

The Last Of The Barons, Volume 6.

Edward Bulwer-Lytton

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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 Nevilles."

"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 threatens! 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 demagoguery, 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 Latin 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, 1'11 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 unsuspectingly 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 attain? 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 Neville, 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 roialme, 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 I"

"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 brodering--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 VII., 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,--

"Ha! death to the dove
Is the falcon's love.
Oh, sharp is the kiss of the falcon's beak!"

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