, with the brow contracted slightly: her form and face took also the character of revery, but not of repose.

The third female (the gentle and lovely mother of the other two) was seated, towards the centre of the room, before a small table, on which rested one of those religious manuscripts, full of the moralities and the marvels of cloister sanctity, which made so large a portion of the literature of the monkish ages. But her eye rested not on the Gothic letter and the rich blazon of the holy book. With all a mother’s fear and all a mother’s fondness, it glanced from Isabel to Anne, from Anne to Isabel, till at length in one of those soft voices, so rarely heard, which makes even a stranger love the speaker, the fair countess said,—

“Come hither, my child Isabel; give me thy hand, and whisper me what hath chafed thee.”

“My mother,” replied the duchess, “it would become me ill to have a secret not known to thee, and yet, methinks, it would become me less to say aught to provoke thine anger!”

“Anger, Isabel! Who ever knew anger for those they love?”

“Pardon me, my sweet mother,” said Isabel, relaxing her haughty brow, and she approached and kissed her mother’s cheek.

The countess drew her gently to a seat by her side.

“And now tell me all,—unless, indeed, thy Clarence hath, in some lover’s hasty mood, vexed thy affection; for of the household secrets even a mother should not question the true wife.”

Isabel paused, and glanced significantly at Anne.

“Nay, see!” said the countess, smiling, though sadly, “she, too, hath thoughts that she will not tell to me; but they seem not such as should alarm my fears, as thine do. For the moment ere I spoke to thee, thy brow frowned, and her lip smiled. She hears us not,—speak on.”

“Is it then true, my mother, that Margaret of Anjou is hastening hither? And can it be possible that King Louis can persuade my lord and father to meet, save in the field of battle, the arch-enemy of our House?”

“Ask the earl thyself, Isabel; Lord Warwick hath no concealment from his children. Whatever he doth is ever wisest, best, and knightliest,—so, at least, may his children always deem!”

Isabel’s colour changed and her eye flashed. But ere she could answer, the arras was raised, and Lord Warwick entered. But no longer did the hero’s mien and manner evince that cordial and tender cheerfulness which, in all the storms of his changeful life, he had hitherto displayed when coming from power and danger, from council or from camp, to man’s earthly paradise,—a virtuous home.

Gloomy and absorbed, his very dress—which, at that day, the Anglo-Norman deemed it a sin against self-dignity to neglect—betraying, by its disorder, that thorough change of the whole mind, that terrible internal revolution, which is made but in strong natures by the tyranny of a great care or a great passion, the earl scarcely seemed to heed his countess, who rose hastily, but stopped in the timid fear and reverence of love at the sight of his stern aspect; he threw himself abruptly on a seat, passed his hand over his face, and sighed heavily.

That sigh dispelled the fear of the wife, and made her alive only to her privilege of the soother. She drew near, and placing herself on the green rushes at his feet, took his hand and kissed it, but did not speak.

The earl’s eyes fell on the lovely face looking up to him through tears, his brow softened, he drew his hand gently from hers, placed it on her head, and said in a low voice,—“God and Our Lady bless thee, sweet wife!”

Then, looking round, he saw Isabel watching him intently; and, rising at once, he threw his arm round her waist, pressed her to his bosom, and said, “My daughter, for thee and thine day and night have I striven and planned in vain. I cannot reward thy husband as I would; I cannot give thee, as I had hoped, a throne!”

“What title so dear to Isabel,” said the countess, “as that of Lord Warwick’s daughter?”

Isabel remained cold and silent, and returned not the earl’s embrace.

Warwick was, happily, too absorbed in his own feelings to notice those of his child. Moving away, he continued, as he paced the room (his habit in emotion, which Isabel, who had many minute external traits in common with her father, had unconsciously caught from him),—

“Till this morning I hoped still that my name and services, that Clarence’s popular bearing and his birth of Plantagenet, would suffice to summon the English people round our standard; that the false Edward would be driven, on our landing, to fly the realm; and that, without change to the dynasty of York, Clarence, as next male heir, would ascend the throne. True, I saw all the obstacles, all the difficulties,—I was warned

of them before I left England; but still I hoped. Lord Oxford has arrived, he has just left me. We have gone over the chart of the way before us, weighed the worth of every name, for and against; and, alas! I cannot but allow that all attempt to place the younger brother on the throne of the elder would but lead to bootless slaughter and irretrievable defeat."

"Wherefore think you so, my lord?" asked Isabel, in evident excitement. "Your own retainers are sixty thousand,—an army larger than Edward, and all his lords of yesterday, can bring into the field."

"My child," answered the earl, with that profound knowledge of his countrymen which he had rather acquired from his English heart than from any subtlety of intellect, "armies may gain a victory, but they do not achieve a throne,—unless, at least, they enforce a slavery; and it is not for me and for Clarence to be the violent conquerors of our countrymen, but the regenerators of a free realm, corrupted by a false man's rule."

"And what then," exclaimed Isabel,—"what do you propose, my father? Can it be possible that you can unite yourself with the abhorred Lancastrians, with the savage Anjouite, who beheaded my grandsire, Salisbury? Well do I remember your own words,—'May God and Saint George forget me, when I forget those gray and gory hairs!'"

Here Isabel was interrupted by a faint cry from Anne, who, unobserved by the rest, and hitherto concealed from her father's eye by the deep embrasure of the window, had risen some moments before, and listened, with breathless attention, to the conversation between Warwick and the duchess.

"It is not true, it is not true!" exclaimed Anne, passionately. "Margaret disowns the inhuman deed."

"Thou art right, Anne," said Warwick; "though I guess not how thou didst learn the error of a report so popularly believed that till of late I never questioned its truth. King Louis assures me solemnly that that foul act was done by the butcher Clifford, against Margaret's knowledge, and, when known, to her grief and anger."

"And you, who call Edward false, can believe Louis true?"

"Cease, Isabel, cease!" said the countess. "Is it thus my child can address my lord and husband? Forgive her, beloved Richard."

"Such heat in Clarence's wife misbeseems her not," answered Warwick. "And I can comprehend and pardon in my haughty Isabel a resentment which her reason must at last subdue; for think not, Isabel, that it is without dread struggle and fierce agony that I can contemplate peace and league with mine ancient foe; but here two duties speak to me in voices not to be denied: my honour and my hearth, as noble and as man, demand redress, and the weal and glory of my country demand a ruler who does not degrade a warrior, nor assail a virgin, nor corrupt a people by lewd pleasures, nor exhaust a land by grinding imposts; and that honour shall be vindicated, and that country shall be righted, no matter at what sacrifice of private grief and pride."

The words and the tone of the earl for a moment awed even Isabel; but after a pause, she said suddenly, "And for this, then, Clarence hath joined your quarrel and shared your exile?—for this,—that he may place the eternal barrier of the Lancastrian line between himself and the English throne?"

"I would fain hope," answered the earl, calmly, "that Clarence will view our hard position more charitably than thou. If he gain not all that I could desire, should success crown our arms, he will, at least, gain much; for often and ever did thy husband, Isabel, urge me to stern measures against Edward, when I soothed him and restrained. Mort Dieu! how often did he complain of slight and insult from Elizabeth and

her minions, of open affront from Edward, of parsimony to his wants as prince,—of a life, in short, humbled and made bitter by all the indignity and the gall which scornful power can inflict on dependent pride. If he gain not the throne, he will gain, at least, the succession in thy right to the baronies of Beauchamp, the mighty duchy, and the vast heritage of York, the vice-royalty of Ireland. Never prince of the blood had wealth and honours equal to those that shall await thy lord. For the rest, I drew him not into my quarrel; long before would he have drawn me into his; nor doth it become thee, Isabel, as child and as sister, to repent, if the husband of my daughter felt as brave men feel, without calculation of gain and profit, the insult offered to his lady's House. But if here I overgauge his chivalry and love to me and mine, or discontent his ambition and his hopes, Mort Dieu! we hold him not a captive. Edward will hail his overtures of peace; let him make terms with his brother, and return."

"I will report to him what you say, my lord," said Isabel, with cold brevity and, bending her haughty head in formal reverence, she advanced to the door. Anne sprang forward and caught her hand.

"Oh, Isabel!" she whispered, "in our father's sad and gloomy hour can you leave him thus?" and the sweet lady burst into tears.

"Anne," retorted Isabel, bitterly, "thy heart is Lancastrian; and what, peradventure, grieves my father hath but joy for thee."

Anne drew back, pale and trembling, and her sister swept from the room.

The earl, though he had not overheard the whispered sentences which passed between his daughters, had watched them closely, and his lip quivered with emotion as Isabel closed the door.

"Come hither, my Anne," he said tenderly; "thou who hast thy mother's face, never hast a harsh thought for thy father."

As Anne threw herself on Warwick's breast, he continued, "And how camest thou to learn that Margaret disowns a deed that, if done by her command, would render my union with her cause a sacrilegious impiety to the dead?"

Anne coloured, and nestled her head still closer to her father's bosom. Her mother regarded her confusion and her silence with an anxious eye.

The wing of the palace in which the earl's apartments were situated was appropriated to himself and household, flanked to the left by an abutting pile containing state-chambers, never used by the austere and thrifty Louis, save on great occasions of pomp or revel; and, as we have before observed, looking on a garden, which was generally solitary and deserted. From this garden, while Anne yet strove for words to answer her father, and the countess yet watched her embarrassment, suddenly came the soft strain of a Provencal lute; while a low voice, rich, and modulated at once by a deep feeling and an exquisite art that would have given effect to even simpler words, breathed—

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THE LAY OF THE HEIR OF LANCASTER

"His birthright but a father's name,
   A grandsire's hero-sword,
 He dwelt within the stranger's land,
   The friendless, homeless lord!"

"Yet one dear hope, too dear to tell,
   Consoled the exiled man;
 The angels have their home in heaven
   And gentle thoughts in Anne."
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At that name the voice of the singer trembled, and paused a moment; the earl, who at first had scarcely listened to what he deemed but the ill-seasoned gallantry of one of the royal minstrels, started in proud surprise, and Anne herself, tightening her clasp round her father's neck, burst into passionate sobs. The eye of the countess met that of her lord; but she put her finger to her lips in sign to him to listen. The song was resumed—

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"Recall the single sunny time,
   In childhood's April weather,
 When he and thou, the boy and girl,
   Roved hand in band together."

"When round thy young companion knelt
   The princes of the isle;
 And priest and people prayed their God,
   On England's heir to smile."
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The earl uttered a half-stifled exclamation, but the minstrel heard not the interruption, and continued,—

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"Methinks the sun hath never smiled
   Upon the exiled man,
 Like that bright morning when the boy
   Told all his soul to Anne."

"No; while his birthright but a name,
   A grandsire's hero—sword,
 He would not woo the lofty maid
   To love the banished lord."

"But when, with clarion, fife, and drum,
   He claims and wins his own;
 When o'er the deluge drifts his ark,
   To rest upon a throne."

"Then, wilt thou deign to hear the hope
   That blessed the exiled man,
 When pining for his father's crown
   To deck the brows of Anne?"
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The song ceased, and there was silence within the chamber, broken but by Anne's low yet passionate weeping. The earl gently strove to disengage her arms from his neck; but she, mistaking his intention, sank on her knees, and covering her face with her hands, exclaimed,—

"Pardon! pardon! pardon him, if not me!"

"What have I to pardon? What hast thou concealed from me? Can I think that thou hast met, in secret, one who—"

"In secret! Never, never, Father! This is the third time only that I have heard his voice since we have been at Amboise, save when—save when—"

"Go on."

"Save when King Louis presented him to me in the revel under the name of the Count de F——, and he asked me if I could forgive his mother for Lord Clifford's crime."

"It is, then, as the rhyme proclaimed; and it is Edward of Lancaster who loves and woos the daughter of Lord Warwick!"

Something in her father's voice made Anne remove her hands from her face, and look up to him with a thrill of timid joy. Upon his brow, indeed, frowned no anger, upon his lip smiled no scorn. At that moment all his haughty grief at the curse of circumstance which drove him to his hereditary foe had vanished. Though Montagu had obtained from Oxford some glimpse of the desire which the more sagacious and temperate Lancastrians already entertained for that alliance, and though Louis had already hinted its expediency to the earl, yet, till now, Warwick himself had naturally conceived that the prince shared the enmity of his mother, and that such a union, however politic, was impossible; but now indeed there burst upon him the full triumph of revenge and pride. Edward of York dared to woo Anne to dishonour, Edward of Lancaster dared not even woo her as his wife till his crown was won! To place upon the throne the very daughter the ungrateful monarch had insulted; to make her he would have humbled not only the instrument of his fall, but the successor of his purple; to unite in one glorious strife the wrongs of the man and the pride of the father,—these were the thoughts that sparkled in the eye of the king-maker, and flushed with a fierce rapture the dark cheek, already hollowed by passion and care. He raised his daughter from the floor, and placed her in her mother's arms, but still spoke not.

"This, then, was thy secret, Anne," whispered the countess; "and I half foreguessed it, when, last night, I knelt beside thy couch to pray, and overheard thee murmur in thy dreams."

"Sweet mother, thou forgivest me; but my father—ah, he speaks not. One word! Father, Father, not even his love could console me if I angered thee!"

The earl, who had remained rooted to the spot, his eyes shining thoughtfully under his dark brows, and his hand slightly raised, as if piercing into the future, and mapping out its airy realm, turned quickly,—

"I go to the heir of Lancaster; if this boy be bold and true, worthy of England and of thee, we will change the sad ditty of that scrannel lute into such a storm of trumpets as beseems the triumph of a conqueror and the marriage of a prince!"

CHAPTER VIII. HOW THE HEIR OF LANCASTER MEETS THE KING-MAKER.

In truth, the young prince, in obedience to a secret message from the artful Louis, had repaired to the court of Amboise under the name of the Count de F——. The French king had long before made himself acquainted with Prince Edward's romantic attachment to the earl's daughter, through the agent employed by Edward to transmit his portrait to Anne at Rouen; and from him, probably, came to Oxford the suggestion which that nobleman had hazarded to Montagu; and now that it became his policy seriously and earnestly to espouse the cause of his kinswoman Margaret, he saw all the advantage to his cold statecraft which could be drawn from a boyish love. Louis had a well-founded fear of the warlike spirit and military talents of Edward IV.; and this fear had induced him hitherto to refrain from openly espousing the cause of the Lancastrians, though it did not prevent his abetting such seditions and intrigues as could confine the attention of the martial Plantagenet to the perils of his own realm. But now that the

breach between Warwick and the king had taken place; now that the earl could no longer curb the desire of the Yorkist monarch to advance his hereditary claims to the fairest provinces of France,—nay, peradventure, to France itself,—while the defection of Lord Warwick gave to the Lancastrians the first fair hope of success in urging their own pretensions to the English throne, he bent all the powers of his intellect and his will towards the restoration of a natural ally and the downfall of a dangerous foe. But he knew that Margaret and her Lancastrian favourers could not of themselves suffice to achieve a revolution,—that they could only succeed under cover of the popularity and the power of Warwick, while he perceived all the art it would require to make Margaret forego her vindictive nature and long resentment, and to supple the pride of the great earl into recognizing as a sovereign the woman who had branded him as a traitor.

Long before Lord Oxford's arrival, Louis, with all that address which belonged to him, had gradually prepared the earl to familiarize himself to the only alternative before him, save that, indeed, of powerless sense of wrong and obscure and lasting exile. The French king looked with more uneasiness to the scruples of Margaret; and to remove these, he trusted less to his own skill than to her love for her only son.

His youth passed principally in Anjou—that court of minstrels—young Edward's gallant and ardent temper had become deeply imbued with the southern poetry and romance. Perhaps the very feud between his House and Lord Warwick's, though both claimed their common descent from John of Gaunt, had tended, by the contradictions in the human heart, to endear to him the recollection of the gentle Anne. He obeyed with joy the summons of Louis, repaired to the court, was presented to Anne as the Count de F——, found himself recognized at the first glance (for his portrait still lay upon her heart, as his remembrance in its core), and, twice before the song we have recited, had ventured, agreeably to the sweet customs of Anjou, to address the lady of his love under the shade of the starlit summer copses. But on this last occasion, he had departed from his former discretion; hitherto he had selected an hour of deeper night, and ventured but beneath the lattice of the maiden's chamber when the rest of the palace was hushed in sleep. And the fearless declaration of his rank and love now hazarded was prompted by one who contrived to turn to grave uses the wildest whim of the minstrel, the most romantic enthusiasm of youth.

Louis had just learned from Oxford the result of his interview with Warwick. And about the same time the French king had received a letter from Margaret, announcing her departure from the castle of Verdun for Tours, where she prayed him to meet her forthwith, and stating that she had received from England tidings that might change all her schemes, and more than ever forbid the possibility of a reconciliation with the Earl of Warwick.

The king perceived the necessity of calling into immediate effect the aid on which he had relied, in the presence and passion of the young prince. He sought him at once; he found him in a remote part of the gardens, and overheard him breathing to himself the lay he had just composed.

"Pasque Dieu!" said the king, laying his hand on the young man's shoulder, "if thou wilt but repeat that song where and when I bid thee, I promise that before the month ends Lord Warwick shall pledge thee his daughter's hand; and before the year is closed thou shalt sit beside Lord Warwick's daughter in the halls of Westminster."

And the royal troubadour took the counsel of the king.

The song had ceased; the minstrel emerged from the bosquets, and stood upon the sward, as, from the postern of the palace, walked with a slow step, a form from which it became him not, as prince or as lover, in peace or in war, to shrink. The first stars had now risen; the light, though serene, was pale and dim. The two men—the one advancing, the other motionless—gazed on each other in grave silence. As Count de F——, amidst the young nobles in the king's train, the earl had scarcely noticed the heir of England. He

viewed him now with a different eye: in secret complacency, for, with a soldier's weakness, the soldier-baron valued men too much for their outward seeming, he surveyed a figure already masculine and stalwart, though still in the graceful symmetry of fair eighteen.

"A youth of a goodly presence," muttered the earl, "with the dignity that commands in peace, and the sinews that can strive against hardship and death in war."

He approached, and said calmly: "Sir minstrel, he who woos either fame or beauty may love the lute, but should wield the sword. At least, so methinks had the Fifth Henry said to him who boasts for his heritage the sword of Agincourt."

"O noble earl!" exclaimed the prince, touched by words far gentler than he had dared to hope, despite his bold and steadfast mien, and giving way to frank and graceful emotion, "O noble earl! since thou knowest me; since my secret is told; since, in that secret, I have proclaimed a hope as dear to me as a crown and dearer far than life, can I hope that thy rebuke but veils thy favour, and that, under Lord Warwick's eye, the grandson of Henry V. shall approve himself worthy of the blood that kindles in his veins?"

"Fair sir and prince," returned the earl, whose hardy and generous nature the emotion and fire of Edward warmed and charmed, "there are, alas! deep memories of blood and wrong—the sad deeds and wrathful words of party feud and civil war—between thy royal mother and myself; and though we may unite now against a common foe, much I fear that the Lady Margaret would brook ill a closer friendship, a nearer tie, than the exigency of the hour between Richard Nevile and her son."

"No, Sir Earl, let me hope you misthink her. Hot and impetuous, but not mean and treacherous, the moment that she accepts the service of thine arm she must forget that thou hast been her foe; and if I, as my father's heir, return to England, it is in the trust that a new era will commence. Free from the passionate enmities of either faction, Yorkist and Lancastrian are but Englishmen to me. Justice to all who serve us, pardon for all who have opposed."

The prince paused, and, even in the dim light, his kingly aspect gave effect to his kingly words. "And if this resolve be such as you approve; if you, great earl, be that which even your foes proclaim, a man whose power depends less on lands and vassals—broad though the one, and numerous though the other—than on well-known love for England, her glory and her peace, it rests with you to bury forever in one grave the feuds of Lancaster and York! What Yorkist who hath fought at Towton or St. Albans under Lord Warwick's standard, will lift sword against the husband of Lord Warwick's daughter? What Lancastrian will not forgive a Yorkist, when Lord Warwick, the kinsman of Duke Richard, becomes father to the Lancastrian heir, and bulwark to the Lancastrian throne? O Warwick, if not for my sake, nor for the sake of full redress against the ingrate whom thou repentest to have placed on my father's throne, at least for the sake of England, for the healing of her bleeding wounds, for the union of her divided people, hear the grandson of Henry V., who sues to thee for thy daughter's hand!"

The royal wooer bent his knee as he spoke. The mighty subject saw and prevented the impulse of the prince who had forgotten himself in the lover; the hand which he caught he lifted to his lips, and the next moment, in manly and soldierlike embrace, the prince's young arm was thrown over the broad shoulder of the king-maker.

CHAPTER IX. THE INTERVIEW OF EARL WARWICK AND QUEEN MARGARET.

Louis hastened to meet Margaret at Tours; thither came also her father Rene, her brother John of Calabria, Yolante her sister, and the Count of Vaudemonte. The meeting between the queen and Rene was so touching as to have drawn tears to the hard eyes of Louis XI.; but, that emotion over, Margaret evinced how little affliction had humbled her high spirit, or softened her angry passions: she interrupted Louis in every argument for reconciliation with Warwick. “Not with honour to myself and to my son,” she exclaimed, “can I pardon that cruel earl, the main cause of King Henry’s downfall! in vain patch up a hollow peace between us,—a peace of form and parchment! My spirit never can be contented with him, ne pardon!”

For several days she maintained a language which betrayed the chief cause of her own impolitic passions, that had lost her crown. Showing to Louis the letter despatched to her, proffering the hand of the Lady Elizabeth to her son, she asked if that were not a more profitable party [See, for this curious passage of secret history, Sir H. Ellis’s “Original Letters from the Harleian Manuscripts,” second series, vol. i., letter 42.], and if it were necessary that she should forgive,—whether it were not more queenly to treat with Edward than with a twofold rebel?

In fact, the queen would perhaps have fallen into Gloucester’s artful snare, despite all the arguments and even the half-menaces [Louis would have thrown over Margaret’s cause if Warwick had demanded it; he instructed MM. de Concressault and du Plessis to assure the earl that he would aid him to the utmost to reconquer England either for the Queen Margaret or for any one else he chose (on pour qui il voudra): for that he loved the earl better than Margaret or her son.—BRANTE, t. ix. 276.] of the more penetrating Louis, but for a counteracting influence which Richard had not reckoned upon. Prince Edward, who had lingered behind Louis, arrived from Amboise, and his persuasions did more than all the representations of the crafty king. The queen loved her son with that intenseness which characterizes the one soft affection of violent natures. Never had she yet opposed his most childish whim, and now he spoke with the eloquence of one who put his heart and his life’s life into his words. At last, reluctantly, she consented to an interview with Warwick. The earl, accompanied by Oxford, arrived at Tours, and the two nobles were led into the presence of Margaret by King Louis.

The reader will picture to himself a room darkened by thick curtains drawn across the casement, for the proud woman wished not the earl to detect on her face either the ravages of years or the emotions of offended pride. In a throne chair, placed on the dais, sat the motionless queen, her hands clasping, convulsively, the arms of the fauteuil, her features pale and rigid; and behind the chair leaned the graceful figure of her son. The person of the Lancastrian prince was little less remarkable than that of his hostile namesake, but its character was distinctly different. [“According to some of the French chroniclers, the Prince of Wales, who was one of the handsomest and most accomplished princes in Europe, was very desirous of becoming the husband of Anne Nevile,” etc.—Miss STRICKLAND: Life of Margaret of Anjou.] Spare, like Henry V., almost to the manly defect of leanness, his proportions were slight to those which gave such portly majesty to the vast-chested Edward, but they evinced the promise of almost equal strength,—the muscles hardened to iron by early exercise in arms, the sap of youth never wasted by riot and debauch. His short purple manteline, trimmed with ermine, was embroidered with his grandfather’s favourite device, “the silver swan;” he wore on his breast the badge of St. George; and the single ostrich plume, which made his cognizance as Prince of Wales, waved over a fair and ample forehead, on which were even then traced the lines of musing thought and high design; his chestnut hair curled close to his noble head; his eye shone dark and brilliant beneath the deep-set brow, which gives to the human countenance such expression of energy and intellect,—all about him, in aspect and mien, seemed to betoken a mind riper than his years, a masculine simplicity of taste and bearing, the earnest and grave temperament mostly allied in youth to pure and elevated desires, to an honourable and chivalric soul.

Below the dais stood some of the tried and gallant gentlemen who had braved exile, and tasted penury in their devotion to the House of Lancaster, and who had now flocked once more round their queen, in the hope of better days. There were the Dukes of Exeter and Somerset, their very garments soiled and threadbare,—many a day had those great lords hungered for the beggar's crust! [Philip de Comines says he himself had seen the Dukes of Exeter and Somerset in the Low Countries in as wretched a plight as common beggars.] There stood Sir John Fortescue, the patriarch authority of our laws, who had composed his famous treatise for the benefit of the young prince, overfond of exercise with lance and brand, and the recreation of knightly song. There were Jasper of Pembroke, and Sir Henry Rous, and the Earl of Devon, and the Knight of Lytton, whose House had followed, from sire to son, the fortunes of the Lancastrian Rose; [Sir Robert de Lytton (whose grandfather had been Comptroller to the Household of Henry IV., and Agister of the Forests allotted to Queen Joan), was one of the most powerful knights of the time; and afterwards, according to Perkin Warbeck, one of the ministers most trusted by Henry VII. He was lord of Lytton, in Derbyshire (where his ancestors had been settled since the Conquest), of Knebworth in Herts (the ancient seat and manor of Plantagenet de Brotherton, Earl of Norfolk and Earl Marshal), of Myndelesden and Langley, of Standyarn, Dene, and Brekesborne, in Northamptonshire, and became in the reign of Henry VII. Privy Councillor, Uuder-Treasurer, and Keeper of the great Wardrobe.] and, contrasting the sober garments of the exiles, shone the jewels and cloth-of-gold that decked the persons of the more prosperous foreigners, Ferri, Count of Vaudemonte, Margaret's brother, the Duke of Calabria, and the powerful form of Sir Pierre de Breze, who had accompanied Margaret in her last disastrous campaigns, with all the devotion of a chevalier for the lofty lady adored in secret. [See, for the chivalrous devotion of this knight (Seneschal of Normandy) to Margaret, Miss Strickland's Life of that queen.]

When the door opened, and gave to the eyes of those proud exiles the form of their puissant enemy, they with difficulty suppressed the murmur of their resentment, and their looks turned with sympathy and grief to the hueless face of their queen.

The earl himself was troubled; his step was less firm, his crest less haughty, his eye less serenely steadfast.

But beside him, in a dress more homely than that of the poorest exile there, and in garb and in aspect, as he lives forever in the portraiture of Victor Hugo and our own yet greater Scott, moved Louis, popularly called "The Fell."

"Madame and cousin," said the king, "we present to you the man for whose haute courage and dread fame we have such love and respect, that we value him as much as any king, and would do as much for him as for man living [Ellis: Original Letters, vol. i., letter 42, second series]; and with my lord of Warwick, see also this noble earl of Oxford, who, though he may have sided awhile with the enemies of your Highness, comes now to pray your pardon, and to lay at your feet his sword."

Lord Oxford (who had ever unwillingly acquiesced in the Yorkist dynasty), more prompt than Warwick, here threw himself on his knees before Margaret, and his tears fell on her hand, as he murmured "Pardon."

"Rise, Sir John de Vere," said the queen, glancing with a flashing eye from Oxford to Lord Warwick. "Your pardon is right easy to purchase, for well I know that you yielded but to the time,—you did not turn the time against us; you and yours have suffered much for King Henry's cause. Rise, Sir Earl."

"And," said a voice, so deep and so solemn, that it hushed the very breath of those who heard it,—"and has Margaret a pardon also for the man who did more than all others to dethrone King Henry, and can do more than all to restore his crown?"

"Ha!" cried' Margaret, rising in her passion, and casting from her the hand her son had placed upon her shoulder, "ha! Ownest thou thy wrongs, proud lord? Comest thou at last to kneel at Queen Margaret's feet? Look round and behold her court,—some half-score brave and unhappy gentlemen, driven from their

hearths and homes, their heritage the prey of knaves and varlets, their sovereign in a prison, their sovereign's wife, their sovereign's son, persecuted and hunted from the soil! And comest thou now to the forlorn majesty of sorrow to boast, 'Such deeds were mine?'"

"Mother and lady," began the prince

"Madden me not, my son. Forgiveness is for the prosperous, not for adversity and woe."

"Hear me," said the earl,—who, having once bowed his pride to the interview, had steeled himself against the passion which, in his heart, he somewhat despised as a mere woman's burst of inconsiderate fury,—"for I have this right to be heard,—that not one of these knights, your lealest and noblest friends, can say of me that I ever stooped to gloss mine acts, or palliate bold deeds with wily words. Dear to me as comrade in arms, sacred to me as a father's head, was Richard of York, mine uncle by marriage with Lord Salisbury's sister. I speak not now of his claims by descent (for those even King Henry could not deny), but I maintain them, even in your Grace's presence, to be such as vindicate, from disloyalty and treason, me and the many true and gallant men who upheld them through danger, by field and scaffold. Error, it might be,—but the error of men who believed themselves the defenders of a just cause. Nor did I, Queen Margaret, lend myself wholly to my kinsman's quarrel, nor share one scheme that went to the dethronement of King Henry, until—pardon, if I speak bluntly; it is my wont, and would be more so now, but for thy fair face and woman's form, which awe me more than if confronting the frown of Coeur de Lion, or the First Great Edward—pardon me, I say, if I speak bluntly, and aver that I was not King Henry's foe until false counsellors had planned my destruction, in body and goods, land and life. In the midst of peace, at Coventry, my father and myself scarcely escaped the knife of the murderer. [See Hall (236), who says that Margaret had laid a snare for Salisbury and Warwick at Warwick, and "if they had not suddenly departed, their life's thread had been broken."] In the streets of London the very menials and hangmen employed in the service of your Highness beset me unarmed [Hall, Fabyan]; a little time after and my name was attainted by an illegal Parliament. [Parl. Rolls, 370; W. Wyr. 478.] And not till after these things did Richard Duke of York ride to the hall of Westminster, and lay his hand upon the throne; nor till after these things did I and my father Salisbury say to each other, 'The time has come when neither peace nor honour can be found for us under King Henry's reign.' Blame me if you will, Queen Margaret; reject me if you need not my sword; but that which I did in the gone days was such as no nobleman so outraged and despaired [Warwick's phrase. See Sir H. Ellis's "Original Letters," vol. i., second series.] would have forborne to do,—remembering that England is not the heritage of the king alone, but that safety and honour, and freedom and justice, are the rights of his Norman gentlemen and his Saxon people. And rights are a mockery and a laughter if they do not justify resistance, whensoever, and by whomsoever, they are invaded and assailed."

It had been with a violent effort that Margaret had refrained from interrupting this address, which had, however, produced no inconsiderable effect upon the knightly listeners around the dais. And now, as the earl ceased, her indignation was arrested by dismay on seeing the young prince suddenly leave his post and advance to the side of Warwick.

"Right well hast thou spoken, noble earl and cousin,—right well, though right plainly. And I," added the prince, "saving the presence of my queen and mother,—I, the representative of my sovereign father, in his name will pledge thee a king's oblivion and pardon for the past, if thou on thy side acquit my princely mother of all privity to the snares against thy life and honour of which thou hast spoken, and give thy knightly word to be henceforth leal to Lancaster. Perish all memories of the past that can make walls between the souls of brave men."

Till this moment, his arms folded in his gown, his thin, fox-like face bent to the ground, Louis had listened, silent and undisturbed. He now deemed it the moment to second the appeal of the prince. Passing his hand hypocritically over his tearless eyes, the king turned to Margaret and said,—

"Joyful hour! happy union! May Madame La Vierge and Monseigneur Saint Martin sanctify and hallow the bond by which alone my beloved kinswoman can regain her rights and roiaulme. Amen."

Unheeding this pious ejaculation, her bosom heaving, her eyes wandering from the earl to Edward, Margaret at last gave vent to her passion.

"And is it come to this, Prince Edward of Wales, that thy mother's wrongs are not thine? Standest thou side by side with my mortal foe, who, instead of repenting treason, dares but to complain of injury? Am I fallen so low that my voice to pardon or disdain is counted but as a sough of idle air! God of my fathers, hear me! Willingly from my heart I tear the last thought and care for the pomps of earth. Hateful to me a crown for which the wearer must cringe to enemy and rebel! Away, Earl Warwick! Monstrous and unnatural seems it to the wife of captive Henry to see thee by the side of Henry's son!"

Every eye turned in fear to the aspect of the earl, every ear listened for the answer which might be expected from his well-known heat and pride,—an answer to destroy forever the last hope of the Lancastrian line. But whether it was the very consciousness of his power to raise or to crush that fiery speaker, or those feelings natural to brave men, half of chivalry, half contempt, which kept down the natural anger by thoughts of the sex and sorrows of the Anjouite, or that the wonted irascibility of his temper had melted into one steady and profound passion of revenge against Edward of York, which absorbed all lesser and more trivial causes of resentment,—the earl's face, though pale as the dead, was unmoved and calm, and, with a grave and melancholy smile, he answered,—

"More do I respect thee, O queen, for the hot words which show a truth rarely heard from royal lips than hadst thou deigned to dissimulate the forgiveness and kindly charity which sharp remembrance permits thee not to feel! No, princely Margaret, not yet can there be frank amity between thee and me! Nor do I boast the affection yon gallant gentlemen have displayed. Frankly, as thou hast spoken, do I say, that the wrongs I have suffered from another alone move me to allegiance to thyself! Let others serve thee for love of Henry; reject not my service, given but for revenge on Edward,—as much, henceforth, am I his foe as formerly his friend and maker! [Sir H. Ellis: Original Letters, vol. i., second series.] And if, hereafter, on the throne, thou shouldst remember and resent the former wars, at least thou hast owed me no gratitude, and thou canst not grieve my heart and seethe my brain, as the man whom I once loved better than a son! Thus, from thy presence I depart, chafing not at thy scornful wrath; mindful, young prince, but of thy just and gentle heart, and sure, in the calm of my own soul (on which this much, at least, of our destiny is reflected as on a glass), that when, high lady, thy colder sense returns to thee, thou wilt see that the league between us must be made!—that thine ire as woman must fade before thy duties as a another, thy affection as a wife, and thy paramount and solemn obligations to the people thou hast ruled as queen! In the dead of night thou shalt hear the voice of Henry in his prison asking Margaret to set him free; the vision of thy son shall rise before thee in his bloom and promise, to demand why his mother deprives him of a crown; and crowds of pale peasants, grinded beneath tyrannous exaction, and despairing fathers mourning for dishonoured children, shall ask the Christian queen if God will sanction the unreasoning wrath which rejects the only instrument that can redress her people."

This said, the earl bowed his head and turned; but, at the first sign of his departure, there was a general movement among the noble bystanders. Impressed by the dignity of his bearing, by the greatness of his power, and by the unquestionable truth that in rejecting him Margaret cast away the heritage of her son, the exiles, with a common impulse, threw themselves at the queen's feet, and exclaimed, almost in the same words,—

"Grace! noble queen!—Grace for the great Lord Warwick!"

"My sister," whispered John of Calabria, "thou art thy son's ruin if the earl depart!"

"Pasque Dieu! Vex not my kinswoman,—if she prefer a convent to a throne, cross not the holy choice!" said the wily Louis, with a mocking irony on his pinched lips.

The prince alone spoke not, but stood proudly on the same spot, gazing on the earl, as he slowly moved to the door.

"Oh, Edward! Edward, my son!" exclaimed the unhappy Margaret, "if for thy sake—for thine—I must make the past a blank, speak thou for me!"

"I have spoken," said the prince, gently, "and thou didst chide me, noble mother; yet I spoke, methinks, as Henry V. had done, if of a mighty enemy he had had the power to make a noble friend."

A short, convulsive sob was heard from the throne chair; and as suddenly as it burst, it ceased. Queen Margaret rose, not a trace of that stormy emotion upon the grand and marble beauty of her face. Her voice, unnaturally calm, arrested the steps of the departing earl.

"Lord Warwick, defend this boy, restore his rights, release his sainted father, and for years of anguish and of exile, Margaret of Anjou forgives the champion of her son!"

In an instant Prince Edward was again by the earl's side; a moment more, and the earl's proud knee bent in homage to the queen, joyful tears were in the eyes of her friends and kindred, a triumphant smile on the lips of Louis, and Margaret's face, terrible in its stony and locked repose, was raised above, as if asking the All-Merciful pardon—for the pardon which the human sinner had bestowed! [Ellis: Original Letters from the Harleian Manuscripts, letter 42.]

CHAPTER X. LOVE AND MARRIAGE—DOUBTS OF CONSCIENCE—DOMESTIC JEALOUSY—AND HOUSEHOLD TREASON.

The events that followed this tempestuous interview were such as the position of the parties necessarily compelled. The craft of Louis, the energy and love of Prince Edward, the representations of all her kindred and friends, conquered, though not without repeated struggles, Margaret's repugnance to a nearer union between Warwick and her son. The earl did not deign to appear personally in this matter. He left it, as became him, to Louis and the prince, and finally received from them the proposals, which ratified the league, and consummated the schemes of his revenge.

Upon the Very Cross [Miss Strickland observes upon this interview: "It does not appear that Warwick mentioned the execution of his father, the Earl of Salisbury, which is almost a confirmation of the statements of those historians who deny that he was beheaded by Margaret."] in St. Mary's Church of Angers, Lord Warwick swore without change to hold the party of King Henry. Before the same sacred symbol, King Louis and his brother, Duke of Guienne, robed in canvas, swore to sustain to their utmost the Earl of Warwick in behalf of King Henry; and Margaret recorded her oath "to treat the earl as true and faithful, and never for deeds past to make him any reproach."

Then were signed the articles of marriage between Prince Edward and the Lady Anne,—the latter to remain with Margaret, but the marriage not to be consummated "till Lord Warwick had entered England

and regained the realm, or most part, for King Henry,”—a condition which pleased the earl, who desired to award his beloved daughter no less a dowry than a crown.

An article far more important than all to the safety of the earl and to the permanent success of the enterprise, was one that virtually took from the fierce and unpopular Margaret the reins of government, by constituting Prince Edward (whose qualities endeared him more and more to Warwick, and were such as promised to command the respect and love of the people) sole regent of all the realm, upon attaining his majority. For the Duke of Clarence were reserved all the lands and dignities of the duchy of York, the right to the succession of the throne to him and his posterity,—failing male heirs to the Prince of Wales,—with a private pledge of the viceroyalty of Ireland.

Margaret had attached to her consent one condition highly obnoxious to her high-spirited son, and to which he was only reconciled by the arguments of Warwick: she stipulated that he should not accompany the earl to England, nor appear there till his father was proclaimed king. In this, no doubt, she was guided by maternal fears, and by some undeclared suspicion, either of the good faith of Warwick, or of his means to raise a sufficient army to fulfil his promise. The brave prince wished to be himself foremost in the battles fought in his right and for his cause. But the earl contended, to the surprise and joy of Margaret, that it best behooved the prince’s interests to enter England without one enemy in the field, leaving others to clear his path, free himself from all the personal hate of hostile factions, and without a drop of blood upon the sword of one heralded and announced as the peace-maker and impartial reconciles of all feuds. So then (these high conditions settled), in the presence of the Kings Rene and Louis, of the Earl and Countess of Warwick, and in solemn state, at Amboise, Edward of Lancaster plighted his marriage-troth to his beloved and loving Anne.

It was deep night, and high revel in the Palace of Amboise crowned the ceremonies of that memorable day. The Earl of Warwick stood alone in the same chamber in which he had first discovered the secret of the young Lancastrian. From the brilliant company, assembled in the halls of state, he had stolen unperceived away, for his great heart was full to overflowing. The part he had played for many days was over, and with it the excitement and the fever. His schemes were crowned,—the Lancastrians were won to his revenge; the king’s heir was the betrothed of his favourite child; and the hour was visible in the distance, when, by the retribution most to be desired, the father’s hand should lead that child to the throne of him who would have degraded her to the dust. If victory awaited his sanguine hopes, as father to his future queen, the dignity and power of the earl became greater in the court of Lancaster than, even in his palmiest day, amidst the minions of ungrateful York; the sire of two lines,—if Anne’s posterity should fail, the crown would pass to the sons of Isabel,—in either case from him (if successful in his invasion) would descend the royalty of England. Ambition, pride, revenge, might well exult in viewing the future, as mortal wisdom could discern it. The House of Nevile never seemed brightened by a more glorious star: and yet the earl was heavy and sad at heart. However he had concealed it from the eyes of others, the haughty ire of Margaret must have galled him in his deepest soul. And even as he had that day contemplated the holy happiness in the face of Anne, a sharp pang had shot through his breast. Were those the witnesses of fair-omened spousailles? How different from the hearty greeting of his warrior-friends was the measured courtesy of foes who had felt and fled before his sword! If aught chanced to him in the hazard of the field, what thought for his child ever could speak in pity from the hard and scornful eyes of the imperious Anjouite?

The mist which till then had clouded his mind, or left visible to his gaze but one stern idea of retribution, melted into air. He beheld the fearful crisis to which his life had passed,—he had reached the eminence to mourn the happy gardens left behind. Gone, forever gone, the old endearing friendships, the sweet and manly remembrances of brave companionship and early love! Who among those who had confronted war by his side for the House of York would hasten to clasp his hand and hail his coming as the captain of hated Lancaster? True, could he bow his honour to proclaim the true cause of his desertion, the heart of every father would beat in sympathy with his; but less than ever could the tale that vindicated his name be

told. How stoop to invoke malignant pity to the insult offered to a future queen? Dark in his grave must rest the secret no words could syllable, save by such vague and mysterious hint and comment as pass from baseless gossip into dubious history. [Hall well explains the mystery which wrapped the king's insult to a female of the House of Warwick by the simple sentence, "The certainty was not, for both their honours, openly known!"] True, that in his change of party he was not, like Julian of Spain, an apostate to his native land. He did not meditate the subversion of his country by the foreign foe; it was but the substitution of one English monarch for another,—a virtuous prince for a false and a sanguinary king. True, that the change from rose to rose had been so common amongst the greatest and the bravest, that even the most rigid could scarcely censure what the age itself had sanctioned. But what other man of his stormy day had been so conspicuous in the downfall of those he was now as conspicuously to raise? What other man had Richard of York taken so dearly to his heart, to what other man had the august father said, "Protect my sons"? Before him seemed literally to rise the phantom of that honoured prince, and with clay-cold lips to ask, "Art thou, of all the world, the doomsman of my first-born?" A groan escaped the breast of the self-tormentor; he fell on his knees and prayed: "Oh, pardon, thou All-seeing!—plead for me, Divine Mother! if in this I have darkly erred, taking my heart for my conscience, and mindful only of a selfish wrong! Oh, surely, no! Had Richard of York himself lived to know what I have suffered from his unworthy son,—causeless insult, broken faith, public and unabashed dishonour; yea, pardoning, serving, loving on through all, till, at the last, nothing less than the foulest taint that can light upon 'scutcheon and name was the cold, premeditated reward for untired devotion,—surely, surely, Richard himself had said, 'Thy honour at last forbids all pardon!'"

Then, in that rapidity with which the human heart, once seizing upon self-excuse, reviews, one after one, the fair apologies, the earl passed from the injury to himself to the mal-government of his land, and muttered over the thousand instances of cruelty and misrule which rose to his remembrance,—forgetting, alas, or steeling himself to the memory, that till Edward's vices had assailed his own hearth and honour, he had been contented with lamenting them, he had not ventured to chastise. At length, calm and self-acquitted, he rose from his self-confession, and leaning by the open casement, drank in the reviving and gentle balm of the summer air. The state apartments he had left, formed as we have before observed, an angle to the wing in which the chamber he had now retired to was placed. They were brilliantly illumined, their windows opened to admit the fresh, soft breeze of night; and he saw, as if by daylight, distinct and gorgeous, in their gay dresses, the many revellers within. But one group caught and riveted his eye. Close by the centre window he recognized his gentle Anne, with downcast looks; he almost fancied he saw her blush, as her young bridegroom, young and beautiful as herself, whispered love's flatteries in her ear. He saw farther on, but yet near, his own sweet countess, and muttered, "After twenty years of marriage, may Anne be as dear to him as thou art now to me!" And still he saw, or deemed he saw, his lady's eye, after resting with tender happiness on the young pair, rove wistfully around, as if missing and searching for her partner in her mother's joy. But what form sweeps by with so haughty a majesty, then pauses by the betrothed, addresses them not, but seems to regard them with so fixed a watch? He knew by her ducal diadem, by the baudekin colours of her robe, by her unmistakable air of pride, his daughter Isabel. He did not distinguish the expression of her countenance, but an ominous thrill passed through his heart; for the attitude itself had an expression, and not that of a sister's sympathy and love. He turned away his face with an unquiet recollection of the altered mood of his discontented daughter. He looked again: the duchess had passed on, lost amidst the confused splendour of the revel. And high and rich swelled the merry music that invited to the stately pavon. He gazed still; his lady had left her place, the lovers too had vanished, and where they stood, stood now in close conference his ancient enemies, Exeter and Somerset. The sudden change from objects of love to those associated with hate had something which touched one of those superstitions to which, in all ages, the heart, when deeply stirred, is weakly sensitive. And again, forgetful of the revel, the earl turned to the serener landscape of the grove and the moonlit green sward, and mused and mused, till a soft arm thrown round him woke his revery. For this had his lady left the revel. Divining, by the instinct born of love, the gloom of her husband, she had stolen from pomp and pleasure to his side.

"Ah, wherefore wouldst thou rob me," said the countess, "of one hour of thy presence, since so few hours remain; since, when the sun that succeeds the morrow's shines upon these walls, the night of thine absence will have closed upon me?"

"And if that thought of parting, sad to me as thee, suffice not, belle amie, to dim the revel," answered the earl, "weetest thou not how ill the grave and solemn thoughts of one who sees before him the emprise that would change the dynasty of a realm can suit with the careless dance and the wanton music? But not at that moment did I think of those mightier cares; my thoughts were nearer home. Hast thou noted, sweet wife, the silent gloom, the clouded brow of Isabel, since she learned that Anne was to be the bride of the heir of Lancaster?"

The mother suppressed a sigh. "We must pardon, or glance lightly over, the mood of one who loves her lord, and mourns for his baffled hopes! Well-a-day! I grieve that she admits not even me to her confidence. Ever with the favourite lady who lately joined her train,—methinks that new friend gives less holy counsel than a mother!"

"Ha! and yet what counsels can Isabel listen to from a comparative stranger? Even if Edward, or rather his cunning Elizabeth, had suborned this waiting-woman, our daughter never could hearken, even in an hour of anger, to the message from our dishonourer and our foe."

"Nay, but a flatterer often fosters by praising the erring thought. Isabel hath something, dear lord, of thy high heart and courage; and ever from childhood, her vaulting spirit, her very character of stately beauty, hath given her a conviction of destiny and power loftier than those reserved for our gentle Anne. Let us trust to time and forbearance, and hope that the affection of the generous sister will subdue the jealousy of the disappointed princess."

"Pray Heaven, indeed, that it so prove! Isabel's ascendancy over Clarence is great, and might be dangerous. Would that she consented to remain in France with thee and Anne! Her lord, at least, it seems I have convinced and satisfied. Pleased at the vast fortunes before him, the toys of viceregal power, his lighter nature reconciles itself to the loss of a crown, which, I fear, it could never have upheld. For the more I have read his qualities in our household intimacy, the more it seems that I could scarcely have justified the imposing on England a king not worthy of so great a people. He is young yet, but how different the youth of Lancastrian Edward! In him what earnest and manly spirit! What heaven-born views of the duties of a king! Oh, if there be a sin in the passion that hath urged me on, let me, and me alone, atone! and may I be at least the instrument to give to England a prince whose virtues shall compensate for all!"

While yet the last word trembled upon the earl's lips, a light flashed along the floors, hitherto illumined but by the stars and the full moon. And presently Isabel, in conference with the lady whom her mother had referred to, passed into the room, on her way to her private chamber. The countenance of this female diplomatist, whose talent for intrigue Philip de Comines [Comines, iii. 5; Hall, Lingard, Hume, etc.] has commemorated, but whose name, happily for her memory, history has concealed, was soft and winning in its expression to the ordinary glance, though the sharpness of the features, the thin compression of the lips, and the harsh dry redness of the hair corresponded with the attributes which modern physiognomical science truly or erringly assigns to a wily and treacherous character. She bore a light in her hand, and its rays shone full on the disturbed and agitated face of the duchess. Isabel perceived at once the forms of her parents, and stopped short in some whispered conversation, and uttered a cry almost of dismay.

"Thou leavest the revel betimes, fair daughter," said the earl, examining her countenance with an eye somewhat stern.

"My lady," said the confidant, with a lowly reverence, "was anxious for her babe."

"Thy lady, good waiting-wench," said Warwick, "needs not thy tongue to address her father. Pass on."

The gentlewoman bit her lips, but obeyed, and quitted the room. The earl approached, and took Isabel's hand,—it was cold as stone.

"My child," said he, tenderly, "thou dost well to retire to rest; of late thy cheek hath lost its bloom. But just now, for many causes, I was wishing thee not to brave our perilous return to England; and now, I know not whether it would make me the more uneasy, to fear for thy health if absent or thy safety if with me!"

"My lord," replied Isabel, coldly, "my duty calls me to my husband's side, and the more, since now it seems he dares the battle but reaps not its rewards! Let Edward and Anne rest in safety, Clarence and Isabel go to achieve the diadem and orb for others!"

"Be not bitter with thy father, girl; be not envious of thy sister!" said the earl, in grave rebuke; then, softening his tone, he added, "The women of a noble House should have no ambition of their own,—their glory and their honour they should leave, unmurmuring, in the hands of men! Mourn not if thy sister mounts the throne of him who would have branded the very name to which thou and she were born!"

"I have made no reproach, my lord. Forgive me, I pray you, if I now retire; I am so weary, and would fain have strength and health not to be a burden to you when you depart."

The duchess bowed with proud submission, and moved on. "Beware!" said the earl, in a low voice.

"Beware!—and of what?" said Isabel, startled.

"Of thine own heart, Isabel. Ay, go to thine infant's couch ere thou seek thine own, and, before the sleep of innocence, calm thyself back to womanhood."

The duchess raised her head quickly, but habitual awe of her father checked the angry answer; and kissing, with formal reverence, the hand the countess extended to her, she left the room. She gained the chamber in which was the cradle of her son, gorgeously canopied with silks, inwrought with the blazoned arms of royal Clarence;—and beside the cradle sat the confidant.

The duchess drew aside the drapery, and contemplated the rosy face of the infant slumberer.

Then, turning to her confidant, she said,—

"Three months since, and I hoped my first-born would be a king! Away with those vain mockeries of royal birth! How suit they the destined vassal of the abhorred Lancastrian?"

"Sweet lady," said the confidant, "did I not warn thee from the first that this alliance, to the injury of my lord duke and this dear boy, was already imminent? I had hoped thou mightst have prevailed with the earl!"

"He heeds me not, he cares not for me!" exclaimed Isabel; "his whole love is for Anne,—Anne, who, without energy and pride, I scarcely have looked on as my equal! And now to my younger sister I must bow my knee, pleased if she deign to bid me hold the skirt of her queenly robe! Never,—no, never!"

"Calm thyself; the courier must part this night. My Lord of Clarence is already in his chamber; he waits but thine assent to write to Edward, that he rejects not his loving messages."

The duchess walked to and fro, in great disorder. “But to be thus secret and false to my father?”

“Doth be merit that thou shouldst sacrifice thy child to him? Reflect! the king has no son! The English barons acknowledge not in girls a sovereign; [Miss Strickland (“Life of Elizabeth of York”) remarks, “How much Norman prejudice in favour of Salic law had corrupted the common or constitutional law of England regarding the succession!” The remark involves a controversy.] and, with Edward on the throne, thy son is heir-presumptive. Little chance that a male heir shall now be born to Queen Elizabeth, while from Anne and her bridegroom a long line may spring. Besides, no matter what parchment treaties may ordain, how can Clarence and his offspring ever be regarded by a Lancastrian king but as enemies to feed the prison or the block, when some false invention gives the seemly pretext for extirpating the lawful race?”

“Cease, cease, cease!” cried Isabel, in terrible struggles with herself.

“Lady, the hour presses! And, reflect, a few lines are but words, to be confirmed or retracted as occasion suits! If Lord Warwick succeed, and King Edward lose his crown, ye can shape as ye best may your conduct to the time. But if the earl lose the day, if again he be driven into exile, a few words now release you and yours from everlasting banishment; restore your boy to his natural heritage; deliver you from the insolence of the Anjouite, who, methinks, even dared this very day to taunt your highness—”

“She did—she did! Oh that my father had been by to hear! She bade me stand aside that Anne might pass,—‘not for the younger daughter of Lord Warwick, but for the lady admitted into the royalty of Lancaster!’ Elizabeth Woodville, at least, never dared this insolence!”

“And this Margaret the Duke of Clarence is to place on the throne which your child yonder might otherwise aspire to mount!”

Isabel clasped her hands in mute passion.

“Hark!” said the confidant, throwing open the door—

And along the corridor came, in measured pomp, a stately procession, the chamberlain in front, announcing “Her Highness the Princess of Wales;” and Louis XI., leading the virgin bride (wife but in name and honour, till her dowry of a kingdom was made secure) to her gentle rest. The ceremonial pomp, the regal homage that attended the younger sister thus raised above herself, completed in Isabel’s jealous heart the triumph of the Tempter. Her face settled into hard resolve, and she passed at once from the chamber into one near at hand, where the Duke of Clarence sat alone, the rich wines of the livery, not untasted, before him, and the ink yet wet upon a scroll he had just indited.

He turned his irresolute countenance to Isabel as she bent over him and read the letter. It was to Edward; and after briefly warning him of the meditated invasion, significantly added, “and if I may seem to share this emprise, which, here and alone, I cannot resist, thou shalt find me still, when the moment comes, thy affectionate brother and loyal subject.”

“Well, Isabel,” said the duke, “thou knowest I have delayed this till the last hour to please thee; for verily, lady mine, thy will is my sweetest law. But now, if thy heart misgives thee—”

“It does, it does!” exclaimed the duchess, bursting into tears.

“If thy heart misgives thee,” continued Clarence, who with all his weakness had much of the duplicity of his brothers, “why, let it pass. Slavery to scornful Margaret, vassalage to thy sister’s spouse, triumph to

the House which both thou and I were taught from childhood to deem accursed,—why, welcome all! so that Isabel does not weep, and our boy reproach us not in the days to come!"

For all answer, Isabel, who had seized the letter, let it drop on the table, pushed it, with averted face, towards the duke, and turned back to the cradle of her child, whom she woke with her sobs, and who wailed its shrill reply in infant petulance and terror, snatched from its slumber to the arms of the remorseful mother.

A smile of half contemptuous joy passed over the thin lips of the she-Judas, and, without speaking, she took her way to Clarence. He had sealed and bound his letter, first adding these words, "My lady and duchess, whatever her kin, has seen this letter, and approves it, for she is more a friend to York than to the earl, now he has turned Lancastrian;" and placed it in a small iron coffer.

He gave the coffer, curiously clasped and locked, to the gentlewoman, with a significant glance—"Be quick, or she repents! The courier waits, his steed saddled! The instant you give it, he departs,—he hath his permit to pass the gates."

"All is prepared; ere the clock strike, he is on his way." The confidant vanished; the duke sank in his chair, and rubbed his hands.

"Oho, father-in-law, thou deemest me too dull for a crown! I am not dull enough for thy tool. I have had the wit, at least, to deceive thee, and to hide resentment beneath a smiling brow! Dullard, thou to believe aught less than the sovereignty of England could have bribed Clarence to thy cause!" He turned to the table and complacently drained his goblet.

Suddenly, haggard and pale as a spectre, Isabel stood before him.

"I was mad—mad, George! The letter! the letter—it must not go!"

At that moment the clock struck.

"Bel enfant," said the duke, "it is too late!"

BOOK X. THE RETURN OF THE KING-MAKER.

CHAPTER I. THE MAID'S HOPE, THE COURTIER'S LOVE, AND THE SAGE'S COMFORT.

Fair are thy fields, O England; fair the rural farm and the orchards in which the blossoms have ripened into laughing fruits; and fairer than all, O England, the faces of thy soft-eyed daughters!

From the field where Sibyll and her father had wandered amidst the dead, the dismal witnesses of war had vanished; and over the green pastures roved the gentle flocks. And the farm to which Hastings had led the wanderers looked upon that peaceful field through its leafy screen; and there father and daughter had found a home.

It was a lovely summer evening; and Sibyll put aside the broidery frame, at which, for the last hour, she had not worked, and gliding to the lattice, looked wistfully along the winding lane. The room was in the upper story, and was decorated with a care which the exterior of the house little promised, and which almost approached to elegance. The fresh green rushes that strewed the floor were intermingled with dried wild thyme and other fragrant herbs. The bare walls were hung with serge of a bright and cheerful blue; a rich carpet de cuir covered the oak table, on which lay musical instruments, curiously inlaid, with a few manuscripts, chiefly of English and Provencal poetry. The tabourets were covered with cushions of Norwich worsted, in gay colours. All was simple, it is true, yet all betokened a comfort—ay, a refinement, an evidence of wealth—very rare in the houses even of the second order of nobility.

As Sibyll gazed, her face suddenly brightened; she uttered a joyous cry, hurried from the room, descended the stairs, and passed her father, who was seated without the porch, and seemingly plunged in one of his most abstracted reveries. She kissed his brow (he heeded her not), bounded with a light step over the sward of the orchard, and pausing by a wicket gate, listened with throbbing heart to the advancing sound of a horse's hoofs. Nearer came the sound, and nearer. A cavalier appeared in sight, sprang from his saddle, and, leaving his palfrey to find his way to the well-known stable, sprang lightly over the little gate.

"And thou hast watched for me, Sibyll?"

The girl blushingly withdrew from the eager embrace, and said touchingly, "My heart watcheth for thee alway. Oh, shall I thank or chide thee for so much care? Thou wilt see how thy craftsmen have changed the rugged homestead into the daintiest bower!"

"Alas! my Sibyll! would that it were worthier of thy beauty, and our mutual troth! Blessings on thy trust and sweet patience; may the day soon come when I may lead thee to a nobler home, and hear knight and baron envy the bride of Hastings!"

"My own lord!" said Sibyll, with grateful tears in confiding eyes; but, after a pause, she added timidly, "Does the king still bear so stern a memory against so humble a subject?"

"The king is more wroth than before, since tidings of Lord Warwick's restless machinations in France have soured his temper. He cannot hear thy name without threats against thy father as a secret adherent of Lancaster, and accuseth thee of witching his chamberlain,—as, in truth, thou hast. The Duchess of Bedford is more than ever under the influence of Friar Bungey, to whose spells and charms, and not to our good swords, she ascribes the marvellous flight of Warwick and the dispersion of our foes; and the friar, methinks, has fostered and yet feeds Edward's suspicions of thy harmless father. The king chides himself for having suffered poor Warner to depart unscathed, and even recalls the disastrous adventure of the mechanical, and swears that from the first thy father was in treasonable conspiracy with Margaret. Nay, sure I am, that if I dared to wed thee while his anger lasts, he would condemn thee as a sorceress, and give me up to the secret hate of my old foes the Woodvilles. But fie! be not so appalled, my Sibyll; Edward's passions, though fierce, are changeful, and patience will reward us both."

"Meanwhile, thou lovest me, Hastings!" said Sibyll, with great emotion. "Oh, if thou knewest how I torment myself in thine absence! I see thee surrounded by the fairest and the loftiest, and say to myself, 'Is it possible that he can remember me?' But thou lovest me still—still—still, and ever! Dost thou not?"

And Hastings said and swore.

"And the Lady Bonville?" asked Sibyll, trying to smile archly, but with the faltering tone of jealous fear.

"I have not seen her for months," replied the noble, with a slight change of countenance. "She is at one of their western manors. They say her lord is sorely ill; and the Lady Bonville is a devout hypocrite, and plays the tender wife. But enough of such ancient and worn-out memories. Thy father—sorrows he still for his Eureka? I can learn no trace of it."

"See," said Sibyll, recalled to her filial love, and pointing to Warner as they now drew near the house, "see, he shapes another Eureka from his thoughts!"

"How fares it, dear Warner?" asked the noble, taking the scholar's hand.

"Ah," cried the student, roused at the sight of his powerful protector, "bringest thou tidings of IT? Thy cheerful eye tells me that—no—no—thy face changes! They have destroyed it! Oh, that I could be young once more!"

"What!" said the world-wise man, astonished. "If thou hadst another youth, wouldst thou cherish the same delusion, and go again through a life of hardship, persecution, and wrong?"

"My noble son," said the philosopher, "for hours when I have felt the wrong, the persecution, and the hardship, count the days and the nights when I felt only the hope and the glory and the joy! God is kinder to us all than man can know; for man looks only to the sorrow on the surface, and sees not the consolation in the deeps of the unwitnessed soul."

Sibyll had left Hastings by her father's side, and tripped lightly to the farther part of the house, inhabited by the rustic owners who supplied the homely service, to order the evening banquet,—the happy banquet; for hunger gives not such flavour to the viand, nor thirst such sparkle to the wine, as the presence of a beloved guest.

And as the courtier seated himself on the rude settle under the honeysuckles that wreathed the porch, a delicious calm stole over his sated mind. The pure soul of the student, released a while from the tyranny of an earthly pursuit,—the drudgery of a toil, that however grand, still but ministered to human and material science,—had found for its only other element the contemplation of more solemn and eternal mysteries. Soaring naturally, as a bird freed from a golden cage, into the realms of heaven, he began now, with earnest and spiritual eloquence, to talk of the things and visions lately made familiar to his thoughts. Mounting from philosophy to religion, he indulged in his large ideas upon life and nature: of the stars that now came forth in heaven; of the laws that gave harmony to the universe; of the evidence of a God in the mechanism of creation; of the spark from central divinity, that, kindling in a man's soul, we call "genius;" of the eternal resurrection of the dead, which makes the very principle of being, and types, in the leaf and in the atom, the immortality of the great human race. He was sublimer, that gray old man, hunted from the circle of his kind, in his words, than ever is action in its deeds; for words can fathom truth, and deeds but blunderingly and lamely seek it.

And the sad and gifted and erring intellect of Hastings, rapt from its little ambition of the hour, had no answer when his heart asked, "What can courts and a king's smile give me in exchange for serene tranquillity and devoted love?"

CHAPTER II. THE MAN AWAKES IN THE SAGE, AND THE SHE-WOLF AGAIN HATH TRACKED THE LAMB.

From the night in which Hastings had saved from the knives of the tymbesteres Sibyll and her father, his honour and chivalry had made him their protector. The people of the farm (a widow and her children, with the peasants in their employ) were kindly and simple folks. What safer home for the wanderers than that to which Hastings had removed them? The influence of Sibyll over his variable heart or fancy was renewed. Again vows were interchanged and faith plighted. Anthony Woodville, Lord Rivers, who, however gallant an enemy, was still more than ever, since Warwick's exile, a formidable one, and who shared his sister's dislike to Hastings, was naturally at that time in the fullest favour of King Edward, anxious to atone for the brief disgrace his brother-in-law had suffered during the later days of Warwick's administration. And Hastings, offended by the manners of the rival favourite, took one of the disgusts so frequent in the life of a courtier, and, despite his office of chamberlain, absented himself much from his sovereign's company. Thus, in the reaction of his mind, the influence of Sibyll was greater than it otherwise might have been. His visits to the farm were regular and frequent. The widow believed him nearly related to Sibyll, and suspected Warner to be some attainted Lancastrian, compelled to hide in secret till his pardon was obtained; and no scandal was attached to the noble's visits, nor any surprise evinced at his attentive care for all that could lend a grace to a temporary refuge unfitting the quality of his supposed kindred.

And, in her entire confidence and reverential affection, Sibyll's very pride was rather soothed than wounded by obligations which were but proofs of love, and to which plighted troth gave her a sweet right. As for Warner, he had hitherto seemed to regard the great lord's attentions only as a tribute to his own science, and a testimony of the interest which a statesman might naturally feel in the invention of a thing that might benefit the realm. And Hastings had been delicate in the pretexts of his visits. One time he called to relate the death of poor Madge, though he kindly concealed the manner of it, which he had discovered, but which opinion, if not law, forbade him to attempt to punish: drowning was but the orthodox ordeal of a suspected witch, and it was not without many scruples that the poor woman was interred in holy ground. The search for the Eureka was a pretence that sufficed for countless visits; and then, too, Hastings had counselled Adam to sell the ruined house, and undertaken the negotiation; and the new comforts of their present residence, and the expense of the maintenance, were laid to the account of the sale. Hastings had begun to consider Adam Warner as utterly blind and passive to the things that passed under his eyes; and his astonishment was great when, the morning after the visit we have just recorded, Adam, suddenly lifting his eyes, and seeing the guest whispering soft tales in Sibyll's ear, rose abruptly, approached the nobleman, took him gently by the arm, led him into the garden, and thus addressed him,—

"Noble lord, you have been tender and generous in our misfortunes. The poor Eureka is lost to me and the world forever. God's will be done! Methinks Heaven designs thereby to rouse me to the sense of nearer duties; and I have a daughter whose name I adjure you not to sully, and whose heart I pray you not to break. Come hither no more, my Lord Hastings."

This speech, almost the only one which showed plain sense and judgment in the affairs of this life that the man of genius had ever uttered, so confounded Hastings, that he with difficulty recovered himself enough to say,—

"My poor scholar, what hath so suddenly kindled suspicions which wrong thy child and me?"

"Last eve, when we sat together, I saw your hand steal into hers, and suddenly I remembered the day when I was young, and wooed her mother! And last night I slept not, and sense and memory became active for my living child, as they were wont to be only for the iron infant of my mind, and I said to myself, 'Lord

Hastings is King Edward's friend; and King Edward spares not maiden honour. Lord Hastings is a mighty peer, and he will not wed the dowerless and worse than nameless girl!' Be merciful! Depart, depart!"

"But," exclaimed Hastings, "if I love thy sweet Sibyll in all honesty, if I have plighted to her my troth—"

"Alas, alas!" groaned Adam.

"If I wait but my king's permission to demand her wedded hand, couldst thou forbid me the presence of my affianced?"

"She loves thee, then?" said Adam, in a tone of great anguish,—"she loves thee,—speak!"

"It is my pride to think it."

"Then go,—go at once; come back no more till thou hast wound up thy courage to brave the sacrifice; no, not till the priest is ready at the altar, not till the bridegroom can claim the bride. And as that time will never come—never—never—leave me to whisper to the breaking heart, 'Courage; honour and virtue are left thee yet, and thy mother from heaven looks down on a stainless child!'"

The resuscitation of the dead could scarcely have startled and awed the courtier more than this abrupt development of life and passion and energy in a man who had hitherto seemed to sleep in the folds of his thought, as a chrysalis in its web. But as we have always seen that ever, when this strange being woke from his ideal abstraction, he awoke to honour and courage and truth, so now, whether, as he had said, the absence of the Eureka left his mind to the sense of practical duties, or whether their common suffering had more endeared to him his gentle companion, and affection sharpened reason, Adam Warner became puissant and majestic in his rights and sanctity of father,—greater in his homely household character, than when, in his mania of inventor, and the sublime hunger of aspiring genius, he had stolen to his daughter's couch, and waked her with the cry of "Gold!"

Before the force and power of Adam's adjuration, his outstretched hand, the anguish, yet authority, written on his face, all the art and self-possession of the accomplished lover deserted him, as one spell-bound.

He was literally without reply; till, suddenly, the sight of Sibyll, who, surprised by this singular conference, but unsuspecting its nature, now came from the house, relieved and nerved him; and his first impulse was then, as ever, worthy and noble, such as showed, though dimly, how glorious a creature he had been, if cast in a time and amidst a race which could have fostered the impulse into habit.

"Brave old man!" he said, kissing the hand still raised in command, "thou hast spoken as beseems thee; and my answer I will tell thy child." Then hurrying to the wondering Sibyll, he resumed: "Your father says well, that not thus, dubious and in secret, should I visit the home blest by thy beloved presence. I obey; I leave thee, Sibyll. I go to my king, as one who hath served him long and truly, and claims his guerdon,—thee!"

"Oh, my lord!" exclaimed Sibyll, in generous terror, "bethink thee well; remember what thou saidst but last eve. This king so fierce, my name so hated! No, no! leave me. Farewell forever, if it be right, as what thou and my father say must be. But thy life, thy liberty, thy welfare,—they are my happiness; thou hast no right to endanger them!" And she fell at his knees. He raised and strained her to his heart; then resigning her to her father's arms, he said in a voice choked with emotion,—

"Not as peer and as knight, but as man, I claim my prerogative of home and hearth. Let Edward frown, call back his gifts, banish me his court,—thou art more worth than all! Look for me, sigh not, weep not,

smile till we meet again!" He left them with these words, hastened to the stall where his steed stood, caparisoned it with his own hands, and rode with the speed of one whom passion spurs and goads towards the Tower of London.

But as Sibyll started from her father's arms, when she heard the departing hoofs of her lover's steed,—to listen and to listen for the last sound that told of him,—a terrible apparition, ever ominous of woe and horror, met her eye. On the other side of the orchard fence, which concealed her figure, but not her well-known face, which peered above, stood the tymbestere, Graul. A shriek of terror at this recognition burst from Sibyll, as she threw herself again upon Adam's breast; but when he looked round to discover the cause of her alarm, Graul was gone.

CHAPTER III. VIRTUOUS RESOLVES SUBMITTED TO THE TEST OF VANITY AND THE WORLD.

On reaching his own house, Hastings learned that the court was still at Shene. He waited but till the retinue which his rank required were equipped and ready, and reached the court, from which of late he had found so many excuses to absent himself, before night. Edward was then at the banquet, and Hastings was too experienced a courtier to disturb him at such a time. In a mood unfit for companionship, he took his way to the apartments usually reserved for him, when a gentleman met him by the way, and apprised him, with great respect, that the Lord Scales and Rivers had already appropriated those apartments to the principal waiting-lady of his countess,—but that other chambers, if less commodious and spacious, were at his command.

Hastings had not the superb and more than regal pride of Warwick and Montagu; but this notice sensibly piqued and galled him.

"My apartments as Lord Chamberlain, as one of the captain-generals in the king's army, given to the waiting-lady of Sir Anthony Woodville's wife! At whose orders, sir?"

"Her highness the queen's; pardon me, my lord," and the gentleman, looking round, and sinking his voice, continued, "pardon me, her highness added, 'If my Lord Chamberlain returns not ere the week ends, he may find not only the apartment, but the office, no longer free.' My lord, we all love you—forgive my zeal, and look well if you would guard your own."

"Thanks, sir. Is my lord of Gloucester in the palace?"

"He is,—and in his chamber. He sits not long at the feast."

"Oblige me by craving his grace's permission to wait on him at leisure; I attend his answer here."

Leaning against the wall of the corridor, Hastings gave himself up to other thoughts than those of love. So strong is habit, so powerful vanity or ambition, once indulged, that this puny slight made a sudden revulsion in the mind of the royal favourite; once more the agitated and brilliant court life stirred and fevered him,—that life, so wearisome when secure, became sweeter when imperilled. To counteract his foes, to humble his rivals, to regain the king's countenance, to baffle, with the easy art of his skilful intellect, every hostile stratagem,—such were the ideas that crossed and hurtled themselves, and Sibyll was forgotten.

The gentleman reappeared. “Prince Richard besought my lord’s presence with loving welcome;” and to the duke’s apartment went Lord Hastings. Richard, clad in a loose chamber robe, which concealed the defects of his shape, rose from before a table covered with papers, and embraced Hastings with cordial affection.

“Never more gladly hail to thee, dear William. I need thy wise counsels with the king, and I have glad tidings for thine own ear.”

“Pardieu, my prince; the king, methinks, will scarce heed the counsels of a dead man.”

“Dead?”

“Ay. At court it seems men are dead,—their rooms filled, their places promised or bestowed,—if they come not, morn and night, to convince the king that they are alive.” And Hastings, with constrained gayety, repeated the information he had received.

“What would you, Hastings?” said the duke, shrugging his shoulders, but with some latent meaning in his tone. “Lord Rivers were nought in himself; but his lady is a mighty heiress, [Elizabeth secured to her brother, Sir Anthony, the greatest heiress in the kingdom, in the daughter of Lord Scales,—a wife, by the way, who is said to have been a mere child at the time of the marriage.] and requires state, as she bestows pomp. Look round, and tell me what man ever maintained himself in power without the strong connections, the convenient dower, the acute, unseen, unsleeping woman-influence of some noble wife? How can a poor man defend his repute, his popular name, that airy but all puissant thing we call dignity or station, against the pricks and stings of female intrigue and female gossip? But he marries, and, lo, a host of fairy champions, who pinch the rival lozels unawares: his wife hath her army of courtpie and jupon, to array against the dames of his foes! Wherefore, my friend, while thou art unwedded, think not to cope with Lord Rivers, who hath a wife with three sisters, two aunts, and a score of she-cousins!”

“And if,” replied Hastings, more and more unquiet under the duke’s truthful irony,—“if I were now to come to ask the king permission to wed—”

“If thou wert, and the bride-elect were a lady with power and wealth and manifold connections, and the practice of a court, thou wouldst be the mightiest lord in the kingdom since Warwick’s exile.”

“And if she had but youth, beauty, and virtue?”

“Oh, then, my Lord Hastings, pray thy patron saint for a war,—for in peace thou wouldst be lost amongst the crowd. But truce to these jests; for thou art not the man to prate of youth, virtue, and such like, in sober earnest, amidst this work-day world, where nothing is young and nothing virtuous;—and listen to grave matters.”

The duke then communicated to Hastings the last tidings received of the machinations of Warwick. He was in high spirits; for those last tidings but reported Margaret’s refusal to entertain the proposition of a nuptial alliance with the earl, though, on the other hand, the Duke of Burgundy, who was in constant correspondence with his spies, wrote word that Warwick was collecting provisions, from his own means, for more than sixty thousand men; and that, with Lancaster or without, the earl was prepared to match his own family interest against the armies of Edward.

“And,” said Hastings, “if all his family joined with him, what foreign king could be so formidable an invader? Maltravers and the Mowbrays, Fauconberg, Westmoreland, Fitzhugh, Stanley, Bonville, Worcester—”

"But happily," said Gloucester, "the Mowbrays have been allied also to the queen's sister; Worcester detests Warwick; Stanley always murmurs against us, a sure sign that he will fight for us; and Bonville—I have in view a trusty Yorkist to whom the retainers of that House shall be assigned. But of that anon. What I now wish from thy wisdom is, to aid me in rousing Edward from his lethargy; he laughs at his danger, and neither communicates with his captains nor mans his coasts. His courage makes him a dullard."

After some further talk on these heads, and more detailed account of the preparations which Gloucester deemed necessary to urge on the king, the duke, then moving his chair nearer to Hastings, said with a smile,—

"And now, Hastings, to thyself: it seems that thou hast not heard the news which reached us four days since. The Lord Bonville is dead,—died three months ago at his manor house in Devon. [To those who have read the "Paston Letters" it will not seem strange that in that day the death of a nobleman at his country seat should be so long in reaching the metropolis,—the ordinary purveyors of communication were the itinerant attendants of fairs; and a father might be ignorant for months together of the death of his son.] Thy Katherine is free, and in London. Well, man, where is thy joy?"

"Time is, time was!" said Hastings, gloomily. "The day has passed when this news could rejoice me."

"Passed! nay, thy good stars themselves have fought for thee in delay. Seven goodly manors swell the fair widow's jointure; the noble dowry she brought returns to her. Her very daughter will bring thee power. Young Cecily Bonville [afterwards married to Dorset], the heiress, Lord Dorset demands in betrothal. Thy wife will be mother-in-law to thy queen's son; on the other hand, she is already aunt to the Duchess of Clarence; and George, be sure, sooner or later, will desert Warwick, and win his pardon. Powerful connections, vast possessions, a lady of immaculate name and surpassing beauty, and thy first love!—(thy hand trembles!)—thy first love, thy sole love, and thy last!"

"Prince—Prince! forbear! Even if so—In brief, Katherine loves me not!"

"Thou mistakest! I have seen her, and she loves thee not the less because her virtue so long concealed the love." Hastings uttered an exclamation of passionate joy, but again his face darkened.

Gloucester watched him in silence; besides any motive suggested by the affection he then sincerely bore to Hastings, policy might well interest the duke in the securing to so loyal a Yorkist the hand and the wealth of Lord Warwick's sister; but, prudently not pressing the subject further, he said, in an altered and careless voice, "Pardon me if I have presumed on matters on which each man judges for himself. But as, despite all obstacle, one day or other Anne Nevile shall be mine, it would have delighted me to know a near connection in Lord Hastings. And now the hour grows late, I prithee let Edward find thee in his chamber."

When Hastings attended the king, he at once perceived that Edward's manner was changed to him. At first, he attributed the cause to the ill offices of the queen and her brother; but the king soon betrayed the true source of his altered humour.

"My lord," he said abruptly, "I am no saint, as thou knowest; but there are some ties, par amour, which, in my mind, become not knights and nobles about a king's person."

"My liege, I arede you not."

"Tush, William!" replied the king, more gently, "thou hast more than once wearied me with application for the pardon of the nigromancer Warner,—the whole court is scandalized at thy love for his daughter.

Thou hast absented thyself from thine office on poor pretexts! I know thee too well not to be aware that love alone can make thee neglect thy king,—thy time has been spent at the knees or in the arms of this young sorceress! One word for all times,—he whom a witch snares cannot be a king's true servant! I ask of thee as a right, or as a grace, see this fair ribaude no more! What, man, are there not ladies enough in merry England, that thou shouldst undo thyself for so unchristian a fere?"

"My king! how can this poor maid have angered thee thus?"

"Knowest thou not"—began the king, sharply, and changing colour as he eyed his favourite's mournful astonishment,—"ah, well!" he muttered to himself, "they have been discreet hitherto, but how long will they be so? I am in time yet. It is enough,"—he added, aloud and gravely—"it is enough that our learned [it will be remembered that Edward himself was a man of no learning] Bungey holds her father as a most pestilent wizard, whose spells are muttered for Lancaster and the rebel Warwick; that the girl hath her father's unholy gifts, and I lay my command on thee, as liege king, and I pray thee, as loving friend, to see no more either child or sire! Let this suffice—and now I will hear thee on state matters."

Whatever Hastings might feel, he saw that it was no time to venture remonstrance with the king, and strove to collect his thoughts, and speak indifferently on the high interests to which Edward invited him; but he was so distracted and absent that he made but a sorry counsellor, and the king, taking pity on him, dismissed his chamberlain for the night.

Sleep came not to the couch of Hastings; his acuteness perceived that whatever Edward's superstition, and he was a devout believer in witchcraft, some more worldly motive actuated him in his resentment to poor Sibyll. But as we need scarcely say that neither from the abstracted Warner nor his innocent daughter had Hastings learned the true cause, he wearied himself with vain conjectures, and knew not that Edward involuntarily did homage to the superior chivalry of his gallant favourite, when he dreaded that, above all men, Hastings should be made aware of the guilty secret which the philosopher and his child could tell. If Hastings gave his name and rank to Sibyll, how powerful a weight would the tale of a witness now so obscure suddenly acquire!

Turning from the image of Sibyll, thus beset with thoughts of danger, embarrassment, humiliation, disgrace, ruin, Lord Hastings recalled the words of Gloucester; and the stately image of Katherine, surrounded with every memory of early passion, every attribute of present ambition, rose before him; and he slept at last, to dream not of Sibyll and the humble orchard, but of Katherine in her maiden bloom, of the trysting-tree by the halls of Middleham, of the broken ring, of the rapture and the woe of his youth's first high-placed love.

CHAPTER IV. THE STRIFE WHICH SIBYLL HAD COURTED, BETWEEN KATHERINE AND HERSELF, COMMENCES IN SERIOUS EARNEST.

Hastings felt relieved when, the next day, several couriers arrived with tidings so important as to merge all considerations into those of state. A secret messenger from the French court threw Gloucester into one of those convulsive passions of rage, to which, with all his intellect and dissimulation, he was sometimes subject, by the news of Anne's betrothal to Prince Edward; nor did the letter from Clarence to the king, attesting the success of one of his schemes, comfort Richard for the failure of the other. A letter from

Burgundy confirmed the report of the spy, announced Duke Charles's intention of sending a fleet to prevent Warwick's invasion, and rated King Edward sharply for his supineness in not preparing suitably against so formidable a foe. The gay and reckless presumption of Edward, worthier of a knight-errant than a monarch, laughed at the word invasion. "Pest on Burgundy's ships! I only wish that the earl would land!" [Com, iii. c. 5] he said to his council. None echoed the wish! But later in the day came a third messenger with information that roused all Edward's ire; careless of each danger in the distance, he ever sprang into energy and vengeance when a foe was already in the field. And the Lord Fitzhugh (the young nobleman before seen among the rebels at Olney, and who had now succeeded to the honours of his House) had suddenly risen in the North, at the head of a formidable rebellion. No man had so large an experience in the warfare of those districts, the temper of the people, and the inclinations of the various towns and lordships as Montagu; he was the natural chief to depute against the rebels. Some animated discussion took place as to the dependence to be placed in the marquis at such a crisis; but while the more wary held it safer, at all hazards, not to leave him unemployed, and to command his services in an expedition that would remove him from the neighbourhood of his brother, should the latter land, as was expected, on the coast of Norfolk, Edward, with a blindness of conceit that seems almost incredible, believed firmly in the infatuated loyalty of the man whom he had slighted and impoverished, and whom, by his offer of his daughter to the Lancastrian prince, he had yet more recently cozened and deluded. Montagu was hastily summoned, and received orders to march at once to the North, levy forces, and assume their command. The marquis obeyed with fewer words than were natural to him, left the presence, sprang on his horse, and as he rode from the palace, drew a letter from his bosom. "Ah, Edward," said he, setting his teeth, "so, after the solemn betrothal of thy daughter to my son, thou wouldst have given her to thy Lancastrian enemy. Coward, to bribe his peace! recreant, to belie thy word! I thank thee for this news, Warwick; for without that injury I feel I could never, when the hour came, have drawn sword against this faithless man,—especially for Lancaster. Ay, tremble, thou who deridest all truth and honour! He who himself betrays, cannot call vengeance treason!"

Meanwhile, Edward departed, for further preparations, to the Tower of London. New evidences of the mine beneath his feet here awaited the incredulous king. On the door of St. Paul's, of many of the metropolitan churches, on the Standard at Chepe, and on London Bridge, during the past night, had been affixed, none knew by whom, the celebrated proclamation, signed by Warwick and Clarence (drawn up in the bold style of the earl), announcing their speedy return, containing a brief and vigorous description of the misrule of the realm, and their determination to reform all evils and redress all wrongs. [See, for this proclamation, Ellis's "Original Letters," vol. i., second series, letter 42.] Though the proclamation named not the restoration of the Lancastrian line (doubtless from regard for Henry's safety), all men in the metropolis were already aware of the formidable league between Margaret and Warwick. Yet, even still, Edward smiled in contempt, for he had faith in the letter received from Clarence, and felt assured that the moment the duke and the earl landed, the former would betray his companion stealthily to the king; so, despite all these exciting subjects of grave alarm, the nightly banquet at the Tower was never merrier and more joyous. Hastings left the feast ere it deepened into revel, and, absorbed in various and profound contemplation, entered his apartment. He threw himself on a seat, and leaned his face on his hands.

"Oh, no, no!" he muttered; "now, in the hour when true greatness is most seen, when prince and peer crowd around me for counsel, when noble, knight, and squire crave permission to march in the troop of which Hastings is the leader,—now I feel how impossible, how falsely fair, the dream that I could forget all—all for a life of obscurity, for a young girl's love! Love! as if I had not felt its delusions to palling! love, as if I could love again: or, if love—alas, it must be a light reflected but from memory! And Katherine is free once more!" His eye fell as he spoke, perhaps in shame and remorse that, feeling thus now, he had felt so differently when he bade Sibyll smile till his return!

"It is the air of this accursed court which taints our best resolves!" he murmured, as an apology for himself; but scarcely was the poor excuse made, than the murmur broke into an exclamation of surprise and joy. A letter lay before him; he recognized the hand of Katherine. What years had passed since her

writing had met his eye, since the lines that bade him "farewell, and forget!" Those lines had been blotted with tears, and these, as he tore open the silk that bound them—these, the trace of tears, too, was on them! Yet they were but few, and in tremulous characters. They ran thus:—

To-morrow, before noon, the Lord Hastings is prayed to visit one whose life he hath saddened by the thought and the accusation that she hath clouded and embittered his. KATHERINE DE BONVILLE.

Leaving Hastings to such meditations of fear or of hope as these lines could call forth, we lead the reader to a room not very distant from his own,—the room of the illustrious Friar Bungey.

The ex-tregetour was standing before the captured Eureka, and gazing on it with an air of serio-comic despair and rage. We say the Eureka, as comprising all the ingenious contrivances towards one single object invented by its maker, a harmonious compound of many separate details; but the iron creature no longer deserved that superb appellation, for its various members were now disjointed and dislocated, and lay pell-mell in multiform confusion.

By the side of the friar stood a female, enveloped in a long scarlet mantle, with the hood partially drawn over the face, but still leaving visible the hard, thin, villanous lips, the stern, sharp chin, and the jaw resolute and solid as if hewed from stone.

"I tell thee, Graul," said the friar, "that thou hast had far the best of the bargain. I have put this diabolical contrivance to all manner of shapes, and have muttered over it enough Latin to have charmed a monster into civility. And the accursed thing, after nearly pinching off three fingers, and scalding me with seething water, and spluttering and sputtering enough to have terrified any man but Friar Bungey out of his skin, is obstinatus ut mulum,—dogged as a mule; and was absolutely good for nought, till I happily thought of separating this vessel from all the rest of the gear, and it serves now for the boiling my eggs! But by the soul of Father Merlin, whom the saints assoil, I need not have given myself all this torment for a thing which, at best, does the work of a farthing pipkin!"

"Quick, master; the hour is late! I must go while yet the troopers and couriers and riders, hurrying to and fro, keep the gates from closing. What wantest thou with Graul?"

"More reverence, child!" growled the friar. "What I want of thee is briefly told, if thou hast the wit to serve me. This miserable Warner must himself expound to me the uses and trick of his malignant contrivance. Thou must find and bring him hither!"

"And if he will not expound?"

"The deputy governor of the Tower will lend me a stone dungeon, and, if need be, the use of the brake to unlock the dotard's tongue."

"On what plea?"

"That Adam Warner is a wizard, in the pay of Lord Warwick, whom a more mighty master like myself alone can duly examine and defeat."

"And if I bring thee the sorcerer, what wilt thou teach me in return?"

"What desirest thou most?"

Graul mused, and said, "There is war in the wind. Graul follows the camp, her trooper gets gold and booty. But the trooper is stronger than Graul; and when the trooper sleeps it is with his knife by his side,

and his sleep is light and broken, for he has wicked dreams. Give me a potion to make sleep deep, that his eyes may not open when Graul filches his gold, and his hand may be too heavy to draw the knife from its sheath!"

"Immunda, detestabilis! thine own paramour!"

"He hath beat me with his bridle rein, he hath given a silver broad piece to Grisell; Grisell hath sat on his knee; Graul never pardons!"

The friar, rogue as he was, shuddered. "I cannot help thee to murder, I cannot give thee the potion; name some other reward."

"I go—"

"Nay, nay, think, pause."

"I know where Warner is hid. By this hour to-morrow night, I can place him in thy power. Say the word, and pledge me the draught."

"Well, well, mulier abominabilis!—that is, irresistible bonnibell. I cannot give thee the potion; but I will teach thee an art which can make sleep heavier than the anodyne, and which wastes not like the essence, but strengthens by usage,—an art thou shalt have at thy fingers' ends, and which often draws from the sleeper the darkest secrets of his heart." [We have before said that animal magnetism was known to Bungey, and familiar to the necromancers, or rather theurgists, of the Middle Ages.]

"It is magic," said Graul, with joy.

"Ay, magic."

"I will bring thee the wizard. But listen; he never stirs abroad, save with his daughter. I must bring both."

"Nay, I want not the girl."

"But I dare not throttle her, for a great lord loves her, who would find out the deed and avenge it; and if she be left behind, she will go to the lord, and the lord will discover what thou hast done with the wizard, and thou wilt hang!"

"Never say 'Hang' to me, Graul: it is ill-mannered and ominous. Who is the lord?"

"Hastings."

"Pest!—and already he hath been searching for the thing yonder; and I have brooded over it night and day, like a hen over a chalk egg,—only that the egg does not snap off the hen's claws, as that diabolism would fain snap off my digits. But the war will carry Hastings away in its whirlwind; and, in danger, the duchess is my slave, and will bear me through all. So, thou mayst bring the girl; and strangle her not; for no good ever comes of a murder,—unless, indeed, it be absolutely necessary!"

"I know the men who will help me, bold ribauds, whom I will guerdon myself; for I want not thy coins, but thy craft. When the curfew has tolled, and the bat hunts the moth, we will bring thee the quarry—"

Graul turned; but as she gained the door, she stopped, and said abruptly, throwing back her hood,—

"What age dost thou deem me?"

"Marry," quoth the friar, "an' I had not seen thee on thy mother's knee when she followed my stage of tregetour, I should have guessed thee for thirty; but thou hast led too jolly a life to look still in the blossom. Why speer'st thou the question?"

"Because when trooper and ribaud say to me, 'Graul, thou art too worn and too old to drink of our cup and sit in the lap, to follow the young fere to the battle, and weave the blithe dance in the fair,' I would depart from my sisters, and have a hut of my own, and a black cat without a white hair, and steal herbs by the new moon, and bones from the charnel, and curse those whom I hate, and cleave the misty air on a besom, like Mother Halkin of Edmonton. Ha, ha! Master, thou shalt present me then to the Sabbat. Graul has the mettle for a bonny witch!"

The tymbestere vanished with a laugh. The friar muttered a paternoster for once, perchance, devoutly, and after having again deliberately scanned the disjecta membra of the Eureka, gravely took forth a duck's egg from his cupboard, and applied the master-agent of the machine which Warner hoped was to change the face of the globe to the only practical utility it possessed to the mountebank's comprehension.

CHAPTER V. THE MEETING OF HASTINGS AND KATHERINE.

The next morning, while Edward was engaged in levying from his opulent citizens all the loans he could extract, knowing that gold is the sinew of war; while Worcester was manning the fortress of the Tower, in which the queen, then near her confinement, was to reside during the campaign; while Gloucester was writing commissions to captains and barons to raise men; while Sir Anthony Lord Rivers was ordering improvements in his dainty damasquine armour, and the whole Fortress Palatine was animated and alive with the stir of the coming strife,—Lord Hastings escaped from the bustle, and repaired to the house of Katherine. With what motive, with what intentions, was not known clearly to himself,—perhaps, for there was bitterness in his very love for Katherine, to enjoy the retaliation due to his own wounded pride, and say to the idol of his youth, as he had said to Gloucester, "Time is, time was;" perhaps with some remembrance of the faith due to Sibyll, wakened up the more now that Katherine seemed actually to escape from the ideal image into the real woman,—to be easily wooed and won. But, certainly, Sibyll's cause was not wholly lost, though greatly shaken and endangered, when Lord Hastings alighted at Lady Bonville's gate; but his face gradually grew paler, his mien less assured, as he drew nearer and nearer to the apartment and the presence of the widowed Katherine.

She was seated alone, and in the same room in which he had last seen her. Her deep mourning only served, by contrasting the pale and exquisite clearness of her complexion, to enhance her beauty. Hastings bowed low, and seated himself by her side in silence.

The Lady of Bonville eyed him for some moments with an unutterable expression of melancholy and tenderness. All her pride seemed to have gone; the very character of her face was changed: grave severity had become soft timidity, and stately self-control was broken into the unmistaken struggle of hope and fear.

"Hastings—William!" she said, in a gentle and low whisper, and at the sound of that last name from those lips, the noble felt his veins thrill and his heart throb. "If," she continued, "the step I have taken seems to

thee unwomanly and too bold, know, at least, what was my design and my excuse. There was a time" (and Katherine blushed) "when, thou knowest well, that, had this hand been mine to bestow, it would have been his who claimed the half of this ring." And Katherine took from a small crystal casket the well-remembered token.

"The broken ring foretold but the broken troth," said Hastings, averting his face.

"Thy conscience rebukes thy words," replied Katherine, sadly; "I pledged my faith, if thou couldst win my father's word. What maid, and that maid a Nevile, could so forget duty and honour as to pledge thee more? We were severed. Pass—oh, pass over that time! My father loved me dearly; but when did pride and ambition ever deign to take heed of the wild fancies of a girl's heart? Three suitors, wealthy lords, whose alliance gave strength to my kindred in the day when their very lives depended on their swords, were rivals for Earl Salisbury's daughter. Earl Salisbury bade his daughter choose. Thy great friend and my own kinsman, Duke Richard of York, himself pleaded for thy rivals. He proved to me that my disobedience—if, indeed, for the first time, a child of my House could disobey its chief—would be an external barrier to thy fortune; that while Salisbury was thy foe, he himself could not advance thy valiancy and merit; that it was with me to forward thy ambition, though I could not reward thy love; that from the hour I was another's, my mighty kinsmen themselves—for they were generous—would be the first to aid the duke in thy career. Hastings, even then I would have prayed, at least, to be the bride, not of man, but God. But I was trained—as what noble demoiselle is not?—to submit wholly to a parent's welfare and his will. As a nun, I could but pray for the success of my father's cause; as a wife, I could bring to Salisbury and to York the retainers and strongholds of a baron. I obeyed. Hear me on. Of the three suitors for my hand, two were young and gallant,—women deemed them fair and comely; and had my choice been one of these, thou mightest have deemed that a new love had chased the old. Since choice was mine, I chose the man love could not choose, and took this sad comfort to my heart, 'He, the forsaken Hastings, will see in my very choice that I was but the slave of duty, my choice itself my penance.'"

Katherine paused, and tears dropped fast from her eyes. Hastings held his hand over his countenance, and only by the heaving of his heart was his emotion visible. Katherine resumed:—

"Once wedded, I knew what became a wife. We met again; and to thy first disdain and anger (which it had been dishonour in me to soothe by one word that said, 'The wife remembers the maiden's love'),—to these, thy first emotions, succeeded the more cruel revenge, which would have changed sorrow and struggle to remorse and shame. And then, then—weak woman that I was!—I wrapped myself in scorn and pride. Nay, I felt deep anger—was it unjust?—that thou couldst so misread and so repay the heart which had nothing left save virtue to compensate for love. And yet, yet, often when thou didst deem me most hard, most proof against memory and feeling—But why relate the trial? Heaven supported me, and if thou lovest me no longer, thou canst not despise me."

At these last words Hastings was at her feet, bending over her hand, and stifled by his emotions. Katherine gazed at him for a moment through her own tears, and then resumed:—

"But thou hadst, as man, consolations no woman would desire or covet. And oh, what grieved me most was, not—no, not the jealous, the wounded vanity, but it was at least this self-accusation, this remorse—that—but for one goading remembrance, of love returned and love forsaken,—thou hadst never so descended from thy younger nature, never so trifled with the solemn trust of TIME. Ah, when I have heard or seen or fancied one fault in thy maturer manhood, unworthy of thy bright youth, anger of myself has made me bitter and stern to thee; and if I taunted or chid or vexed thy pride, how little didst thou know that through the too shrewish humour spoke the too soft remembrance! For this—for this; and believing that through all, alas! my image was not replaced, when my hand was free, I was grateful that I might still—" (the lady's pale cheek grew brighter than the rose, her voice faltered, and became low and indistinct)—"I might still think it mine to atone to thee for the past. And if," she added, with a sudden and

generous energy, "if in this I have bowed my pride, it is because by pride thou wert wounded; and now, at last, thou hast a just revenge."

O terrible rival for thee, lost Sibyll! Was it wonderful that, while that head drooped upon his breast, while in that enchanted change which Love the softener makes in lips long scornful, eyes long proud and cold, he felt that Katherine Nevile—tender, gentle, frank without boldness, lofty without arrogance—had replaced the austere dame of Bonville, whom he half hated while he wooed,—oh, was it wonderful that the soul of Hastings fled back to the old time, forgot the intervening vows and more chill affections, and repeated only with passionate lips, "Katherine, loved still, loved ever, mine, mine, at last!"

Then followed delicious silence, then vows, confessions, questions, answers,—the thrilling interchange of hearts long divided, and now rushing into one. And time rolled on, till Katherine, gently breaking from her lover, said,—

"And now that thou hast the right to know and guide my projects, approve, I pray thee, my present purpose. War awaits thee, and we must part a while!" At these words her brow darkened and her lip quivered. "Oh, that I should have lived to mourn the day when Lord Warwick, untrue to Salisbury and to York, joined his arms with Lancaster and Margaret,—the day when Katherine could blush for the brother she had deemed the glory of her House! No, no" (she continued, as Hastings interrupted her with generous excuses for the earl, and allusion to the known slights he had received),—"no, no; make not his cause the worse by telling me that an unworthy pride, the grudge of some thwart to his policy or power, has made him forget what was due to the memory of his kinsman York, to the mangled corpse of his father Salisbury. Thinkest thou that but for this I could—" She stopped, but Hastings divined her thought, and guessed that, if spoken, it had run thus: "That I could, even now, have received the homage of one who departs to meet, with banner and clarion, my brother as his foe?"

The lovely sweetness of the late expression had gone from Katherine's face, and its aspect showed that her high and ancestral spirit had yielded but to one passion. She pursued,—

"While this strife lasts, it becomes my widowhood and kindred position with the earl to retire to the convent my mother founded. To-morrow I depart."

"Alas!" said Hastings, "thou speakest of the strife as if but a single field. But Warwick returns not to these shores, nor bows himself to league with Lancaster, for a chance hazardous and desperate, as Edward too rashly deems it. It is in vain to deny that the earl is prepared for a grave and lengthened war, and much I doubt whether Edward can resist his power; for the idolatry of the very land will swell the ranks of so dread a rebel. What if he succeed; what if we be driven into exile, as Henry's friends before us; what if the king-maker be the king-dethroner? Then, Katherine, then once more thou wilt be at the best of thy hostile kindred, and once more, dowered as thou art, and thy womanhood still in its richest bloom, thy hand will be lost to Hastings."

"Nay, if that be all thy fear, take with thee this pledge,—that Warwick's treason to the House for which my father fell dissolves his power over one driven to disown him as a brother,—knowing Earl Salisbury, had he foreseen such disgrace, had disowned him as a son. And if there be defeat and flight and exile, wherever thou wanderest, Hastings, shall Katherine be found beside thee. Fare thee well, and Our Lady shield thee! may thy lance be victorious against all foes,—save one. Thou wilt forbear my—that is, the earl!" And Katherine, softened at that thought, sobbed aloud.

"And come triumph or defeat, I have thy pledge?" said Hastings, soothing her.

"See," said Katherine, taking the broken ring from the casket; "now, for the first time since I bore the name of Bonville, I lay this relic on my heart; art thou answered?"

CHAPTER VI. HASTINGS LEARNS WHAT HAS BEFALLEN SIBYLL, REPAIRS TO THE KING, AND ENCOUNTERS AN OLD RIVAL.

"It is destiny," said Hastings to himself, when early the next morning he was on his road to the farm—"it is destiny,—and who can resist his fate?"

"It is destiny!"—phrase of the weak human heart! "It is destiny!" dark apology for every error! The strong and the virtuous admit no destiny! On earth guides conscience, in heaven watches God. And destiny is but the phantom we invoke to silence the one, to dethrone the other!

Hastings spared not his good steed. With great difficulty had he snatched a brief respite from imperious business, to accomplish the last poor duty now left to him to fulfil,—to confront the maid whose heart he had seduced in vain, and say at length, honestly and firmly, "I cannot wed thee. Forget me, and farewell."

Doubtless his learned and ingenious mind conjured up softer words than these, and more purfled periods wherein to dress the iron truth. But in these two sentences the truth lay. He arrived at the farm, he entered the house; he felt it as a reprieve that he met not the bounding step of the welcoming Sibyll. He sat down in the humble chamber, and waited a while in patience,—no voice was heard. The silence at length surprised and alarmed him. He proceeded farther. He was met by the widowed owner of the house, who was weeping; and her first greeting prepared him for what had chanced. "Oh, my lord, you have come to tell me they are safe, they have not fallen into the hands of their enemies,—the good gentleman, so meek, the poor lady, so fair!"

Hastings stood aghast; a few sentences more explained all that he already guessed. A strange man had arrived the evening before at the house, praying Adam and his daughter to accompany him to the Lord Hastings, who had been thrown from his horse, and was now in a cottage in the neighbouring lane,—not hurt dangerously, but unable to be removed, and who had urgent matters to communicate. Not questioning the truth of this story, Adam and Sibyll had hurried forth, and returned no more. Alarmed by their long absence, the widow, who at first received the message from the stranger, went herself to the cottage, and found that the story was a fable. Every search had since been made for Adam and his daughter, but in vain. The widow, confirmed in her previous belief that her lodgers had been attainted Lancastrians, could but suppose that they had been thus betrayed to their enemies. Hastings heard this with a dismay and remorse impossible to express. His only conjecture was that the king had discovered their retreat, and taken this measure to break off the intercourse he had so sternly denounced. Full of these ideas, he hastily remounted, and stopped not till once more at the gates of the Tower. Hastening to Edward's closet, the moment he saw the king, he exclaimed, in great emotion, "My liege, my liege, do not at this hour, when I have need of my whole energy to serve thee, do not madden my brain, and palsy my arm. This old man—the poor maid—Sibyll—Warner,—speak, my liege—only tell me they are safe; promise me they shall go free, and I swear to obey thee in all else! I will thank thee in the battlefield!"

"Thou art mad, Hastings!" said the king, in great astonishment. "Hush!" and he glanced significantly at a person who stood before several heaps of gold, ranged upon a table in the recess of the room. "See," he whispered, "yonder is the goldsmith, who hath brought me a loan from himself and his fellows! Pretty tales for the city thy folly will send abroad!"

But before Hastings could vent his impatient answer, this person, to Edward's still greater surprise, had advanced from his place, and forgetting all ceremony, had seized Hastings by the hem of his surcoat, exclaiming,—

"My lord, my lord, what new horror is this? Sibyll!—methought she was worthless, and had fled to thee!"

"Ten thousand devils!" shouted the king, "am I ever to be tormented by that damnable wizard and his witch child? And is it, Sir Peer and Sir Goldsmith, in your king's closet that ye come, the very eve before he marches to battle, to speer and glower at each other like two madmen as ye are?"

Neither peer nor goldsmith gave way, till the courtier, naturally recovering himself the first, fell on his knee; and said, with firm though profound respect: "Sire, if poor William Hastings has ever merited from the king one kindly thought, one generous word, forgive now whatever may displease thee in his passion or his suit, and tell him what prison contains those whom it would forever dishonour his knighthood to know punished and endangered but for his offence."

"My lord," answered the king, softened but still surprised, "think you seriously that I, who but reluctantly in this lovely month leave my green lawns of Shene to save a crown, could have been vexing my brain by stratagems to seize a lass, whom I swear by Saint George I do not envy thee in the least? If that does not suffice, incredulous dullard, why then take my kingly word, never before passed for so slight an occasion, that I know nothing whatsoever of thy damsel's whereabout nor her pestilent father's,—where they abode of late, where they now be; and, what is more, if any man has usurped his king's right to imprison the king's subjects, find him out, and name his punishment. Art thou convinced?"

"I am, my liege," said Hastings.

"But—" began the goldsmith.

"Holloa, you, too, sir! This is too much! We have condescended to answer the man who arms three thousand retainers—"

"And I, please your Highness, bring you the gold to pay them," said the trader, bluntly.

The king bit his lip, and then burst into his usual merry laugh.

"Thou art in the right, Master Alwyn. Finish counting the pieces, and then go and consult with my chamberlain,—he must off with the cock-crow; but, since ye seem to understand each other, he shall make thee his lieutenant of search, and I will sign any order he pleases for the recovery of the lost wisdom and the stolen beauty. Go and calm thyself, Hastings."

"I will attend you presently, my lord," said Alwyn, aside, "in your own apartment."

"Do so," said Hastings; and, grateful for the king's consideration, he sought his rooms. There, indeed, Alwyn soon joined him, and learned from the nobleman what filled him at once with joy and terror. Knowing that Warner and Sibyll had left the Tower, he had surmised that the girl's virtue had at last succumbed; and it delighted him to hear from Lord Hastings, whose word to men was never questionable, the solemn assurance of her unstained chastity. But he trembled at this mysterious disappearance, and knew not to whom to impute the snare, till the penetration of Hastings suddenly alighted near, at least, to the clew. "The Duchess of Bedford," said he, "ever increasing in superstition as danger increases, may have desired to refind so great a scholar and reputed an astrologer and magician; if so, all is safe. On the other hand, her favourite, the friar, ever bore a jealous grudge to poor Adam, and may have sought to abstract him from her grace's search; here there may be molestation to Adam, but surely no danger to

Sibyll. Hark ye, Alwyn, thou lovest the maid more worthily, and—" Hastings stopped short; for such is infirm human nature, that, though he had mentally resigned Sibyll forever, he could not yet calmly face the thought of resigning her to a rival. "Thou lovest her," he renewed, more coldly, "and to thee, therefore, I may safely trust the search which time and circumstance and a soldier's duty forbid to me. And believe—oh, believe that I say not this from a passion which may move thy jealousy, but rather with a brother's holy love. If thou canst but see her safe, and lodged where no danger nor wrong can find her, thou hast no friend in the wide world whose service through life thou mayst command like mine."

"My lord," said Alwyn, dryly, "I want no friends! Young as I am, I have lived long enough to see that friends follow fortune, but never make it! I will find this poor maid and her honoured father, if I spend my last groat on the search. Get me but such an order from the king as may place the law at my control, and awe even her grace of Bedford,—and I promise the rest!"

Hastings, much relieved, deigned to press the goldsmith's reluctant hand; and, leaving him alone for a few minutes, returned with a warrant from the king, which seemed to Alwyn sufficiently precise and authoritative. The goldsmith then departed, and first he sought the friar, but found him not at home. Bungey had taken with him, as was his wont, the keys of his mysterious apartment. Alwyn then hastened elsewhere, to secure those experienced in such a search, and to head it in person. At the Tower, the evening was passed in bustle and excitement,—the last preparations for departure. The queen, who was then far advanced towards her confinement, was, as we before said, to remain at the Tower, which was now strongly manned. Roused from her wonted apathy by the imminent dangers that awaited Edward, the night was passed by her in tears and prayers, by him in the sound sleep of confident valour. The next morning departed for the North the several leaders,—Gloucester, Rivers, Hastings, and the king.

CHAPTER VII. THE LANDING OF LORD WARWICK, AND THE EVENTS THAT ENSUE THEREON.

And Charles the Bold, Duke of Burgundy, "prepared such a greate navie as lightly hath not been seene before gathered in manner of all nations, which armie laie at the mouth of the Seyne ready to fight with the Earl of Warwick, when he should set out of his harborowe." [Hall, p. 282, ed. 1809.]

But the winds fought for the Avenger. In the night came "a terrible tempest," which scattered the duke's ships "one from another, so that two of them were not in compagnie together in one place;" and when the tempest had done its work, it passed away; and the gales were fair, and the heaven was clear, when, the next day, the earl "halsed up the sayles," and came in sight of Dartmouth.

It was not with an army of foreign hirelings that Lord Warwick set forth on his mighty enterprise. Scanty indeed were the troops he brought from France,—for he had learned from England that "men so much daily and hourely desired and wished so sore his arrival and return, that almost all men were in harness, looking for his landyng." [The popular feeling in favour of the earl is described by Hall, with somewhat more eloquence and vigour than are common with that homely chronicler: "The absence of the Earle of Warwick made the common people daily more and more to long and bee desirous to have the sight of him, and presently to behold his personage. For they judged that the sunne was clerely taken from the world when hee was absent. In such high estimation amongst the people was his name, that neither no one manne they had in so much honour, neither no one persone they so much praised, or to the clouds so highly extolled. What shall I say? His only name sounded in every song, in the mouth of the common people, and his persone [effigies] was represented with great reverence when publique plaies or open

triumphes should bee skewed or set furthe abrode in the stretes," etc. This lively passage, if not too highly coloured, serves to show us the rude saturnalian kind of liberty that existed, even under a king so vindictive as Edward IV. Though an individual might be banged for the jest that he would make his son heir to the crown (namely, the grocer's shop, which bore that sign), yet no tyranny could deal with the sentiment of the masses. In our own day it would be less safe than in that to make public exhibition "in plaies and triumphes" of sympathy with a man attainted as a traitor, and in open rebellion to the crown.] As his ships neared the coast, and the banner of the Ragged Staff, worked in gold, shone in the sun, the shores swarmed with armed crowds, not to resist but to welcome. From cliff to cliff, wide and far, blazed rejoicing bonfires; and from cliff to cliff, wide and far, burst the shout, when, first of all his men, bareheaded, but, save the burgonet, in complete mail, the popular hero leaped to shore.

"When the earl had taken land, he made a proclamation, in the name of King Henry VI., upon high paynes commanding and charging all men apt or able to bear armour, to prepare themselves to fight against Edward, Duke of York, who had untruly usurped the croune and dignity of this realm." [Hall, p. 82.]

And where was Edward? Afar, following the forces of Fitzhugh and Robin of Redesdale, who by artful retreat drew him farther and farther northward, and left all the other quarters of the kingdom free to send their thousands to the banners of Lancaster and Warwick. And even as the news of the earl's landing reached the king, it spread also through all the towns of the North; and all the towns of the North were in "a great rore, and made fires, and sang songs, crying, 'King Henry! King Henry! a Warwicke! a Warwicke!'" But his warlike and presumptuous spirit forsook not the chief of that bloody and fatal race,—the line of the English Pelops,—"bespattered with kindred gore." [Aeschylus: Agamemnon] A messenger from Burgundy was in his tent when the news reached him. "Back to the duke!" cried Edward; "tell him to recollect his navy, guard the sea, scour the streams, that the earl shall not escape, nor return to France; for the doings in England, let me alone! I have ability and puissance to overcome all enemies and rebels in mine own realm." [Hall, p. 283.]

And therewith he raised his camp, abandoned the pursuit of Fitzhugh, summoned Montagu to join him (it being now safer to hold the marquis near him, and near the axe, if his loyalty became suspected), and marched on to meet the earl. Nor did the earl tarry from the encounter. His army, swelling as he passed, and as men read his proclamations to reform all grievances and right all wrongs, he pressed on to meet the king, while fast and fast upon Edward's rear came the troops of Fitzhugh and Hilyard, no longer flying but pursuing. The king was the more anxious to come up to Warwick, inasmuch as he relied greatly upon the treachery of Clarence, either secretly to betray or openly to desert the earl. And he knew that if he did the latter on the eve of a battle, it could not fail morally to weaken Warwick, and dishearten his army by fear that desertion should prove, as it ever does, the most contagious disease that can afflict a camp. It is probable, however, that the enthusiasm which had surrounded the earl with volunteers so numerous had far exceeded the anticipations of the inexperienced Clarence, and would have forbid him that opportunity of betraying the earl. However this be, the rival armies drew nearer and nearer. The king halted in his rapid march at a small village, and took up his quarters in a fortified house, to which there was no access but by a single bridge. [Sharon Turner, Comines.] Edward himself retired for a short time to his couch, for he had need of all his strength in the battle he foresaw; but scarce had he closed his eyes, when Alexander Carlile [Hearne: Fragment], the serjeant of the royal minstrels, followed by Hastings and Rivers (their jealousy laid at rest for a time in the sense of their king's danger), rushed into his room.

"Arm, sire, arm!—Lord Montagu has thrown off the mask, and rides through thy troops, shouting 'Long live King Henry!'"

"Ah, traitor!" cried the king, leaping from his bed. "From Warwick hate was my due, but not from Montagu! Rivers, help to buckle on my mail. Hastings, post my body-guard at the bridge. We will sell our lives dear."

Hastings vanished. Edward had scarcely hurried on his helm, cuirass, and greaves, when Gloucester entered, calm in the midst of peril.

"Your enemies are marching to seize you, brother. Hark! behind you rings the cry, 'A Fitzhugh! a Robin! death to the tyrant!' Hark! in front, 'A Montagu! a Warwick! Long live King Henry!' I come to redeem my word,—to share your exile or your death. Choose either while there is yet time. Thy choice is mine!"

And while he spoke, behind, before, came the various cries nearer and nearer. The lion of March was in the toils.

"Now, my two-handed sword!" said Edward. "Gloucester, in this weapon learn my choice!"

But now all the principal barons and captains, still true to the king whose crown was already lost, flocked in a body to the chamber. They fell on their knees, and with tears implored him to save himself for a happier day.

"There is yet time to escape," said D'Eyncourt, "to pass the bridge, to gain the seaport! Think not that a soldier's death will be left thee. Numbers will suffice to encumber thine arm, to seize thy person. Live not to be Warwick's prisoner,—shown as a wild beast in its cage to the hooting crowd!"

"If not on thyself," exclaimed Rivers, "have pity on these loyal gentlemen, and for the sake of their lives preserve thine own. What is flight? Warwick fled!"

"True,—and returned!" added Gloucester. "You are right, my lords. Come, sire, we must fly. Our rights fly not with us, but shall fight for us in absence!"

The calm WILL of this strange and terrible boy had its effect upon Edward. He suffered his brother to lead him from the chamber, grinding his teeth in impotent rage. He mounted his horse, while Rivers held the stirrup, and with some six or seven knights and earls rode to the bridge, already occupied by Hastings and a small but determined guard.

"Come, Hastings," said the king, with a ghastly smile,—"they tell us we must fly!"

"True, sire, haste, haste! I stay but to deceive the enemy by feigning to defend the pass, and to counsel, as I best may, the faithful soldiers we leave behind."

"Brave Hastings!" said Gloucester, pressing his hand, "you do well, and I envy you the glory of this post. Come, sire."

"Ay, ay," said the king, with a sudden and fierce cry, "we go,—but at least slaughtering as we go. See! yon rascal troop! ride we through their midst! Havock and revenge!"

He set spurs to his steed, galloped over the bridge, and before his companions could join him, dashed alone into the very centre of the advanced guard sent to invest the fortress, and while they were yet shouting, "Where is the tyrant, where is Edward?"

"Here!" answered a voice of thunder,—"here, rebels and faytors, in your ranks!"

This sudden and appalling reply, even more than the sweep of the gigantic sword, before which were riven sallet and mail as the woodman's axe rives the fagot, created amongst the enemy that singular panic, which in those ages often scattered numbers before the arm and the name of one. They recoiled in confusion and dismay. Many actually threw down their arms and fled. Through a path broad and clear

amidst the forest of pikes, Gloucester and the captains followed the flashing track of the king, over the corpses, headless or limbless, that he felled as he rode.

Meanwhile, with a truer chivalry, Hastings, taking advantage of the sortie which confused and delayed the enemy, summoned such of the loyal as were left in the fortress, advised them, as the only chance of life, to affect submission to Warwick; but when the time came, to remember their old allegiance, [Sharon Turner, vol. iii. 280.] and promising that he would not desert them, save with life, till their safety was pledged by the foe, reclosed his visor, and rode back to the front of the bridge.

And now the king and his comrades had cut their way through all barrier, but the enemy still wavered and lagged, till suddenly the cry of "Robin of Redesdale!" was heard, and sword in hand, Hilyard, followed by a troop of horse, dashed to the head of the besiegers, and, learning the king's escape, rode off in pursuit. His brief presence and sharp rebuke reanimated the falterers, and in a few minutes they gained the bridge.

"Halt, sirs," cried Hastings; "I would offer capitulation to your leader! Who is he?"

A knight on horseback advanced from the rest. Hastings lowered the point of his sword.

"Sir, we yield this fortress to your hands upon one condition,—our men yonder are willing to submit, and shout with you for Henry VI. Pledge me your word that you and your soldiers spare their lives and do them no wrong, and we depart."

"And if I pledge it not?" said the knight.

"Then for every warrior who guards this bridge count ten dead men amongst your ranks."

"Do your worst,—our bloods are up! We want life for life! revenge for the subjects butchered by your tyrant chief! Charge! to the attack! charge! pike and bill!" The knight spurred on, the Lancastrians followed, and the knight reeled from his horse into the moat below, felled by the sword of Hastings.

For several minutes the pass was so gallantly defended that the strife seemed uncertain, though fearfully unequal, when Lord Montagu himself, hearing what had befallen, galloped to the spot, threw down his truncheon, cried "Hold!" and the slaughter ceased. To this nobleman Hastings repeated the terms he had proposed.

"And," said Montagu, turning with anger to the Lancastrians, who formed a detachment of Fitzhugh's force—"can Englishmen insist upon butchering Englishmen? Rather thank we Lord Hastings that he would spare good King Henry so many subjects' lives! The terms are granted, my lord; and your own life also, and those of your friends around you, vainly brave in a wrong cause. Depart!"

"Ah, Montagu," said Hastings, touched, and in a whisper, "what pity that so gallant a gentleman should leave a rebel's blot upon his scutcheon!"

"When chiefs and suzerains are false and perjured, Lord Hastings," answered Montagu, "to obey them is not loyalty, but serfdom; and revolt is not disloyalty, but a freeman's duty. One day thou mayst know that truth, but too late." [It was in the midst of his own conspiracy against Richard of Gloucester that the head of Lord Hastings fell.]

Hastings made no reply, waved his hand to his fellow-defenders of the bridge, and, followed by them, went slowly and deliberately on, till clear of the murmuring and sullen foe; then putting spurs to their steeds, these faithful warriors rode fast to rejoin their king; overtook Hilyard on the way, and after a fierce skirmish, a blow from Hastings unhorsed and unhelmed the stalwart Robin, and left him so stunned as to

check further pursuit. They at last reached the king, and gaining, with him and his party, the town of Lynn, happily found one English and two Dutch vessels on the point of sailing. Without other raiment than the mail they wore, without money, the men a few hours before hailed as sovereign or as peers fled from their native land as outcasts and paupers. New dangers beset them on the sea: the ships of the Easterlings, at war both with France and England, bore down upon their vessels. At the risk of drowning they ran ashore near Alcmaer. The large ships of the Easterlings followed as far as the low water would permit, "intendeing at the fludde to have obtained their prey." [Hall.] In this extremity, the lord of the province (Louis of Grauthuse) came aboard their vessels, protected the fugitives from the Easterlings, conducted them to the Hague, and apprised the Duke of Burgundy how his brother-in-law had lost his throne. Then were verified Lord Warwick's predictions of the faith of Burgundy! The duke for whose alliance Edward had dishonoured the man to whom he owed his crown, so feared the victorious earl, that "he had rather have heard of King Edward's death than of his discomfiture;" [Hall, p. 279] and his first thought was to send an embassy to the king-maker, praying the amity and alliance of the restored dynasty.

CHAPTER VIII. WHAT BEFELL ADAM WARNER AND SIBYLL WHEN MADE SUBJECT TO THE GREAT FRIAR BUNGEY.

We must now return to the Tower of London,—not, indeed, to its lordly halls and gilded chambers, but to the room of Friar Bungey. We must go back somewhat in time; and on the day following the departure of the king and his lords, conjure up in that strangely furnished apartment the form of the burly friar, standing before the disorganized Eureka, with Adam Warner by his side.

Graul, as we have seen, had kept her word, and Sibyll and her father, having fallen into the snare, were suddenly gagged, bound, led through by-paths to a solitary hut, where a covered wagon was in waiting, and finally, at nightfall, conducted to the Tower. The friar, whom his own repute, jolly affability, and favour with the Duchess of Bedford made a considerable person with the authorities of the place, had already obtained from the deputy-governor an order to lodge two persons, whom his zeal for the king sought to convict of necromantic practices in favour of the rebellion, in the cells set apart for such unhappy captives. Thither the prisoners were conducted. The friar did not object to their allocation in contiguous cells; and the jailer deemed him mighty kind and charitable, when he ordered that they might be well served and fed till their examination.

He did not venture, however, to summon his captives till the departure of the king, when the Tower was in fact at the disposition of his powerful patroness, and when he thought he might stretch his authority as far as he pleased, unquestioned and unchid.

Now, therefore, on the day succeeding Edward's departure, Adam Warner was brought from his cell, and led to the chamber where the triumphant friar received him in majestic state. The moment Warner entered, he caught sight of the chaos to which his Eureka was resolved, and uttering a cry of mingled grief and joy, sprang forward to greet his profaned treasure. The friar motioned away the jailer (whispering him to wait without), and they were left alone. Bungey listened with curious and puzzled attention to poor Adam's broken interjections of lamentation and anger, and at last, clapping him roughly on the back, said,—

"Thou knowest the secret of this magical and ugly device: but in thy hands it leads only to ruin and perdition. Tell me that secret, and in my hands it shall turn to honour and profit. Porkey verbey! I am a

man of few words. Do this, and thou shalt go free with thy daughter, and I will protect thee, and give thee moneys, and my fatherly blessing; refuse to do it, and thou shalt go from thy snug cell into a black dungeon full of newts and rats, where thou shalt rot till thy nails are like birds' talons, and thy skin shrivelled up into mummy, and covered with hair like Nebuchadnezzar!"

"Miserable varlet! Give thee my secret, give thee my fame, my life! Never! I scorn and spit at thy malice!"

The friar's face grew convulsed with rage. "Wretch!" he roared forth, "darest thou unslip thy hound-like malignity upon great Bungey? Knowest thou not that he could bid the walls open and close upon thee; that he could set yon serpents to coil round thy limbs, and yon lizard to gnaw out thine entrails? Despise not my mercy, and descend to plain sense. What good didst thou ever reap from thy engine? Why shouldst thou lose liberty—nay, life—if I will, for a thing that has cursed thee with man's horror and hate?"

"Art thou Christian and friar to ask me why? Were not Christians themselves hunted by wild beasts, and burned at the stake, and boiled in the caldron for their belief? Knave, whatever is holiest men ever persecute. Read thy Bible!"

"Read the Bible!" exclaimed Bungey, in pious horror at such a proposition. "Ah, blasphemer, now I have thee! Thou art a heretic and Lollard. Hollo, there!"

The friar stamped his foot, the door opened; but to his astonishment and dismay appeared, not the grim jailer, but the Duchess of Bedford herself, preceded by Nicholas Alwyn. "I told your Grace truly—see, lady!" cried the goldsmith. "Vile impostor, where hast thou hidden this wise man's daughter?"

The friar turned his dull, bead-like eyes in vacant consternation from Nicholas to Adam, from Adam to the duchess. "Sir friar," said Jacquetta, mildly—for she wished to conciliate the rival seers—"what means this over-zealous violation of law? Is it true, as Master Alwyn affirms, that thou hast stolen away and seducted this venerable sage and his daughter,—a maid I deemed worthy of a post in my own household?"

"Daughter and lady," said the friar, sullenly, "this ill faytor, I have reason to know, has been practising spells for Lord Warwick and the enemy. I did but summon him hither that my art might undo his charms; and as for his daughter, it seemed more merciful to let her attend him than to leave her alone and unfriended; specially," added the friar with a grin, "since the poor lord she hath witched is gone to the wars."

"It is true, then, wretch, that thou or thy caitiffs have dared to lay hands on a maiden of birth and blood!" exclaimed Alwyn. "Tremble!—see, here, the warrant signed by the king, offering a reward for thy detection, empowering me to give thee up to the laws. By Saint Dunstan, but for thy friar's frock, thou shouldst hang!"

"Tut, tut, Master Goldsmith," said the duchess, haughtily, "lower thy tone. This holy man is under my protection, and his fault was but over-zeal. What were this sage's devices and spells?"

"Marry," said the friar, "that is what your Grace just hindereth my knowing. But he cannot deny that he is a pestilent astrologer, and sends word to the rebels what hours are lucky or fatal for battle and assault."

"Ha!" said the duchess, "he is an astrologer! true, and came nearer to the alchemist's truth than any multiplier that ever served me! My own astrologer is just dead,—why died he at such a time? Peace, peace! be there peace between two so learned men. Forgive thy brother, Master Warner!" Adam had hitherto disdained all participation in this dialogue. In fact, he had returned to the Eureka, and was silently examining if any loss of the vital parts had occurred in its melancholy dismemberment. But now he turned

round and said, “Lady, leave the lore of the stars to their great Maker. I forgive this man, and thank your Grace for your justice. I claim these poor fragments, and crave your leave to suffer me to depart with my device and my child.”

“No, no!” said the duchess, seizing his hand. “Hist! whatever Lord Warwick paid thee, I will double. No time now for alchemy; but for the horoscope, it is the veriest season. I name thee my special astrologer.”

“Accept, accept,” whispered Alwyn; “for your daughter’s sake—for your own—nay, for the Eureka’s!”

Adam bowed his head, and groaned forth, “But I go not hence—no, not a foot—unless this goes with me. Cruel wretch, how he hath deformed it!”

“And now,” cried Alwyn, eagerly, “this wronged and unhappy maiden?”

“Go! be it thine to release and bring her to our presence, good Alwyn,” said the duchess; “she shall lodge with her father, and receive all honour. Follow me, Master Warner.”

No sooner, however, did the friar perceive that Alwyn had gone in search of the jailer, than he arrested the steps of the duchess, and said, with the air of a much-injured man,—

“May it please your Grace to remember that unless the greater magician have all power and aid in thwarting the lesser, the lesser can prevail; and therefore, if your Grace finds, when too late, that Lord Warwick’s or Lord Fitzhugh’s arms prosper, that woe and disaster befall the king, say not it was the fault of Friar Bungey! Such things may be. Nathless I shall still sweat and watch and toil; and if, despite your unhappy favour and encouragement to this hostile sorcerer, the king should beat his enemies, why, then, Friar Bungey is not so powerless as your Grace holds him. I have said—Porkey verbey!—Figilabo et conabo—et perspirabo—et hungerabo—pro vos et vestros, Amen!”

The duchess was struck by this eloquent appeal; but more and more convinced of the dread science of Adam by the evident apprehensions of the redoubted Bungey, and firmly persuaded that she could bribe or induce the former to turn a science that would otherwise be hostile into salutary account, she contented herself with a few words of conciliation and compliment, and summoning the attendants who had followed her, bade them take up the various members of the Eureka (for Adam clearly demonstrated that he would not depart without them) and conducted the philosopher to a lofty chamber, fitted up for the defunct astrologer.

Hither, in a short time, Alwyn had the happiness of leading Sibyll, and witnessing the delighted reunion of the child and father. And then, after he had learned the brief details of their abduction, he related how, baffled in all attempt to trace their clew, he had convinced himself that either the duchess or Bungey was the author of the snare, returned to the Tower, shown the king’s warrant, learned that an old man and a young female had indeed been admitted into the fortress, and hurried at once to the duchess, who, surprised at his narration and complaint, and anxious to regain the services of Warner, had accompanied him at once to the friar.

“And though,” added the goldsmith, “I could indeed procure you lodgings more welcome to ye elsewhere, yet it is well to win the friendship of the duchess, and royalty is ever an ill foe. How came ye to quit the palace?”

Sibyll changed countenance, and her father answered gravely, “We incurred the king’s displeasure, and the excuse was the popular hatred of me and the Eureka.”

"Heaven made the people, and the devil makes three-fourths of what is popular!" bluntly said the man of the middle class, ever against both extremes.

"And how," asked Sibyll, "how, honoured and true friend, didst thou obtain the king's warrant, and learn the snare into which we had fallen?"

This time it was Alwyn who changed countenance. He mused a moment, and then frankly answering, "Thou must thank Lord Hastings," gave the explanation already known to the reader.

But the grateful tears this relation called forth from Sibyll, her clasped hands, her evident emotion of delight and love, so pained poor Alwyn, that he rose abruptly and took his leave.

And now the Eureka was a luxury as peremptorily forbid to the astrologer as it had been to the alchemist! Again the true science was despised, and the false cultivated and honoured. Condemned to calculations which no man (however wise) in that age held altogether delusive, and which yet Adam Warner studied with very qualified belief, it happened by some of those coincidences, which have from time to time appeared to confirm the credulous in judicial astrology, that Adam's predictions became fulfilled. The duchess was prepared for the first tidings that Edward's foes fled before him. She was next prepared for the very day in which Warwick landed; and then her respect for the astrologer became strangely mingled with suspicion and terror, when she found that he proceeded to foretell but ominous and evil events; and when at last, still in corroboration of the unhappily too faithful horoscope, came the news of the king's flight, and the earl's march upon London, she fled to Friar Bungey in dismay. And Friar Bungey said,—

"Did I not warn you, daughter? Had you suffered me to—"

"True, true!" interrupted the duchess. "Now take, hang, rack, drown, or burn your horrible rival, if you will, but undo the charm, and save us from the earl!"

The friar's eyes twinkled, but to the first thought of spite and vengeance succeeded another: if he who had made the famous waxen effigies of the Earl of Warwick were now to be found guilty of some atrocious and positive violence upon Master Adam Warner, might not the earl be glad of so good an excuse to put an end to Himself?

"Daughter," said the friar, at that reflection, and shaking his head mysteriously and sadly, "daughter, it is too late."

The duchess in great despair flew to the queen. Hitherto she had concealed from her royal daughter the employment she had given to Adam; for Elizabeth, who had herself suffered from the popular belief in Jacquetta's sorceries, had of late earnestly besought her to lay aside all practices that could be called into question. Now, however, when she confessed to the agitated and distracted queen the retaining of Adam Warner, and his fatal predictions, Elizabeth, who, from discretion and pride, had carefully hidden from her mother (too vehement to keep a secret) that offence in the king, the memory of which had made Warner peculiarly obnoxious to him, exclaimed,—

"Unhappy mother, thou hast employed the very man my fated husband would the most carefully have banished from the palace, the very man who could blast his name."

The duchess was aghast and thunderstricken.

"If ever I forsake Friar Bungey again!" she muttered; "OH, THE GREAT MAN!"

But events which demand a detailed recital now rapidly pressing on, gave the duchess not even the time to seek further explanation of Elizabeth's words, much less to determine the doubt that rose in her enlightened mind whether Adam's spells might not be yet unravelled by the timely execution of the sorcerer!

CHAPTER IX. THE DELIBERATIONS OF MAYOR AND COUNCIL, WHILE LORD WARWICK MARCHES UPON LONDON.

It was a clear and bright day in the first week of October, 1470, when the various scouts employed by the mayor and council of London came back to the Guild, at which that worshipful corporation were assembled,—their steeds blown and jaded, themselves panting and breathless,—to announce the rapid march of the Earl of Warwick. The lord mayor of that year, Richard Lee, grocer and citizen, sat in the venerable hall in a huge leather chair, over which a pall of velvet had been thrown in haste, clad in his robes of state, and surrounded by his aldermen and the magnates of the city. To the personal love which the greater part of the body bore to the young and courteous king was added the terror which the corporation justly entertained of the Lancastrian faction. They remembered the dreadful excesses which Margaret had permitted to her army in the year 1461,—what time, to use the expression of the old historian, "the wealth of London looked pale;" and how grudgingly she had been restrained from condemning her revolted metropolis to the horrors of sack and pillage. And the bearing of this august representation of the trade and power of London was not, at the first, unworthy of the high influence it had obtained. The agitation and disorder of the hour had introduced into the assembly several of the more active and accredited citizens not of right belonging to it; but they sat, in silent discipline and order, on long benches beyond the table crowded by the corporate officers. Foremost among these, and remarkable by the firmness and intelligence of his countenance, and the earnest self-possession with which he listened to his seniors, was Nicholas Alwyn, summoned to the council from his great influence with the apprentices and younger freemen of the city.

As the last scout announced his news and was gravely dismissed, the lord mayor rose; and being, perhaps, a better educated man than many of the haughtiest barons, and having more at stake than most of them, his manner and language had a dignity and earnestness which might have reflected honour on the higher court of parliament.

"Brethren and citizens," he said, with the decided brevity of one who felt it no time for many words, "in two hours we shall hear the clarions of Lord Warwick at our gates; in two hours we shall be summoned to give entrance to an army assembled in the name of King Henry. I have done my duty,—I have manned the walls, I have marshalled what soldiers we can command, I have sent to the deputy-governor of the Tower—"

"And what answer gives he, my lord mayor?" interrupted Humfrey Heyford.

"None to depend upon. He answers that Edward IV., in abdicating the kingdom, has left him no power to resist; and that between force and force, king and king, might makes right."

A deep breath, like a groan, went through the assembly.

Up rose Master John Stokton, the mercer. He rose, trembling from limb to limb.

"Worshipful my lord mayor," said he, "it seems to me that our first duty is to look to our own selves!"

Despite the gravity of the emergence, a laugh burst forth, and was at once silenced at this frank avowal.

"Yes," continued the mercer, turning round, and striking the table with his fist, in the action of a nervous man—"yes; for King Edward has set us the example. A stout and a dauntless champion, whose whole youth has been war, King Edward has fled from the kingdom. King Edward takes care of himself,—it is our duty to do the same!"

Strange though it may seem, this homely selfishness went at once through the assembly like a flash of conviction. There was a burst of applause, and, as it ceased, the sullen explosion of a bombard (or cannon) from the city wall announced that the warder had caught the first glimpse of the approaching army.

Master Stokton started as if the shot had gone near to himself, and dropped at once into his seat, ejaculating, "The Lord have mercy upon us!" There was a pause of a moment, and then several of the corporation rose simultaneously. The mayor, preserving his dignity, fixed on the sheriff.

"Few words, my lord, and I have done," said Richard Gardyner—"there is no fighting without men. The troops at the Tower are not to be counted on. The populace are all with Lord Warwick, even though he brought the devil at his back. If you hold out, look to rape and plunder before sunset to-morrow. If ye yield, go forth in a body, and the earl is not the man to suffer one Englishman to be injured in life or health who once trusts to his good faith. My say is said."

"Worshipful my lord," said a thin, cadaverous alderman, who rose next, "this is a judgment of the Lord and His saints. The Lollards and heretics have been too much suffered to run at large, and the wrath of Heaven is upon us."

An impatient murmuring attested the unwillingness of the larger part of the audience to listen further; but an approving buzz from the elder citizens announced that the fanaticism was not without its favourers. Thus stimulated and encouraged, the orator continued; and concluded an harangue, interrupted more stormily than all that had preceded, by an exhortation to leave the city to its fate, and to march in a body to the New Prison, draw forth five suspected Lollards, and burn them at Smithfield, in order to appease the Almighty and divert the tempest!

This subject of controversy once started might have delayed the audience till the ragged staves of the Warwickers drove them forth from their hall, but for the sagacity and promptitude of the mayor.

"Brethren," he said, "it matters not to me whether the counsel suggested be good or bad, in the main; but this have I heard,—there is small safety in death-bed repentance. It is too late now to do, through fear of the devil, what we omitted to do through zeal for the Church. The sole question is, 'Fight or make terms.' Ye say we lack men; verily, yes, while no leaders are found! Walworth, my predecessor, saved London from Wat Tyler. Men were wanting then till the mayor and his fellow-citizens marched forth to Mile End. It may be the same now. Agree to fight, and we'll try it. What say you, Nicholas Alwyn?—you know the temper of our young men."

Thus called upon, Alwyn rose, and such was the good name he had already acquired, that every murmur hushed into eager silence.

"My lord mayor," he said, "there is a proverb in my country which says, 'Fish swim best that's bred in the sea;' which means, I take it, that men do best what they are trained for! Lord Warwick and his men are

trained for fighting. Few of the fish about London Bridge are bred in that sea. Cry, 'London to the rescue!'—put on hauberk and helm, and you will have crowns enough to crack around you. What follows?—Master Stokton hath said it: pillage and rape for the city, gibbet and cord for mayor and aldermen. Do I say this, loving the House of Lancaster? No; as Heaven shall judge me, I think that the policy King Edward hath chosen, and which costs him his crown to-day, ought to make the House of York dear to burgess and trader. He hath sought to break up the iron rule of the great barons,—and never peace to England till that be done. He has failed; but for a day. He has yielded for a time; so must we. 'There's a time to squint, and a time to look even.' I advise that we march out to the earl, that we make honourable terms for the city, that we take advantage of one faction to gain what we have not gained with the other; that we fight for our profit, not with swords, where we shall be worsted, but in council and parliament, by speech and petition. New power is ever gentle and douce. What matters to us York or Lancaster?—all we want is good laws. Get the best we can from Lancaster, and when King Edward returns, as return he will, let him bid higher than Henry for our love. Worshipful my lords and brethren, while barons and knaves go to loggerheads, honest men get their own. Time grows under us like grass. York and Lancaster may pull down each other,—and what is left? Why, three things that thrive in all weather,—London, industry; and the people! We have fallen on a rough time. Well, what says the proverb? 'Boil stones in butter, and you may sup the broth.' I have done."

This characteristic harangue, which was fortunate enough to accord with the selfishness of each one, and yet give the manly excuse of sound sense and wise policy to all, was the more decisive in its effect, inasmuch as the young Alwyn, from his own determined courage, and his avowed distaste to the Lancaster faction, had been expected to favour warlike counsels. The mayor himself, who was faithfully and personally attached to Edward, with a deep sigh gave way to the feeling of the assembly. And the resolution being once come to, Henry Lee was the first to give it whatever advantage could be derived from prompt and speedy action.

"Go we forth at once," said he,—"go, as becomes us, in our robes of state, and with the insignia of the city. Never be it said that the guardians of the city of London could neither defend with spirit, nor make terms with honour. We give entrance to Lord Warwick. Well, then, it must be our own free act. Come! Officers of our court, advance."

"Stay a bit, stay a bit," whispered Stokton, digging sharp claws into Alwyn's arm; "let them go first,—a word with you, cunning Nick,—a word."

Master Stokton, despite the tremor of his nerves, was a man of such wealth and substance, that Alwyn might well take the request, thus familiarly made, as a compliment not to be received discourteously; moreover, he had his own reasons for hanging back from a procession which his rank in the city did not require him to join.

While, therefore, the mayor and the other dignitaries left the hall with as much state and order as if not going to meet an invading army, but to join a holiday festival, Nicholas and Stokton lingered behind.

"Master Alwyn," said Stokton, then, with a sly wink of his eye, "you have this day done yourself great credit; you will rise, I have my eye on you! I have a daughter, I have a daughter! Aha! a lad like you may come to great things!"

"I am much bounden to you, Master Stokton," returned Alwyn, somewhat abstractedly; "but what's your will?"

"My will!—hum, I say, Nicholas, what's your advice? Quite right not to go to blows. Odds costards! that mayor is a very tiger! But don't you think it would be wiser not to join this procession? Edward IV., an'

he ever come back, has a long memory. He deals at my ware, too,—a good customer at a mercer's; and, Lord! how much money he owes the city!—hum!—I would not seem ungrateful."

"But if you go not out with the rest, there be other mercers who will have King Henry's countenance and favour; and it is easy to see that a new court will make vast consumption in mercery."

Master Stokton looked puzzled.

"That were a hugeous pity, good Nicholas; and, certes, there is Wat Smith, in Eastgate, who would cheat that good King Henry, poor man! which were a shame to the city; but, on the other hand, the Yorkists mostly pay on the nail (except King Edward, God save him!), and the Lancastrians are as poor as mice. Moreover, King Henry is a meek man, and does not avenge; King Edward, a hot and a stern man, and may call it treason to go with the Red Rose! I wish I knew how to decide! I have a daughter, an only daughter,—a buxom lass, and well dowered. I would I had a sharp son-in-law to advise me!"

"Master Stokton, in one word, then, he never goes far wrong who can run with the hare and hunt with the hounds. Good-day to you, I have business elsewhere."

So saying, Nicholas rather hastily shook off the mercer's quivering fingers, and hastened out of the hall.

"Verily," murmured the disconsolate Stokton, "run with the hare, quotha!—that is, go with King Edward; but hunt with the hounds,—that is, go with King Henry. Odds costards; it's not so easily done by a plain man not bred in the North. I'd best go—home, and do nothing!"

With that, musing and bewildered, the poor man sneaked out, and was soon lost amidst the murmuring, gathering, and swaying crowds, many amongst which were as much perplexed as himself.

In the mean while, with his cloak muffled carefully round his face, and with a long, stealthy, gliding stride, Alwyn made his way through the streets, gained the river, entered a boat in waiting for him, and arrived at last at the palace of the Tower.

CHAPTER X. THE TRIUMPHAL ENTRY OF THE EARL—THE ROYAL CAPTIVE IN THE TOWER—THE MEETING BETWEEN KING-MAKER AND KING.

All in the chambers of the metropolitan fortress exhibited the greatest confusion and dismay. The sentinels, it is true, were still at their posts, men-at-arms at the outworks, the bombards were loaded, the flag of Edward IV. still waved aloft from the battlements; but the officers of the fortress and the captains of its soldiery were, some assembled in the old hall, pale with fear, and wrangling with each other; some had fled, none knew whither; some had gone avowedly and openly to join the invading army.

Through this tumultuous and feeble force, Nicholas Alwyn was conducted by a single faithful servitor of the queen's (by whom he was expected); and one glance of his quick eye, as he passed along, convinced him of the justice of his counsels. He arrived at last, by a long and winding stair, at one of the loftiest chambers, in one of the loftiest towers, usually appropriated to the subordinate officers of the household.

And there, standing by the open casement, commanding some extended view of the noisy and crowded scene beyond, both on stream and land, he saw the queen of the fugitive monarch. By her side was the Lady Scrope, her most familiar friend and confidant, her three infant children, Elizabeth, Mary, and Cicely, grouped round her knees, playing with each other, and unconscious of the terrors of the times; and apart from the rest stood the Duchess of Bedford, conferring eagerly with Friar Bungey, whom she had summoned in haste, to know if his art could not yet prevail over enemies merely mortal.

The servitor announced Alwyn, and retired; the queen turned—"What news, Master Alwyn? Quick! What tidings from the lord mayor?"

"Gracious my queen and lady," said Alwyn, falling on his knees, "you have but one course to pursue. Below yon casement lies your barge, to the right see the round gray tower of Westminster Sanctuary; you have time yet, and but time!"

The old Duchess of Bedford turned her sharp, bright, gray eyes from the pale and trembling friar to the goldsmith, but was silent. The queen stood aghast. "Mean you," she faltered, at last, "that the city of London forsakes the king? Shame on the cravens!"

"Not cravens, my lady and queen," said Alwyn, rising. "He must have iron nails that scratches a bear,—and the white bear above all. The king has fled, the barons have fled, the soldiers have fled, the captains have fled,—the citizens of London alone fly not; but there is nothing save life and property left to guard."

"Is this thy boasted influence with the commons and youths of the city?"

"My humble influence, may it please your Grace (I say it now openly, and I will say it a year hence, when King Edward will hold his court in these halls once again), my influence, such as it is, has been used to save lives which resistance would waste in vain. Alack, alack! 'No gaping against an oven,' gracious lady! Your barge is below. Again I say there is yet time,—when the bell tolls the next hour that time will be past!"

"Then Jesu defend these children!" said Elizabeth, bending over her infants, and weeping bitterly; "I will go!"

"Hold!" said the Duchess of Bedford, "men desert us, but do the spirits also forsake us?—Speak, friar! canst thou yet do aught for us?—and if not, thinkest thou it is the right hour to yield and fly?"

"Daughter," said the friar, whose terror might have moved pity, "as I said before, thank yourself. This Warner, this—in short, the lesser magician hath been aided and cockered to countervail the greater, as I forewarned. Fly! run! fly! Verily and indeed it is the prosperest of all times to save ourselves; and the stars and the book and my familiar all call out, 'Off and away!'"

"'Fore heaven!" exclaimed Alwyn, who had hitherto been dumb with astonishment at this singular interlude, "sith he who hath shipped the devil must make the best of him, thou art for once an honest man and a wise counsellor. Hark! the second gun! The earl is at the gates of the city!"

The queen lingered no longer; she caught her youngest child in her arms; the Lady Scrope followed with the two others. "Come, follow, quick, Master Alwyn," said the duchess, who, now that she was compelled to abandon the world of prediction and soothsaying, became thoroughly the sagacious, plotting, ready woman of this life; "come, your face and name will be of service to us, an' we meet with obstruction."

Before Alwyn could reply, the door was thrown abruptly open, and several of the officers of the household rushed pell-mell into the royal presence.

“Gracious queen!” cried many voices at once, each with a different sentence of fear and warning, “fly! We cannot depend on the soldiers; the populace are up,—they shout for King Henry; Dr. Godard is preaching against you at St. Paul’s Cross; Sir Geoffrey Gates has come out of the sanctuary, and with him all the miscreants and outlaws; the mayor is now with the rebels! Fly! the sanctuary, the sanctuary!”

“And who amongst you is of highest rank?” asked the duchess, calmly; for Elizabeth, completely overwhelmed, seemed incapable of speech or movement.

“I, Giles de Malvoisin, knight banneret,” said an old warrior armed cap-a-pie, who had fought in France under the hero Talbot.

“Then, sir,” said the duchess, with majesty, “to your hands I confide the eldest daughter of your king. Lead on!—we follow you. Elizabeth, lean on me.”

With this, supporting Elizabeth, and leading her second grandchild, the duchess left the chamber.

The friar followed amidst the crowd, for well he knew that if the soldiers of Warwick once caught hold of him, he had fared about as happily as the fox amidst the dogs; and Alwyn, forgotten in the general confusion, hastened to Adam’s chamber.

The old man, blessing any cause that induced his patroness to dispense with his astrological labours and restored him to the care of his Eureka, was calmly and quietly employed in repairing the mischief effected by the bungling friar; and Sibyll, who at the first alarm had flown to his retreat, joyfully hailed the entrance of the friendly goldsmith.

Alwyn was indeed perplexed what to advise, for the principal sanctuary would, no doubt, be crowded by ruffians of the worst character; and the better lodgments which that place, a little town in itself, [the Sanctuary of Westminster was fortified] contained, be already preoccupied by the Yorkists of rank; and the smaller sanctuaries were still more liable to the same objection. Moreover, if Adam should be recognized by any of the rabble that would meet them by the way, his fate, by the summary malice of a mob, was certain. After all, the Tower would be free from the populace; and as soon as, by a few rapid questions, Alwyn learned from Sibyll that she had reason to hope her father would find protection with Lord Warwick, and called to mind that Marmaduke Nevile was necessarily in the earl’s train, he advised them to remain quiet and concealed in their apartments, and promised to see and provide for them the moment the Tower was yielded up to the new government.

The counsel suited both Sibyll and Warner. Indeed, the philosopher could not very easily have been induced to separate himself again from the beloved Eureka; and Sibyll was more occupied at that hour with thoughts and prayers for the beloved Hastings,—afar, a wanderer and an exile,—than with the turbulent events amidst which her lot was cast.

In the storms of a revolution which convulsed a kingdom and hurled to the dust a throne, Love saw but a single object, Science but its tranquil toil. Beyond the realm of men lies ever with its joy and sorrow, its vicissitude and change, the domain of the human heart. In the revolution, the toy of the scholar was restored to him; in the revolution, the maiden mourned her lover. In the movement of the mass, each unit hath its separate passion. The blast that rocks the trees shakes a different world in every leaf.

CHAPTER XI. THE TOWER IN COMMOTION.

On quitting the Tower, Alwyn regained the boat, and took his way to the city; and here, whatever credit that worthy and excellent personage may lose in certain eyes, his historian is bound to confess that his anxiety for Sibyll did not entirely distract his attention from interest or ambition. To become the head of his class, to rise to the first honours of his beloved city of London, had become to Nicholas Alwyn a hope and aspiration which made as much a part of his being as glory to a warrior, power to a king, a Eureka to a scholar; and, though more mechanically than with any sordid calculation or self-seeking, Nicholas Alwyn repaired to his ware in the Chepe. The streets, when he landed, already presented a different appearance from the disorder and tumult noticeable when he had before passed them. The citizens now had decided what course to adopt; and though the shops, or rather booths, were carefully closed, streamers of silk, cloth of arras and gold, were hung from the upper casements; the balconies were crowded with holiday gazers; the fickle populace (the same herd that had hooted the meek Henry when led to the Tower) were now shouting, “A Warwick!” “A Clarence!” and pouring throng after throng, to gaze upon the army, which, with the mayor and aldermen, had already entered the city. Having seen to the security of his costly goods, and praised his apprentices duly for their care of his interests, and their abstinence from joining the crowd, Nicholas then repaired to the upper story of his house, and set forth from his casements and balcony the richest stuffs he possessed. However, there was his own shrewd, sarcastic smile on his firm lips, as he said to his apprentices, “When these are done with, lay them carefully by against Edward of York’s re-entry.”

Meanwhile, preceded by trumpets, drums, and heralds, the Earl of Warwick and his royal son-in-law rode into the shouting city. Behind came the litter of the Duchess of Clarence, attended by the Earl of Oxford, Lord Fitzhugh, the Lords Stanley and Shrewsbury, Sir Robert de Lytton, and a princely cortege of knights, squires, and nobles; while, file upon file, rank upon rank, followed the long march of the unresisted armament.

Warwick, clad in complete armour of Milan steel,—save the helmet, which was borne behind him by his squire,—mounted on his own noble Saladin, preserved upon a countenance so well suited to command the admiration of a populace the same character as heretofore of manly majesty and lofty frankness. But to a nearer and more searching gaze than was likely to be bent upon him in such an hour, the dark, deep traces of care, anxiety, and passion might have been detected in the lines which now thickly intersected the forehead, once so smooth and furrowless; and his kingly eye, not looking, as of old, right forward as he moved, cast unquiet, searching glances about him and around, as he bowed his bare head from side to side of the welcoming thousands.

A far greater change, to outward appearance, was visible in the fair young face of the Duke of Clarence. His complexion, usually sanguine and blooming, like his elder brother’s, was now little less pale than that of Richard. A sullen, moody, discontented expression, which not all the heartiness of the greetings he received could dispel, contrasted forcibly with the good-humoured, laughing recklessness, which had once drawn a “God bless him!” from all on whom rested his light-blue joyous eye. He was unarmed, save by a corselet richly embossed with gold. His short manteline of crimson velvet, his hosen of white cloth laced with gold, and his low horseman’s boots of Spanish leather curiously carved and broidered, with long golden spurs; his plumed and jewelled cap; his white charger with housings enriched with pearls and blazing with cloth-of-gold; his broad collar of precious stones, with the order of St. George; his general’s truncheon raised aloft, and his Plantagenet banner borne by the herald over his royal head, caught the eyes of the crowd only the more to rivet them on an aspect ill fitting the triumph of a bloodless victory. At his left hand, where the breadth of the streets permitted, rode Henry Lee, the mayor, uttering no word, unless appealed to, and then answering but with chilling reverence and dry monosyllables.

A narrow winding in the streets, which left Warwick and Clarence alone side by side, gave the former the opportunity he had desired.

“How, prince and son,” he said in a hollow whisper, “is it with this brow of care that thou saddenest our conquest, and enterest the capital we gain without a blow?”

“By Saint George!” answered Clarence, sullenly, and in the same tone, “thinkest thou it chafes not the son of Richard of York, after such toils and bloodshed, to minister to the dethronement of his kin and the restoration of the foe of his race?”

“Thou shouldst have thought of that before,” returned Warwick, but with sadness and pity in the reproach.

“Ay, before Edward of Lancaster was made my lord and brother,” retorted Clarence, bitterly.

“Hush!” said the earl, “and calm thy brow. Not thus didst thou speak at Amboise; either thou wert then less frank or more generous. But regrets are vain: we have raised the whirlwind, and must rule it.”

And with that, in the action of a man who would escape his own thoughts, Warwick made his black steed demivolte; and the crowd shouted again the louder at the earl’s gallant horsemanship, and Clarence’s dazzling collar of jewels.

While thus the procession of the victors, the nominal object of all this mighty and sudden revolution—of this stir and uproar, of these shining arms and flaunting banners, of this heaven or hell in the deep passions of men—still remained in his prison-chamber of the Tower, a true type of the thing factions contend for; absent, insignificant, unheeded, and, save by a few of the leaders and fanatical priests, absolutely forgotten!

To this solitary chamber we are now transported; yet solitary is a word of doubtful propriety; for though the royal captive was alone, so far as the human species make up a man’s companionship and solace, though the faithful gentlemen, Manning, Bedle, and Allerton, had, on the news of Warwick’s landing, been thrust from his chamber, and were now in the ranks of his new and strange defenders, yet power and jealousy had not left his captivity all forsaken. There was still the starling in its cage, and the fat, asthmatic spaniel still wagged its tail at the sound of its master’s voice, or the rustle of his long gown. And still from the ivory crucifix gleamed the sad and holy face of the God, present alway, and who, by faith and patience, linketh evermore grief to joy,—but earth to heaven.

The august prisoner had not been so utterly cut off from all knowledge of the outer life as to be ignorant of some unwonted and important stir in the fortress and the city. The squire who had brought him his morning meal had been so agitated as to excite the captive’s attention, and had then owned that the Earl of Warwick had proclaimed Henry king, and was on his march to London. But neither the squire nor any of the officers of the Tower dared release the illustrious captive, or even remove him as yet to the state apartments vacated by Elizabeth. They knew not what might be the pleasure of the stout earl or the Duke of Clarence, and feared over-officiousness might be their worst crime. But naturally imagining that Henry’s first command, at the new position of things, might be for liberty, and perplexed whether to yield or refuse, they absented themselves from his summons, and left the whole tower in which he was placed actually deserted.

From his casement the king could see, however, the commotion, and the crowds upon the wharf and river, with the gleam of arms and banners; and hear the sounds of “A Warwick!” “A Clarence!” “Long live good Henry VI.!” A strange combination of names, which disturbed and amazed him much! But by degrees the unwonted excitement of perplexity and surprise settled back into the calm serenity of his most gentle mind and temper. That trust in an all-directing Providence, to which he had schooled himself, had (if we may so

say with reverence) driven his beautiful soul into the opposite error, so fatal to the affairs of life,—the error that deadens and benumbs the energy of free will and the noble alertness of active duty. Why strain and strive for the things of this world? God would order all for the best. Alas! God hath placed us in this world, each, from king to peasant, with nerves and hearts and blood and passions to struggle with our kind; and, no matter how heavenly the goal, to labour with the million in the race!

"Forsooth," murmured the king, as, his hands clasped behind him, he paced slowly to and fro the floor, "this ill world seemeth but a feather, blown about by the winds, and never to be at rest. Hark! Warwick and King Henry,—the lion and the lamb! Alack, and we are fallen on no Paradise, where such union were not a miracle! Foolish bird!"—and with a pitying smile upon that face whose holy sweetness might have disarmed a fiend, he paused before the cage and contemplated his fellow-captive—"foolish bird, the uneasiness and turmoil without have reached even to thee. Thou beatest thy wings against the wires, thou turnest thy bright eyes to mine restlessly. Why? Pantest thou to be free, silly one, that the hawk may swoop on its defenceless prey? Better, perhaps, the cage for thee, and the prison for thy master. Well, out if thou wilt! Here at least thou art safe!" and opening the cage, the starling flew to his bosom, and nestled there, with its small clear voice mimicking the human sound,—

"Poor Henry, poor Henry! Wicked men, poor Henry!"

The king bowed his meek head over his favourite, and the fat spaniel, jealous of the monopolized caress, came waddling towards its master, with a fond whine, and looked up at him with eyes that expressed more of faith and love than Edward of York, the ever wooing and ever wooed, had read in the gaze of woman.

With those companions, and with thoughts growing more and more composed and rapt from all that had roused and vexed his interest in the forenoon, Henry remained till the hour had long passed for his evening meal. Surprised at last by a negligence which (to do his jailers justice) had never before occurred, and finding no response to his hand-bell, no attendant in the anteroom, the outer doors locked as usual, but the sentinel's tread in the court below hushed and still, a cold thrill for a moment shot through his blood.—"Was he left for hunger to do its silent work?" Slowly he bent his way from the outer rooms back to his chamber; and, as he passed the casement again, he heard, though far in the distance, through the dim air of the deepening twilight, the cry of "Long live King Henry!"

This devotion without, this neglect within, was a wondrous contrast! Meanwhile the spaniel, with that instinct of fidelity which divines the wants of the master, had moved snuffling and smelling round and round the chambers, till it stopped and scratched at a cupboard in the anteroom, and then with a joyful bark flew back to the king, and taking the hem of his gown between its teeth, led him towards the spot it had discovered; and there, in truth, a few of those small cakes, usually served up for the night's livery, had been carelessly left. They sufficed for the day's food, and the king, the dog, and the starling shared them peacefully together. This done, Henry carefully replaced his bird in its cage, bade the dog creep to the hearth and lie still; passed on to his little oratory, with the relics of cross and saint strewed around the solemn image,—and in prayer forgot the world! Meanwhile darkness set in: the streets had grown deserted, save where in some nooks and by-lanes gathered groups of the soldiery; but for the most part the discipline in which Warwick held his army had dismissed those stern loiterers to the various quarters provided for them, and little remained to remind the peaceful citizens that a throne had been uprooted, and a revolution consummated, that eventful day.

It was at this time that a tall man, closely wrapped in his large horseman's cloak, passed alone through the streets and gained the Tower. At the sound of his voice by the great gate, the sentinel started in alarm; a few moments more, and all left to guard the fortress were gathered round him. From these he singled out one of the squires who usually attended Henry, and bade him light his steps to the king's chamber. As in that chamber Henry rose from his knees, he saw the broad red light of a torch flickering under the chinks of the threshold; he heard the slow tread of approaching footsteps; the spaniel uttered a low growl, its eyes

sparkling; the door opened, and the torch borne behind by the squire, and raised aloft so that its glare threw a broad light over the whole chamber, brought into full view the dark and haughty countenance of the Earl of Warwick.

The squire, at a gesture from the earl, lighted the sconces on the wall, the tapers on the table, and quickly vanished. King-maker and king were alone! At the first sight of Warwick, Henry had turned pale, and receded a few paces, with one hand uplifted in adjuration or command, while with the other he veiled his eyes,—whether that this startled movement came from the weakness of bodily nerves, much shattered by sickness and confinement, or from the sudden emotions called forth by the aspect of one who had wrought him calamities so dire. But the craven's terror in the presence of a living foe was, with all his meekness, all his holy abhorrence of wrath and warfare, as unknown to that royal heart as to the high blood of his hero-sire. And so, after a brief pause, and a thought that took the shape of prayer, not for safety from peril, but for grace to forgive the past, Henry VI. advanced to Warwick, who still stood dumb by the threshold, combating with his own mingled and turbulent emotions of pride and shame, and said, in a voice majestic even from its very mildness,—

"What tale of new woe and evil hath the Earl of Salisbury and Warwick come to announce to the poor captive who was once a king?"

"Forgive me! Forgiveness, Henry, my lord,—forgiveness!" exclaimed Warwick, falling on his knee. The meek reproach; the touching words; the mien and visage altered, since last beheld, from manhood into age; the gray hairs and bended form of the king, went at once to that proud heart; and as the earl bent over the wan, thin hand resigned to his lips, a tear upon its surface out-sparkled all the jewels that it wore.

"Yet no," continued the earl (impatient, as proud men are, to hurry from repentance to atonement, for the one is of humiliation and the other of pride),—"yet no, my liege, not now do I crave thy pardon. No; but when begirt, in the halls of thine ancestors, with the peers of England, the victorious banner of Saint George waving above the throne which thy servant hath rebuilt,—then, when the trumpets are sounding thy rights without the answer of a foe; then, when from shore to shore of fair England the shout of thy people echoes to the vault of heaven,—then will Warwick kneel again to King Henry, and sue for the pardon he hath not ignobly won!

"Alack, sir," said the king, with accents of mournful yet half-reproving kindness, "it was not amidst trump and banners that the Son of God set mankind the exemplar and pattern of charity to foes. When thy hand struck the spurs from my heel, when thou didst parade me through the booting crowd to this solitary cell, then, Warwick, I forgave thee, and prayed to Heaven for pardon for thee, if thou didst wrong me,—for myself, if a king's fault had deserved a subject's harshness. Rise, Sir Earl; our God is a jealous God, and the attitude of worship is for Him alone."

Warwick rose from his knee; and the king, perceiving and compassionating the struggle which shook the strong man's breast, laid his hand on the earl's shoulder, and said, "Peace be with thee!—thou hast done me no real harm. I have been as happy in these walls as in the green parks of Windsor; happier than in the halls of state or in the midst of wrangling armies. What tidings now?"

"My liege, is it possible that you know not that Edward is a fugitive and a beggar, and that Heaven hath permitted me to avenge at once your injuries and my own? This day, without a blow, I have regained your city of London; its streets are manned with my army. From the council of peers and warriors and prelates assembled at my house, I have stolen hither alone and in secret, that I might be the first to hail your Grace's restoration to the throne of Henry V."

The king's face so little changed at this intelligence, that its calm sadness almost enraged the impetuous Warwick, and with difficulty he restrained from giving utterance to the thought, "He is not worthy of a throne who cares so little to possess it!"

"Well-a-day!" said Henry, sighing, "Heaven then hath sore trials yet in store for mine old age! Tray, Tray!" and stooping, he gently patted his dog, who kept watch at his feet, still glaring suspiciously at Warwick, "we are both too old for the chase now!—Will you be seated, my lord?"

"Trust me," said the earl, as he obeyed the command, having first set chair and footstool for the king, who listened to him with downcast eyes and his head drooping on his bosom—"trust me, your later days, my liege, will be free from the storms of your youth. All chance of Edward's hostility is expired. Your alliance, though I seem boastful so to speak,—your alliance with one in whom the people can confide for some skill in war, and some more profound experience of the habits and tempers of your subjects than your former councillors could possess, will leave your honoured leisure free for the holy meditations it affects; and your glory, as your safety, shall be the care of men who can awe this rebellious world."

"Alliance!" said the king, who had caught but that one word; "of what speakest thou, Sir Earl?"

"These missives will explain all, my liege; this letter from my lady the Queen Margaret, and this from your gracious son, the Prince of Wales."

"Edward! my Edward!" exclaimed the king, with a father's burst of emotion. "Thou hast seen him, then,—bears he his health well, is he of cheer and heart?"

"He is strong and fair, and full of promise, and brave as his grandsire's sword."

"And knows he—knows he well—that we all are the potter's clay in the hands of God?"

"My liege," said Warwick, embarrassed, "he has as much devotion as befits a Christian knight and a goodly prince."

"Ah," sighed the king, "ye men of arms have strange thoughts on these matters;" and cutting the silk of the letters, he turned from the warrior. Shading his face with his hand, the earl darted his keen glance on the features of the king, as, drawing near to the table, the latter read the communications which announced his new connection with his ancient foe.

But Henry was at first so affected by the sight of Margaret's well-known hand, that he thrice put down her letter and wiped the moisture from his eyes.

"My poor Margaret, how thou hast suffered!" he murmured; "these very characters are less firm and bold than they were. Well, well!" and at last he betook himself resolutely to the task. Once or twice his countenance changed, and he uttered an exclamation of surprise. But the proposition of a marriage between Prince Edward and the Lady Anne did not revolt his forgiving mind, as it had the haughty and stern temper of his consort. And when he had concluded his son's epistle, full of the ardour of his love and the spirit of his youth, the king passed his left hand over his brow, and then extending his right to Warwick, said, in accents which trembled with emotion, "Serve my son, since he is thine, too; give peace to this distracted kingdom, repair my errors, press not hard upon those who contend against us, and Jesu and His saints will bless this bond!"

The earl's object, perhaps, in seeking a meeting with Henry so private and unwitnessed, had been that none, not even his brother, might hearken to the reproaches he anticipated to receive, or say hereafter that he heard Warwick, returned as victor and avenger to his native land, descend, in the hour of triumph, to

extenuation and excuse. So affronted, imperilled, or to use his own strong word, “so despaired,” had he been in the former rule of Henry, that his intellect, which, however vigorous in his calmer moods, was liable to be obscured and dulled by his passions, had half confounded the gentle king with his ferocious wife and stern councillors, and he had thought he never could have humbled himself to the man, even so far as knighthood’s submission to Margaret’s sex had allowed him to the woman. But the sweetness of Henry’s manners and disposition, the saint-like dignity which he had manifested throughout this painful interview, and the touching grace and trustful generosity of his last words,—words which consummated the earl’s large projects of ambition and revenge,—had that effect upon Warwick which the preaching of some holy man, dwelling upon the patient sanctity of the Saviour, had of old on a grim Crusader, all incapable himself of practising such meek excellence, and yet all moved and penetrated by its loveliness in another; and, like such Crusader, the representation of all mildest and most forgiving singularly stirred up in the warrior’s mind images precisely the reverse,—images of armed valour and stern vindication, as if where the Cross was planted sprang from the earth the standard and the war-horse!

“Perish your foes! May war and storm scatter them as the chaff! My liege, my royal master,” continued the earl, in a deep, low, faltering voice, “why knew I not thy holy and princely heart before? Why stood so many between Warwick’s devotion and a king so worthy to command it? How poor, beside thy great-hearted fortitude and thy Christian heroism, seems the savage valour of false Edward! Shame upon one who can betray the trust thou hast placed in him! Never will I!—Never! I swear it! No! though all England desert thee, I will stand alone with my breast of mail before thy throne! Oh, would that my triumph had been less peaceful and less bloodless! would that a hundred battlefields were yet left to prove how deeply—deeply in his heart of hearts—Warwick feels the forgiveness of his king!”

“Not so, not so, not so! not battlefields, Warwick!” said Henry. “Ask not to serve the king by shedding one subject’s blood.”

“Your pious will be obeyed!” replied Warwick. “We will see if mercy can effect in others what thy pardon effects in me. And now, my liege, no longer must these walls confine thee. The chambers of the palace await their sovereign. What ho, there!” and going to the door he threw it open, and agreeably to the orders he had given below, all the officers left in the fortress stood crowded together in the small anteroom, bareheaded, with tapers in their hands, to conduct the monarch to the halls of his conquered foe.

At the sudden sight of the earl, these men, struck involuntarily and at once by the grandeur of his person and his animated aspect, burst forth with the rude retainer’s cry, “A Warwick! a Warwick!”

“Silence!” thundered the earl’s deep voice. “Who names the subject in the sovereign’s presence? Behold your king!” The men, abashed by the reproof, bowed their heads and sank on their knees, as Warwick took a taper from the table, to lead the way from the prison.

Then Henry turned slowly, and gazed with a lingering eye upon the walls which even sorrow and solitude had endeared. The little oratory, the crucifix, the relics, the embers burning low on the hearth, the rude time-piece,—all took to his thoughtful eye an almost human aspect of melancholy and omen; and the bird, roused, whether by the glare of the lights, or the recent shout of the men, opened its bright eyes, and fluttering restlessly to and fro, shrilled out its favourite sentence, “Poor Henry! poor Henry!—wicked men!—who would be a king?”

“Thou hearest it, Warwick?” said Henry, shaking his head.

“Could an eagle speak, it would have another cry than the starling,” returned the earl, with a proud smile.

“Why, look you,” said the king, once more releasing the bird, which settled on his wrist, “the eagle had broken his heart in the narrow cage, the eagle had been no comforter for a captive; it is these gentler ones

that love and soothe us best in our adversities. Tray, Tray, fawn not now, sirrah, or I shall think thou hast been false in thy fondness heretofore! Cousin, I attend you."

And with his bird on his wrist, his dog at his heels, Henry VI. followed the earl to the illuminated hall of Edward, where the table was spread for the royal repast, and where his old friends, Manning, Bedle, and Allerton, stood weeping for joy; while from the gallery raised aloft, the musicians gave forth the rough and stirring melody which had gradually fallen out of usage, but which was once the Norman's national air, and which the warlike Margaret of Anjou had retaught her minstrels,—"THE BATTLE HYMN OF ROLLO."

BOOK XI. THE NEW POSITION OF THE KING-MAKER

CHAPTER I. WHEREIN MASTER ADAM WARNER IS NOTABLY COMMENDED AND ADVANCED—AND GREATNESS SAYS TO WISDOM, "THY DESTINY BE MINE, AMEN."

The Chronicles inform us, that two or three days after the entrance of Warwick and Clarence,—namely, on the 6th of October,—those two leaders, accompanied by the Lords Shrewsbury, Stanley, and a numerous and noble train, visited the Tower in formal state, and escorted the king, robed in blue velvet, the crown on his head, to public thanksgivings at St. Paul's, and thence to the Bishop's Palace, [not to the Palace at Westminster, as some historians, preferring the French to the English authorities, have asserted,—that palace was out of repair] where he continued chiefly to reside.

The proclamation that announced the change of dynasty was received with apparent acquiescence through the length and breadth of the kingdom, and the restoration of the Lancastrian line seemed yet the more firm and solid by the magnanimous forbearance of Warwick and his councils. Not one execution that could be termed the act of a private revenge stained with blood the second reign of the peaceful Henry. One only head fell on the scaffold,—that of the Earl of Worcester. [Lord Warwick himself did not sit in judgment on Worcester. He was tried and condemned by Lord Oxford. Though some old offences in his Irish government were alleged against him, the cruelties which rendered him so odious were of recent date. He had (as we before took occasion to relate) impaled twenty persons after Warwick's flight into France. The "Warkworth Chronicle" says, "He was ever afterwardes greatly behated among the people for this disordynate dethe that he used, contrary to the laws of the lande."] This solitary execution, which was regarded by all classes as a due concession to justice, only yet more illustrated the general mildness of the new rule.

It was in the earliest days of this sudden restoration that Alwyn found the occasion to serve his friends in the Tower. Warwick was eager to conciliate all the citizens, who, whether frankly or grudgingly, had supported his cause; and, amongst these, he was soon informed of the part taken in the Guildhall by the rising goldsmith. He sent for Alwyn to his house in Warwick-lane, and after complimenting him on his

advance in life and repute, since Nicholas had waited on him with baubles for his embassy to France, he offered him the special rank of goldsmith to the king.

The wary, yet honest, trader paused a moment in some embarrassment before he answered,—

"My good lord, you are noble and gracious eno' to understand and forgive me when I say that I have had, in the upstart of my fortunes, the countenance of the late King Edward and his queen; and though the public weal made me advise my fellow-citizens not to resist your entry, I would not, at least, have it said that my desertion had benefited my private fortunes."

Warwick coloured, and his lip curled. "Tush, man, assume not virtues which do not exist amongst the sons of trade, nor, much I trow, amongst the sons of Adam. I read thy mind. Thou thinkest it unsafe openly to commit thyself to the new state. Fear not,—we are firm."

"Nay, my lord," returned Alwyn, "it is not so. But there are many better citizens than I, who remember that the Yorkists were ever friends to commerce. And you will find that only by great tenderness to our crafts you can win the heart of London, though you have passed its gates."

"I shall be just to all men," answered the earl, dryly; "but if the flat-caps are false, there are eno' of bonnets of steel to watch over the Red Rose!"

"You are said, my lord," returned Alwyn, bluntly, "to love the barons, the knights, the gentry, the yeomen, and the peasants, but to despise the traders,—I fear me that report in this is true."

"I love not the trader spirit, man,—the spirit that cheats, and cringes, and haggles, and splits straws for pence, and roasts eggs by other men's blazing rafters. Edward of York, forsooth, was a great trader! It was a sorry hour for England when such as ye, Nick Alwyn, left your green villages for loom and booth. But thus far have I spoken to you as a brave fellow, and of the north countree. I have no time to waste on words. Wilt thou accept mine offer, or name another boon in my power? The man who hath served me wrongs me,—till I have served him again!"

"My lord, yes; I will name such a boon,—safety, and, if you will, some grace and honour, to a learned scholar now in the Tower, one Adam Warner, whom—"

"Now in the Tower! Adam Warner! And wanting a friend, I no more an exile! That is my affair, not thine. Grace, honour,—ay, to his heart's content. And his noble daughter? Mort Dieu! she shall choose her bridegroom among the best of England. Is she, too, in the fortress?"

"Yes," said Alwyn, briefly, not liking the last part of the earl's speech.

The earl rang the bell on his table. "Send hither Sir Marmaduke Nevile."

Alwyn saw his former rival enter, and heard the earl commission him to accompany, with a fitting train, his own litter to the Tower. "And you, Alwyn, go with your foster-brother, and pray Master Warner and his daughter to be my guests for their own pleasure. Come hither, my rude Northman,—come. I see I shall have many secret foes in this city: wilt not thou at least be Warwick's open friend?"

Alwyn found it hard to resist the charm of the earl's manner and voice; but, convinced in his own mind that the age was against Warwick, and that commerce and London would be little advantaged by the earl's rule, the trading spirit prevailed in his breast.

"Gracious my lord," he said, bending his knee in no servile homage, "he who befriends my order, commands me."

The proud noble bit his lip, and with a silent wave of his hand dismissed the foster-brothers.

"Thou art but a churl at best, Nick," said Marmaduke, as the door closed on the young men. "Many a baron would have sold his father's hall for such words from the earl's lip."

"Let barons sell their free conduct for fair words. I keep myself unshackled to join that cause which best fills the market and reforms the law. But tell me, I pray thee, Sir Knight, what makes Warner and his daughter so dear to your lord?"

"What! know you not?—and has she not told you?—Ah, what was I about to say?"

"Can there be a secret between the earl and the scholar?" asked Alwyn, in wonder.

"If there be, it is our place to respect it," returned the Nevile, adjusting his manteline; "and now we must command the litter."

In spite of all the more urgent and harassing affairs that pressed upon him, the earl found an early time to attend to his guests. His welcome to Sibyll was more than courteous,—it was paternal. As she approached him, timidly and with a downcast eye, he advanced, placed his hand upon her head,—

"The Holy Mother ever have thee in her charge, child!—This is a father's kiss, young mistress," added the earl, pressing his lips to her forehead; "and in this kiss, remember that I pledge to thee care for thy fortunes, honour for thy name, my heart to do thee service, my arm to shield from wrong! Brave scholar, thy lot has become interwoven with my own. Prosperous is now my destiny,—my destiny be thine! Amen!"

He turned then to Warner, and without further reference to a past which so galled his proud spirit, he made the scholar explain to him the nature of his labours. In the mind of every man who has passed much of his life in successful action, there is a certain, if we may so say, untaught mathesis,—but especially among those who have been bred to the art of war. A great soldier is a great mechanic, a great mathematician, though he may know it not; and Warwick, therefore, better than many a scholar comprehended the principle upon which Adam founded his experiments. But though he caught also a glimpse of the vast results which such experiments in themselves were calculated to effect, his strong common-sense perceived yet more clearly that the time was not ripe for such startling inventions.

"My friend," he said, "I comprehend thee passably. It is clear to me, that if thou canst succeed in making the elements do the work of man with equal precision, but with far greater force and rapidity, thou must multiply eventually, and, by multiplying, cheapen, all the products of industry; that thou must give to this country the market of the world; and that thine would be the true alchemy that turneth all to gold."

"Mighty intellect, thou graspest the truth!" exclaimed Adam.

"But," pursued the earl, with a mixture of prejudice and judgment, "grant thee success to the full, and thou wouldst turn this bold land of yeomanry and manhood into one community of griping traders and sickly artisans. Mort Dieu! we are over-commerced as it is,—the bow is already deserted for the ell-measure. The town populations are ever the most worthless in war. England is begirt with mailed foes; and if by one process she were to accumulate treasure and lose soldiers, she would but tempt invasion and emasculate defenders. Verily, I avise and implore thee to turn thy wit and scholarship to a manlier occupation!"

"My life knows no other object; kill my labour and thou destroyest me," said Adam, in a voice of gloomy despair. Alas, it seemed that, whatever the changes of power, no change could better the hopes of science in an age of iron! Warwick was moved. "Well," he said, after a pause, "be happy in thine own way. I will do my best at least to protect thee. To-morrow resume thy labours; but this day, at least, thou must feast with me."

And at his banquet that day, among the knights and barons, and the abbots and the warriors, Adam sat on the dais near the earl, and Sibyll at "the mess" of the ladies of the Duchess of Clarence. And ere the feast broke up, Warwick thus addressed his company:—

"My friends, though I, and most of us reared in the lap of war, have little other clerkship than sufficed our bold fathers before us, yet in the free towns of Italy and the Rhine,—yea, and in France, under her politic king,—we may see that a day is dawning wherein new knowledge will teach many marvels to our wiser sons. Wherefore it is good that a State should foster men who devote laborious nights and weary days to the advancement of arts and letters, for the glory of our common land. A worthy gentleman, now at this board, hath deeply meditated contrivances which may make our English artisans excel the Flemish loons, who now fatten upon our industry to the impoverishment of the realm. And, above all, he also purposes to complete an invention which may render our ship-craft the most notable in Europe. Of this I say no more at present; but I commend our guest, Master Adam Warner, to your good service, and pray you especially, worshipful sirs of the Church now present, to shield his good name from that charge which most paineth and endangereth honest men. For ye wot well that the commons, from ignorance, would impute all to witchcraft that passeth their understanding. Not," added the earl, crossing himself, "that witchcraft does not horribly infect the land, and hath been largely practised by Jacquetta of Bedford, and her confederates, Bungey and others. But our cause needeth no such aid; and all that Master Warner purposes is in behalf of the people, and in conformity with Holy Church. So this wassail to his health and House."

This characteristic address being received with respect, though with less applause than usually greeted the speeches of the great earl, Warwick added, in a softer and more earnest tone, "And in the fair demoiselle, his daughter, I pray you to acknowledge the dear friend of my beloved lady and child, Anne, Princess of Wales; and for the sake of her highness and in her name, I arrogate to myself a share with Master Warner in this young donzell's guardianship and charge. Know ye, my gallant gentles and fair squires, that he who can succeed in achieving, either by leal love or by bold deeds, as best befit a wooer, the grace of my young ward, shall claim from my hands a knight's fee, with as much of my best land as a bull's hide can cover; and when heaven shall grant safe passage to the Princess Anne and her noble spouse, we will hold at Smithfield a tourney in honor of Saint George and our ladies, wherein, pardie, I myself would be sorely tempted to provoke my jealous countess, and break a lance for the fame of the demoiselle whose fair face is married to a noble heart."

That evening, in the galliard, many an admiring eye turned to Sibyll, and many a young gallant, recalling the earl's words, sighed to win her grace. There had been a time when such honour and such homage would have, indeed, been welcome; but now ONE saw them not, and they were valueless. All that, in her earlier girlhood, Sibyll's ambition had coveted, when musing on the brilliant world, seemed now well-nigh fulfilled,—her father protected by the first noble of the land, and that not with the degrading condescension of the Duchess of Bedford, but as Power alone should protect Genius, honoured while it honours; her gentle birth recognized; her position elevated; fair fortunes smiling after such rude trials; and all won without servility or abasement. But her ambition having once exhausted itself in a diviner passion, all excitement seemed poor and spiritless compared to the lonely waiting at the humble farm for the voice and step of Hastings. Nay, but for her father's sake, she could almost have loathed the pleasure and the pomp, and the admiration and the homage, which seemed to insult the reverses of the wandering exile.

The earl had designed to place Sibyll among Isabel's ladies, but the haughty air of the duchess chilled the poor girl; and pleading the excuse that her father's health required her constant attendance, she prayed

permission to rest with Warner wherever he might be lodged. Adam himself, now that the Duchess of Bedford and Friar Bungey were no longer in the Tower, entreated permission to return to the place where he had worked the most successfully upon the beloved Eureka; and, as the Tower seemed a safer residence than any private home could be, from popular prejudice and assault, Warwick kindly offered apartments, far more commodious than they had yet occupied, to be appropriated to the father and daughter. Several attendants were assigned to them, and never was man of letters or science more honoured now than the poor scholar who, till then, had been so persecuted and despised.

Who shall tell Adam's serene delight? Alchemy and astrology at rest, no imperious duchess, no hateful Bungey, his free mind left to its congenial labours! And Sibyll, when they met, strove to wear a cheerful brow, praying him only never to speak to her of Hastings. The good old man, relapsing into his wonted mechanical existence, hoped she had forgotten a girl's evanescent fancy.

But the peculiar distinction showed by the earl to Warner confirmed the reports circulated by Bungey,—"that he was, indeed, a fearful nigromancer, who had much helped the earl in his emprise." The earl's address to his guests in behalf both of Warner and Sibyll, the high state accorded to the student, reached even the Sanctuary; for the fugitives there easily contrived to learn all the gossip of the city. Judge of the effect the tale produced upon the envious Bungey! judge of the representations it enabled him to make to the credulous duchess! It was clear now to Jacquetta as the sun in noonday that Warwick rewarded the evil-predicting astrologer for much dark and secret service, which Bungey, had she listened to him, might have frustrated; and she promised the friar that, if ever again she had the power, Warner and the Eureka should be placed at his sole mercy and discretion.

The friar himself, however, growing very weary of the dulness of the Sanctuary, and covetous of the advantages enjoyed by Adam, began to meditate acquiescence in the fashion of the day, and a transfer of his allegiance to the party in power. Emboldened by the clemency of the victors, learning that no rewards for his own apprehension had been offered, hoping that the stout earl would forget or forgive the old offence of the waxen effigies, and aware of the comparative security his friar's gown and cowl afforded him, he resolved one day to venture forth from his retreat. He even flattered himself that he could cajole Adam—whom he really believed the possessor of some high and weird secrets, but whom otherwise he despised as a very weak creature—into forgiving his past brutalities, and soliciting the earl to take him into favour.

At dusk, then, and by the aid of one of the subalterns of the Tower, whom he had formerly made his friend, the friar got admittance into Warner's chamber. Now it so chanced that Adam, having his own superstitions, had lately taken it into his head that all the various disasters which had befallen the Eureka, together with all the little blemishes and defects that yet marred its construction, were owing to the want of the diamond bathed in the mystic moonbeams, which his German authority had long so emphatically prescribed; and now that a monthly stipend far exceeding his wants was at his disposal, and that it became him to do all possible honour to the earl's patronage, he resolved that the diamond should be no longer absent from the operations it was to influence. He obtained one of passable size and sparkle, exposed it the due number of nights to the new moon, and had already prepared its place in the Eureka, and was contemplating it with solemn joy, when Bungey entered.

"Mighty brother," said the friar, bowing to the ground, "be merciful as thou art strong! Verily thou hast proved thyself the magician, and I but a poor wretch in comparison,—for lo! thou art rich and honoured, and I poor and proscribed. Deign to forgive thine enemy, and take him as thy slave by right of conquest. Oh, Cogsbones! oh, Gemini! what a jewel thou hast got!"

"Depart! thou disturbest me," said Adam, oblivious, in his absorption, of the exact reasons for his repugnance, but feeling indistinctly that something very loathsome and hateful was at his elbow; and, as he spoke, he fitted the diamond into its socket.

“What! a jewel, a diamond—in the—in the—in the—MECHANICAL!” faltered the friar, in profound astonishment, his mouth watering at the sight. If the Eureka were to be envied before, how much more enviable now. “If ever I get thee again, O ugly talisman,” he muttered to himself, “I shall know where to look for something better than a pot to boil eggs.”

“Depart, I say!” repeated Adam, turning round at last, and shuddering as he now clearly recognized the friar, and recalled his malignity. “Darest thou molest me still?”

The friar abjectly fell on his knees, and, after a long exordium of penitent excuses, entreated the scholar to intercede in his favour with the earl.

“I want not all thy honours and advancement, great Adam, I want only to serve thee, trim thy furnace, and hand thee thy tools, and work out my apprenticeship under thee, master. As for the earl, he will listen to thee, I know, if thou tellest him that I had the trust of his foe, the duchess; that I can give him all her closest secrets; that I—”

“Avaunt! Thou art worse than I deemed thee, wretch! Cruel and ignorant I knew thee,—and now mean and perfidious! I work with thee! I commend to the earl a living disgrace to the name of scholar! Never! If thou wantest bread and alms, those I can give, as a Christian gives to want; but trust and honour, and learned repute and noble toils, those are not for the impostor and the traitor. There, there, there!” And he ran to the closet, took out a handful of small coins, thrust them into the friar’s hands, and, pushing him to the door, called to the servants to see his visitor to the gates. The friar turned round with a scowl. He did not dare to utter a threat, but he vowed a vow in his soul, and went his way.

It chanced, some days after this, that Adam, in one of his musing rambles about the precincts of the Tower, which (since it was not then inhabited as a palace) was all free to his rare and desultory wanderings, came by some workmen employed in repairing a bombard; and as whatever was of mechanical art always woke his interest, he paused, and pointed out to them a very simple improvement which would necessarily tend to make the balls go farther and more direct to their object. The principal workman, struck with his remarks, ran to one of the officers of the Tower; the officer came to listen to the learned man, and then went to the earl of Warwick to declare that Master Warner had the most wonderful comprehension of military mechanism. The earl sent for Warner, seized at once upon the very simple truth he suggested as to the proper width of the bore, and holding him in higher esteem than he had ever done before, placed some new cannon he was constructing under his superintendence. As this care occupied but little of his time, Warner was glad to show gratitude to the earl, looking upon the destructive engines as mechanical contrivances, and wholly unconscious of the new terror he gave to his name.

Soon did the indignant and conscience-stricken Duchess of Bedford hear, in the Sanctuary, that the fell wizard she had saved from the clutches of Bungey was preparing the most dreadful, infallible, and murtherous instruments of war against the possible return of her son-in-law!

Leaving Adam to his dreams, and his toils, and his horrible reputation, we return to the world upon the surface,—the Life of Action.

CHAPTER II. THE PROSPERITY OF THE OUTER SHOW—THE CARES OF THE INNER MAN.

The position of the king-maker was, to a superficial observer, such as might gratify to the utmost the ambition and the pride of man. He had driven from the land one of the most gorgeous princes and one of the boldest warriors that ever sat upon a throne. He had changed a dynasty without a blow. In the alliances of his daughters, whatever chanced, it seemed certain that by one or the other his posterity would be the kings of England.

The easiness of his victory appeared to prove of itself that the hearts of the people were with him; and the parliament that he hastened to summon confirmed by law the revolution achieved by a bloodless sword. [Lingard, Hume, etc.]

Nor was there aught abroad which menaced disturbance to the peace at home. Letters from the Countess of Warwick and Lady Anne announced their triumphant entry at Paris, where Margaret of Anjou was received with honours never before rendered but to a queen of France.

A solemn embassy, meanwhile, was preparing to proceed from Paris to London to congratulate Henry, and establish a permanent treaty of peace and commerce, [Rymer, xi., 682-690] while Charles of Burgundy himself (the only ally left to Edward) supplicated for the continuance of amicable relations with England, stating that they were formed with the country, not with any special person who might wear the crown; [Hume, Comines] and forbade his subjects by proclamation to join any enterprise for the recovery of his throne which Edward might attempt.

The conduct of Warwick, whom the parliament had declared, conjointly with Clarence, protector of the realm during the minority of the Prince of Wales, was worthy of the triumph he had obtained. He exhibited now a greater genius for government than he had yet displayed; for all his passions were nerved to the utmost, to consummate his victory and sharpen his faculties. He united mildness towards the defeated faction with a firmness which repelled all attempt at insurrection. [Habington.]

In contrast to the splendour that surrounded his daughter Anne, all accounts spoke of the humiliation to which Charles subjected the exiled king; and in the Sanctuary, amidst homicides and felons, the wife of the earl's defeated foe gave birth to a male child, baptized and christened (says the chronicler) "as the son of a common man." For the Avenger and his children were regal authority and gorgeous pomp, for the fugitive and his offspring were the bread of the exile, or the refuge of the outlaw.

But still the earl's prosperity was hollow, the statue of brass stood on limbs of clay. The position of a man with the name of subject, but the authority of king, was an unpopular anomaly in England. In the principal trading-towns had been long growing up that animosity towards the aristocracy of which Henry VII. availed himself to raise a despotism (and which, even in our day, causes the main disputes of faction); but the recent revolution was one in which the towns had had no share. It was a revolution made by the representative of the barons and his followers. It was connected with no advancement of the middle class; it seemed to the men of commerce but the violence of a turbulent and disappointed nobility. The very name given to Warwick's supporters was unpopular in the towns. They were not called the Lancastrians, or the friends of King Henry,—they were styled then, and still are so, by the old chronicler, "The Lord's Party." Most of whatever was still feudal—the haughtiest of the magnates, the rudest of the yeomanry, the most warlike of the knights—gave to Warwick the sanction of their allegiance; and this sanction was displeasing to the intelligence of the towns.

Classes in all times have a keen instinct of their own class-interests. The revolution which the earl had effected was the triumph of aristocracy; its natural results would tend to strengthen certainly the moral, and probably the constitutional, power already possessed by that martial order. The new parliament was their creature, Henry VI. was a cipher, his son a boy with unknown character, and according to vulgar scandal, of doubtful legitimacy, seemingly bound hand and foot in the trammels of the archbaron's mighty

House; the earl himself had never scrupled to evince a distaste to the change in society which was slowly converting an agricultural into a trading population.

It may be observed, too, that a middle class as rarely unites itself with the idols of the populace as with the chiefs of a seignorie. The brute attachment of the peasants and the mobs to the gorgeous and lavish earl seemed to the burgesses the sign of a barbaric clanship, opposed to that advance in civilization towards which they half unconsciously struggled.

And here we must rapidly glance at what, as far as a statesman may foresee, would have been the probable result of Warwick's ascendancy, if durable and effectual. If attached, by prejudice and birth, to the aristocracy, he was yet by reputation and habit attached also to the popular party,—that party more popular than the middle class,—the majority, the masses. His whole life had been one struggle against despotism in the crown. Though far from entertaining such schemes as in similar circumstances might have occurred to the deep sagacity of an Italian patrician for the interest of his order, no doubt his policy would have tended to this one aim,—the limitation of the monarchy by the strength of an aristocracy endeared to the agricultural population, owing to that population its own powers of defence, with the wants and grievances of that population thoroughly familiar, and willing to satisfy the one and redress the other: in short, the great baron would have secured and promoted liberty according to the notions of a seigneur and a Norman, by making the king but the first nobleman of the realm. Had the policy lasted long enough to succeed, the subsequent despotism, which changed a limited into an absolute monarchy under the Tudors, would have been prevented, with all the sanguinary reaction in which the Stuarts were the sufferers. The earl's family, and his own "large father-like heart," had ever been opposed to religious persecution; and timely toleration to the Lollards might have prevented the long-delayed revenge of their posterity, the Puritans. Gradually, perhaps, might the system he represented (of the whole consequences of which he was unconscious) have changed monarchic into aristocratic government, resting, however, upon broad and popular institutions; but no doubt, also, the middle, or rather the commercial class, with all the blessings that attend their power, would have risen much more slowly than when made as they were already, partially under Edward IV., and more systematically under Henry VIL, the instrument for destroying feudal aristocracy, and thereby establishing for a long and fearful interval the arbitrary rule of the single tyrant. Warwick's dislike to the commercial biases of Edward was, in fact, not a patrician prejudice alone. It required no great sagacity to perceive that Edward had designed to raise up a class that, though powerful when employed against the barons, would long be impotent against the encroachments of the crown; and the earl viewed that class not only as foes to his own order, but as tools for the destruction of the ancient liberties.

Without presuming to decide which policy, upon the whole, would have been the happier for England,—the one that based a despotism on the middle class, or the one that founded an aristocracy upon popular affection,—it was clear to the more enlightened burgesses of the great towns, that between Edward of York and the Earl of Warwick a vast principle was at stake, and the commercial king seemed to them a more natural ally than the feudal baron; and equally clear it is to us, now, that the true spirit of the age fought for the false Edward, and against the honest earl.

Warwick did not, however, apprehend any serious results from the passive distaste of the trading towns. His martial spirit led him to despise the least martial part of the population. He knew that the towns would not rise in arms so long as their charters were respected; and that slow, undermining hostility which exists only in opinion, his intellect, so vigorous in immediate dangers, was not far-sighted enough to comprehend. More direct cause for apprehension would there have been to a suspicious mind in the demeanour of the earl's colleague in the Protectorate,—the Duke of Clarence. It was obviously Warwick's policy to satisfy this weak but ambitious person. The duke was, as before agreed, declared heir to the vast possessions of the House of York. He was invested with the Lieutenancy of Ireland, but delayed his departure to his government till the arrival of the Prince of Wales. The personal honours accorded him in

the mean while were those due to a sovereign; but still the duke's brow was moody, though, if the earl noticed it, Clarence rallied into seeming cheerfulness, and reiterated pledges of faith and friendship.

The manner of Isabel to her father was varying and uncertain: at one time hard and cold; at another, as if in the reaction of secret remorse, she would throw herself into his arms, and pray him, weepingly, to forgive her wayward humours. But the curse of the earl's position was that which he had foreseen before quitting Amboise, and which, more or less, attends upon those who from whatever cause suddenly desert the party with which all their associations, whether of fame or friendship, have been interwoven. His vengeance against one had comprehended many still dear to him. He was not only separated from his old companions in arms, but he had driven their most eminent into exile. He stood alone amongst men whom the habits of an active life had indissolubly connected, in his mind, with recollections of wrath and wrong. Amidst that princely company which begirt him, he hailed no familiar face. Even many of those who most detested Edward (or rather the Woodvilles) recoiled from so startling a desertion to the Lancastrian foe. It was a heavy blow to a heart already bruised and sore, when the fiery Raoul de Fulke, who had so idolized Warwick, that, despite his own high lineage, he had worn his badge upon his breast, sought him at the dead of night, and thus said,—

"Lord of Salisbury and Warwick, I once offered to serve thee as a vassal, if thou wouldst wrestle with lewd Edward for the crown which only a manly brow should wear; and hadst thou now returned, as Henry of Lancaster returned of old, to gripe the sceptre of the Norman with a conqueror's hand, I had been the first to cry, 'Long live King Richard, namesake and emulator of Coeur de Lion!' But to place upon the throne yon monk-puppet, and to call on brave hearts to worship a patterer of aves and a counter of beads; to fix the succession of England in the adulterous offspring of Margaret, the butcher-harlot [One of the greatest obstacles to the cause of the Red Rose was the popular belief that the young prince was not Henry's son. Had that belief not been widely spread and firmly maintained, the lords who arbitrated between Henry VI. and Richard Duke of York, in October, 1460, could scarcely have come to the resolution to set aside the Prince of Wales altogether, to accord Henry the crown for his life, and declare the Duke of York his heir. Ten years previously (in November, 1450), before the young prince was born or thought of, and the proposition was really just and reasonable, it was moved in the House of Commons to declare Richard Duke of York next heir to Henry; which, at least, by birthright, he certainly was; but the motion met with little favour and the mover was sent to the Tower.]; to give the power of the realm to the men against whom thou thyself hast often led me to strive with lance and battle-axe, is to open a path which leads but to dishonour, and thither Raoul de Fulke follows not even the steps of the Lord of Warwick. Interrupt me not! speak not! As thou to Edward, so I now to thee, forswear allegiance, and I bid thee farewell forever!"

"I pardon thee," answered Warwick; "and if ever thou art wronged as I have been, thy heart will avenge me. Go!" But when this haughty visitor was gone, the earl covered his face with his hands, and groaned aloud. A defection perhaps even more severely felt came next. Katherine de Bonville had been the earl's favourite sister; he wrote to her at the convent to which she had retired, praying her affectionately to come to London, "and cheer his vexed spirit, and learn the true cause, not to be told by letter, which had moved him to things once farthest from his thought." The messenger came back, the letter unopened; for Katherine had left the convent, and fled into Burgundy, distrustful, as it seemed to Warwick, of her own brother. The nature of this lion-hearted man was, as we have seen, singularly kindly, frank, and affectionate; and now in the most critical, the most anxious, the most tortured period of his life, confidence and affection were forbidden to him. What had he not given for one hour of the soothing company of his wife, the only being in the world to whom his pride could have communicated the grief of his heart, or the doubts of his conscience! Alas! never on earth should he hear that soft voice again! Anne, too, the gentle, childlike Anne, was afar; but she was happy,—a basker in the brief sunshine, and blind to the darkening clouds. His elder child, with her changeful moods, added but to his disquiet and unhappiness. Next to Edward, Warwick of all the House of York had loved Clarence, though a closer and more domestic intimacy had weakened the affection by lessening the esteem. But looking further into the

future, he now saw in this alliance the seeds of many a rankling sorrow. The nearer Anne and her spouse to power and fame, the more bitter the jealousy of Clarence and his wife. Thus, in the very connections which seemed most to strengthen his House, lay all which must destroy the hallowed unity and peace of family and home.

The Archbishop of York had prudently taken no part whatever in the measures that had changed the dynasty. He came now to reap the fruits; did homage to Henry VI., received the Chancellor's seals, and recommenced intrigues for the Cardinal's hat. But between the bold warrior and the wily priest there could be but little of the endearment of brotherly confidence and love. With Montagu alone could the earl confer in cordiality and unreserve; and their similar position, and certain points of agreement in their characters, now more clearly brought out and manifest, served to make their friendship for each other firmer and more tender, in the estrangement of all other ties, than ever it had been before. But the marquis was soon compelled to depart from London, to his post as warden of the northern marches; for Warwick had not the rash presumption of Edward, and neglected no precaution against the return of the dethroned king.

So there, alone, in pomp and in power, vengeance consummated, ambition gratified, but love denied; with an aching heart and a fearless front; amidst old foes made prosperous, and old friends alienated and ruined, stood the king-maker! and, day by day, the untimely streaks of gray showed more and more amidst the raven curls of the strong man.

CHAPTER III. FURTHER VIEWS INTO THE HEART OF MAN, AND THE CONDITIONS OF POWER.

But woe to any man who is called to power with exaggerated expectations of his ability to do good! Woe to the man whom the populace have esteemed a popular champion, and who is suddenly made the guardian of law! The Commons of England had not bewailed the exile of the good earl simply for love of his groaning table and admiration of his huge battle-axe,—it was not merely either in pity, or from fame, that his "name had sounded in every song," and that, to use the strong expression of the chronicler, the people "judged that the sun was clearly taken from the world when he was absent."

They knew him as one who had ever sought to correct the abuses of power, to repair the wrongs of the poor; who even in war had forbidden his knights to slay the common men. He was regarded, therefore, as a reformer; and wonderful indeed were the things, proportioned to his fame and his popularity, which he was expected to accomplish; and his thorough knowledge of the English character, and experience of every class,—especially the lowest as the highest,—conjoined with the vigour of his robust understanding, unquestionably enabled him from the very first to put a stop to the lawless violences which had disgraced the rule of Edward. The infamous spoliations of the royal purveyors ceased; the robber-like excesses of the ruder barons and gentry were severely punished; the country felt that a strong hand held the reins of power. But what is justice when men ask miracles? The peasant and mechanic were astonished that wages were not doubled, that bread was not to be had for asking, that the disparities of life remained the same,—the rich still rich, the poor still poor. In the first days of the revolution, Sir Geoffrey Gates, the freebooter, little comprehending the earl's merciful policy, and anxious naturally to turn a victory into its accustomed fruit of rapine and pillage, placed himself at the head of an armed mob, marched from Kent to the suburbs of London, and, joined by some of the miscreants from the different Sanctuaries, burned and pillaged, ravished and slew. The earl quelled this insurrection with spirit and ease; [Hall, Habington] and great was the praise he received thereby. But all-pervading is the sympathy the poor feel for the poor. And when

even the refuse of the populace once felt the sword of Warwick, some portion of the popular enthusiasm must have silently deserted him.

Robert Hilyard, who had borne so large a share in the restoration of the Lancastrians, now fixed his home in the metropolis; and anxious as ever to turn the current to the popular profit, he saw with rage and disappointment that as yet no party but the nobles had really triumphed. He had longed to achieve a revolution that might be called the People's; and he had abetted one that was called "the Lord's doing." The affection he had felt for Warwick arose principally from his regarding him as an instrument to prepare society for the more democratic changes he panted to effect; and, lo! he himself had been the instrument to strengthen the aristocracy. Society resettled after the storm, the noble retained his armies, the demagogue had lost his mobs! Although through England were scattered the principles which were ultimately to destroy feudalism, to humble the fierce barons into silken lords, to reform the Church, to ripen into a commonwealth through the representative system,—the principles were but in the germ; and when Hilyard mingled with the traders or the artisans of London, and sought to form a party which might comprehend something of steady policy and definite object, he found himself regarded as a visionary fanatic by some, as a dangerous dare-devil by the rest. Strange to say, Warwick was the only man who listened to him with attention; the man behind the age and the man before the age ever have some inch of ground in common both desired to increase liberty; both honestly and ardently loved the masses; but each in the spirit of his order,—Warwick defended freedom as against the throne, Hilyard as against the barons. Still, notwithstanding their differences, each was so convinced of the integrity of the other,—that it wanted only a foe in the field to unite them as before. The natural ally of the popular baron was the leader of the populace.

Some minor, but still serious, griefs added to the embarrassment of the earl's position. Margaret's jealousy had bound him to defer all rewards to lords and others, and encumbered with a provisional council all great acts of government, all grants of offices, lands, or benefits. [Sharon Turner] And who knows not the expectations of men after a successful revolution? The royal exchequer was so empty that even the ordinary household was suspended; [See Ellis: Original Letters from Harleian Manuscripts, second series, vol. i., letter 42.] and as ready money was then prodigiously scarce, the mighty revenues of Warwick barely sufficed to pay the expenses of the expedition which, at his own cost, had restored the Lancastrian line. Hard position, both to generosity and to prudence, to put off and apologize to just claims and valiant service!

With intense, wearying, tortured anxiety, did the earl await the coming of Margaret and her son. The conditions imposed on him in their absence crippled all his resources. Several even of the Lancastrian nobles held aloof, while they saw no authority but Warwick's. Above all, he relied upon the effect that the young Prince of Wales's presence, his beauty, his graciousness, his frank spirit—mild as his fathers, bold as his grandsire's—would create upon all that inert and neutral mass of the public, the affection of which, once gained, makes the solid strength of a government. The very appearance of that prince would at once dispel the slander on his birth. His resemblance to his heroic grandfather would suffice to win him all the hearts by which, in absence, he was regarded as a stranger, a dubious alien. How often did the earl groan forth, "If the prince were but here, all were won!" Henry was worse than a cipher,—he was an eternal embarrassment. His good intentions, his scrupulous piety, made him ever ready to interfere. The Church had got hold of him already, and prompted him to issue proclamations against the disguised Lollards, which would have lost him at one stroke half his subjects. This Warwick prevented, to the great discontent of the honest prince. The moment required all the prestige that an imposing presence and a splendid court could bestow. And Henry, glad of the poverty of his exchequer, deemed it a sin to make a parade of earthly glory. "Heaven will punish me again," said he, meekly, "if, just delivered from a dungeon, I gild my unworthy self with all the vanities of perishable power."

There was not a department which the chill of this poor king's virtue did not somewhat benumb. The gay youths, who had revelled in the alluring court of Edward IV., heard, with disdainful mockery, the grave

lectures of Henry on the length of their lovelocks and the beakers of their shoes. The brave warriors presented to him for praise were entertained with homilies on the guilt of war. Even poor Adam was molested and invaded by Henry's pious apprehensions that he was seeking, by vain knowledge, to be superior to the will of Providence.

Yet, albeit perpetually irritating and chafing the impetuous spirit of the earl, the earl, strange to say, loved the king more and more. This perfect innocence, this absence from guile and self-seeking, in the midst of an age never excelled for fraud, falsehood, and selfish simulation, moved Warwick's admiration as well as pity. Whatever contrasted Edward IV. had a charm for him. He schooled his hot temper, and softened his deep voice, in that holy presence; and the intimate persuasion of the hollowness of all worldly greatness, which worldly greatness itself had forced upon the earl's mind, made something congenial between the meek saint and the fiery warrior. For the hundredth time groaned Warwick, as he quitted Henry's presence,—

"Would that my gallant son-in-law were come! His spirit will soon learn how to govern; then Warwick may be needed no more! I am weary, sore weary of the task of ruling men!"

"Holy Saint Thomas!" bluntly exclaimed Marmaduke, to whom these sad words were said,—"whenever you visit the king you come back—pardon me, my lord—half unmanned. He would make a monk of you!"

"Ah," said Warwick, thoughtfully, "there have been greater marvels than that. Our boldest fathers often died the meekest shavelings. An' I had ruled this realm as long as Henry,—nay, an' this same life I lead now were to continue two years, with its broil and fever,—I could well conceive the sweetness of the cloister and repose. How sets the wind? Against them still! against them still! I cannot bear this suspense!"

The winds had ever seemed malignant to Margaret of Anjou, but never more than now. So long a continuance of stormy and adverse weather was never known in the memory of man; and we believe that it has scarcely its parallel in history.

The earl's promise to restore King Henry was fulfilled in October. From November to the following April, Margaret, with the young and royal pair, and the Countess of Warwick, lay at the seaside, waiting for a wind. [Fabyan, 502.] Thrice, in defiance of all warnings from the mariners of Harfleur, did she put to sea, and thrice was she driven back on the coast of Normandy, her ships much damaged. Her friends protested that this malice of the elements was caused by sorcery, [Hall, Warkworth Chronicle]—a belief which gained ground in England, exhilarated the Duchess of Bedford, and gave new fame to Bungey, who arrogated all the merit, and whose weather wisdom, indeed, had here borne out his predictions. Many besought Margaret not to tempt Providence, not to trust the sea; but the queen was firm to her purpose, and her son laughed at omens,—yet still the vessels could only leave the harbour to be driven back upon the land.

Day after day the first question of Warwick, when the sun rose, was, "How sets the wind?" Night after night, ere he retired to rest, "Ill sets the wind!" sighed the earl. The gales that forbade the coming of the royal party sped to the unwilling lingerers courier after courier, envoy after envoy; and at length Warwick, unable to bear the sickening suspense at distance, went himself to Dover [Hall], and from its white cliffs looked, hour by hour, for the sails which were to bear "Lancaster and its fortunes." The actual watch grew more intolerable than the distant expectation, and the earl sorrowfully departed to his castle of Warwick, at which Isabel and Clarence then were. Alas! where the old smile of home?

CHAPTER IV. THE RETURN OF EDWARD OF YORK.

And the winds still blew, and the storm was on the tide, and Margaret came not when, in the gusty month of March, the fishermen of the Humber beheld a single ship, without flag or pennon, and sorely stripped and rivelled by adverse blasts, gallantly struggling towards the shore. The vessel was not of English build, and resembled in its bulk and fashion those employed by the Easterlings in their trade, half merchantman, half war-ship.

The villagers of Ravenspur,—the creek of which the vessel now rapidly made to,—imagining that it was some trading craft in distress, grouped round the banks, and some put out their boats: But the vessel held on its way, and, as the water was swelled by the tide, and unusually deep, silently cast anchor close ashore, a quarter of a mile from the crowd.

The first who leaped on land was a knight of lofty stature, and in complete armour richly inlaid with gold arabesques. To him succeeded another, also in mail, and, though well guilt and fair proportioned, of less imposing presence. And then, one by one, the womb of the dark ship gave forth a number of armed soldiers, infinitely larger than it could have been supposed to contain, till the knight who first landed stood the centre of a group of five hundred men. Then were lowered from the vessel, barbed and caparisoned, some five score horses; and, finally, the sailors and rowers, armed but with steel caps and short swords, came on shore, till not a man was left on board.

“Now praise,” said the chief knight, “to God and Saint George that we have escaped the water! and not with invisible winds but with bodily foes must our war be waged.”

“Beau sire,” cried one knight, who had debarked immediately after the speaker, and who seemed, from his bearing and equipment, of higher rank than those that followed, “beau sire, this is a slight army to reconquer a king’s realm! Pray Heaven that our bold companions have also escaped the deep!”

“Why, verily, we are not eno’ at the best, to spare one man,” said the chief knight, gayly, “but, lo! we are not without welcomers.” And he pointed to the crowd of villagers who now slowly neared the warlike group, but halting at a little distance, continued to gaze at them in some anxiety and alarm.

“Ho there! good fellows!” cried the leader, striding towards the throng, “what name give you to this village?”

“Ravenspur, please your worship,” answered one of the peasants.

“Ravenspur, hear you that, lords and friends? Accept the omen! On this spot landed from exile Henry of Bolingbroke, known afterwards in our annals as King Henry IV.! Bare is the soil of corn and of trees,—it disdains meaner fruit; it grows kings! Hark!” The sound of a bugle was heard at a little distance, and in a few moments a troop of about a hundred men were seen rising above an undulation in the ground, and as the two bands recognized each other, a shout of joy was given and returned.

As this new reinforcement advanced, the peasantry and fishermen, attracted by curiosity and encouraged by the peaceable demeanour of the debarkers, drew nearer, and mingled with the first comers.

“What manner of men be ye, and what want ye?” asked one of the bystanders, who seemed of better nurturing than the rest, and who, indeed, was a small franklin.

No answer was returned by those he more immediately addressed; but the chief knight heard the question, and suddenly unbuckling his helmet, and giving it to one of those beside him, he turned to the crowd a

countenance of singular beauty at once animated and majestic, and said in a loud voice, “We are Englishmen, like you, and we come here to claim our rights. Ye seem tall fellows and honest.—Standard bearer, unfurl our flag!” And as the ensign suddenly displayed the device of a sun in a field azure, the chief continued, “March under this banner, and for every day ye serve, ye shall have a month’s hire.”

“Marry!” quoth the franklin, with a suspicious, sinister look, “these be big words. And who are you, Sir Knight, who would levy men in King Henry’s kingdom?”

“Your knees, fellows!” cried the second knight. “Behold your true liege and suzerain, Edward IV.! Long live King Edward!”

The soldiers caught up the cry, and it was re-echoed lustily by the smaller detachment that now reached the spot; but no answer came from the crowd. They looked at each other in dismay, and retreated rapidly from their place amongst the troops. In fact, the whole of the neighbouring district was devoted to Warwick, and many of the peasantry about had joined the former rising under Sir John Coniers. The franklin alone retreated not with the rest; he was a bluff, plain, bold fellow, with good English blood in his veins. And when the shout ceased, he said shortly, “We hereabouts know no king but King Henry. We fear you would impose upon us. We cannot believe that a great lord like him you call Edward IV. would land with a handful of men to encounter the armies of Lord Warwick. We forewarn you to get into your ship and go back as fast as ye came, for the stomach of England is sick of brawls and blows; and what ye devise is treason!”

Forth from the new detachment stepped a youth of small stature, not in armour, and with many a weather-stain on his gorgeous dress. He laid his hand upon the franklin’s shoulder. “Honest and plain-dealing fellow,” said he, “you are right: pardon the foolish outburst of these brave men, who cannot forget as yet that their chief has worn the crown. We come back not to disturb this realm, nor to effect aught against King Henry, whom the saints have favoured. No, by Saint Paul, we come but back to claim our lands unjustly forfeit. My noble brother here is not king of England, since the people will it not, but he is Duke of York, and he will be contented if assured of the style and lands our father left him. For me, called Richard of Gloucester, I ask nothing but leave to spend my manhood where I have spent my youth, under the eyes of my renowned godfather, Richard Nevile, Earl of Warwick. So report of us. Whither leads yon road?”

“To York,” said the franklin, softened, despite his judgment, by the irresistible suavity of the voice that addressed him.

“Thither will we go, my lord duke and brother, with your leave,” said Prince Richard, “peaceably and as petitioners. God save ye, friends and countrymen, pray for us, that King Henry and the parliament may do us justice. We are not over rich now, but better times may come. Largess!” and filling both hands with coins from his gipsire, he tossed the bounty among the peasants.

“Mille tonnere! What means he with this humble talk of King Henry and the parliament?” whispered Edward to the Lord Say, while the crowd scrambled for the largess, and Richard smilingly mingled amongst them, and conferred with the franklin.

“Let him alone, I pray you, my liege; I guess his wise design. And now for our ships. What orders for the master?”

“For the other vessels, let them sail or anchor as they list. But for the bark that has borne Edward king of England to the land of his ancestors there is no return!”

The royal adventurer then beckoned the Flemish master of the ship, who, with every sailor aboard, had debarked, and the loose dresses of the mariners made a strong contrast to the mail of the warriors with whom they mingled.

“Friend,” said Edward, in French, “thou hast said that thou wilt share my fortunes, and that thy good fellows are no less free of courage and leal in trust.”

“It is so, sire. Not a man who has gazed on thy face, and heard thy voice, but longs to serve one on whose brow Nature has written king.”

“And trust me,” said Edward, “no prince of my blood shall be dearer to me than you and yours, my friends in danger and in need. And sith it be so, the ship that hath borne such hearts and such hopes should, in sooth, know no meaner freight. Is all prepared?”

“Yes, sire, as you ordered. The train is laid for the brennen.”

“Up, then, with the fiery signal, and let it tell, from cliff to cliff, from town to town, that Edward the Plantagenet, once returned to England, leaves it but for the grave!”

The master bowed, and smiled grimly. The sailors, who had been prepared for the burning, arranged before between the master and the prince, and whose careless hearts Edward had thoroughly won to his person and his cause, followed the former towards the ship, and stood silently grouped around the shore. The soldiers, less informed, gazed idly on, and Richard now regained Edward’s side.

“Reflect,” he said, as he drew him apart, “that, when on this spot landed Henry of Bolingbroke, he gave not out that he was marching to the throne of Richard II. He professed but to claim his duchy,—and men were influenced by justice, till they became agents of ambition. This be your policy; with two thousand men you are but Duke of York; with ten thousand men you are King of England! In passing hither, I met with many, and sounding the temper of the district, I find it not ripe to share your hazard. The world soon ripens when it hath to hail success!”

“O young boy’s smooth face! O old man’s deep brain!” said Edward, admiringly, “what a king hadst thou made!” A sudden flush passed over the prince’s pale cheek, and, ere it died away, a flaming torch was hurled aloft in the air; it fell whirling into the ship—a moment, and a loud crash; a moment, and a mighty blaze! Up sprung from the deck, along the sails, the sheeted fire,—

> “A giant beard of flame.” [Aeschylus: Agamemnon, 314]

It reddened the coast, the skies, from far and near; it glowed on the faces and the steel of the scanty army; it was seen, miles away, by the warders of many a castle manned with the troops of Lancaster; it brought the steed from the stall, the courier to the selle; it sped, as of old the beacon fire that announced to Clytemnestra the return of the Argive king. From post to post rode the fiery news, till it reached Lord Warwick in his hall, King Henry in his palace, Elizabeth in her sanctuary. The iron step of the dauntless Edward was once more pressed upon the soil of England.

CHAPTER V. THE PROGRESS OF THE PLANTAGENET.

A few words suffice to explain the formidable arrival we have just announced. Though the Duke of Burgundy had by public proclamation forbidden his subjects to aid the exiled Edward, yet, whether moved by the entreaties of his wife, or wearied by the remonstrances of his brother-in-law, he at length privately gave the dethroned monarch fifty thousand florins to find troops for himself, and secretly hired Flemish and Dutch vessels to convey him to England. [Comines, Hall, Lingard, S. Turner] But so small was the force to which the bold Edward trusted his fortunes, that it almost seemed as if Burgundy sent him forth to his destruction. He sailed from the coast of Zealand; the winds, if less unmanageable than those that blew off the seaport where Margaret and her armament awaited a favouring breeze, were still adverse. Scared from the coast of Norfolk by the vigilance of Warwick and Oxford, who had filled that district with armed men, storm and tempest drove him at last to Humber Head, where we have seen him land, and whence we pursue his steps.

The little band set out upon its march, and halted for the night at a small village two miles inland. Some of the men were then sent out on horseback for news of the other vessels, that bore the remnant of the invading force. These had, fortunately, effected a landing in various places; and, before daybreak, Anthony Woodville, and the rest of the troops, had joined the leader of an enterprise that seemed but the rashness of despair, for its utmost force, including the few sailors allured to the adventurer's standard, was about two thousand men. [Fifteen hundred, according to the Croyland historian.] Close and anxious was the consultation then held. Each of the several detachments reported alike of the sullen indifference of the population, which each had sought to excite in favour of Edward. Light riders [Hall] were despatched in various directions, still further to sound the neighbourhood. All returned ere noon, some bruised and maltreated by the stones and staves of the rustics, and not a voice had been heard to echo the cry, "Long live King Edward!" The profound sagacity of Gloucester's guileful counsel was then unanimously recognized. Richard despatched a secret letter to Clarence; and it was resolved immediately to proceed to York, and to publish everywhere along the road that the fugitive had returned but to claim his private heritage, and remonstrate with the parliament which had awarded the duchy of York to Clarence, his younger brother.

"Such a power," saith the Chronicle, "hath justice ever among men, that all, moved by mercy or compassion, began either to favour or not to resist him." And so, wearing the Lancastrian Prince of Wales's cognizance of the ostrich feather, crying out as they marched, "Long live King Henry!" the hardy liars, four days after their debarkation, arrived at the gates of York.

Here, not till after much delay and negotiation, Edward was admitted only as Duke of York, and upon condition that he would swear to be a faithful and loyal servant to King Henry; and at the gate by which he was to enter, Edward actually took that oath, "a priest being by to say Mass in the Mass tyme, receiving the body of our blessed Saviour!" [Hall.]

Edward tarried not long in York; he pushed forward. Two great nobles guarded those districts,—Montagu and the Earl of Northumberland, to whom Edward had restored his lands and titles, and who, on condition of retaining them, had re-entered the service of Lancaster. This last, a true server of the times, who had sided with all parties, now judged it discreet to remain neutral. [This is the most favourable interpretation of his conduct: according to some he was in correspondence with Edward, who showed his letters.] But Edward must pass within a few miles of Pontefract castle, where Montagu lay with a force that could destroy him at a blow. Edward was prepared for the assault, but trusted to deceive the marquis, as he had deceived the citizens of York,—the more for the strong personal love Montagu had ever shown him. If not, he was prepared equally to die in the field rather than eat again the bitter bread of the exile. But to his inconceivable joy and astonishment, Montagu, like Northumberland, lay idle and supine. Edward and his little troop threaded safely the formidable pass. Alas! Montagu had that day received a formal order from the Duke of Clarence, as co-protector of the realm, [Our historians have puzzled their brains in ingenious conjectures of the cause of Montagu's fatal supineness at this juncture, and have passed over the only probable solution of the mystery, which is to be found simply enough stated thus in Stowe's Chronicle:

"The Marquess Montacute would have fought with King Edward, but that he had received letters from the Duke of Clarence that he should not fight till hee came." This explanation is borne out by the Warkworth Chronicler and others, who, in an evident mistake of the person addressed, state that Clarence wrote word to Warwick not to fight till he came. Clarence could not have written so to Warwick, who, according to all authorities, was mustering his troops near London, and not in the way to fight Edward; nor could Clarence have had authority to issue such commands to his colleague, nor would his colleague have attended to them, since we have the amplest testimony that Warwick was urging all his captains to attack Edward at once. The duke's order was, therefore, clearly addressed to Montagu.] to suffer Edward to march on, provided his force was small, and he had taken the oaths to Henry, and assumed but the title of Duke of York,—"for your brother the earl hath had compunctious visitings, and would fain forgive what hath passed, for my father's sake, and unite all factions by Edward's voluntary abdication of the throne; at all hazards, I am on my way northward, and you will not fight till I come." The marquis,—who knew the conscientious doubts which Warwick had entertained in his darker hours, who had no right to disobey the co-protector, who knew no reason to suspect Lord Warwick's son-in-law, and who, moreover, was by no means anxious to be, himself, the executioner of Edward, whom he had once so truly loved,—though a little marvelling at Warwick's softness, yet did not discredit the letter, and the less regarded the free passage he left to the returned exiles, from contempt for the smallness of their numbers, and his persuasion that if the earl saw fit to alter his counsels, Edward was still more in his power the farther he advanced amidst a hostile population, and towards the armies which the Lords Exeter and Oxford were already mustering.

But that free passage was everything to Edward! It made men think that Montagu, as well as Northumberland, favoured his enterprise; that the hazard was less rash and hopeless than it had seemed; that Edward counted upon finding his most powerful allies among those falsely supposed to be his enemies. The popularity Edward had artfully acquired amongst the captains of Warwick's own troops, on the march to Middleham, now bestead him. Many of them were knights and gentlemen residing in the very districts through which he passed. They did not join him, but they did not oppose. Then rapidly flocked to "the Sun of York," first the adventurers and condottieri who in civil war adopt any side for pay; next came the disappointed, the ambitious, and the needy. The hesitating began to resolve, the neutral to take a part. From the state of petitioners supplicating a pardon, every league the Yorkists marched advanced them to the dignity of assertors of a cause. Doncaster first, then Nottingham, then Leicester,—true to the town spirit we have before described,—opened their gates to the trader prince.

Oxford and Exeter reached Newark with their force. Edward marched on them at once. Deceived as to his numbers, they took panic and fled. When once the foe flies, friends ever start up from the very earth! Hereditary partisans—gentlemen, knights, and nobles—now flocked fast round the adventurer. Then came Lovell and Cromwell and D'Eyncourt, ever true to York; and Stanley, never true to any cause. Then came the brave knights Parr and Norris and De Burgh; and no less than three thousand retainers belonging to Lord Hastings—the new man—obeyed the summons of his couriers and joined their chief at Leicester.

Edward of March, who had landed at Ravenspur with a handful of brigands, now saw a king's army under his banner. [The perplexity and confusion which involve the annals of this period may be guessed by this,—that two historians, eminent for research (Lingard and Sharon Turner), differ so widely as to the numbers who had now joined Edward, that Lingard asserts that at Nottingham he was at the head of fifty or sixty thousand men; and Turner gives him, at the most, between six and seven thousand. The latter seems nearer to the truth. We must here regret that Turner's partiality to the House of York induces him to slur over Edward's detestable perjury at York, and to accumulate all rhetorical arts to command admiration for his progress,—to the prejudice of the salutary moral horror we ought to feel for the atrocious perfidy and violation of oath to which he owed the first impunity that secured the after triumph.] Then the audacious perjurer threw away the mask; then, forth went—not the prayer of the attainted Duke of York—but the proclamation of the indignant king. England now beheld two sovereigns, equal in their armies. It was no longer a rebellion to be crushed; it was a dynasty to be decided.

CHAPTER VI. LORD WARWICK, WITH THE FOE IN THE FIELD AND THE TRAITOR AT THE HEARTH.

Every precaution which human wisdom could foresee had Lord Warwick taken to guard against invasion, or to crush it at the onset. [Hall.] All the coasts on which it was most probable Edward would land had been strongly guarded. And if the Humber had been left without regular troops, it was because prudence might calculate that the very spot where Edward did land was the very last he would have selected,—unless guided by fate to his destruction,—in the midst of an unfriendly population, and in face of the armies of Northumberland and of Montagu. The moment the earl heard of Edward's reception at York,—far from the weakness which the false Clarence (already in correspondence with Gloucester) imputed to him,—he despatched to Montagu, by Marmaduke Nevile, peremptory orders to intercept Edward's path, and give him battle before he could advance farther towards the centre of the island. We shall explain presently why this messenger did not reach the marquis. But Clarence was some hours before him in his intelligence and his measures.

When the earl next heard that Edward had passed Pontefract with impunity, and had reached Doncaster, he flew first to London, to arrange for its defence; consigned the care of Henry to the Archbishop of York, mustered a force already quartered in the neighbourhood of the metropolis, and then marched rapidly back towards Coventry, where he had left Clarence with seven thousand men; while he despatched new messengers to Montagu and Northumberland, severely rebuking the former for his supineness, and ordering him to march in all haste to attack Edward in the rear. The earl's activity, promptitude, all-provident generalship, form a mournful contrast to the errors, the pusillanimity, and the treachery of others, which hitherto, as we have seen, made all his wisest schemes abortive. Despite Clarence's sullenness, Warwick had discovered no reason, as yet, to doubt his good faith. The oath he had taken—not only to Henry in London, but to Warwick at Amboise—had been the strongest which can bind man to man. If the duke had not gained all he had hoped, he had still much to lose and much to dread by desertion to Edward. He had been the loudest in bold assertions when he heard of the invasion; and above all, Isabel, whose influence over Clarence at that time the earl overrated, had, at the tidings of so imminent a danger to her father, forgot all her displeasure and recovered all her tenderness.

During Warwick's brief absence, Isabel had indeed exerted her utmost power to repair her former wrongs, and induce Clarence to be faithful to his oath. Although her inconsistency and irresolution had much weakened her influence with the duke, for natures like his are governed but by the ascendancy of a steady and tranquil will, yet still she so far prevailed, that the duke had despatched to Richard a secret courier, informing him that he had finally resolved not to desert his father-in-law.

This letter reached Gloucester as the invaders were on their march to Coventry, before the strong walls of which the Duke of Clarence lay encamped. Richard, after some intent and silent reflection, beckoned to him his familiar Catesby.

"Marmaduke Nevile, whom our scouts seized on his way to Pontefract, is safe, and in the rear?"

"Yes, my lord; prisoners but encumber us; shall I give orders to the provost to end his captivity?"

"Ever ready, Catesby!" said the duke, with a fell smile. "No; hark ye, Clarence vacillates. If he hold firm to Warwick, and the two forces fight honestly against us, we are lost; on the other hand, if Clarence join us, his defection will bring not only the men he commands, all of whom are the retainers of the York lands

and duchy, and therefore free from peculiar bias to the earl, and easily lured back to their proper chief; but it will set an example that will create such distrust and panic amongst the enemy, and give such hope of fresh desertions to our own men, as will open to us the keys of the metropolis. But Clarence, I say, vacillates; look you, here is his letter from Amboise to King Edward; see, his duchess, Warwick's very daughter, approves the promise it contains! If this letter reach Warwick, and Clarence knows it is in his hand, George will have no option but to join us. He will never dare to face the earl, his pledge to Edward once revealed—"

"Most true; a very legal subtlety, my lord," said the lawyer Catesby, admiringly.

"You can serve us in this. Fall back; join Sir Marmaduke; affect to sympathize with him; affect to side with the earl; affect to make terms for Warwick's amity and favour; affect to betray us; affect to have stolen this letter. Give it to young Nevile, artfully effect his escape, as if against our knowledge, and commend him to lose not an hour—a moment—in gaining the earl, and giving him so important a forewarning of the meditated treason of his son-in-law."

"I will do all,—I comprehend; but how will the duke learn in time that the letter is on its way to Warwick?"

"I will seek the duke in his own tent."

"And how shall I effect Sir Marmaduke's escape?"

"Send hither the officer who guards the prisoner; I will give him orders to obey thee in all things."

The invaders marched on. The earl, meanwhile, had reached Warwick, hastened thence to throw himself into the stronger fortifications of the neighbouring Coventry, without the walls of which Clarence was still encamped; Edward advanced on the town of Warwick thus vacated; and Richard, at night, rode along to the camp of Clarence. [Hall, and others.]

The next day, the earl was employed in giving orders to his lieutenants to march forth, join the troops of his son-in-law, who were a mile from the walls, and advance upon Edward, who had that morning quitted Warwick town, when suddenly Sir Marmaduke Nevile rushed into his presence, and, faltering out, "Beware, beware!" placed in his hands the fatal letter which Clarence had despatched from Amboise.

Never did blow more ruthless fall upon man's heart! Clarence's perfidy—that might be disdained; but the closing lines, which revealed a daughter's treachery—words cannot express the father's anguish.

The letter dropped from his hand, a stupor seized his senses, and, ere yet recovered, pale men hurried into his presence to relate how, amidst joyous trumpets and streaming banners, Richard of Gloucester had led the Duke of Clarence to the brotherly embrace of Edward. [Hall. The chronicler adds: "It was no marvell that the Duke of Clarence with so small persuasion and less exhorting turned from the Earl of Warwick's party, for, as you have heard before, this marchandise was laboured, conducted, and concluded by a damsell, when the duke was in the French court, to the earl's utter confusion." Hume makes a notable mistake in deferring the date of Clarence's desertion to the battle of Barnet.]

Breaking from these messengers of evil news, that could not now surprise, the earl strode on, alone, to his daughter's chamber.

He placed the letter in her hands, and folding his arms said, "What sayest thou of this, Isabel of Clarence?" The terror, the shame, the remorse, that seized upon the wretched lady, the death-like lips, the suppressed shriek, the momentary torpor, succeeded by the impulse which made her fall at her father's

feet and clasp his knees,—told the earl, if he had before doubted, that the letter lied not; that Isabel had known and sanctioned its contents.

He gazed on her (as she grovelled at his feet) with a look that her eyes did well to shun.

“Curse me not! curse me not!” cried Isabel, awed by his very silence. “It was but a brief frenzy. Evil counsel, evil passion! I was maddened that my boy had lost a crown. I repented, I repented! Clarence shall yet be true. He hath promised it, vowed it to me; hath written to Gloucester to retract all,—to—”

“Woman! Clarence is in Edward’s camp!”

Isabel started to her feet, and uttered a shriek so wild and despairing, that at least it gave to her father’s lacerated heart the miserable solace of believing the last treason had not been shared. A softer expression—one of pity, if not of pardon—stole over his dark face.

“I curse thee not,” he said; “I rebuke thee not. Thy sin hath its own penance. Ill omen broods on the hearth of the household traitor! Never more shalt thou see holy love in a husband’s smile. His kiss shall have the taint of Judas. From his arms thou shalt start with horror, as from those of thy wronged father’s betrayer,—perchance his deathsman! Ill omen broods on the cradle of the child for whom a mother’s ambition was but a daughter’s perfidy. Woe to thee, wife and mother! Even my forgiveness cannot avert thy doom!”

“Kill me! kill me!” exclaimed Isabel, springing towards him; but seeing his face averted, his arms folded on his breast,—that noble breast, never again her shelter,—she fell lifeless on the floor. [As our narrative does not embrace the future fate of the Duchess of Clarence, the reader will pardon us if we remind him that her first-born (who bore his illustrious grandfather’s title of Earl of Warwick) was cast into prison on the accession of Henry VII., and afterwards beheaded by that king. By birth, he was the rightful heir to the throne. The ill-fated Isabel died young (five years after the date at which our tale has arrived). One of her female attendants was tried and executed on the charge of having poisoned her. Clarence lost no time in seeking to supply her place. He solicited the hand of Mary of Burgundy, sole daughter and heir of Charles the Bold. Edward’s jealousy and fear forbade him to listen to an alliance that might, as Lingard observes, enable Clarence “to employ the power of Burgundy to win the crown of England;” and hence arose those dissensions which ended in the secret murder of the perjured duke.]

The earl looked round, to see that none were by to witness his weakness, took her gently in his arms, laid her on her couch, and, bending over her a moment, prayed to God to pardon her.

He then hastily left the room, ordered her handmaids and her litter, and while she was yet unconscious, the gates of the town opened, and forth through the arch went the closed and curtained vehicle which bore the ill-fated duchess to the new home her husband had made with her father’s foe! The earl watched it from the casement of his tower, and said to himself,—

“I had been unmanned, had I known her within the same walls. Now forever I dismiss her memory and her crime. Treachery hath done its worst, and my soul is proof against all storms!”

At night came messengers from Clarence and Edward, who had returned to Warwick town, with offers of pardon to the earl, with promises of favour, power, and grace. To Edward the earl deigned no answer; to the messenger of Clarence he gave this: “Tell thy master I had liefer be always like myself than like a false and a perjured duke, and that I am determined never to leave the war till I have lost mine own life, or utterly extinguished and put down my foes.” [Hall.]

After this terrible defection, neither his remaining forces, nor the panic amongst them which the duke's desertion had occasioned, nor the mighty interests involved in the success of his arms, nor the irretrievable advantage which even an engagement of equivocal result with the earl in person would give to Edward, justified Warwick in gratifying the anticipations of the enemy,—that his valour and wrath would urge him into immediate and imprudent battle.

Edward, after the vain bravado of marching up to the walls of Coventry, moved on towards London. Thither the earl sent Marmaduke, enjoining the Archbishop of York and the lord mayor but to hold out the city for three days, and he would come to their aid with such a force as would insure lasting triumph. For, indeed, already were hurrying to his banner Montagu, burning to retrieve his error, Oxford and Exeter, recovered from, and chafing at, their past alarm. Thither his nephew, Fitzhugh, led the earl's own clansmen of Middleham; thither were spurring Somerset from the west, [Most historians state that Somerset was then in London; but Sharon Turner quotes "Harleian Manuscripts," 38, to show that he had left the metropolis "to raise an army from the western counties," and ranks him amongst the generals at the battle of Barnet.] and Sir Thomas Dymoke from Lincolnshire, and the Knight of Lytton, with his hardy retainers, from the Peak. Bold Hilyard waited not far from London, with a host of mingled yeomen and bravos, reduced, as before, to discipline under his own sturdy energies and the military craft of Sir John Coniers. If London would but hold out till these forces could unite, Edward's destruction was still inevitable.

BOOK XII. THE BATTLE OF BARNET.

CHAPTER I. A KING IN HIS CITY HOPES TO RECOVER HIS REALM—A WOMAN IN HER CHAMBER FEARS TO FORFEIT HER OWN.

Edward and his army reached St. Alban's. Great commotion, great joy, were in the Sanctuary of Westminster! The Jerusalem Chamber, therein, was made the high council-hall of the friends of York. Great commotion, great terror, were in the city of London. Timid Master Stokton had been elected mayor; horribly frightened either to side with an Edward or a Henry, timid Master Stokton feigned or fell ill. Sir Thomas Cook, a wealthy and influential citizen, and a member of the House of Commons, had been appointed deputy in his stead. Sir Thomas Cook took fright also, and ran away. [Fabyan.] The power of the city thus fell into the hands of Ureswick, the Recorder, a zealous Yorkist. Great commotion, great scorn, were in the breasts of the populace, as the Archbishop of York, hoping thereby to rekindle their loyalty, placed King Henry on horseback, and paraded him through the streets from Chepeside to Walbrook, from Walbrook to St. Paul's; for the news of Edward's arrival, and the sudden agitation and excitement it produced on his enfeebled frame, had brought upon the poor king one of the epileptic attacks to which he had been subject from childhood, and which made the cause of his frequent imbecility; and, just recovered from such a fit,—his eyes vacant, his face haggard, his head drooping,—the spectacle of such an antagonist to the vigorous Edward moved only pity in the few and ridicule in the many. Two thousand Yorkist gentlemen were in the various Sanctuaries; aided and headed by the Earl of Essex, they came forth armed and clamorous, scouring the streets, and shouting, "King Edward!" with impunity.

Edward's popularity in London was heightened amongst the merchants by prudent reminiscences of the vast debts he had incurred, which his victory only could ever enable him to repay to his good citizens. [Comines.] The women, always, in such a movement, active partisans, and useful, deserted their hearths to canvass all strong arms and stout hearts for the handsome woman-lover. [Comines.] The Yorkist Archbishop of Canterbury did his best with the ecclesiastics, the Yorkist Recorder his best with the flat-caps. Alwyn, true to his anti-feudal principles, animated all the young freemen to support the merchant-king, the favourer of commerce, the man of his age! The city authorities began to yield to their own and the general metropolitan predilections. But still the Archbishop of York had six thousand soldiers at his disposal, and London could be yet saved to Warwick, if the prelate acted with energy and zeal and good faith. That such was his first intention is clear, from his appeal to the public loyalty in King Henry's procession; but when he perceived how little effect that pageant had produced; when, on re-entering the Bishop of London's palace, he saw before him the guileless, helpless puppet of contending factions, gasping for breath, scarcely able to articulate, the heartless prelate turned away, with a muttered ejaculation of contempt.

"Clarence had not deserted," said he to himself, "unless he saw greater profit with King Edward!" And then he began to commune with himself, and to commune with his brother-prelate of Canterbury; and in the midst of all this commune arrived Catesby, charged with messages to the archbishop from Edward,—messages full of promise and affection on the one hand, of menace and revenge upon the other. Brief: Warwick's cup of bitterness had not yet been filled; that night the archbishop and the mayor of London met, and the Tower was surrendered to Edward's friends. The next day Edward and his army entered, amidst the shouts of the populace; rode to St. Paul's, where the archbishop [Sharon Turner. It is a comfort to think that this archbishop was, two years afterwards, first robbed, and then imprisoned, by Edward IV.; nor did he recover his liberty till a few weeks before his death, in 1476 (five years subsequently to the battle of Barnet).] met him, leading Henry by the hand, again a captive; thence Edward proceeded to Westminster Abbey, and, fresh from his atrocious perjury at York, offered thanksgiving for its success. The Sanctuary yielded up its royal fugitives, and, in joy and in pomp, Edward led his wife and her new-born babe, with Jacquetta and his elder children, to Baynard's Castle.

The next morning (the third day), true to his promise, Warwick marched towards London with the mighty armament he had now collected. Treason had done its worst,—the metropolis was surrendered, and King Henry in the Tower.

"These things considered," says the Chronicler, "the earl saw that all calculations of necessity were brought to this end,—that they must now be committed to the hazard and chance of one battle." [Hall.] He halted, therefore, at St. Alban's, to rest his troops; and marching thence towards Barnet, pitched his tents on the upland ground, then called the Heath or Chase of Gladsmoor, and waited the coming foe.

Nor did Edward linger long from that stern meeting. Entering London on the 11th of April, he prepared to quit it on the 13th. Besides the force he had brought with him, he had now recruits in his partisans from the Sanctuaries and other hiding-places in the metropolis, while London furnished him, from her high-spirited youths, a gallant troop of bow and bill men, whom Alwyn had enlisted, and to whom Edward willingly appointed, as captain, Alwyn himself,—who had atoned for his submission to Henry's restoration by such signal activity on behalf of the young king, whom he associated with the interests of his class, and the weal of the great commercial city, which some years afterwards rewarded his affection by electing him to her chief magistracy. [Nicholas Alwyn, the representative of that generation which aided the commercial and anti-feudal policy of Edward IV. and Richard III., and welcomed its consummation under their Tudor successor, rose to be Lord Mayor of London in the fifteenth year of the reign of Henry VII.—FABYAN.]

It was on that very day, the 13th of April, some hours before the departure of the York army, that Lord Hastings entered the Tower, to give orders relative to the removal of the unhappy Henry, whom Edward had resolved to take with him on his march.

And as he had so ordered and was about to return, Alwyn, emerging from one of the interior courts, approached him in much agitation, and said thus: “Pardon me, my lord, if in so grave an hour I recall your attention to one you may haply have forgotten.”

“Ah, the poor maiden; but you told me, in the hurried words that we have already interchanged, that she was safe and well.”

“Safe, my lord,—not well. Oh, hear me. I depart to battle for your cause and your king’s. A gentleman in your train has advised me that you are married to a noble dame in the foreign land. If so, this girl whom I have loved so long and truly may yet forget you, may yet be mine. Oh, give me that hope to make me a braver soldier.”

“But,” said Hastings, embarrassed, and with a changing countenance, “but time presses, and I know not where the demoiselle—”

“She is here,” interrupted Alwyn; “here, within these walls, in yonder courtyard. I have just left her. You, whom she loves, forgot her! I, whom she disdains, remembered. I went to see to her safety, to counsel her to rest here for the present, whatever betides; and at every word I said, she broke in upon me with but one name,—that name was thine! And when stung, and in the impulse of the moment, I exclaimed, ‘He deserves not this devotion. They tell me, Sibyll, that Lord Hastings has found a wife in exile.’ Oh, that look! that cry! they haunt me still. ‘Prove it, prove it, Alwyn,’ she cried. ‘And—’ I interrupted, ‘and thou couldst yet, for thy father’s sake, be true wife to me?’”

“Her answer, Alwyn?”

“It was this, ‘For my father’s sake only, then, could I live on; and—’ her sobs stopped her speech, till she cried again, ‘I believe it not! thou hast deceived me. Only from his lips will I hear the sentence.’ Go to her, manfully and frankly, as becomes you, high lord,—go! It Is but a single sentence thou hast to say, and thy heart will be the lighter, and thine arm the stronger for those honest words.”

Hastings pulled his cap over his brow, and stood a moment as if in reflection; he then said, “Show me the way; thou art right. It is due to her and to thee; and as by this hour to-morrow my soul may stand before the Judgment-seat, that poor child’s pardon may take one sin from the large account.”

CHAPTER II. SHARP IS THE KISS OF THE FALCON’S BEAR.

Hastings stood in the presence of the girl to whom he had pledged his truth. They were alone; but in the next chamber might be heard the peculiar sound made by the mechanism of the Eureka. Happy and lifeless mechanism, which moves, and toils, and strives on, to change the destiny of millions, but hath neither ear nor eye, nor sense nor heart,—the avenues of pain to man! She had—yes, literally—she had recognized her lover’s step upon the stair, she had awakened at once from that dull and icy lethargy with which the words of Alwyn had chained life and soul. She sprang forward as Hastings entered; she threw

herself in delirious joy upon his bosom. “Thou art come, thou art! It is not true, not true. Heaven bless thee! thou art come!” But sudden as the movement was the recoil. Drawing herself back, she gazed steadily on his face, and said, “Lord Hastings, they tell me thy hand is another’s. Is it true?”

“Hear me!” answered the nobleman. “When first I—”

“O God! O God! he answers not, he falters! Speak! Is it true?”

“It is true. I am wedded to another.”

Sibyll did not fall to the ground, nor faint, nor give vent to noisy passion. But the rich colour, which before had been varying and fitful, deserted her cheek, and left it of an ashen whiteness; the lips, too, grew tightly compressed, and her small fingers, interlaced, were clasped with strained and convulsive energy, so that the quivering of the very arms was perceptible. In all else she seemed composed, as she said, “I thank you, my lord, for the simple truth; no more is needed. Heaven bless you and yours! Farewell!”

“Stay! you shall—you must hear me on. Thou knowest how dearly in youth I loved Katherine Nevile. In manhood the memory of that love haunted me, but beneath thy sweet smile I deemed it at last effaced; I left thee to seek the king, and demand his assent to our union. I speak not of obstacles that then arose; in the midst of them I learned Katherine was lone and widowed,—was free. At her own summons I sought her presence, and learned that she had loved me ever,—loved me still. The intoxication of my early dream returned; reverse and exile followed close; Katherine left her state, her fortunes, her native land, and followed the banished man; and so memory and gratitude and destiny concurred, and the mistress of my youth became my wife. None other could have replaced thy image; none other have made me forget the faith I pledged thee. The thought of thee has still pursued me,—will pursue me to the last. I dare not say now that I love thee still, but yet—” He paused, but rapidly resumed, “Enough, enough! dear art thou to me, and honoured,—dearer, more honoured than a sister. Thank Heaven, at least, and thine own virtue, my falsehood leaves thee pure and stainless. Thy hand may yet bless a worthier man. If our cause triumphs, thy fortunes, thy father’s fate, shall be my fondest care. Never, never will my sleep be sweet, and my conscience laid to rest, till I hear thee say, as honoured wife—perchance, as blessed and blessing mother—‘False one, I am happy!’”

A cold smile, at these last words, flitted over the girl’s face,—the smile of a broken heart; but it vanished, and with that strange mixture of sweetness and pride,—mild and forgiving, yet still spirited and firm,—which belonged to her character, she nerved herself to the last and saddest effort to preserve dignity and conceal despair. “Farther words, my lord, are idle; I am rightly punished for a proud folly. Let not woman love above her state. Think no more of my destiny.”

“No, no,” interrupted the remorseful lord, “thy destiny must haunt me till thou hast chosen one with a better right to protect thee.”

At the repetition of that implied desire to transfer her also to another, a noble indignation came to mar the calm for which she had hitherto not vainly struggled. “Oh, man!” she exclaimed, with passion, “does thy deceit give me the right to deceive another? I—I wed!—I—I—vow at the altar—a love dead, dead forever—dead as my own heart! Why dost thou mock me with the hollow phrase, ‘Thou art pure and stainless?’ Is the virginity of the soul still left? Do the tears I have shed for thee; doth the thrill of my heart when I heard thy voice; doth the plighted kiss that burns, burns now into my brow, and on my lips,—do these, these leave me free to carry to a new affection the cinders and ashes of a soul thou hast ravaged and deflowered? Oh, coarse and rude belief of men, that naught is lost if the mere form be pure! The freshness of the first feelings, the bloom of the sinless thought, the sigh, the blush of the devotion—never, never felt but once! these, these make the true dower a maiden should bring to the hearth to which she comes as

wife. Oh, taunt! Oh, insult! to speak to me of happiness, of the altar! Thou never knewest, lord, how I really loved thee!" And for the first time, a violent gush of tears came to relieve her heart.

Hastings was almost equally overcome. Well experienced as he was in those partings when maids reproach and gallants pray for pardon, but still sigh, "Farewell,"—he had now no words to answer that burst of uncontrollable agony; and he felt at once humbled and relieved, when Sibyll again, with one of those struggles which exhaust years of life, and almost leave us callous to all after-trial, pressed back the scalding tears, and said, with unnatural sweetness: "Pardon me, my lord, I meant not to reproach; the words escaped me,—think of them no more. I would fain, at least, part from you now as I had once hoped to part from you at the last hour of life,—without one memory of bitterness and anger, so that my conscience, whatever its other griefs, might say, 'My lips never belied my heart, my words never pained him!' And now then, Lord Hastings, in all charity, we part. Farewell forever, and forever! Thou hast wedded one who loves thee, doubtless, as tenderly as I had done. Ah, cherish that affection! There are times even in thy career when a little love is sweeter than much fame. If thou thinkest I have aught to pardon thee, now with my whole heart I pray, as while life is mine that prayer shall be murmured, 'Heaven forgive this man, as I do! Heaven make his home the home of peace, and breathe into those now near and dear to him, the love and the faith that I once—'" She stopped, for the words choked her, and, hiding her face, held out her hand, in sign of charity and of farewell.

"Ah, if I dared pray like thee," murmured Hastings, pressing his lips upon that burning hand, "how should I weary Heaven to repair, by countless blessings, the wrong which I have done thee! And Heaven will—oh, it surely will!" He pressed the hand to his heart, dropped it, and was gone.

In the courtyard he was accosted by Alwyn—

"Thou hast been frank, my lord?"

"I have."

"And she bears it, and—"

"See how she forgives, and how I suffer!" said Hastings, turning his face towards his rival; and Alwyn saw that the tears were rolling down his cheeks—"Question me no more." There was a long silence. They quitted the precincts of the Tower, and were at the river-side. Hastings, waving his hand to Alwyn, was about to enter the boat which was to bear him to the war council assembled at Baynard's Castle, when the trader stopped him, and said anxiously,—

"Think you not, for the present, the Tower is the safest asylum for Sibyll and her father? If we fail and Warwick returns, they are protected by the earl; if we triumph, thou wilt insure their safety from all foes?"

"Surely; in either case, their present home is the most secure."

The two men then parted. And not long afterwards, Hastings, who led the on-guard, was on his way towards Barnet; with him also went the foot volunteers under Alwyn. The army of York was on its march. Gloucester, to whose vigilance and energy were left the final preparations, was necessarily the last of the generals to quit the city. And suddenly, while his steed was at the gate of Baynard's Castle, he entered, armed cap-a-pie, into the chamber where the Duchess of Bedford sat with her grandchildren.

"Madame," said he, "I have a grace to demand from you, which will, methinks, not be displeasing. My lieutenants report to me that an alarm has spread amongst my men,—a religious horror of some fearful bombards and guns which have been devised by a sorcerer in Lord Warwick's pay. Your famous Friar Bungey has been piously amongst them, promising, however, that the mists which now creep over the

earth shall last through the night and the early morrow; and if he deceive us not, we may post our men so as to elude the hostile artillery. But, sith the friar is so noted and influential, and sith there is a strong fancy that the winds which have driven back Margaret obeyed his charm, the soldiers clamour out for him to attend us, and, on the very field itself, counteract the spells of the Lancastrian nigromancer. The good friar, more accustomed to fight with fiends than men, is daunted, and resists. As much may depend on his showing us good will, and making our fellows suppose we have the best of the witchcraft, I pray you to command his attendance, and cheer up his courage. He waits without."

"A most notable, a most wise advice, beloved Richard!" cried the duchess. "Friar Bungey is, indeed, a potent man. I will win him at once to your will;" and the duchess hurried from the room.

The friar's bodily fears, quieted at last by assurances that he should be posted in a place of perfect safety during the battle, and his avarice excited by promises of the amplest rewards, he consented to accompany the troops, upon one stipulation,—namely, that the atrocious wizard, who had so often baffled his best spells,—the very wizard who had superintended the accursed bombards, and predicted Edward's previous defeat and flight (together with the diabolical invention, in which all the malice and strength of his sorcery were centred),—might, according to Jacquetta's former promise, be delivered forthwith to his mercy, and accompany him to the very spot where he was to dispel and counteract the Lancastrian nigromancer's enchantments. The duchess, too glad to purchase the friar's acquiescence on such cheap terms, and to whose superstitious horror for Adam's lore in the black art was now added a purely political motive for desiring him to be made away with,—inasmuch as in the Sanctuary she had at last extorted from Elizabeth the dark secret which might make him a very dangerous witness against the interests and honour of Edward,—readily and joyfully consented to this proposition.

A strong guard was at once despatched to the Tower with the friar himself, followed by a covered wagon, which was to serve for conveyance to Bungey and his victim.

In the mean while, Sibyll, after remaining for some time in the chamber which Hastings had abandoned to her solitary woe, had passed to the room in which her father held mute commune with his Eureka.

The machine was now thoroughly completed,—improved and perfected, to the utmost art the inventor ever could attain. Thinking that the prejudice against it might have arisen from its uncouth appearance, the poor philosopher had sought now to give it a gracious and imposing appearance. He had painted and gilt it with his own hands; it looked bright and gaudy in its gay hues; its outward form was worthy of the precious and propitious jewel which lay hidden in its centre.

"See, child, see!" said Adam; "is it not beautiful and comely?"

"My dear father, yes!" answered the poor girl, as still she sought to smile; then, after a short silence, she continued, "Father, of late, methinks, I have too much forgotten thee; pardon me, if so. Henceforth, I have no care in life but thee; henceforth let me ever, when thou toilest, come and sit by thy side. I would not be alone,—I dare not! Father, Father! God shield thy harmless life! I have nothing to love under heaven but thee!"

The good man turned wistfully, and raised, with tremulous hands, the sad face that had pressed itself on his bosom. Gazing thereon mournfully, he said, "Some new grief hath chanced to thee, my child. Methought I heard another voice besides thine in yonder room. Ah, has Lord Hastings—"

"Father, spare me! Thou wert too right; thou didst judge too wisely. Lord Hastings is wedded to another! But see, I can smile still, I am calm. My heart will not break so long as it hath thee to love and pray for!"

She wound her arms round him as she spoke, and he roused himself from his world out of earth again. Though he could bring no comfort, there was something, at least, to the forlorn one, in his words of love, in his tears of pity.

They sat down together, side by side, as the evening darkened,—the Eureka forgotten in the hour of its perfection! They noted not the torches which flashed below, reddened at intervals the walls of their chamber, and gave a glow to the gay gilding and bright hues of the gaudy model. Yet those torches flickered round the litter that was to convey Henry the Peaceful to the battlefield, which was to decide the dynasty of his realm! The torches vanished, and forth from the dark fortress went the captive king.

Night succeeded to eve, when again the red glare shot upward on the Eureka, playing with fantastic smile on its quaint aspect. Steps and voices, and the clatter of arms, sounded in the yard, on the stairs, in the adjoining chamber; and suddenly the door was flung open, and, followed by some half score soldiers, strode in the terrible friar.

"Aha, Master Adam! who is the greater nigromancer now? Seize him! Away! And help you, Master Sergeant, to bear this piece of the foul fiend's cunning devising. Ho, ho! see you how it is tricked out and furbished up,—all for the battle, I warrant ye!"

The soldiers had already seized upon Adam, who, stupefied by astonishment rather than fear, uttered no sound, and attempted no struggle. But it was in vain they sought to tear from him Sibyll's clinging and protecting arms. A supernatural strength, inspired by a kind of superstition that no harm could chance to him while she was by, animated her slight form; and fierce though the soldiers were, they shrunk from actual and brutal violence to one thus young and fair. Those small hands clung so firmly, that it seemed that nothing but the edge of the sword could sever the child's clasp from the father's neck.

"Harm him not, harm him at your peril, friar!" she cried, with flashing eyes. "Tear him from me, and if King Edward win the day, Lord Hastings shall have thy life; if Lord Warwick, thy days are numbered, too. Beware, and avaunt!"

The friar was startled. He had forgotten Lord Hastings in the zest of his revenge. He feared that, if Sibyll were left behind, the tale she might tell would indeed bring on him a powerful foe in the daughter's lover; on the other hand, should Lord Warwick get the better, what vengeance would await her appeal to the great protector of her father! He resolved, therefore, on the instant, to take Sibyll as well as her father; and if the fortune of the day allowed him to rid himself of Warner, a good occasion might equally occur to dispose forever of the testimony of Sibyll. He had already formed a cunning calculation in desiring Warner's company; for while, should Edward triumph, the sacrifice of the hated Warner was resolved upon, yet, should the earl get the better, he could make a merit to Warner that he (the friar) had not only spared, but saved, his life, in making him his companion. It was in harmony with this double policy that the friar mildly answered to Sibyll,—

"Tusk, my daughter! Perhaps if your father be true to King Edward, and aid my skill instead of obstructing it, he may be none the worse for the journey he must take; and if thou likest to go with him, there's room in the vehicle, and the more the merrier. Harm them not, soldiers; no doubt they will follow quietly."

As he said this, the men, after first crossing themselves, had already hoisted up the Eureka; and when Adam saw it borne from the room, he instinctively followed the bearers. Sibyll, relieved by the thought that, for weal or for woe, she should, at least, share her father's fate, and scarce foreboding much positive danger from the party which contained Hastings and Alwyn, attempted no further remonstrance.

The Eureka was placed in the enormous vehicle,—it served as a barrier between the friar and his prisoners.

The friar himself, as soon as the wagon was in motion, addressed himself civilly enough to his fellow-travellers, and assured them there was nothing to fear, unless Adam thought fit to disturb his incantations. The captives answered not his address, but nestled close to each other, interchanging, at intervals, words of comfort, and recoiling as far as possible from the ex-tregetour, who, having taken with him a more congenial companion in the shape of a great leathern bottle, finally sunk into the silent and complacent doze which usually rewards the libations to the Bromian god.

The vehicle, with many other baggage-wagons in the rear of the army in that memorable night-march, moved mournfully on; the night continued wrapped in fog and mist, agreeably to the weatherwise predictions of the friar. The rumbling groan of the vehicle, the tramp of the soldiers, the dull rattle of their arms, with now and then the neigh of some knight's steed in the distance, were the only sounds that broke the silence, till once, as they neared their destination, Sibyll started from her father's bosom, and shudderingly thought she recognized the hoarse chant and the tinkling bells of the ominous tymbesteres.

CHAPTER III. A PAUSE.

In the profound darkness of the night and the thick fog, Edward had stationed his men at a venture upon the heath at Gladsmoor, [Edward "had the greater number of men."—HALL, p. 296.] and hastily environed the camp with palisades and trenches. He had intended to have rested immediately in front of the foe, but, in the darkness, mistook the extent of the hostile line; and his men were ranged only opposite to the left side of the earl's force (towards Hadley), leaving the right unopposed. Most fortunate for Edward was this mistake; for Warwick's artillery, and the new and deadly bombards he had constructed, were placed on the right of the earl's army; and the provident earl, naturally supposing Edward's left was there opposed to him, ordered his gunners to cannonade all night. Edward, "as the flashes of the guns illumined by fits the gloom of midnight, saw the advantage of his unintentional error; and to prevent Warwick from discovering it, reiterated his orders for the most profound silence." [Sharon Turner.] Thus even his very blunders favoured Edward more than the wisest precautions had served his fated foe.

Raw, cold, and dismal dawned the morning of the fourteenth of April, the Easter Sabbath. In the fortunes of that day were involved those of all the persons who hitherto, in the course of this narrative, may have seemed to move in separate orbits from the fiery star of Warwick. Now, in this crowning hour, the vast and gigantic destiny of the great earl comprehended all upon which its darkness or its light had fallen: not only the luxurious Edward, the perjured Clarence, the haughty Margaret, her gallant son, the gentle Anne, the remorseful Isabel, the dark guile of Gloucester, the rising fortunes of the gifted Hastings,—but on the hazard of that die rested the hopes of Hilyard, and the interests of the trader Alwyn, and the permanence of that frank, chivalric, hardy, still half Norman race, of which Nicholas Alwyn and his Saxon class were the rival antagonistic principle, and Marmaduke Nevile the ordinary type. Dragged inexorably into the whirlpool of that mighty fate were even the very lives of the simple Scholar, of his obscure and devoted child. Here, into this gory ocean, all scattered rivulets and streams had hastened to merge at last.

But grander and more awful than all individual interests were those assigned to the fortunes of this battle, so memorable in the English annals,—the ruin or triumph of a dynasty; the fall of that warlike baronage, of which Richard Nevile was the personation, the crowning flower, the greatest representative and the last,—associated with memories of turbulence and excess, it is true, but with the proudest and grandest achievements in our early history; with all such liberty as had been yet achieved since the Norman Conquest; with all such glory as had made the island famous,—here with Runnymede, and there with Cressy; the rise of a crafty, plotting, imperious Despotism, based upon the growing sympathy of craftsmen

and traders, and ripening on the one hand to the Tudor tyranny, the Republican reaction under the Stuarts, the slavery, and the civil war, but on the other hand to the concentration of all the vigour and life of genius into a single and strong government, the graces, the arts, the letters of a polished court, the freedom, the energy, the resources of a commercial population destined to rise above the tyranny at which it had first connived, and give to the emancipated Saxon the markets of the world. Upon the victory of that day all these contending interests, this vast alternative in the future, swayed and trembled. Out, then, upon that vulgar craving of those who comprehend neither the vast truths of life nor the grandeur of ideal art, and who ask from poet or narrator the poor and petty morality of "Poetical Justice,"—a justice existing not in our work-day world; a justice existing not in the sombre page of history; a justice existing not in the loftier conceptions of men whose genius has grappled with the enigmas which art and poetry only can foreshadow and divine,—unknown to us in the street and the market, unknown to us on the scaffold of the patriot or amidst the flames of the martyr, unknown to us in the Lear and the Hamlet, in the Agamemnon and the Prometheus. Millions upon millions, ages upon ages, are entered but as items in the vast account in which the recording angel sums up the unerring justice of God to man.

Raw, cold, and dismal dawned the morning of the fourteenth of April. And on that very day Margaret and her son, and the wife and daughter of Lord Warwick, landed, at last, on the shores of England. [Margaret landed at Weymouth; Lady Warwick, at Portsmouth.] Come they for joy or for woe, for victory or despair? The issue of this day's fight on the heath of Gladsmoor will decide. Prank thy halls, O Westminster, for the triumph of the Lancastrian king,—or open thou, O Grave, to receive the saint-like Henry and his noble son. The king-maker goes before ye, saint-like father and noble son, to prepare your thrones amongst the living or your mansions amongst the dead!

CHAPTER IV. THE BATTLE.

Raw, cold, and dismal dawned the morning of the fourteenth of April. The heavy mist still covered both armies, but their hum and stir was already heard through the gloaming,—the neighing of steeds, and the clangour of mail. Occasionally a movement of either force made dim forms, seeming gigantic through the vapour, indistinctly visible to the antagonistic army; and there was something ghastly and unearthlike in these ominous shapes, suddenly seen, and suddenly vanishing, amidst the sullen atmosphere. By this time, Warwick had discovered the mistake of his gunners; for, to the right of the earl, the silence of the Yorkists was still unbroken, while abruptly, from the thick gloom to the left, broke the hoarse mutter and low growl of the awakening war. Not a moment was lost by the earl in repairing the error of the night: his artillery wheeled rapidly from the right wing, and, sudden as a storm of lightning, the fire from the cannon flashed through the dun and heavy vapour, and, not far from the very spot where Hastings was marshalling the wing intrusted to his command, made a deep chasm in the serried ranks. Death had begun his feast!

At that moment, however, from the centre of the Yorkist army, arose, scarcely drowned by the explosion, that deep-toned shout of enthusiasm, which he who has once heard it, coming, as it were, from the one heart of an armed multitude, will ever recall as the most kindling and glorious sound which ever quickened the pulse and thrilled the blood,—for along that part of the army now rode King Edward. His mail was polished as a mirror, but otherwise unadorned, resembling that which now invests his effigies at the Tower, [The suit of armour, however, which the visitor to the Royal Armoury is expected to believe King Edward could have worn, is infinitely too small for such credulity. Edward's height was six feet two inches.] and the housings of his steed were spangled with silver suns, for the silver sun was the cognizance on all his banners. His head was bare, and through the hazy atmosphere the gold of his rich locks seemed literally to shine. Followed by his body squire, with his helm and lance, and the lords in his immediate

staff, his truncheon in his hand, he passed slowly along the steady line, till, halting where he deemed his voice could be farthest heard, he reined in, and lifting his hand, the shout of the soldiery was hushed; though still, while he spoke, from Warwick's archers came the arrowy shower, and still the gloom was pierced and the hush interrupted by the flash and the roar of the bombards.

"Englishmen and friends," said the martial chief, "to bold deeds go but few words. Before you is the foe! From Ravenspur to London I have marched, treason flying from my sword, loyalty gathering to my standard. With but two thousand men, on the fourteenth of March, I entered England; on the fourteenth of April, fifty thousand is my muster roll. Who shall say, then, that I am not king, when one month mans a monarch's army from his subjects' love? And well know ye, now, that my cause is yours and England's! Those against us are men who would rule in despite of law,—barons whom I gorged with favours, and who would reduce this fair realm of King, Lords, and Commons to be the appanage and property of one man's measureless ambition,—the park, forsooth, the homestead to Lord Warwick's private house! Ye gentlemen and knights of England, let them and their rabble prosper, and your properties will be despoiled, your lives insecure, all law struck dead. What differs Richard of Warwick from Jack Cade, save that if his name is nobler, so is his treason greater? Commoners and soldiers of England, freemen, however humble, what do these rebel lords (who would rule in the name of Lancaster) desire? To reduce you to villeins and to bondsmen, as your forefathers were to them. Ye owe freedom from the barons to the just laws of my sires, your kings. Gentlemen and knights, commoners and soldiers, Edward IV. upon his throne will not profit by a victory more than you. This is no war of dainty chivalry,—it is a war of true men against false. No quarter! Spare not either knight or hilding. Warwick, forsooth, will not smite the Commons. Truly not,—the rabble are his friends! I say to you—" and Edward, pausing in the excitement and sanguinary fury of his tiger nature,—the soldiers, heated like himself to the thirst of blood, saw his eyes sparkle, and his teeth gnash, as he added in a deeper and lower, but not less audible voice, "I say to you, SLAY ALL! [Hall.] What heel spares the viper's brood?"

"We will! we will!" was the horrid answer, which came hissing and muttered forth from morion and cap of steel.

"Hark! to their bombards!" resumed Edward. "The enemy would fight from afar, for they excel us in their archers and gunners. Upon them, then, hand to hand, and man to man! Advance banners, sound trumpets! Sir Oliver, my bassinet! Soldiers, if my standard falls, look for the plume upon your king's helmet! Charge!"

Then, with a shout wilder and louder than before, on through the hail of the arrows, on through the glare of the bombards, rather with a rush than in a march, advanced Edward's centre against the array of Somerset; but from a part of the encampment where the circumvallation seemed strongest, a small body of men moved not with the general body.

To the left of the churchyard of Hadley, at this day, the visitor may notice a low wall; on the other side of that wall is a garden, then but a rude eminence on Gladsmoor Heath. On that spot a troop in complete armour, upon destriers pawing impatiently, surrounded a man upon a sorry palfrey, and in a gown of blue,—the colour of royalty and of servitude; that man was Henry the Sixth. In the same space stood Friar Bungey, his foot on the Eureka, muttering incantations, that the mists he had foretold, [Lest the reader should suppose that the importance of Friar Bungey upon this bloody day has been exaggerated by the narrator, we must cite the testimony of sober Allerman Fabyan: "Of the mists and other impediments which fell upon the lords' party, by reason of the incantations wrought by Friar Bungey, as the fame went, me list not to write."] and which had protected the Yorkists from the midnight guns, might yet last, to the confusion of the foe. And near him, under a gaunt, leafless tree, a rope round his neck, was Adam Warner, Sibyl still faithful to his side, nor shuddering at the arrows and the guns, her whole fear concentrated upon the sole life for which her own was prized. Upon this eminence, then, these lookers-on stood aloof. And the meek ears of Henry heard through the fog the inexplicable, sullen, jarring clash,—steel had met steel.

"Holy Father!" exclaimed the kingly saint, "and this is the Easter Sabbath, Thy most solemn day of peace!"

"Be silent," thundered the friar; "thou disturbest my spells. Barabbarara, Santhinoa, Foggibus increscebo, confusio inimicis, Garabbora, vapor et mistes!"

We must now rapidly survey the dispositions of the army under Warwick. In the right wing, the command was entrusted to the Earl of Oxford and the Marquis of Montagu. The former, who led the cavalry of that division, was stationed in the van; the latter, according to his usual habit—surrounded by a strong body-guard of knights and a prodigious number of squires as aides-de-camp—remained at the rear, and directed thence by his orders the general movement. In this wing the greater number were Lancastrian, jealous of Warwick, and only consenting to the generalship of Montagu because shared by their favourite hero, Oxford. In the mid-space lay the chief strength of the bowmen, with a goodly number of pikes and bills, under the Duke of Somerset; and this division also was principally Lancastrian, and shared the jealousy of Oxford's soldiery. The left wing, composed for the most part of Warwick's yeomanry and retainers, was commanded by the Duke of Exeter, conjointly with the earl himself. Both armies kept a considerable body in reserve, and Warwick, besides this resource, had selected from his own retainers a band of picked archers, whom he had skilfully placed in the outskirts of a wood that then stretched from Wrotham Park to the column that now commemorates the battle of Barnet, on the high northern road. He had guarded these last-mentioned archers (where exposed in front to Edward's horsemen) by strong tall barricades, leaving only such an opening as would allow one horseman at a time to pass, and defending by a formidable line of pikes this narrow opening left for communication, and to admit to a place of refuge in case of need. These dispositions made, and ere yet Edward had advanced on Somerset, the earl rode to the front of the wing under his special command, and, agreeably to the custom of the time, observed by his royal foe, harangued the troops. Here were placed those who loved him as a father, and venerated him as something superior to mortal man; here the retainers who had grown up with him from his childhood, who had followed him to his first fields of war, who had lived under the shelter of his many castles, and fed, in that rude equality of a more primeval age which he loved still to maintain, at his lavish board. And now Lord Warwick's coal-black steed halted, motionless in the van. His squire behind bore his helmet, overshadowed by the eagle of Monthermer, the outstretched wings of which spread wide into sable plumes; and as the earl's noble face turned full and calm upon the bristling lines, there arose not the vulgar uproar that greeted the aspect of the young Edward. By one of those strange sympathies which pass through multitudes, and seize them with a common feeling, the whole body of those adoring vassals became suddenly aware of the change which a year had made in the face of their chief and father. They saw the gray flakes in his Jove-like curls, the furrows in that lofty brow, the hollows in that bronzed and manly visage, which had seemed to their rude admiration to wear the stamp of the twofold Divinity,—Beneficence and Valour. A thrill of tenderness and awe shot through the veins of every one, tears of devotion rushed into many a hardy eye. No! there was not the ruthless captain addressing his hireling butchers; it was the chief and father rallying gratitude and love and reverence to the crisis of his stormy fate.

"My friends, my followers, and my children," said the earl, "the field we have entered is one from which there is no retreat; here must your leader conquer or here die. It is not a parchment pedigree, it is not a name derived from the ashes of dead men, that make the only charter of a king. We Englishmen were but slaves, if, in giving crown and sceptre to a mortal like ourselves, we asked not in return the kingly virtues. Beset of old by evil counsellors, the reign of Henry VI. was obscured, and the weal of the realm endangered. Mine own wrongs seemed to me great, but the disasters of my country not less. I deemed that in the race of York, England would know a wiser and happier rule. What was, in this, mine error, ye partly know. A prince dissolved in luxurious vices, a nobility degraded by minions and blood-suckers, a people plundered by purveyors, and a land disturbed by brawl and riot. But ye know not all: God makes man's hearth man's altar: our hearths were polluted, our wives and daughters were viewed as harlots, and lechery ruled the realm. A king's word should be fast as the pillars of the world. What man ever trusted Edward

and was not deceived? Even now the unknightly liar stands in arms with the weight of perjury on his soul. In his father's town of York, ye know that he took, three short weeks since, solemn oath of fealty to King Henry. And now King Henry is his captive, and King Henry's holy crown upon his traitor's head. 'Traitors' calls he Us? What name, then, rank enough for him? Edward gave the promise of a brave man, and I served him. He proved a base, a false, a licentious, and a cruel king, and I forsook him; may all free hearts in all free lands so serve kings when they become tyrants! Ye fight against a cruel and atrocious usurper, whose bold hand cannot sanctify a black heart; ye fight not only for King Henry, the meek and the godly,—ye fight not for him alone, but for his young and princely son, the grandchild of Henry of Agincourt, who, old men tell me, has that hero's face, and who, I know, has that hero's frank and royal and noble soul; ye fight for the freedom of your land, for the honour of your women, for what is better than any king's cause,—for justice and mercy, for truth and manhood's virtues against corruption in the laws, slaughter by the scaffold, falsehood in a ruler's lips, and shameless harlotry in the councils of ruthless power. The order I have ever given in war I give now; we war against the leaders of evil, not against the hapless tools; we war against our oppressors, not against our misguided brethren. Strike down every plumed crest, but when the strife is over, spare every common man! Hark! while I speak, I hear the march of your foe! Up standards!—blow trumpets! And now, as I brace my bassinet, may God grant us all a glorious victory, or a glorious grave! On, my merry men! show these London loons the stout hearts of Warwickshire and Yorkshire. On, my merry men! A Warwick! A Warwick!"

As he ended, he swung lightly over his head the terrible battle-axe which had smitten down, as the grass before the reaper, the chivalry of many a field; and ere the last blast of the trumpets died, the troops of Warwick and of Gloucester met, and mingled hand to hand.

Although the earl had, on discovering the position of the enemy, moved some of his artillery from his right wing, yet there still lay the great number and strength of his force. And there, therefore, Montagu, rolling troop on troop to the aid of Oxford, pressed so overpoweringly upon the soldiers under Hastings, that the battle very soon wore a most unfavourable aspect for the Yorkists. It seemed, indeed, that the success which had always hitherto attended the military movements of Montagu was destined for a crowning triumph. Stationed, as we have said, in the rear, with his light-armed squires, upon fleet steeds, around him, he moved the springs of the battle with the calm sagacity which at that moment no chief in either army possessed. Hastings was thoroughly outflanked, and though his men fought with great valour, they could not resist the weight of superior numbers.

In the midst of the carnage in the centre, Edward reined in his steed as he heard the cry of victory in the gale.

"By Heaven!" he exclaimed, "our men at the left are cravens! they fly! they fly!—Ride to Lord Hastings, Sir Humphrey Bourchier, bid him defile hither what men are left him; and now, ere our fellows are well aware what hath chanced yonder, charge we, knights and gentlemen, on, on!—break Somerset's line; on, on, to the heart of the rebel earl!"

Then, visor closed, lance in rest, Edward and his cavalry dashed through the archers and billmen of Somerset; clad in complete mail, impervious to the weapons of the infantry, they slaughtered as they rode, and their way was marked by corpses and streams of blood. Fiercest and fellest of all was Edward himself; when his lance shivered, and he drew his knotty mace from its sling by his saddlebow, woe to all who attempted to stop his path. Vain alike steel helmet or leathern cap, jerkin or coat of mail. In vain Somerset threw himself into the melee. The instant Edward and his cavalry had made a path through the lines for his foot-soldiery, the fortunes of the day were half retrieved. It was no rapid passage, pierced and reclosed, that he desired to effect,—it was the wedge in the oak of war. There, rooted in the very midst of Somerset's troops, doubling on each side, passing on but to return again, where helm could be crashed and man overthrown, the mighty strength of Edward widened the breach more and more, till faster and faster

poured in his bands, and the centre of Warwick's army seemed to reel and whirl round the broadening gap through its ranks, as the waves round some chasm in a maelstrom.

But in the interval, the hard-pressed troops commanded by Hastings were scattered and dispersed; driven from the field, they fled in numbers through the town of Barnet; many halted not till they reached London, where they spread the news of the earl's victory and Edward's ruin. [Sharon Turner.]

Through the mist, Friar Bungey discerned the fugitive Yorkists under Hastings, and heard their cries of despair; through the mist, Sibyll saw, close beneath the intrenchments which protected the space on which they stood, an armed horseman with the well-known crest of Hastings on his helmet, and, with lifted visor, calling his men to the return, in the loud voice of rage and scorn. And then she herself sprang forwards, and forgetting his past cruelty in his present danger, cried his name,—weak cry, lost in the roar of war! But the friar, now fearing he had taken the wrong side, began to turn from his spells, to address the most abject apologies to Adam, to assure him that he would have been slaughtered at the Tower but for the friar's interruption; and that the rope round his neck was but an insignificant ceremony due to the prejudices of the soldiers. "Alas, Great Man," he concluded, "I see still that thou art mightier than I am; thy charms, though silent, are more potent than mine, though my lungs crack beneath them! Confusio Inimicis Taralorolu, I mean no harm to the earl. Garrabora, mistes et nubes!—Lord, what will become of me!"

Meanwhile, Hastings—with a small body of horse, who being composed of knights and squires, specially singled out for the sword, fought with the pride of disdainful gentlemen, and the fury of desperate soldiers—finding it impossible to lure back the fugitives, hewed their own way through Oxford's ranks to the centre, where they brought fresh aid to the terrible arm of Edward.

CHAPTER V. THE BATTLE.

The mist still continued so thick that Montagu was unable to discern the general prospects of the field; but, calm and resolute in his post, amidst the arrows which whirled round him, and often struck, blunted, against his Milan mail, the marquis received the reports of his aides-de-camp (may that modern word be pardoned?) as one after one they emerged through the fog to his side.

"Well," he said, as one of these messengers now spurred to the spot, "we have beaten off Hastings and his hirelings; but I see not 'the Silver Star' of Lord Oxford's banner." [The Silver Star of the De Veres had its origin in a tradition that one of their ancestors, when fighting in the Holy Land, saw a falling star descend upon his shield. Fatal to men nobler even than the De Veres was that silver falling star.]

"Lord Oxford, my lord, has followed the enemy he routed to the farthest verge of the heath."

"Saints help us! Is Oxford thus headstrong? He will ruin all if he be decoyed from the field! Ride back, sir! Yet hold!"—as another of the aides-de-camp appeared. "What news from Lord Warwick's wing?"

"Sore beset, bold marquis. Gloucester's line seems countless; it already outflanks the earl. The duke himself seems inspired by hell! Twice has his slight arm braved even the earl's battle-axe, which spared the boy but smote to the dust his comrades!"

"Well, and what of the centre, sir?" as a third form now arrived.

"There rages Edward in person. He hath pierced into the midst. But Somerset still holds on gallantly!" Montagu turned to the first aide-de-camp.

"Ride, sir! Quick! This to Oxford—No pursuit! Bid him haste, with all his men, to the left wing, and smite Gloucester in the rear. Ride, ride, for life and victory! If he come but in time the day is ours!" [Fabyan.]

The aide-de-camp darted off, and the mist swallowed up horse and horseman.

"Sound trumpets to the return!" said the marquis. Then, after a moment's musing, "Though Oxford hath drawn off our main force of cavalry, we have still some stout lances left; and Warwick must be strengthened. On to the earl! Laissez aller! A Montagu! a Montagu!" And lance in rest, the marquis and the knights immediately around him, and hitherto not personally engaged, descended the hillock at a hand-gallop, and were met by a troop outnumbering their own, and commanded by the Lords D'Eyncourt and Say.

At this time Warwick was indeed in the same danger that had routed the troops of Hastings; for, by a similar position, the strength of the hostile numbers being arrayed with Gloucester, the duke's troops had almost entirely surrounded him [Sharon Turner]; and Gloucester himself wondrously approved the trust that had consigned to his stripling arm the flower of the Yorkist army. Through the mists the blood-red manteline he wore over his mail, the grinning teeth of the boar's head which crested his helmet, flashed and gleamed wherever his presence was most needed to encourage the flagging or spur on the fierce. And there seemed to both armies something ghastly and preternatural in the savage strength of this small slight figure thus startlingly caparisoned, and which was heard evermore uttering its sharp war-cry, "Gloucester to the onslaught! Down with the rebels, down!"

Nor did this daring personage disdain, in the midst of his fury, to increase the effect of valour by the art of a brain that never ceased to scheme on the follies of mankind. "See, see!" he cried, as he shot meteor-like from rank to rank, "see, these are no natural vapours! Yonder the mighty friar, who delayed the sails of Margaret, chants his spells to the Powers that ride the gale. Fear not the bombards,—their enchanted balls swerve from the brave! The dark legions of Air fight for us! For the hour is come when the fiend shall rend his prey!" And fiendlike seemed the form thus screeching forth its predictions from under the grim head-gear; and then darting and disappearing amidst the sea of pikes, cleaving its path of blood!

But still the untiring might of Warwick defied the press of numbers that swept round him tide upon tide. Through the mist, his black armour, black plume, black steed, gloomed forth like one thundercloud in the midst of a dismal heaven. The noble charger bore along that mighty rider, animating, guiding all, with as much ease and lightness as the racer bears its puny weight; the steed itself was scarce less terrible to encounter than the sweep of the rider's axe. Protected from arrow and lance by a coat of steel, the long chaffron, or pike, which projected from its barbed frontal dropped with gore as it scoured along. No line of men, however serried, could resist the charge of that horse and horseman. And vain even Gloucester's dauntless presence and thrilling battle-cry, when the stout earl was seen looming through the vapour, and his cheerful shout was heard, "My merry men, fight on!"

For a third time, Gloucester, spurring forth from his recoiling and shrinking followers, bending low over his saddle-bow, covered by his shield, and with the tenth lance (his favourite weapon, because the one in which skill best supplied strength) he had borne that day, launched himself upon the vast bulk of his tremendous foe. With that dogged energy, that rapid calculation, which made the basis of his character, and which ever clove through all obstacles at the one that, if destroyed, destroyed the rest,—in that, his first great battle, as in his last at Bosworth, he singled out the leader, and rushed upon the giant as the mastiff on the horns and dewlap of the bull. Warwick, in the broad space which his arm had made around him in the carnage, reined in as he saw the foe and recognized the grisly cognizance and scarlet mantle of his godson. And even in that moment, with all his heated blood and his remembered wrong and his

imminent peril, his generous and lion heart felt a glow of admiration at the valour of the boy he had trained to arms,—of the son of the beloved York. “His father little thought,” muttered the earl, “that that arm should win glory against his old friend’s life!” And as the half-uttered word died on his lips, the well-poised lance of Gloucester struck full upon his bassinet, and, despite the earl’s horsemanship and his strength, made him reel in his saddle, while the prince shot by, and suddenly wheeling round, cast away the shivered lance, and assailed him sword in hand.

“Back, Richard! boy, back!” said the earl, in a voice that sounded hollow through his helmet; “it is not against thee that my wrongs call for blood,—pass on!”

“Not so, Lord Warwick,” answered Richard, in a sobered and almost solemn voice, dropping for the moment the point of his sword, and raising his visor, that he might be the better heard,—“on the field of battle all memories sweet in peace must die! Saint Paul be my judge, that even in this hour I love you well; but I love renown and glory more. On the edge of my sword sit power and royalty, and what high souls prize most,—ambition; these would nerve me against my own brother’s breast, were that breast my barrier to an illustrious future. Thou hast given thy daughter to another! I smite the father to regain my bride. Lay on, and spare not!—for he who hates thee most would prove not so fell a foe as the man who sees his fortunes made or marred, his love crushed or yet crowned, as this day’s battle closes in triumph or defeat. REBEL, DEFEND THYSELF!”

No time was left for further speech; for as Richard’s sword descended, two of Gloucester’s followers, Parr and Milwater by name, dashed from the halting lines at the distance, and bore down to their young prince’s aid. At the same moment, Sir Marmaduke Nevile and the Lord Fitzhugh spurred from the opposite line; and thus encouraged, the band on either side came boldly forward, and the melee grew fierce and general. But still Richard’s sword singled out the earl, and still the earl, parrying his blows, dealt his own upon meaner heads. Crushed by one sweep of the axe fell Milwater to the earth; down, as again it swung on high, fell Sir Humphrey Bourchier, who had just arrived to Gloucester with messages from Edward, never uttered in the world below. Before Marmaduke’s lance fell Sir Thomas Parr; and these three corpses making a barrier between Gloucester and the earl, the duke turned fiercely upon Marmaduke, while the earl, wheeling round, charged into the midst of the hostile line, which scattered to the right and left.

“On! my merry men, on!” rang once more through the heavy air. “They give way, the London tailors,—on!” and on dashed, with their joyous cry, the merry men of Yorkshire and Warwick, the warrior yeomen! Separated thus from his great foe, Gloucester, after unhorsing Marmaduke, galloped off to sustain that part of his following which began to waver and retreat before the rush of Warwick and his chivalry.

This, in truth, was the regiment recruited from the loyalty of London; and little accustomed, we trow, were the worthy heroes of Cockaigne to the discipline of arms, nor trained to that stubborn resistance which makes, under skilful leaders, the English peasants the most enduring soldiery that the world has known since the day when the Roman sentinel perished amidst the falling columns and lava floods [at Pompeii], rather than, though society itself dissolved, forsake his post unbidden. “Saint Thomas defend us!” muttered a worthy tailor, who in the flush of his valour, when safe in the Chepe, had consented to bear the rank of lieutenant; “it is not reasonable to expect men of pith and substance to be crushed into jellies and carved into subtleties by horse-hoofs and pole-axes. Right about face! Fly!”—and throwing down his sword and shield, the lieutenant fairly took to his heels as he saw the charging column, headed by the raven steed of Warwick, come giant-like through the fog. The terror of one man is contagious, and the Londoners actually turned their backs, when Nicholas Alwyn cried, in his shrill voice and northern accent, “Out on you! What will the girls say of us in East-gate and the Chepe? Hurrah for the bold hearts of London! Round me, stout ‘prentices! let the boys shame the men! This shaft for Cockaigne!” And as the troop turned irresolute, and Alwyn’s arrow left his bow, they saw a horseman by the side of Warwick reel in his saddle and fall at once to the earth; and so great evidently was the rank of the fallen man that even

Warwick reined in, and the charge halted midway in its career. It was no less a person than the Duke of Exeter whom Alwyn's shaft had disabled for the field. This incident, coupled with the hearty address of the stout goldsmith, served to reanimate the flaggers, and Gloucester, by a circuitous route, reaching their line a moment after, they dressed their ranks, and a flight of arrows followed their loud "Hurrah for London Town!"

But the charge of Warwick had only halted, and (while the wounded Exeter was borne back by his squires to the rear) it dashed into the midst of the Londoners, threw their whole line into confusion, and drove them, despite all the efforts of Gloucester, far back along the plain. This well-timed exploit served to extricate the earl from the main danger of his position; and, hastening to improve his advantage, he sent forthwith to command the reserved forces under Lord St. John, the Knight of Lytton, Sir John Coniers, Dymoke, and Robert Hilyard, to bear down to his aid.

At this time Edward had succeeded, after a most stubborn fight, in effecting a terrible breach through Somerset's wing; and the fog continued still so dense and mirk, that his foe itself—for Somerset had prudently drawn back to re-form his disordered squadron—seemed vanished from the field. Halting now, as through the dim atmosphere came from different quarters the many battle-cries of that feudal-day, by which alone he could well estimate the strength or weakness of those in the distance, his calmer genius as a general cooled, for a time, his individual ferocity of knight and soldier. He took his helmet from his brow to listen with greater certainty; and the lords and riders round him were well content to take breath and pause from the weary slaughter.

The cry of "Gloucester to the onslaught!" was heard no more. Feebler and feebler, scatteringly as it were, and here and there, the note had changed into "Gloucester to the rescue!"

Farther off rose, mingled and blent together, the opposing shouts, "A Montagu! a Montagu! Strike for D'Eyncourt and King Edward!"—"A Say! A Say!"

"Ha!" said Edward, thoughtfully, "bold Gloucester fails, Montagu is bearing on to Warwick's aid, Say and D'Eyncourt stop his path. Our doom looks dark! Ride, Hastings,—ride; retrieve thy laurels, and bring up the reserve under Clarence. But hark ye, leave not his side,—he may desert again! Ho! ho! Again, 'Gloucester to the rescue!' Ah, how lustily sounds the cry of 'Warwick!' By the flaming sword of Saint Michael, we will slacken that haughty shout, or be evermore dumb ourself, ere the day be an hour nearer to the eternal judgment!"

Deliberately Edward rebraced his helm, and settled himself in his saddle, and with his knights riding close each to each, that they might not lose themselves in the darkness, regained his infantry, and led them on to the quarter where the war now raged fiercest, round the black steed of Warwick and the blood-red manteline of the fiery Richard.

CHAPTER VI. THE BATTLE.

It was now scarcely eight in the morning, though the battle had endured three hours; and, as yet, victory so inclined to the earl that nought but some dire mischance could turn the scale. Montagu had cut his way to Warwick; Somerset had re-established his array. The fresh vigour brought by the earl's reserve had well-nigh completed his advantage over Gloucester's wing. The new infantry under Hilyard, the unexhausted riders under Sir John Coniers and his knightly compeers, were dealing fearful havoc, as they cleared the

plain; and Gloucester, fighting inch by inch, no longer outnumbering but outnumbered, was driven nearer and nearer towards the town, when suddenly a pale, sickly, and ghostlike ray of sunshine, rather resembling the watery gleam of a waning moon than the radiance of the Lord of Light, broke through the mists, and showed to the earl's eager troops the banner and badges of a new array hurrying to the spot. "Behold," cried the young Lord Fitzhugh, "the standard and the badge of the Usurper,—a silver sun! Edward himself is delivered into our hands! Upon them, bill and pike, lance and brand, shaft and bolt! Upon them, and crown the day!"

The same fatal error was shared by Hilyard, as he caught sight of the advancing troop, with their silvery cognizance. He gave the word, and every arrow left its string. At the same moment, as both horse and foot assailed the fancied foe, the momentary beam vanished from the heaven, the two forces mingled in the sullen mists, when, after a brief conflict, a sudden and horrible cry of "Treason! Treason!" resounded from either band. The shining star of Oxford, returning from the pursuit, had been mistaken for Edward's cognizance of the sun. [Cont. Croyl., 555; Fabyan, Habington, Hume, S. Turner.] Friend was slaughtering friend, and when the error was detected, each believed the other had deserted to the foe. In vain, here Montagu and Warwick, and there Oxford and his captains, sought to dispel the confusion, and unite those whose blood had been fired against each other. While yet in doubt, confusion, and dismay, rushed full into the centre Edward of York himself, with his knights and riders; and his tossing banners, scarcely even yet distinguished from Oxford's starry ensigns, added to the general incertitude and panic. Loud in the midst rose Edward's trumpet voice, while through the midst, like one crest of foam upon a roaring sea, danced his plume of snow. Hark! again, again—near and nearer—the tramp of steeds, the clash of steel, the whiz and hiss of arrows, the shout of "Hastings to the onslaught!" Fresh, and panting for glory and for blood, came on King Edward's large reserve; from all the scattered parts of the field spurred the Yorkist knights, where the uproar, so much mightier than before, told them that the crisis of the war was come. Thither, as vultures to the carcass, they flocked and wheeled; thither D'Eyncourt and Lovell, and Cromwell's bloody sword, and Say's knotted mace; and thither, again rallying his late half-beaten myrmidons, the grim Gloucester, his helmet bruised and dinted, but the boar's teeth still gnashing wrath and horror from the grisly crest. But direst and most hateful of all in the eyes of the yet undaunted earl, thither, plainly visible, riding scarcely a yard before him, with the cognizance of Clare wrought on his gay mantle, and in all the pomp and bravery of a holiday suit, came the perjured Clarence. Conflict now it could scarce be called: as well might the Dane have rolled back the sea from his footstool, as Warwick and his disordered troop (often and aye, dazzled here by Oxford's star, there by Edward's sun, dealing random blows against each other) have resisted the general whirl and torrent of the surrounding foe. To add to the rout, Somerset and the on-guard of his wing had been marching towards the earl at the very time that the cry of "treason" had struck their ears, and Edward's charge was made; these men, nearly all Lancastrians, and ever doubting Montagu, if not Warwick, with the example of Clarence and the Archbishop of York fresh before them, lost heart at once,—Somerset himself headed the flight of his force.

"All is lost!" said Montagu, as side by side with Warwick the brothers fronted the foe, and for one moment stayed the rush.

"Not yet," returned the earl; "a band of my northern archers still guard yon wood; I know them,—they will fight to the last gasp! Thither, then, with what men we may. You so marshal our soldiers, and I will make good the retreat. Where is Sir Marmaduke Nevile?"

"Here!"

"Horsed again, young cousin! I give thee a perilous commission. Take the path down the hill; the mists thicken in the hollows, and may hide thee. Overtake Somerset; he hath fled westward, and tell him, from me, if he can yet rally but one troop of horse—but one—and charge Edward suddenly in the rear, he will yet redeem all. If he refuse, the ruin of his king and the slaughter of the brave men he deserts be on his head! Swift, a tout bride, Marmaduke. Yet one word," added the earl, in a whisper,—"if you fail with

Somerset, come not back, make to the Sanctuary. You are too young to die, cousin! Away! keep to the hollows of the chase."

As the knight vanished, Warwick turned to his comrades "Bold nephew Fitzhugh, and ye brave riders round me,—so we are fifty knights! Haste thou, Montagu, to the wood! the wood!"

So noble in that hero age was the Individual MAN, even amidst the multitudes massed by war, that history vies with romance in showing how far a single sword could redress the scale of war. While Montagu, with rapid dexterity, and a voice yet promising victory, drew back the remnant of the lines, and in serried order retreated to the outskirts of the wood, Warwick and his band of knights protected the movement from the countless horsemen who darted forth from Edward's swarming and momently thickening ranks. Now dividing and charging singly, now rejoining, and breast to breast, they served to divert and perplex and harass the eager enemy. And never in all his wars, in all the former might of his indomitable arm, had Warwick so excelled the martial chivalry of his age, as in that eventful and crowning hour. Thrice almost alone he penetrated into the very centre of Edward's body-guard, literally felling to the earth all before him. Then perished by his battle-axe Lord Cromwell and the redoubted Lord of Say; then, no longer sparing even the old affection, Gloucester was hurled to the ground. The last time he penetrated even to Edward himself, smiting down the king's standard-bearer, unhorsing Hastings, who threw himself on his path; and Edward, setting his teeth in stern joy as he saw him, rose in his stirrups, and for a moment the mace of the king, the axe of the earl, met as thunder encounters thunder; but then a hundred knights rushed into the rescue, and robbed the baffled avenger of his prey. Thus charging and retreating, driving back with each charge farther and farther the mighty multitude hounding on to the lion's death, this great chief and his devoted knights, though terribly reduced in number, succeeded at last in covering Montagu's skilful retreat; and when they gained the outskirts of the wood, and dashed through the narrow opening between the barricades, the Yorkshire archers approved their lord's trust, and, shouting, as to a marriage feast, hailed his coming.

But few, alas! of his fellow-horsemen had survived that marvellous enterprise of valour and despair. Of the fifty knights who had shared its perils, eleven only gained the wood; and, though in this number the most eminent (save Sir John Coniers, either slain or fled) might be found, their horses, more exposed than themselves, were for the most part wounded and unfit for further service. At this time the sun again, and suddenly as before, broke forth,—not now with a feeble glimmer, but a broad and almost a cheerful beam, which sufficed to give a fuller view than the day had yet afforded of the state and prospects of the field.

To the right and to the left, what remained of the cavalry of Warwick were seen flying fast,—gone the lances of Oxford, the bills of Somerset. Exeter, pierced by the shaft of Alwyn, was lying cold and insensible, remote from the contest, and deserted even by his squires.

In front of the archers and such men as Montagu had saved from the sword, halted the immense and murmuring multitude of Edward, their thousand banners glittering in the sudden sun; for, as Edward beheld the last wrecks of his foe, stationed near the covert, his desire of consummating victory and revenge made him cautious, and, fearing an ambush, he had abruptly halted.

When the scanty followers of the earl thus beheld the immense force arrayed for their destruction, and saw the extent of their danger, and their loss,—here the handful, there the multitude,—a simultaneous exclamation of terror and dismay broke from their ranks.

"Children!" cried Warwick, "droop not! Henry at Agincourt had worse odds than we!"

But the murmur among the archers, the lealest part of the earl's retainers, continued, till there stepped forth their captain, a gray old man, but still sinewy and unbent, the iron relic of a hundred battles.

"Back to your men, Mark Forester!" said the earl, sternly.

The old man obeyed not. He came on to Warwick, and fell on his knees beside his stirrup.

"Fly, my lord! escape is possible for you and your riders. Fly through the wood, we will screen your path with our bodies. Your children, father of your followers, your children of Middleham, ask no better fate than to die for you! Is it not so?" and the old man, rising, turned to those in hearing. They answered by a general acclamation.

"Mark Forester speaks well," said Montagu. "On you depends the last hope of Lancaster. We may yet join Oxford and Somerset! This way through the wood,—come!" and he laid his hand on the earl's rein.

"Knights and sirs," said the earl, dismounting, and partially raising his visor as he turned to the horsemen, "let those who will, fly with Lord Montagu! Let those who, in a just cause, never despair of victory, nor, even at the worst, fear to face their Maker, fresh from the glorious death of heroes, dismount with me!" Every knight sprang from his steed, Montagu the first. "Comrades!" continued the earl, then addressing the retainers, "when the children fight for a father's honour, the father flies not from the peril into which he has drawn the children. What to me were life, stained by the blood of mine own beloved retainers, basely deserted by their chief? Edward has proclaimed that he will spare none. Fool! he gives us, then, the superhuman mightiness of despair! To your bows!—one shaft—if it pierce the joints of the tyrant's mail—one shaft may scatter yon army to the winds! Sir Marmaduke has gone to rally noble Somerset and his riders; if we make good our defence one little hour, the foe may be yet smitten in the rear, and the day retrieved! Courage and heart then!" Here the earl lifted his visor to the farthest bar, and showed his cheerful face—"Is this the face of a man who thinks all hope is gone?"

In this interval, the sudden sunshine revealed to King Henry, where he stood, the dispersion of his friends. To the rear of the palisades, which protected the spot where he was placed, already grouped "the lookers-on and no fighters," as the chronicler [Fabyan] words it, who, as the guns slackened, ventured forth to learn the news, and who now, filling the churchyard of Hadley, strove hard to catch a peep of Henry the saint, or of Bungey the sorcerer. Mingled with these gleamed the robes of the tymbesteres, pressing nearer and nearer to the barriers, as wolves, in the instinct of blood, come nearer and nearer round the circling watch-fire of some northern travellers. At this time the friar, turning to one of the guards who stood near him, said, "The mists are needed no more now; King Edward hath got the day, eh?"

"Certes, great master," quoth the guard, "nothing now lacks to the king's triumph except the death of the earl."

"Infamous nigromancer, hear that!" cried Bungey to Adam. "What now avail thy bombards and thy talisman! Hark yet—tell me the secret of the last,—of the damnable engine under my feet, and I may spare thy life."

Adam shrugged his shoulders in impatient disdain. "Unless I gave thee my science, my secret were profitless to thee. Villain and numskull, do thy worst."

The friar made a sign to a soldier who stood behind Adam, and the soldier silently drew the end of the rope which girded the scholar's neck round a bough of the leafless tree. "Hold!" whispered the friar, "not till I give the word. The earl may recover himself yet," he added to himself; and therewith he began once more to vociferate his incantations. Meanwhile the eyes of Sibyll had turned for a moment from her father; for the burst of sunshine, lighting up the valley below, had suddenly given to her eyes, in the distance, the gable-ends of the old farmhouse, with the wintry orchard,—no longer, alas! smiling with starry blossoms. Far remote from the battlefield was that abode of peace,—that once happy home, where she had watched the coming of the false one!

Loftier and holier were the thoughts of the fated king. He had turned his face from the field, and his eyes were fixed upon the tower of the church behind. And while he so gazed, the knoll from the belfry began solemnly to chime. It was now near the hour of the Sabbath prayers, and amidst horror and carnage, still the holy custom was not suspended.

“Hark!” said the king, mournfully, “that chime summons many a soul to God!”

While thus the scene on the eminence of Hadley, Edward, surrounded by Hastings, Gloucester, and his principal captains, took advantage of the unexpected sunshine to scan the foe and its position, with the eye of his intuitive genius for all that can slaughter man. “This day,” he said, “brings no victory, assures no crown, if Warwick escape alive. To you, Lovell and Ratcliffe, I intrust two hundred knights,—your sole care the head of the rebel earl!”

“And Montagu?” said Ratcliffe.

“Montagu? Nay, poor Montagu, I loved him as well once as my own mother’s son; and Montagu,” he muttered to himself, “I never wronged, and therefore him I can forgive. Spare the marquis.—I mislike that wood; they must have more force within than that handful on the skirts betrays. Come hither, D’Eyncourt.”

And a few minutes afterwards, Warwick and his men saw two parties of horse leave the main body, one for the right hand, one the left, followed by long detachments of pikes, which they protected; and then the central array marched slowly and steadily on towards the scanty foe. The design was obvious,—to surround on all sides the enemy, driven to its last desperate bay. But Montagu and his brother had not been idle in the breathing-pause; they had planted the greater portion of the archers skilfully among the trees. They had placed their pikemen on the verge of the barricades made by sharp stakes and fallen timber, and where their rampart was unguarded by the pass which had been left free for the horsemen, Hilyard and his stoutest fellows took their post, filling the gap with breasts of iron.

And now, as with horns and clarions, with a sea of plumes and spears and pennons, the multitudinous deathsmen came on, Warwick, towering in the front, not one feather on his eagle crest despoiled or shorn, stood, dismounted, his visor still raised, by his renowned steed. Some of the men had by Warwick’s order removed the mail from the destrier’s breast; and the noble animal, relieved from the weight, seemed as unexhausted as its rider; save where the champed foam had bespecked its glossy hide, not a hair was turned; and the on-guard of the Yorkists heard its fiery snort as they moved slowly on. This figure of horse and horseman stood prominently forth amidst the little band. And Lovell, riding by Ratcliffe’s side, whispered, “Beshrew me, I would rather King Edward had asked for mine own head than that gallant earl’s!”

“Tush, youth,” said the inexorable Ratcliffe, “I care not of what steps the ladder of mine ambition may be made!”

While they were thus speaking, Warwick, turning to Montagu and his knights, said,—

“Our sole hope is in the courage of our men. And, as at Towton, when I gave the throne to yon false man, I slew, with my own hand, my noble Malech, to show that on that spot I would win or die, and by that sacrifice so fired the soldiers, that we turned the day, so now—oh, gentlemen, in another hour ye would jeer me, for my hand fails: this hand that the poor beast hath so often fed from! Saladin, last of thy race, serve me now in death as in life. Not for my sake, oh noblest steed that ever bore a knight,—not for mine this offering!”

He kissed the destrier on his frontal, and Saladin, as if conscious of the coming blow, bent his proud crest humbly, and licked his lord's steel-clad hand. So associated together had been horse and horseman, that had it been a human sacrifice, the bystanders could not have been more moved. And when, covering the charger's eyes with one hand, the earl's dagger descended, bright and rapid, a groan went through the ranks. But the effect was unspeakable! The men knew at once that to them, and them alone, their lord intrusted his fortunes and his life; they were nerved to more than mortal daring. No escape for Warwick—why, then, in Warwick's person they lived and died! Upon foe as upon friend, the sacrifice produced all that could tend to strengthen the last refuge of despair. Even Edward, where he rode in the van, beheld and knew the meaning of the deed. Victorious Towton rushed back upon his memory with a thrill of strange terror and remorse.

"He will die as he has lived," said Gloucester, with admiration. "If I live for such a field, God grant me such a death!"

As the words left the duke's lips, and Warwick, one foot on his dumb friend's corpse, gave the mandate, a murderous discharge from the archers in the covert rattled against the line of the Yorkists, and the foe, still advancing, stepped over a hundred corpses to the conflict. Despite the vast preponderance of numbers, the skill of Warwick's archers, the strength of his position, the obstacle to the cavalry made by the barricades, rendered the attack perilous in the extreme.

But the orders of Edward were prompt and vigorous. He cared not for the waste of life, and as one rank fell, another rushed on. High before the barricades stood Montagu, Warwick, and the rest of that indomitable chivalry, the flower of the ancient Norman heroism. As idly beat the waves upon a rock as the ranks of Edward upon that serried front of steel. The sun still shone in heaven, and still Edward's conquest was unassured. Nay, if Marmaduke could yet bring back the troops of Somerset upon the rear of the foe, Montagu and the earl felt that the victory might be for them. And often the earl paused, to hearken for the cry of "Somerset" on the gale, and often Montagu raised his visor to look for the banners and the spears of the Lancastrian duke. And ever, as the earl listened and Montagu scanned the field, larger and larger seemed to spread the armament of Edward. The regiment which boasted the stubborn energy of Alwyn was now in movement, and, encouraged by the young Saxon's hardihood, the Londoners marched on, unawed by the massacre of their predecessors. But Alwyn, avoiding the quarter defended by the knights, defiled a little towards the left, where his quick eye, inured to the northern fogs, had detected the weakness of the barricade in the spot where Hilyard was stationed; and this pass Alwyn (discarding the bow) resolved to attempt at the point of the pike, the weapon answering to our modern bayonet. The first rush which he headed was so impetuous as to effect an entry. The weight of the numbers behind urged on the foremost, and Hilyard had not sufficient space for the sweep of the two-handed sword which had done good work that day. While here the conflict became fierce and doubtful, the right wing led by D'Eyncourt had pierced the wood, and, surprised to discover no ambush, fell upon the archers in the rear. The scene was now inexpressibly terrific; cries and groans, and the ineffable roar and yell of human passion, resounded demonlike through the shade of the leafless trees. And at this moment, the provident and rapid generalship of Edward had moved up one of his heavy bombards. Warwick and Montagu and most of the knights were called from the barricades to aid the archers thus assailed behind; but an instant before that defence was shattered into air by the explosion of the bombard. In another minute horse and foot rushed through the opening. And amidst all the din was heard the voice of Edward, "Strike, and spare not; we win the day!" "We win the day! victory! victory!" repeated the troops behind. Rank caught the sound from rank, and file from file; it reached the captive Henry, and he paused in prayer; it reached the ruthless friar, and he gave the sign to the hireling at his shoulder; it reached the priest as he entered, unmoved, the church of Hadley. And the bell, changing its note into a quicker and sweeter chime, invited the living to prepare for death, and the soul to rise above the cruelty and the falsehood, and the pleasure and the pomp, and the wisdom and the glory of the world! And suddenly, as the chime ceased, there was heard, from the eminence hard by, a shriek of agony,—a female shriek,—drowned by the roar of a bombard in the field below.

On pressed the Yorkists through the pass forced by Alwyn. “Yield thee, stout fellow,” said the bold trader to Hilyard, whose dogged energy, resembling his own, moved his admiration, and in whom, by the accent in which Robin called his men, he recognized a north-countryman; “yield, and I will see that thou goest safe in life and limb. Look round, ye are beaten.”

“Fool!” answered Hilyard, setting his teeth, “the People are never beaten!” And as the words left his lips, the shot from the recharged bombard shattered him piecemeal.

“On for London and the crown!” cried Alwyn,—“the citizens are the People!”

At this time, through the general crowd of the Yorkists, Ratcliffe and Lovell, at the head of their appointed knights, galloped forward to accomplish their crowning mission.

Behind the column which still commemorates “the great battle” of that day, stretches now a trilateral patch of pasture-land, which faces a small house. At that time this space was rough forest-ground, and where now, in the hedge, rise two small trees, types of the diminutive offspring of our niggard and ignoble civilization, rose then two huge oaks, coeval with the warriors of the Norman Conquest. They grew close together; yet, though their roots interlaced, though their branches mingled, one had not taken nourishment from the other. They stood, equal in height and grandeur, the twin giants of the wood. Before these trees, whose ample trunks protected them from the falchions in the rear, Warwick and Montagu took their last post. In front rose, literally, mounds of the slain, whether of foe or friend; for round the two brothers to the last had gathered the brunt of war, and they towered now, almost solitary in valour’s sublime despair, amidst the wrecks of battle and against the irresistible march of fate. As side by side they had gained this spot, and the vulgar assailants drew back, leaving the bodies of the dead their last defence from death, they turned their visors to each other, as for one latest farewell on earth.

“Forgive me, Richard,” said Montagu,—“forgive me thy death; had I not so blindly believed in Clarence’s fatal order, the savage Edward had never passed alive through the pass of Pontefract.”

“Blame not thyself,” replied Warwick. “We are but the instruments of a wiser Will. God assoil thee, brother mine. We leave this world to tyranny and vice. Christ receive our souls!”

For a moment their hands clasped, and then all was grim silence.

Wide and far, behind and before, in the gleam of the sun, stretched the victorious armament, and that breathing-pause sufficed to show the grandeur of their resistance,—the grandest of all spectacles, even in its hopeless extremity,—the defiance of brave hearts to the brute force of the many. Where they stood they were visible to thousands, but not a man stirred against them. The memory of Warwick’s past achievements, the consciousness of his feats that day, all the splendour of his fortunes and his name, made the mean fear to strike, and the brave ashamed to murder! The gallant D’Eyncourt sprang from his steed, and advanced to the spot. His followers did the same.

“Yield, my lords, yield! Ye have done all that men could do!”

“Yield, Montagu,” whispered Warwick. “Edward can harm not thee. Life has sweets; so they say, at least.”

“Not with power and glory gone.—We yield not, Sir Knight,” answered the marquis, in a calm tone.

“Then die, and make room for the new men whom ye so have scorned!” exclaimed a fierce voice; and Ratcliffe, who had neared the spot, dismounted and hallooed on his bloodhounds.

Seven points might the shadow have traversed on the dial, and, before Warwick's axe and Montagu's sword, seven souls had gone to judgment. In that brief crisis, amidst the general torpor and stupefaction and awe of the bystanders, round one little spot centred still a war.

But numbers rushed on numbers, as the fury of conflict urged on the lukewarm. Montagu was beaten to his knee, Warwick covered him with his body; a hundred axes resounded on the earl's stooping casque, a hundred blades gleamed round the joints of his harness. A simultaneous cry was heard; over the mounds of the slain, through the press into the shadow of the oaks, dashed Gloucester's charger. The conflict had ceased, the executioners stood mute in a half-circle. Side by side, axe and sword still griped in their iron hands, lay Montagu and Warwick.

The young duke, his visor raised, contemplated the fallen foes in silence. Then dismounting, he unbraced with his own hand the earl's helmet. Revived for a moment by the air, the hero's eyes unclosed, his lips moved, he raised, with a feeble effort, the gory battle-axe, and the armed crowd recoiled in terror. But the earl's soul, dimly conscious, and about to part, had escaped from that scene of strife, its later thoughts of wrath and vengeance, to more gentle memories, to such memories as fade the last from true and manly hearts!

"Wife! child!" murmured the earl, indistinctly. "Anne! Anne! Dear ones, God comfort ye!" And with these words the breath went, the head fell heavily on its mother earth, the face set, calm and undistorted, as the face of a soldier should be, when a brave death has been worthy of a brave life.

"So," muttered the dark and musing Gloucester, unconscious of the throng, "so perishes the Race of Iron. Low lies the last baron who could control the throne and command the people. The Age of Force expires with knighthood and deeds of arms. And over this dead great man I see the New Cycle dawn. Happy, henceforth, he who can plot and scheme, and fawn and smile!" Waking with a start from his revery, the splendid dissimulator said, as in sad reproof, "Ye have been over hasty, knights and gentlemen. The House of York is mighty enough to have spared such noble foes. Sound trumpets! Fall in file! Way, there,—way! King Edward comes. Long live the king!"

CHAPTER VII. THE LAST PILGRIMS IN THE LONG PROCESSION TO THE COMMON BOURNE.

The king and his royal brothers, immediately after the victory, rode back to London to announce their triumph. The foot-soldiers still stayed behind to recruit themselves after the sore fatigue. And towards the eminence by Hadley church, the peasants and villagers of the district had pressed in awe and in wonder; for on that spot had Henry (now sadly led back to a prison, never again to unclose to his living form) stood to watch the destruction of the host gathered in his name; and to that spot the corpses of Warwick and Montagu were removed, while a bier was prepared to convey their remains to London; [The bodies of Montagu and the earl were exhibited bareheaded at St. Paul's church for three days, "that no pretence of their being alive might stir up any rebellion afterwards;... they were then carried down to the Priory of Bisham, in Berkshire, where among their ancestors by the mother's side (the Earls of Salisbury), the two unquiet brothers rest in one tomb.... The large river of their blood, divided now into many streams, runs so small, they are hardly observed as they flow by." (Habington's "Life of Edward IV.," one of the most eloquent compositions in the language, though incorrect as a history).—"Sic transit gloria mundi."] and on that spot had the renowned friar conjured the mists, exorcised the enchanted guns, and defeated the horrible machinations of the Lancastrian wizard.

And towards the spot, and through the crowd, a young Yorkist captain passed with a prisoner he had captured, and whom he was leading to the tent of the Lord Hastings, the only one of the commanders from whom mercy might be hoped, and who had tarried behind the king and his royal brothers to make preparations for the removal of the mighty dead.

“Keep close to me, Sir Marmaduke,” said the Yorkist; “we must look to Hastings to appease the king: and, if he hope not to win your pardon, he may, at least, after such a victory, aid one foe to fly.”

“Care not for me, Alwyn,” said the knight; “when Somerset was deaf save to his own fears, I came back to die by my chieftain’s side, alas, too late! too late! Better now death than life! What kin, kith, ambition, love, were to other men was Lord Warwick’s smile to me!”

Alwyn kindly respected his prisoner’s honest emotion, and took advantage of it to lead him away from the spot where he saw knights and warriors thickest grouped, in soldier-like awe and sadness, round the Hero-Brothers. He pushed through a humbler crowd of peasants and citizens, and women with babes at their breast; and suddenly saw a troop of timbrel-women dancing round a leafless tree, and chanting some wild but mirthful and joyous doggerel.

“What obscene and ill-seasoned revelry is this?” said the trader to a gaping yeoman.

“They are but dancing, poor girls, round the wicked wizard whom Friar Bungey caused to be strangled, and his witch daughter.”

A chill foreboding seized upon Alwyn: he darted forward, scattering peasant and tymbestere with his yet bloody sword. His feet stumbled against some broken fragments; it was the poor Eureka, shattered, at last, for the sake of the diamond! Valueless to the great friar, since the science of the owner could not pass to his executioner,—valueless the mechanism and the invention, the labour and the genius; but the superstition and the folly and the delusion had their value, and the impostor who destroyed the engine clutched the jewel!

From the leafless tree was suspended the dead body of a man; beneath, lay a female, dead too; but whether by the hand of man or the mercy of Heaven, there was no sign to tell. Scholar and Child, Knowledge and Innocence, alike were cold; the grim Age had devoured them, as it devours ever those before, as behind, its march, and confounds, in one common doom, the too guileless and the too wise!

“Why crowd ye thus, knaves?” said a commanding voice.

“Ha, Lord Hastings! approach! behold!” exclaimed Alwyn.

“Ha, ha!” shouted Graul, as she led her sisters from the spot, wheeling, and screaming, and tossing up their timbrels, “ha! the witch and her lover! Ha, ha! Foul is fair! Ha, ha! Witchcraft and death go together, as thou mayest learn at the last, sleek wooer.”

And, peradventure, when, long years afterwards, accusations of witchcraft, wantonness, and treason resounded in the ears of Hastings, and, at the signal of Gloucester, rushed in the armed doomsman, those ominous words echoed back upon his soul!

At that very hour the gates of the Tower were thrown open to the multitude. Fresh from his victory, Edward and his brothers had gone to render thanksgivings at St. Paul’s (they were devout, those three Plantagenets!), thence to Baynard’s Castle, to escort the queen and her children once more to the Tower. And, now, the sound of trumpets stilled the joyous uproar of the multitude, for in the balcony of the casement that looked towards the chapel the herald had just announced that King Edward would show

himself to the people. On every inch of the courtyard, climbing up wall and palisade, soldier, citizen, thief, harlot, age, childhood, all the various conditions and epochs of multiform life, swayed, clung, murmured, moved, jostled, trampled,—the beings of the little hour!

High from the battlements against the weltering beam floated Edward's conquering flag,—a sun shining to the sun. Again, and a third time, rang the trumpets, and on the balcony, his crown upon his head, but his form still sheathed in armour, stood the king. What mattered to the crowd his falseness and his perfidy, his licentiousness and cruelty? All vices ever vanish in success! Hurrah for King Edward! THE MAN OF THE AGE suited the age, had valour for its war and cunning for its peace, and the sympathy of the age was with him! So there stood the king; at his right hand, Elizabeth, with her infant boy (the heir of England) in her arms, the proud face of the duchess seen over the queen's shoulder. By Elizabeth's side was the Duke of Gloucester, leaning on his sword, and at the left of Edward, the perjured Clarence bowed his fair head to the joyous throng! At the sight of the victorious king, of the lovely queen, and, above all, of the young male heir, who promised length of days to the line of York, the crowd burst forth with a hearty cry, "Long live the king and the king's son!" Mechanically Elizabeth turned her moistened eyes from Edward to Edward's brother, and suddenly, as with a mother's prophetic instinct, clasped her infant closer to her bosom, when she caught the glittering and fatal eye of Richard, Duke of Gloucester (York's young hero of the day, Warwick's grim avenger in the future), fixed upon that harmless life, destined to interpose a feeble obstacle between the ambition of a ruthless intellect and the heritage of the English throne!

NOTES.

I. The badge of the Bear and Ragged Staff was so celebrated in the fifteenth century, that the following extract from a letter addressed by Mr. Courthope, Rouge Croix, to the author, will no doubt interest the reader, and the author is happy in the opportunity afforded of expressing his acknowledgments for the courteous attention with which Mr. Courthope has honoured his inquiries:—

"COLLEGE OF ARMS. As regards the badge of Richard Nevile, Earl of Warwick,—namely, the Bear and Staff,—I agree with you, certainly, as to the probability of his having sometimes used the whole badge, and sometimes the Staff only, which accords precisely with the way in which the Bear and Staff are set forth in the Rous Roll to the early earls (Warwick) before the Conquest. We there find them figured with the Staff upon their shields and the Bear at their feet, and the Staff alone is introduced as a quartering upon their shields.

"The story of the origin of these badges is as follows:

"Arth, or Arthgal, is reputed to have been the first Earl of Warwick, and being one of the knights of King Arthur's Round Table, it behooved him to have a cognizance; and Arth or Narth signifying in British the same as Ursus in Latin, he took the Bear for such cognizance. His successor, Morvidus, Earl of Warwick, in single combat, overcame a mighty giant (who had encountered him with a tree pulled up from the root, the boughs of which had been torn from it), and in token of his success assumed the Ragged Staff. You will thus see that the origins of the two were different, which would render the bearing of them separately not unlikely, and you will likewise infer that both came through the Beauchamps. I do not find the Ragged Staff ever attributed to the Neviles before the match with Beauchamp.

"As regards the crest or cognizance of Nevile, the Pied Bull has been the cognizance of that family from a very early time, and the Bull's head, its crest, and both the one and the other may have been used by the king-maker, and by his brother, the Marquis Montagu; the said Bull appears at the feet of Richard Nevile in the Rous Roll, accompanied by the Eagle of Monthermer; the crests on either side of him are those of Montagu and Nevile. Besides these two crests, both of which the Marquis Montagu may have used, he certainly did use the Gryphon, issuant out of a ducal coronet, as this appears alone for his crest, on his garter plate, as a crest for Montagu, he having given the arms of that family precedence over his paternal coat of Nevile; the king-maker, likewise, upon his seal, gives the precedence to Montagu and Monthermer, and they alone appear upon his shield."

II. Hume, Rapin, and Carte, all dismiss the story of Edward's actual imprisonment at Middleham, while Lingard, Sharon Turner, and others, adopt it implicitly. And yet, though Lingard has successfully grappled with some of Hume's objections, he has left others wholly unanswered. Hume states that no such fact is mentioned in Edward's subsequent proclamation against Clarence and Warwick. Lingard answers, after correcting an immaterial error in Hume's dates, "that the proclamation ought not to have mentioned it, because it was confined to the enumeration of offences only committed after the general amnesty in 1469;" and then, surely with some inconsistency, quotes the attainder of Clarence many years afterwards, in which the king enumerates it among his offences, "as jeopardyng the king's royal estate, person, and life, in strait warde, putting him thereby from all his libertye after procuring great commotions." But it is clear that if the amnesty hindered Edward from charging Warwick with this imprisonment only one year after it was granted, it would, a fortiori, hinder him from charging Clarence with it nine years after. Most probable is it that this article of accusation does not refer to any imprisonment, real or supposed, at Middleham, in 1469, but to Clarence's invasion of England in 1470, when Edward's state, person, and life were jeopardized by his narrow escape from the fortified house, where he might fairly be called "in straite warde;" especially as the words, "after procuring great commotions," could not apply to the date of the supposed detention in Middleham, when, instead of procuring commotions, Clarence had helped Warwick to allay them, but do properly apply to his subsequent rebellion in 1470. Finally, Edward's charges against his brother, as Lingard himself has observed elsewhere, are not proofs, and that king never scrupled at any falsehood to serve his turn. Nothing, in short, can be more improbable than this tale of Edward's captivity,—there was no object in it. At the very time it is said to have taken place, Warwick is absolutely engaged in warfare against the king's foes. The moment Edward leaves Middleham, instead of escaping to London, he goes carelessly and openly to York, to judge and execute the very captain of the rebels whom Warwick has subdued, and in the very midst of Warwick's armies! Far from appearing to harbour the natural resentment so vindictive a king must have felt (had so great an indignity been offered to him), almost immediately after he leaves York, he takes the Nevile family into greater power than ever, confers new dignities upon Warwick, and betroths his eldest daughter to Warwick's nephew. On the whole, then, perhaps some such view of the king's visit to Middleham which has been taken in this narrative, may be considered not the least probable compromise of the disputed and contradictory evidence on the subject.

THE END

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