

The Last Of The Barons, Volume 10.

Edward Bulwer-Lytton

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#151 in our series by Edward Bulwer-Lytton

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Title: The Last Of The Barons, Volume 10.

Author: Edward Bulwer-Lytton

Release Date: March 2005 [EBook #7724]
[Yes, we are more than one year ahead of schedule]
[This file was first posted on May 6, 2003]

Edition: 10

Language: English

Character set encoding: ASCII

***** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK LAST OF THE BARONS, V10 *****

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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 blushing 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 chanel, 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 unmistakable 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 Neville, 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 Neville--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 whereabouts 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 compaignie 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 hourelly 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, blasphemers, 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 Neville 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 brodered, 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 strewn 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."

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