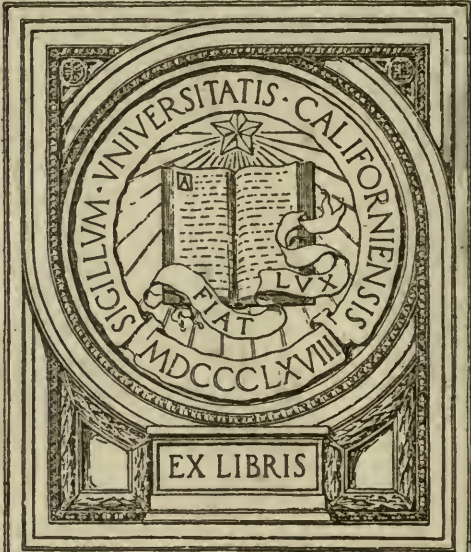


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THE
LAST OF THE BARONS.

VOL. II.

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THE
LAST OF THE BARONS

BY

THE AUTHOR OF "RIENZI."

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

LONDON

SAUNDERS AND OTLEY, CONDUIT STREET.

1843.

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BOOK THE FOURTH.

INTRIGUES OF THE COURT OF EDWARD IV.



BOOK THE FOURTH.

I.

MARGARET OF ANJOU.

THE day after the events recorded in the last section of this narrative, and about the hour of noon, Robert Hilyard (still in the reverend disguise in which he had accosted Hastings) bent his way through the labyrinth of alleys, that wound in dingy confusion from the Chepe towards the River.

The purlieus of the Thames, in that day of ineffective police, sheltered many who either lived upon plunder, or sought abodes that proffered, at alarm, the facility of flight. Here, sauntering in twos or threes, or lazily reclined by the thresholds of plaster huts, might be seen that refuse population which is the unholy offspring of Civil War—disbanded soldiers of either Rose, too inured to vio-

lence and strife for peaceful employment, and ready for any enterprise, by which keen steel wins bright gold. At length, our friend stopped before the gate of a small house, on the very marge of the river, which belonged to one of the many religious Orders then existing; but from its site and aspect, denoted the poverty seldom their characteristic. Here he knocked; the door was opened by a lay-brother, a sign and a smile interchanged, and the visitor was ushered into a room belonging to the superior, but given up for the last few days to a foreign priest, to whom the whole community appeared to consider the reverence of a saint was due. And yet this priest, who, seated alone, by a casement which commanded a partial view of the distant Tower of London, received the conspirator, was clad in the humblest serge. His face was smooth and delicate; and the animation of the aspect, the vehement impatience of the gesture, evinced little of the holy calm that should belong to those who have relinquished the affairs of earth for meditation on the things of heaven. To this personage, the sturdy Hilyard bowed his manly knees; and casting himself at the priest's feet, his eyes, his countenance, changed from their customary hardihood and recklessness, into an expression at once of reverence and of pity.

“ Well, man—well, friend—good friend, tried and leal friend—speak! speak!” exclaimed the

priest, in an accent that plainly revealed a foreign birth.

“ Oh! gracious lady! all hope is over: I come but to bid you fly. Adam Warner was brought before the usurper; he escaped, indeed, the torture, and was faithful to the trust. But the papers—the secret of the rising,—are in the hands of Hastings.”

“ How long, O Lord,” said Margaret of Anjou, for she it was, under that reverend disguise; “ how long wilt thou delay the hour of triumph and revenge?”

The Princess, as she spoke, had suffered her hood to fall back, and her pale, commanding countenance, so well fitted to express fiery and terrible emotion, wore that aspect in which many a sentenced man had read his doom; an aspect the more fearful, inasmuch as the passion that pervaded it did not distort the features, but left them locked, rigid, and marble-like in beauty, as the head of the Medusa.

“ The day will dawn at last,” said Hilyard, “ but the judgments of Heaven are slow. We are favoured, at the least, that our secret is confined to a man more merciful than his tribe.” He then related to Margaret his interview with Hastings, at the house of the Lady Longueville, and continued:—“ This morning, not an hour since, I sought him, (for last evening he did not leave

Edward—a council met at the Tower,) and learned that he had detected the documents in the recesses of Warner's engine. Knowing, from your Highness and your spies, that he had been open to the gifts of Charolois, I spoke to him plainly of the guerdon that should await his silence. Friar," he answered, "if in this court and this world I have found that it were a fool's virtue to be more pure than others, and if I know that I should but provoke the wrath of those who profit by Burgundian gold, were I alone to disdain its glitter; I have still enow of my younger conscience left me not to make barter of human flesh. Did I give these papers to King Edward, the heads of fifty gallant men, whose error is but loyalty to their ancient sovereign, would glut the doomsman. But," he continued, "I am yet true to my king and his cause; I shall know how to advise Edward to the frustrating all your schemes. The districts where you hoped a rising, will be guarded, the men ye count upon will be watched; the Duke of Gloucester, whose vigilance never sleeps, has learned that the Lady Margaret is in England, disguised as a priest. To-morrow, all the Religious Houses will be searched; if thou knowest where she lies concealed, bid her lose not an hour to fly."

"I will NOT fly!" exclaimed Margaret; "let Edward, if he dare, proclaim to my people that their Queen is in her city of London. Let him

send his hirelings to seize her. Not in this dress shall she be found. In robes of state, the sceptre in her hand, shall they drag the consort of their King to the prison-house of her palace."

"On my knees, great Queen, I implore you to be calm; with the loss of your liberty ends indeed all hope of victory, all chance even of struggle. Think not Edward's fears would leave to Margaret the life that his disdain has spared to your royal spouse. Between your prison and your grave, but one secret and bloody step! Be ruled, no time to lose! My trusty Hugh, even now, waits with his boat below. Relays of horses are ready, night and day, to aid you to the coast; while seeking your restoration, I have never neglected the facilities for flight. Pause not, O gracious lady; let not your son say—'My mother's passion has lost me the hope of my grandsire's crown.'"

"My boy, my princely boy, my Edward!" exclaimed Margaret, bursting into tears, all the warrior-queen merged in the remembrance of the fond mother. "Ah! faithful friend! he is so gallant and so beautiful! Oh, he shall reward thee well hereafter!"

"May he live to crush these barons, and raise this people!" said the Demagogue of Redesdale. "But now, save thyself."

"But what!—is it not possible yet to strike the blow! Rather let us spur to the North—rather

let us hasten the hour of action, and raise the Red Rose through the length and breadth of England!"

"Ah, lady, if without warrant from your lord—if without foreign subsidies—if without having yet ripened the time—if without gold, without arms, and without one great baron on our side, we forestall a rising, all that we have gained is lost; and instead of war, you can scarcely provoke a riot. But for this accursed alliance of Edward's daughter with the brother of the icy-hearted Louis, our triumph had been secure. The French king's gold would have manned a camp, bribed the discontented lords, and his support have sustained the hopes of the more leal Lancastrians. But it is in vain to deny, that if Lord Warwick win Louis——"

"He will not!—he shall not!—Louis, mine own kinsman!" exclaimed Margaret, in a voice in which the anguish pierced through the louder tone of resentment and disdain.

"Let us hope that he will not," replied Hilyard, soothingly; "some chance may yet break off these nuptials, and once more give us France as our firm ally. But now we must be patient. Already Edward is fast wearing away the gloss of his crown—already the great lords desert his court—already, in the rural provinces, peasant and franklin complain of the exactions of his minions—already the mighty House of Nevile frowns sullen on the

throne it built. Another year, and who knows but the Earl of Warwick—the beloved and the fearless—whose statesman-art alone hath severed from you the arms and aid of France—at whose lifted finger all England would bristle with armed men—may ride by the side of Margaret through the gates of London.”

“Evil-omened consoler, never!” exclaimed the princess, starting to her feet, with eyes that literally shot fire. “Thinkest thou that the spirit of a queen lies in me so low and crushed, that I, the descendant of Charlemagne, could forgive the wrongs endured from Warwick and his father. But thou, though wise and royal, art of the Commons; thou knowest not how they feel through whose veins rolls the blood of kings!”

A dark and cold shade fell over the bold face of Robin of Redesdale at these words.

“Ah, lady,” he said, with bitterness, “if no misfortune can curb thy pride, in vain would we rebuild thy throne. It is these Commons, Margaret of Anjou—these English Commons—this Saxon People, that can alone secure to thee the holding of the realm, which the right arm wins. And, beshrew me, much as I love thy cause—much as thou hast, with thy sorrows and thy princely beauty, glamoured and spelled my heart and my hand—ay, so that I, the son of a Lollard, forget the wrongs the Lollards sustained from the House of Lancaster—

so that I, who have seen the glorious fruitage of a Republic, yet labour for thee, to overshadow the land with the throne of ONE—yet—yet, lady—yet, if I thought thou wert to be the same Margaret as of old, looking back to thy dead kings, and contemptuous of thy living people, I would not bid one mother's son lift lance or bill on thy behalf."

So resolutely did Robin of Redesdale utter these words, that the Queen's haughty eye fell abashed as he spoke; and her craft, or her intellect, which was keen and prompt where her passions did not deafen and blind her judgment, instantly returned to her. Few women equalled this once idol of knight and minstrel, in the subduing fascination that she could exert in her happier moments. Her affability was as gracious as her wrath was savage; and with a dignified and winning frankness, she extended her hand to her ally, as she answered, in a sweet, humble, womanly, and almost penitent voice—

"O, bravest and lealest of friends, forgive thy wretched queen. Her troubles distract her brain, chide her not if they sour her speech. Saints above! will ye not pardon Margaret, if at times her nature be turned from the mother's milk into streams of gall and bloody purpose—when ye see, from your homes serene, in what a world of strife and falsehood, her very womanhood hath grown, unsexed!" she paused a moment, and her uplifted

eyes shed tears fast and large. Then, with a sigh, she turned to Hilyard, and resumed more calmly—“Yes, thou art right—adversity hath taught me much. And though adversity will too often but feed, and not starve our pride; yet thou—thou hast made me know, that there is more of true nobility in the blunt Children of the People, than in many a breast over which flows the kingly robe. Forgive me, and the daughter of Charlemagne shall yet be a mother to the Commons, who claim thee as their brother!”

Thoroughly melted, Robin of Redesdale bowed over the hand held to his lips, and his rough voice trembled as he answered—though that answer took but the shape of prayer.

“And now,” said the Princess, smiling, “to make peace lasting between us;—I conquer myself—I yield to thy counsels. Once more the fugitive, I abandon the city that contains Henry’s unheeded prison. See, I am ready. Who will know Margaret in this attire? Lead on!”

Rejoiced to seize advantage of this altered and submissive mood, Robin instantly took the way through a narrow passage, to a small door communicating with the river. There, Hugh was waiting in a small boat, moored to the damp and discoloured stairs.

Robin, by a gesture, checked the man’s impulse to throw himself at the feet of the pretended priest,

and bade him put forth his best speed. The Princess seated herself by the helm, and the little boat cut rapidly through the noble stream. Galleys, gay and gilded, with armorial streamers, and filled with nobles and gallants, passed them, noisy with mirth or music, on their way. These the fallen sovereign heeded not; but, with all her faults, the woman's heart beating in her bosom—she who, in prosperity, had so often wrought ruin, and shame, and woe to her gentle lord; she who had been reckless of her trust as queen, and incurred grave—but, let us charitably hope, unjust—suspicion, of her faith as wife, still fixed her eyes on the gloomy tower that contained her captive husband, and felt that she could have forgotten awhile even the loss of power if but permitted to fall on that plighted heart, and weep over the Past with the woe-worn bridegroom of her youth.

II.

IN WHICH ARE LAID OPEN TO THE READER THE CHARACTER OF EDWARD THE FOURTH AND THAT OF HIS COURT, WITH THE MACHINATIONS OF THE WOODVILLES AGAINST THE EARL OF WARWICK.

SCARCE need it be said to those who have looked with some philosophy upon human life, that the young existence of Master Marmaduke Nevile, once fairly merged in the Great Common Sea, will rarely reappear before us individualized and distinct. The type of the provincial cadet of the day, hastening Courtwards to seek his fortune, he becomes lost amidst the gigantic characters and fervid passions that alone stand forth in History. And, as in reading biography, we first take interest in the individual who narrates, but if his career shall pass into that broader and more stirring life, in which he mingles with those who have left a more dazzling memory than his own, we find the interest change from the narrator to those by whom he is surrounded and eclipsed,—so, in this record of a time, we scarce follow our young adventurer into the Court of the brilliant Edward, ere the scene itself

allures and separates us from our guide ; his mission is, as it were, well nigh done. We leave, then, for awhile, this bold, frank nature—fresh from the health of the rural life—gradually to improve, or deprave itself, in the companionship it finds. The example of the Lords Hastings, Scales, and Worcester, and the accomplishments of the two younger Princes of York, especially the Duke of Gloucester, had diffused among the younger and gayer part of the Court that growing taste for letters which had somewhat slept during the dynasty of the House of Lancaster; and Marmaduke's mind became aware that learning was no longer the peculiar distinction of the Church, and that Warwick was behind his age, when he boasted “ that the sword was more familiar to him than the pen.” He had the sagacity to perceive that the alliance with the great Earl did not conduce to his popularity at court; and, even in the King's presence, the courtiers permitted themselves many taunts and jests at the fiery Warwick, which they would have bitten out their tongues ere they would have vented before the Earl himself. But, though the Nevile sufficiently controlled his native candour not to incur unprofitable quarrel, by ill-mannered and unseasonable defence of the Hero-Baron, when sneered at or assailed, he had enough of the soldier and the man in him, not to be tainted by the envy of the time and place—not to lose his gratitude to

his patron, nor his respect for the bulwark of the country. Rather, it may be said, that Warwick gained in his estimation whenever compared with the gay and silken personages who avenged themselves by words for his superiority in deeds. Not only as a soldier, but as a statesman—the great and peculiar merits of the Earl were visible in all those measures which emanated solely from himself. Though so indifferently educated, his busy, practical career, his affable mixing with all classes, and his hearty, national sympathies, made him so well acquainted with the interests of his country and the habits of his countrymen, that he was far more fitted to rule than the scientific Worcester or the learned Scales. The young Duke of Gloucester presented a marked contrast to the general levity of the Court, in speaking of this powerful nobleman. He never named him but with respect, and was pointedly courteous to even the humblest member of the Earl's family. In this he appeared to advantage by the side of Clarence, whose weakness of disposition made him take the tone of the society in which he was thrown, and who, while really loving Warwick, often smiled at the jests against him—not, indeed, if uttered by the Queen or her family, of whom he ill concealed his jealousy and hatred.

The whole Court was animated and pregnant with a spirit of intrigue, which the artful cunning of the Queen, the astute policy of Jacquetta, and

the animosity of the different factions had fomented, to a degree quite unknown under former reigns. It was a place in which the wit of young men grew old rapidly : Amidst stratagem, and plot, and ambitious design, and stealthy overreaching, the boyhood of Richard the Third passed to its relentless manhood : such is the inevitable fruit of that æra in civilization when a martial aristocracy first begins to merge into a voluptuous court.

Through this moving and shifting web of ambition and intrigue the royal Edward moved with a careless grace : simple himself, because his object was won, and pleasure had supplanted ambition. His indolent, joyous temper, served to deaden his powerful intellect ; or, rather, his intellect was now lost in the sensual stream through which it flowed. Ever in pursuit of some new face, his schemes and counter-schemes were limited to cheat a husband or deceive a wife ; and dexterous and successful, no doubt, they were. But a vice always more destructive than the love of women began also to reign over him,—viz., the intemperance of the table. The fastidious and graceful epicurism of the early Normans, inclined to dainties but abhorring excess, and regarding with astonished disdain the heavy meals and deep draughts of the Saxon, had long ceased to characterize the offspring of that noblest of all noble races. Warwick, whose stately manliness was disgusted with what-

ever savoured of effeminacy or debauch, used to declare that he would rather fight fifty battles for Edward IV. than once sup with him! Feasts were prolonged for hours, and the banquets of this King of the Middle Ages almost resembled those of the later Roman emperors. The Lord Montagu did not share the abstemiousness of his brother of Warwick. He was, next to Hastings, the King's chosen and most favourite companion. He ate almost as much as the King, and he drank very little less. Of few courtiers could the same be said. Over the lavish profligacy and excess of the Court, however, a veil, dazzling to the young and high-spirited, was thrown. Edward was thoroughly the cavalier, deeply imbued with the romance of chivalry, and, while making the absolute woman his plaything, always treated the ideal woman as a goddess. A refined gallantry—a deferential courtesy to dame and demoiselle—united the language of an Amadis with the licentiousness of a Gaolor; and a far more alluring contrast than the Court of Charles II. presented to the grim Commonwealth, seduced the vulgar in that of this most brave and most beautiful prince, when compared with the mournful and lugubrious circles in which Henry VI. had reigned and prayed. Edward himself, too, it was so impossible to judge with severe justice, that his extraordinary popularity in London, where he was daily seen, was never diminished by

his faults ; he was so bold in the field, yet so mild in the chamber ; when his passions slept, he was so thoroughly good-natured and social—so kind to all about his person—so hearty and glad-some in his talk and in his vices—so magnificent and so generous withal ; and, despite his indolence, his capacities for business were marvellous :—and these last commanded the reverence of the good Londoners : he often administered justice himself, like the Caliphs of the East, and with great acuteness and address. Like all extravagant men, he had a wholesome touch of avarice. That contempt for commerce which characterizes a modern aristocracy was little felt by the nobles of that day, with the exception of such blunt patricians as Lord Warwick or Raoul de Fulke. The great house of De la Pole, (Duke of Suffolk,) the heir of which married Edward's sister, Elizabeth, had been founded by a merchant of Hull. Earls and archbishops scrupled not to derive revenues from what we should now esteem the literal resources of trade.* No house had ever shewn itself on this

* The Abbot of St. Albans (temp. Henry III.) was a vender of Yarmouth bloaters. The Cistercian Monks were wool-merchants ; and Macpherson tells us of a couple of Iceland bishops who got a licence from Henry VI. for smuggling. (Matthew Paris. Macpherson's Annals of Commerce, 10.) As the Whig historians generally have thought fit to consider the Lancastrian cause the more "*liberal*" of the two, because Henry IV. was the popular choice, and, in fact, an elected, not

point more liberal in its policy, more free from feudal prejudices, than that of the Plantagenets. Even Edward II. was tenacious of the commerce with Genoa, and an intercourse with the merchant princes of that republic probably served to associate the pursuits of commerce with the notion of rank

an hereditary king, so it cannot be too emphatically repeated, that the accession of Edward IV. was the success of two new and two highly popular principles—the one, that of church reform, the other, that of commercial calculation. All that immense section, almost a majority of the people, who had been persecuted by the Lancastrian kings as Lollards, revenged on Henry the aggrieved rights of religious toleration. On the other hand, though Henry IV., who was immeasurably superior to his warlike son in intellect and statesmanship, had favoured the growing commercial spirit, it had received nothing but injury under Henry V., and little better than contempt under Henry VI. The accession of the Yorkists was, then, on two grounds, a great popular movement; and it was followed by a third advantage to the popular cause—viz., in the determined desire both of Edward and Richard III. to destroy the dangerous influence of the old feudal aristocracy. To this end Edward laboured in the creation of a court noblesse; and Richard, with the more dogged resolution that belonged to him, went at once to the root of the feudal power, in forbidding the nobles to give badges and liveries;^a in other words, to appropriate armies under the name of retainers. Henry VII., in short, did not originate the policy for which he has monopolized the credit; he did but steadily follow out the theory of raising the middle class and humbling the baronial, which the House of York first put into practice.

^a This also was forbidden, it is true, by the edict of Edward IV., as well as by his predecessors from the reign of Richard II., but no king seems to have had the courage to enforce the prohibition before Richard the Third.

and power. Edward III. is still called the Father of English Commerce; but Edward IV. carried the theories of his ancestors into far more extensive practice, for his own personal profit. This king, so indolent in the palace, was literally the most active merchant in the mart. He traded largely in ships of his own, freighted with his own goods; and though, according to sound modern æconomics, this was anything but an aid to commerce, seeing that no private merchant could compete with a royal trader, who went out and came in duty-free, yet certainly the mere companionship and association in risk and gain, and the common conversation that it made between the affable monarch and the homeliest trader, served to increase his popularity, and to couple it with respect for practical sense. Edward IV. was in all this pre-eminently **THE MAN OF HIS AGE**—not an inch behind it or before! And, in addition to this happy position, he was one of those darlings of Nature, so affluent and blest in gifts of person, mind, and outward show, that it is only at the distance of posterity we ask why men of his own age admired the false, the licentious, and the cruel, where those contemporaries, over-dazzled, saw but the heroic and the joyous, the young, the beautiful,—the affable to friend, and the terrible to foe!

It was necessary to say thus much on the commercial tendencies of Edward, because, at this

epoch, they operated greatly, besides other motives shortly to be made clear, in favour of the plot laid by the enemies of the Earl of Warwick, to dishonour that powerful minister, and drive him from the councils of the King.

One morning, Hastings received a summons to attend Edward, and on entering the royal chamber, he found already assembled, Lord Rivers, the Queen's father, Anthony Woodville, and the Earl of Worcester.

The King seemed thoughtful; he beckoned Hastings to approach, and placed in his hand a letter, dated from Rouen. "Read and judge, Hastings," said Edward.

The letter was from a gentleman in Warwick's train. It gave a glowing account of the honours accorded to the Earl by Louis XI., greater than those ever before manifested to a subject, and proceeded thus:—"But it is just I should apprise you that there be strange rumours as to the marvellous love that King Louis shews my lord the Earl. He lodgeth in the next house to him, and hath even had an opening made in the partition wall between his own chamber and the Earl's. Men do say that the King visits him nightly, and there be those who think that so much stealthy intercourse between an English ambassador and the kinsman of Margaret of Anjou bodeeth small profit to our Grace the King."

“ I observe,” said Hastings, glancing to the superscription, “ that this letter is addressed to my Lord Rivers. Can he avouch the fidelity of his correspondent ?”

“ Surely yes,” answered Rivers ; “ it is a gentleman of my own blood.”

“ Were he not so accredited,” returned Hastings, “ I should question the truth of a man who can thus consent to play the spy upon his lord and superior.”

The public weal justifies all things,” said the Earl of Worcester, (who, though by marriage nearly connected to Warwick, eyed his power with the jealous scorn which the man of book-lore often feels for one whose talent lies in action,)—“ so held our masters in all state-craft, the Greek and Roman.”

“ Certes,” said Sir Anthony Woodville, “ it grieveth the pride of an English knight, that we should be beholden for courtesies to the born foe of England, which I take the Frenchman naturally to be.”

“ Ah,” said Edward, smiling sternly, “ I would rather be, myself, with banner and trump, before the walls of Paris, than sending my cousin, the Earl, to beg the French king’s brother to accept my sister as a bride. And what is to become of my good merchant-ships, if Burgundy take umbrage, and close its ports ?”

“Beau sire,” said Hastings, “thou knowest how little cause I have to love the Earl of Warwick. We all here, save your gracious self, bear the memory of some affront rendered to us by his pride and heat of mood; but in this council I must cease to be William de Hastings, and be all and wholly the King’s servant. I say first, then, with reverence to these noble peers, that Warwick’s faith to the House of York is too well proven to become suspected because of the courtesies of King Louis—an artful craft, as it clearly seems to me of the wily Frenchman, to weaken your throne, by provoking your distrust of its great supporter. Fall we not into such a snare! Moreover, we may be sure that Warwick cannot be false, if he achieve the object of his embassy—viz., detach Louis from the side of Margaret and Lancaster, by close alliance with Edward and York. Secondly, sire, with regard to that alliance which it seems you would repent—I hold now, as I have held ever, that it is a master-stroke in policy, and the Earl in this proves his sharp brain worthy his strong arm; for as his Highness the Duke of Gloucester hath now clearly discovered that Margaret of Anjou has been of late in London, and that treasonable designs were meditated, though now frustrated, so we may ask why the friends of Lancaster really stood aloof? why all conspiracy was, and is in vain?—Because, sire, of this very alli-

ance with France; because the gold and subsidies of Louis are not forthcoming; because the Lancastrians see that if once Lord Warwick win France from the Red Rose, nothing short of such a miracle as their gaining Warwick instead can give a hope to their treason. Your Highness fears the anger of Burgundy, and the suspension of your trade with the Flemings; but forgive me—this is not reasonable. Burgundy dare not offend England, matched, as its arms are, with France; the Flemings gain more by you than you gain by the Flemings, and those interested burghers will not suffer any prince's quarrel to damage their commerce. Charolois may bluster and threaten, but the storm will pass; and Burgundy will be contented, if England remain neutral in the feud with France. All these reasons, sire, urge me to support my private foe, the Lord Warwick, and to pray you to give no ear to the discrediting his honour and his embassy."

The profound sagacity of these remarks, the repute of the speaker, and the well-known grudge between him and Warwick, for reasons hereafter to be explained, produced a strong effect upon the intellect of Edward, always vigorous, save when clouded with passion. But Rivers, whose malice to the Earl was indomitable, coldly recommenced.

"With submission to the Lord Hastings, sire, whom we know that love sometimes blinds, and

whose allegiance to the Earl's fair sister, the Lady of Bonville, perchance somewhat moves him to forget the day when Lord Warwick——”

“Cease, my lord,” said Hastings, white with suppressed anger; “these references beseem not the councils of grave men.”

“Tut, Hastings,” said Edward, laughing merrily—“women mix themselves up in all things: board or council, bed or battle—wherever there is mischief astir, there, be sure, peeps a woman's sly face from her wimple. Go on, Rivers.”

“Your pardon, my Lord Hastings,” said Rivers—“I knew not my thrust went so home; there is another letter I have not yet laid before the King.” He drew forth a scroll from his bosom, and read as follows:—

“Yesterday the Earl feasted the King, and as, in discharge of mine office, I carved for my lord, I heard King Louis say—‘Pasque Dieu, my Lord Warwick; our couriers bring us word that Count Charolois declares he shall yet wed the Lady Margaret, and that he laughs at your ambassage. What if our brother, King Edward, fall back from the treaty?’ ‘He dare not!’ said the Earl.”

“Dare not!” exclaimed Edward, starting to his feet, and striking the table with his clenched hand, “Dare not! Hastings, hear you that?”

Hastings bowed his head, in assent. “Is that all, Lord Rivers?”

“ All! and methinks enough.”

“ Enough, by my halidome!” said Edward, laughing bitterly; “ he shall see what a king dares, when a subject threatens. Admit the Worshipful the Deputies from our City of London—Lord-Chamberlain, it is thine office—they await in the ante-room.”

Hastings gravely obeyed, and in crimson gowns, with purple hoods, and gold chains, marshalled into the King’s presence a goodly deputation from the various corporate companies of London.

These personages advanced within a few paces of the dais, and there halted and knelt, while their spokesman read, on his knees, a long petition, praying the King to take into his gracious consideration the state of the trade with the Flemings; and though not absolutely venturing to name or to deprecate the meditated alliance with France, beseeching his Grace to satisfy them as to certain rumours, already very prejudicial to their commerce, of the possibility of a breach with the Duke of Burgundy. The Merchant-King listened with great attention and affability to this petition; and replied, shortly, that he thanked the deputation for their zeal for the public weal—that a king would have enough to do, if he contravened every gossip’s tale; but that it was his firm purpose to protect, in all ways, the London traders, and to maintain the most amicable understanding with the Duke of Burgundy.

The supplicators then withdrew from the royal presence.

“ Note you how gracious the King was to me?” whispered Master Heyford to one of his brethren ; “ he looked at me while he answered.”

“ Coxcomb !” muttered the confidant, “ as if I did not catch his eye, when he said, ‘ Ye are the pillars of the public weal.’ But because Master Heyford has a handsome wife, he thinks he tosseth all London on his own horns !”

As the citizens were quitting the palace, Lord Rivers joined them. “ You will thank me for suggesting this deputation, worthy sirs,” said he, smiling significantly ; “ you have timed it well !”—and passing by them, without further comment, he took the way to the Queen’s chamber.

Elizabeth was playing with her infant daughter, tossing the child in the air, and laughing at its riotous laughter. The stern old Duchess of Bedford, leaning over the back of the state-chair, looked on with all a grandmother’s pride, and half-chanted a nursery rhyme. It was a sight fair to see ! Elizabeth never seemed more lovely : her artificial, dissimulating smile, changed into hearty, maternal glee ; her smooth cheek flushed with exercise, a stray ringlet escaping from the stiff coif !—And, alas, the moment the two ladies caught sight of Rivers, all the charm was dissolved—the child was hastily put on the floor—the Queen, half ashamed of being natural, even before her father, smoothed back the rebel lock, and the

Duchess, breaking off in the midst of her grandam song, exclaimed—

“ Well, well !—how thrives our policy ?”

“ The King,” answered Rivers, “ is in the very mood we could desire. At the words, ‘ He does not dare !’ the Plantagenet sprung up in his breast ; and now, lest he ask to see the rest of the letter, thus I destroy it ;”—and flinging the scroll in the blazing hearth, he watched it consume.

“ Why this’, sir ?” said the Queen.

“ Because, my Elizabeth, the bold words glided off into a decent gloss—‘ *He does not dare,*’ said Warwick, ‘ *because what a noble heart dares least, is to bely the plighted word, and what the kind heart shuns most is to wrong the confiding friend.*’”

“ It was fortunate,” said the Duchess, “ that Edward took heat at the first words, nor stopped, it seems, for the rest !”

“ I was prepared, Jacquetta ;—had he asked to see the rest, I should have dropped the scroll into the brazier, as containing what I would not dare to read. Courage ! Edward has seen the merchants ; he has flouted Hastings—who would gainsay us. For the rest, Elizabeth, be it yours to speak of affronts paid by the Earl to your Highness ; be it yours, Jacquetta, to rouse Edward’s pride, by dwelling on Warwick’s overweening power. Be it mine, to enlist his interests on behalf of his merchandise ; be it Margaret’s, to move his heart by soft tears for the bold Charolois ;

and 'ere a month be told, Warwick shall find his embassy a thriftless laughing-stock, and no shade pass between the House of Woodville and the sun of England."

"I am scarce queen, while Warwick is minister," said Elizabeth, vindictively. "How he taunted me in the garden, when we met last!"

"But hark you, daughter and lady liege, hark you! Edward is not prepared for the decisive stroke. I have arranged with Anthony, whose chivalrous follies fit him not for full comprehension of our objects, how upon fair excuse the heir of Burgundy's brother—the Count de la Roche—shall visit London, and the Count once here, all is ours! Hush! take up the little one—Edward comes!"

III.

WHEREIN MASTER NICHOLAS ALWYN VISITS THE COURT, AND
THERE LEARNS MATTER OF WHICH THE ACUTE READER
WILL JUDGE FOR HIMSELF.

It was a morning towards the end of May, (some little time after Edward's gracious reception of the London deputies,) when Nicholas Alwyn, accompanied by two servitors armed to the teeth—for they carried with them goods of much value, and even in the broad daylight, and amidst the most frequented parts of the city, men still confided little in the security of the law—arrived at the Tower, and was conducted to the presence of the Queen.

Elizabeth and her mother were engaged in animated but whispered conversation, when the goldsmith entered; and there was an unusual gaiety in the Queen's countenance as she turned to Alwyn and bade him shew her his newest gauds.

While, with a curiosity and eagerness that seemed almost childlike, Elizabeth turned over rings, chains, and brooches, scarcely listening to Alwyn's comments on the lustre of the gems or the quaintness of the fashion, the Duchess disappeared for a moment, and returned with the Princess Margaret.

This young princess had much of the majestic beauty of her royal brother, but, instead of the frank, careless expression, so fascinating in Edward, there was, in her full and curved lip, and bright, large eye, something at once of haughtiness and passion, which spoke a decision and vivacity of character beyond her years.

"Choose for thyself, sweetheart and daughter mine," said the Duchess, affectionately placing her hand on Margaret's luxuriant hair, "and let the noble visitor we await confess that our rose of England outblossoms the world."

The Princess coloured with complacent vanity at these words, and, drawing near the Queen, looked silently at a collar of pearls, which Elizabeth held.

"If I may adventure so to say," observed Alwyn, "pearls will mightily beseem her highness's youthful bloom; and lo! here be some adornments for the bodice or partelet, to sort with the collar; not," added the goldsmith, bowing low, and looking down, "not, perchance, displeasing to her highness,

in that they are wrought in the guise of the fleur-de-lis——”

An impatient gesture in the Queen, and a sudden cloud over the fair brow of Margaret, instantly betokened to the shrewd trader that he had committed some most unwelcome error in this last allusion to the alliance with Prince Louis of France, which, according to rumour, the Earl of Warwick had well nigh brought to a successful negotiation; and to convince him yet more of his mistake, the Duchess said, haughtily—“Good fellow, be contented to display thy goods, and spare us thy comments. As for thy hideous fleur-de-lis, an’ thy master had no better device, he would not long rest the King’s jeweller!”

“I have no heart for the pearls,” said Margaret, abruptly; “they are at best pale and sicklied. What hast thou of bolder ornament, and more dazzling lustrousness?”

“These emeralds, it is said, were once among the jewels of the great House of Burgundy,” observed Nicholas, slowly, and fixing his keen, sagacious look on the royal purchasers.

“Of Burgundy!” exclaimed the Queen.

“It is true,” said the Duchess of Bedford, looking at the ornament with care, and slightly colouring—for, in fact, the jewels had been a present from Philip the Good to the Duke of Bedford, and the exigencies of the civil wars had led, some time

since, first, to their mortgage, or rather pawn, and then to their sale.

The Princess passed her arm affectionately round Jacquetta's neck, and said, "If you leave me my choice, I will have none but these emeralds."

The two elder ladies exchanged looks and smiles.

"Hast thou travelled, young man?" asked the Duchess.

"Not in foreign parts, gracious lady, but I have lived much with those who have been great wanderers."

"Ah! and what say they of the ancient friends of mine house, the Princes of Burgundy?"

"Lady, all men agree that a nobler prince and a juster than Duke Philip never reigned over brave men; and those who have seen the wisdom of his rule, grieve sorely to think so excellent and mighty a lord should have trouble brought to his old age by the turbulence of his son, the Count of Charolois."

Again Margaret's fair brow lowered, and the Duchess hastened to answer—"The disputes between princes, young man, can never be rightly understood by such as thou and thy friends. The Count of Charolois is a noble gentleman; and fire in youth will break out. Richard the Lion-hearted of England, was not less puissant a king for the troubles he occasioned to his sire when prince."

Alwyn bit his lip, to restrain a reply that might

not have been well received; and the Queen, putting aside the emeralds and a few other trinkets, said, smilingly, to the Duchess, "Shall the King pay for these, or have thy learned men yet discovered the Great Secret?"

"Nay," wicked child, said the Duchess, "thou lovest to banter me; and truth to say, more gold has been melted in the crucible than as yet promises ever to come out of it; but my new alchemist, Master Warner, seems to have gone nearer to the result than any I have yet known. Meanwhile the King's treasurer must, perforce, supply the gear to the King's sister."

The Queen wrote an order on the officer thus referred to, who was no other than her own father, Lord Rivers; and Alwyn, putting up his goods, was about to withdraw, when the Duchess said, carelessly, "Good youth, the dealings of our merchants are more with Flanders than with France—is it not so?"

"Surely," said Alwyn, "the Flemings are good traders and honest folk."

"It is well known, I trust, in the city of London, that this new alliance with France is the work of their favourite, the Lord Warwick," said the Duchess, scornfully; "but whatever the Earl does is right with ye of the hood and cap, even though he were to leave yon river without one merchant-mast."

“Whatever be our thoughts, puissant lady,” said Alwyn, cautiously, “we give them not vent to the meddling with state affairs.”

“Ay,” persisted Jacquetta, “thine answer is loyal and discreet. But an’ the Lord Warwick had sought alliance with the Count of Charolois, would there have been brighter bonfires than ye will see in Smithfield, when ye hear that business with the Flemings is surrendered for fine words from King Louis the Cunning?”

“We trust too much to our King’s love for the citizens of London, to fear that surrender, please your highness,” answered Alwyn; “our King himself is the first of our merchants, and he hath given a gracious answer to the deputation from our city.”

“You speak wisely, sir,” said the Queen; “and your King will yet defend you from the plots of your enemies. You may retire.”

Alwyn, glad to be released from questionings but little to his taste, hastened to depart. At the gate of the Royal lodge, he gave his caskets to the servitors who attended him, and passing slowly along the court-yard, thus soliloquized:—

“Our neighbours the Scotch say, ‘It is good fishing in muddy waters;’ but he who fishes into the secrets of courts must bait with his head. What mischief doth that crafty quean—the proud Duchess—devise? Um! They are thinking still to match the young Princess with the hot Count of

Charolois. Better for trade, it is true, to be hand in hand with the Flemings; but there are two sides to a loaf. If they play such a trick on the stout Earl, he is not a man to sit down and do nothing. More food for the ravens, I fear—more brown bills and bright lances in the green fields of poor England!—and King Louis is an awful carle, to sow flax in his neighbour's house, when the torches are burning. Um! Here is fair Marmaduke. He looks brave in his gay super-tunic. Well, sir and foster-brother, how fare you at Court?"

"My dear Nicholas, a merry welcome and hearty to your sharp, thoughtful face. Ah, man! we shall have a gay time for you vendors of gewgaws. There are to be revels and jousts—revels in the Tower, and jousts in Smithfield. We gentles are already hard at practice in the Tilt-yard."

"Sham battles are better than real ones, Master Nevile! But what is in the wind?"

"A sail, Nicholas! a sail, bound to England! Know that the Count of Charolois has permitted Sir Anthony Count de la Roche, his bastard brother, to come over to London, to cross lances with our own Sir Anthony Lord Scales. It is an old challenge, and right royally will the encounter be held."

"Um!" muttered Alwyn—"this bastard, then, is the carrier pigeon. And," said he, aloud—"is it only to exchange hard blows that Sir Anthony of

Burgundy comes over to confer with Sir Anthony of England? Is there no court rumour of other matters between them?"

"Nay. What else? Plague on you craftsmen! Ye cannot even comprehend the pleasure and pastime two knights take in the storm of the lists!"

"I humbly avow it, Master Nevile. But it seemeth, indeed, strange to me that the Count of Charolois should take this very moment to send envoys of courtesy, when so sharp a slight has been put on his pride, and so dangerous a blow struck at his interests, as the alliance between the French Prince and the Lady Margaret. Bold Charles has some cunning, I trow, which your kinsman of Warwick is not here to detect."

"Tush, man! Trade, I see, teaches ye all so to cheat and overreach, that ye suppose a knight's burgonot is as full of tricks and traps as a citizen's flat-cap. Would, though, that my kinsman of Warwick *were* here," added Marmaduke, in a low whisper, "for the women and the courtiers are doing their best to belie him."

"Keep thyself clear of them all, Marmaduke," said Alwyn; "for, by the Lord, I see that the evil days are coming once more, fast and dark, and men like thee will again have to choose between friend and friend, kinsman and king. For my part, I say nothing; for I love not fighting, unless compelled to it. But if ever I do fight, it

will not be by thy side under Warwick's broad flag."

"Eh, man?" interrupted the Nevile.

"Nay, nay," continued Nicholas, shaking his head, "I admire the great Earl, and were I lord or gentle, the great Earl should be my chief. But each to his order; and the trader's tree grows not out of a baron's walking-staff. King Edward may be a stern ruler, but he is a friend to the goldsmiths, and has just confirmed our charter. Let every man praise the bridge he goes over, as the saw saith. Truce to this talk, Master Nevile. I hear that your young hostess—ehem—Mistress Sybill, is greatly marvelled at among the court gallants—is it so?"

Marmaduke's frank face grew gloomy. "Alas! dear foster-brother, he said, dropping the somewhat affected tone in which he had before spoken,—“I must confess, to my shame, that I cannot yet get the damsel out of my thoughts, which is, what I consider it a point of manhood and spirit to achieve.”

"How so?"

"Because, when a maiden chooseth steadily to say nay to your wooing—to follow her heels, and whine and beg, is a dog's duty, not a man's."

"What!" exclaimed Alwyn, in a voice of great eagerness—"mean you to say that you have wooed Sybill Warner as your wife?"

"Verily, yes!"

“ And failed ?”

“ And failed !”

“ Poor Marmaduke !”

“ There is no ‘ poor ’ in the matter, Nick Alwyn,” returned Marmaduke, sturdily ; “ if a girl likes me, well ;—if not, there are too many others in the wide world, for a young fellow to break his heart about one. Yet,” he added, after a short pause, and with a sigh,—“ yet, if thou hast not seen her since she came to the Court, thou wilt find her wondrously changed.”

“ More’s the pity !” said Alwyn, reciprocating his friend’s sigh.

“ I mean that she seems all the comelier for the Court air. And beshrew me, I think, the Lord Hastings, with his dulcet flatteries, hath made it a sort of frenzy for all the gallants to flock round her.”

“ I should like to see Master Warner again,” said Alwyn ;—“ where lodges he ?”

“ Yonder—by the little postern, on the third flight of the turret that flanks the corridor,* next to Friar Bungey, the magician ; but it is broad daylight, and therefore not so dangerous—not but thou mayest as well patter an Ave in going up stairs.”

“ Farewell, Master Nevile,” said Alwyn, smiling ;

* This description refers to that part of the Tower, called the King’s or Queen’s Lodge, and long since destroyed.

“I will seek the mechanician, and if I find there Mistress Sybill, what shall I say from thee?”

“That young bachelors in the reign of Edward IV. will never want fair feres,” answered the Nevile, debonnairly smoothing his lawn partelet.

IV.

EXHIBITING THE BENEFITS WHICH ROYAL PATRONAGE CONFERS ON GENIUS. ALSO THE EARLY LOVES OF THE LORD HASTINGS; WITH OTHER MATTERS EDIFYING AND DELECTABLE.

THE furnace was still at work, the flame glowed, the bellows heaved, but these were no longer ministering to the service of a mighty and practical invention. The Mathematician—the Philosopher—had descended to the Alchemist. The nature of the TIME had conquered the nature of a GENIUS meant to subdue time. Those studies that had gone so far to forestall the master-triumph of far later ages were exchanged for occupations that played with the toys of infant wisdom. O! true Tartarus of Genius—when its energies are misapplied, when the labour but rolls the stone up the mountain, but pours water upon water, through the sieve!

There is a sanguineness in men of great intellect, which often leads them into follies avoided

by the dull. When Adam Warner saw the ruin of his contrivance; when he felt that time, and toil, and money were necessary to its restoration; and when the gold he lacked was placed before him as a reward for alchemical labours—he at first turned to alchemy, as he would have turned to the plough—as he had turned to conspiracy—simply as a means to his darling end. But by rapid degrees, the fascination which all the elder sages experienced in *The Grand Secret*, exercised its witchery over his mind. If Roger Bacon, though catching the notion of the steam-engine, devoted himself to the philosopher's stone—if even in so much more enlightened an age, Newton had wasted some precious hours in the transmutation of metals, it was natural that the solitary sage of the reign of Edward IV. should grow, for awhile at least, wedded to a pursuit which promised results so august. And the worst of alchemy is, that it always allures on its victims: one gets so near, and so near the object—it seems that so small an addition will complete the sum! So there he was—this great practical genius, hard at work on turning copper into gold!

“Well, Master Warner,” said the young goldsmith, entering the student's chamber—“methinks you scarcely remember your friend and visitor, Nicholas Alwyn?”

“Remember, oh, certes! doubtless one of the gentlemen present when they proposed to put me

to the brake*—please to stand a little on this side—what is your will?”

“I am not a gentleman, and I should have been loth to stand idly by when the torture was talked of, for a free-born Englishman, let alone a scholar. And where is your fair daughter, Master Warner? I suppose you see but little of her now she is the great dame’s waiting-damsel?”

“And why so, Master Alwyn?” asked a charming voice; and Alwyn, for the first time, perceived the young form of Sybill, by the embrasure of a window, from which might be seen in the court below, a gay group of lords and courtiers, with the plain, dark dress of Hastings, contrasting their gaudy surcoats, glittering with cloth of gold. Alwyn’s tongue clove to his mouth; all he had to say was forgotten in a certain bashful and indescribable emotion.

The alchemist had returned to his furnace, and the young man and the girl were as much alone as if Adam Warner had been in heaven.

“And why should the daughter forsake the sire more in a court where love is rare, than in the humbler home, where they may need each other less?”

“I thank thee for the rebuke, mistress,” said Alwyn, delighted with her speech; “for I should have been sorry to see thy heart spoiled by the

* Brake, the old word for rack.

vanities that kill most natures." Scarcely had he uttered these words, than they seemed to him overbold and presuming; for his eye now took in the great change of which Marmaduke had spoken. Sybill's dress besecemed the new rank which she held: the corset, fringed with gold, and made of the finest thread, shewed the exquisite contour of the throat and neck, whose ivory it concealed. The kirtle of rich blue became the fair complexion and dark chesnut hair; and over all she wore that most graceful robe called the sasquenice, of which the old French poet sang:—

“ Car nulle robe n'est si belle;
A dame ne à demoiselle.”

This garment, worn over the rest of the dress, had perhaps a classical origin, and with slight variations, may be seen on the Etruscan vases; it was long and loose—of the whitest and finest linen—with hanging sleeves, and open at the sides. But it was not the mere dress that had embellished the young maiden's form and aspect—it was rather an indefinable alteration in the expression and the bearing. She looked as if born to the air of courts; still modest, indeed, and simple—but with a consciousness of dignity, and almost of power; and in fact the Woman had been taught the power that Womanhood possesses. She had been admired, followed, flattered; she had learned the Authority

of Beauty. Her accomplishments, uncommon in that age among her sex, had aided her charm of person: her natural pride, which though hitherto latent, was high and ardent, fed her heart with sweet hopes—a bright career seemed to extend before her; and, at peace as to her father's safety—relieved from the drudging cares of poverty—her fancy was free to follow the phantasms of sanguine youth through the airy land of dreams. And therefore it was that the maid was changed!

At the sight of the delicate beauty—the self-possessed expression—the courtly dress—the noble air of Sybill—Nicholas Alwyn recoiled, and turned pale—he no longer marvelled at her rejection of Marmaduke, and he started at the remembrance of the bold thoughts, when recalling her poor and friendless, he had dared himself to indulge.

The girl smiled at the young man's confusion.

“It is not prosperity that spoils the heart,” she said, touchingly, “unless it be mean, indeed. Thou rememberest, Master Alwyn, that when God tried his saint, it was by adversity and affliction.”

“May thy trial in these last be over,” answered Alwyn; “but the humble must console their state by thinking that the great have their trials too; and, as our homely adage hath it, ‘That is not always good in the maw which is sweet in the mouth.’ Thou seest much of my gentle foster-brother, Mistress Sybill?”

“But in the court dances, Master Alwyn; for most of the hours in which my lady Duchess needs me not are spent here. Oh, my father hopes great things! and now at last fame dawns upon him.”

“I rejoice to hear it, mistress; and so, having paid ye both my homage, I take my leave, praying that I may visit you from time to time, if it be only to consult this worshipful Master, touching certain improvements in the Horologe, in which his mathematics can doubtless instruct me—Farewell. I have some jewels to shew to the Lady of Bonville.”

“The Lady of Bonville!” repeated Sybill, changing colour; “she is a dame of notable loveliness.”

“So men say—and mated to a foolish lord; but scandal, which spares few, breathes not on her—rare praise for a court dame. Few houses can have the boast of Lord Warwick’s—‘that all the men are without fear, and all the women without stain.’”

“It is said,” observed Sybill, looking down, “that my Lord Hastings once much affectioned the Lady Bonville. Hast thou heard such gossip?”

“Surely, yes: in the city we hear all the tales of the Court; for many a courtier, following King Edward’s exemplar, dines with the citizen to-day, that he may borrow gold from the citizen to-morrow. Surely, yes; and hence, they say, the small love the wise Hastings bears to the stout Earl.”

“How runs the tale? Be seated, Master Alwyn.”

“Marry, thus: when William Hastings was but a squire, and much favoured by Richard, Duke of York, he lifted his eyes to the Lady Katherine Neville, sister to the Earl of Warwick; and in beauty and in dower, as in birth, a mate for a king’s son.”

“And, doubtless, the Lady Katherine returned his love?”

“So it is said, maiden; and the Earl of Salisbury, her father, and Lord Warwick, her brother, discovered the secret, and swore that no New Man (the stout Earl’s favourite word of contempt) though he were made a duke, should give to an upstart posterity the quarterings of Montagu and Nevile. Marry, Mistress Sybill, there is a north country and pithy proverb, ‘Happy is the man whose father went to the devil.’ Had some old Hastings been a robber and extortioner, and left to brave William the heirship of his wickedness in lordships and lands, Lord Warwick had not called him ‘a new man.’ Master Hastings was dragged, like a serf’s son, before the Earl on his dais; and be sure he was rated soundly, for his bold blood was up, and he defied the Earl, as a gentleman born, to single battle. Then the Earl’s followers would have fallen on him; and in those days, under King Henry, he who bearded a baron in his hall must have a troop at his back, or was like to have a rope round his neck; but the Earl,

(for the lion is not as fierce as they paint him,) came down from his dais, and said, ‘ Man, I like thy spirit, and I myself will dub thee knight, that I may pick up thy glove and give thee battle.’”

“ And they fought? Brave Hastings!”

“ No. For, whether the Duke of York forbade it, or whether the Lady Katherine would not hear of such strife between fere and frere, I know not; but Duke Richard sent Hastings to Ireland, and, a month after, the Lady Katherine married Lord Bonville’s son and heir—so, at least, tell the gossips and sing the ballad-mongers. Men add, that Lord Hastings still loves the dame, though, certes, he knows how to console himself.”

“ Loves her! Nay, nay—I trow not,” answered Sybill, in a low voice, and with a curl of her dewy lip.

At this moment the door opened gently, and Lord Hastings himself entered. He came in with the familiarity of one accustomed to the place.

“ And how fares the grand secret, Master Warner?—Sweet mistress! thou seemest lovelier to me in this dark chamber than outshining all in the galliard. Ha! Master Alwyn, I owe thee many thanks for making me know first the rare arts of this fair emblazoner. Move me yon stool, good Alwyn.”

As the goldsmith obeyed, he glanced from Hastings to the blushing face and heaving bosom of

Sybill, and a deep and exquisite pang shot through his heart. It was not jealousy alone; it was anxiety, compassion, terror. The powerful Hastings—the ambitious lord—the accomplished libertine—what a fate for poor Sybill, if for such a man the cheek blushed, and the bosom heaved!

“Well, Master Warner,” resumed Hastings, “thou art still silent as to thy progress.”

The philosopher uttered an impatient groan.

“Ah, I comprehend. The gold-maker must not speak of his craft before the goldsmith. Good Alwyn, thou mayest retire. All arts have their mysteries.”

Alwyn, with a sombre brow, moved to the door.

“In sooth,” he said, “I have over-tarried, good my lord. The Lady Bonville will chide me; for she is of no patient temper.”

“Bridle thy tongue, artisan, and begone!” said Hastings, with unusual haughtiness and petulance.

“I stung him there,” muttered Alwyn, as he withdrew—“oh! fool that I was to—nay, I *thought* it never, I did but *dream* it. What wonder we traders hate these silken lords. They reap, we sow—they trifle, we toil—they steal with soft words into the hearts which—Oh! Marmaduke, thou art right—right!—Stout men sit not down to weep beneath the willow. But she—the poor maiden!—she looked so haught and so happy. This is early May; will she wear that look when the autumn leaves are strewn?”

V.

THE WOODVILLE INTRIGUE PROSPERS—MONTAGU CONFERS WITH HASTINGS—VISITS THE ARCHBISHOP OF YORK, AND IS MET ON THE ROAD BY A STRANGE PERSONAGE.

AND now the one topic at the Court of King Edward IV. was the expected arrival of Anthony of Burgundy, Count de la Roche, bastard brother of Charolois, afterwards, as Duke of Burgundy, so famous as Charles *le Temeraire*. Few, indeed, out of the immediate circle of the Duchess of Bedford's confidants, regarded the visit of this illustrious foreigner as connected with any object beyond the avowed one of chivalrous encounter with Anthony Woodville; the fulfilment of a challenge given by the latter two years before, at the time of the queen's coronation. The origin of this challenge, Anthony Woodville Lord Scales has himself explained in a letter to the bastard, still extant, and of which an extract may be seen

in the popular and delightful biographies of Miss Strickland.*

It seems that, on the Wednesday before Easter-day, 1465, as Sir Anthony was speaking to his royal sister, "on his knees," all the ladies of the court gathered round him, and bound to his left knee a band of gold, adorned with stones fashioned into the letters S.S., (souvenance or remembrance,) and to this band was suspended an enamelled "Forget me not." "And one of the ladies said that 'I ought to take a step fitting for the times.'" This step was denoted by a letter on vellum, bound with a gold thread, placed in his cap; and having obtained the king's permission to bring the adventure of the flower of souvenance to a conclusion, the gallant Anthony forwarded the articles and the enamelled flower to the bastard of Burgundy, beseeching him to touch the latter with his knightly hand, in token of his accepting the challenge. The Count De la Roche did so, but was not sent by his brother amongst the knights whom Charolois despatched to England, and the combat had been suspended to the present time.

But now the intriguing Rivers and his duchess gladly availed themselves of so fair a pretext for introducing to Edward the able brother of Warwick's enemy, and the French prince's rival, Charles

* Queens of England, vol. iii. p. 380.

of Burgundy; and Anthony Woodville, too gentle and knightly a person to have abetted their cunning projects in any mode less chivalrous, willingly consented to revive a challenge in honour of the ladies of England.

The only one amongst the courtiers who seemed dissatisfied with the meditated visit of the doughty Burgundian champion was the Lord Montagu. This penetrating and experienced personage was not to be duped by an affectation of that chivalry which, however natural at the court of Edward III., was no longer in unison with the more intriguing and ambitious times over which presided the luxurious husband of Elizabeth Woodville. He had noticed of late, with suspicion, that Edward had held several councils with the anti-Nevile faction, from which he himself was excluded. The King, who heretofore had delighted in his companionship, had shewn him marks of coldness and estrangement, and there was an exulting malice in the looks of the Duchess of Bedford, which augured some approaching triumph over the great family which the Woodvilles so openly laboured to supplant. One day, as Marmaduke was loitering in the court-yard of the Tower, laughing and jesting with his friends,—Lord Montagu, issuing from the King's closet, passed him with a hurried step and a thoughtful brow. This haughty brother of the Earl of Warwick had so far attended

to the recommendation of the latter, that he had with some courtesy excused himself to Marmaduke for his language in the archery ground, and had subsequently, when seeing him in attendance on the King, honoured him with a stately nod, or a brief "Good morrow, young kinsman." But as his eye now rested on Marmaduke, while the group vailed their bonnets to the powerful courtier, he called him forth, with a familiar smile he had never before assumed, and drawing him apart, and leaning on his shoulder, much to the envy of the standers by, he said, caressingly,

"Dear kinsman Guy——"

"Marmaduke, please you, my lord."

"Dear kinsman Marmaduke, my brother esteems you for your father's sake. And, sooth to say, the Neviles are not so numerous at Court as they were. Business and state matters have made me see too seldom those whom I would most affect. Wilt thou ride with me to the More Park? I would present thee to my brother the Archbishop."

"If the King would graciously hold me excused."

"The King, sir! when I—I forgot," said Montagu, checking himself—"oh, as to that, the King stirs not out to-day! He hath with him a score of tailors and armourers, in high council on the coming festivities. I will warrant thy release; and here comes Hastings, who shall confirm it."

“Fair my lord!”—as at that moment Hastings emerged from the little postern that gave egress from the apartments occupied by the Alchemist of the Duchess of Bedford—“wilt thou be pleased, in thy capacity of chamberlain, to sanction my cousin in a day’s absence? I would confer with him on family matters.”

“Certes, a small favour to so deserving a youth. I will see to his deputy.”

“A word with you, Hastings,” said Montagu, thoughtfully, and he drew aside his fellow courtier: “what thinkest thou of this Burgundy bastard’s visit?”

“That it has given a peacock’s strut to the popinjay Anthony Woodville.”

“Would that were all,” returned Montagu. “But the very moment that Warwick is negotiating with Louis of France, this interchange of courtesies with Louis’s deadly foe, the Count of Charolois, is out of season.”

“Nay, take it not so gravely—a mere pastime.”

“Hastings, thou knowest better. But thou art no friend of my great brother.”

“Small cause have I to be so,” answered Hastings, with a quivering lip. “To him and your father, I owe as deep a curse as ever fell on the heart of man. I have lived to be above even Lord Warwick’s insult. Yet young, I stand amongst the warriors and peers of England, with a crest as

haught, and a scutcheon as stainless as the best. I have drank deep of the world's pleasures. I command, as I list, the world's gaudy pomps, and I tell thee, that all my success in life countervails not the agony of the hour, when all the bloom and loveliness of the earth faded into winter, and the only woman I ever loved was sacrificed to her brother's pride."

The large drops stood on the pale brow of the fortunate noble as he thus spoke, and his hollow voice affected even the worldly Montagu.

"Tush, Hastings!" said Montagu, kindly; "these are but a young man's idle memories. Are we not all fated, in our early years, to love in vain?—even I married not the maiden I thought the fairest, and held the dearest. For the rest, bethink thee—thou wert then but a simple squire."

"But of as ancient and pure a blood as ever rolled its fiery essence through a Norman's veins."

"It may be so; but old houses, when impoverished, are cheaply held. And thou must confess thou wert then no mate for Katherine. *Now*, indeed, it were different; now a Nevile might be proud to call Hastings brother."

"I know it," said Hastings, proudly—"I know it, Lord, and why? Because I have gold, and land, and the King's love, and can say, as the Centurion, to my fellow-man, 'Do this, and he doeth it';

and yet I tell thee, Lord Montagu, that I am less worthy now the love of beauty, the right hand of fellowship from a noble spirit, than I was then—when—the simple squire—my heart full of truth and loyalty, with lips that had never lied, with a soul never polluted by unworthy pleasures or mean intrigues, I felt that Katherine Nevile should never blush to own her fere and plighted lord in William de Hastings. Let this pass—let it pass. You call me no friend to Warwick. True! but I am a friend to the King he has served, and the land of my birth to which he has given peace; and, therefore, not till Warwick desert Edward, not till he wakes the land again to broil and strife, will I mingle in the plots of those who seek his downfall. If, in my office and stated rank, I am compelled to countenance the pageant of this mock tournament, and seem to honour the coming of the Count de la Roche, I will at least stand aloof and free from all attempt to apply a gaudy pageant to a dangerous policy; and on this pledge, Montagu, I give you my knightly hand.”

“It suffices,” answered Montagu, pressing the hand extended to him. “But the other day I heard the King’s dissour tell him a tale of some tyrant, who silently shewed a curious questioner how to govern a land, by cutting down, with his staff, the heads of the tallest poppies; and the

Duchess of Bedford turned to me, and asked—
‘What says a Nevile to the application?’
‘Faith, lady,’ said I, ‘the Nevile poppies have oak stems.’ Believe me, Hastings, these Woodvilles may grieve and wrong and affront Lord Warwick, but woe to all the pigmy goaders, when the lion turns at bay.”

With this solemn menacc, Montagu quitted Hastings, and passed on, leaning upon Marmaduke, and with a gloomy brow.

At the gate of the palace waited the Lord Montagu’s palfrey and his retinue of twenty squires and thirty grooms. “Mount, Master Marmaduke, and take thy choice among these steeds, for we shall ride alone. There is no Nevile amongst these gentlemen.” Marmaduke obeyed. The Earl dismissed his retinue, and in little more than ten minutes,—so different, then, was the extent of the metropolis,—the noble and the squire were amidst the open fields.

They had gone several miles, at a brisk trot, before the Earl opened his lips, and then, slackening his pace, he said abruptly, “How dost thou like the King? Speak out, youth; there are no caves-droppers here.”

“He is a most gracious master, and a most winning gentleman.”

“He is both,” said Montagu, with a touch of emotion, that surprised Marmaduke, “and no man

can come near without loving him. And yet, Marmaduke—(is that thy name?)—yet, whether it be weakness or falseness, no man can be sure of his King's favour from day to day! We Neviles must hold fast to each other. Not a stick should be lost, if the faggot is to remain unbroken. What say you?" And the Earl's keen eye turned sharply on the young man.

"I say, my lord, that the Earl of Warwick was to me, patron, lord, and father, when I entered your city a friendless orphan; and that, though I covet honours, and love pleasure, and would be loth to lift finger or speak word against King Edward, yet were that princely lord—the Head of mine House—an outcast and a beggar, by his side I would wander, for his bread I would beg!"

"Young man," exclaimed Montagu, "from this hour I admit thee to my heart! Give me thy hand. Beggar and outcast?—No!—If the storm come, the meaner birds take to shelter, the eagle remains solitary in heaven!" So saying, he relapsed into silence, and put spurs to his steed.

Towards the decline of day they drew near to the favourite palace of the Archbishop of York. There, the features of the country presented a more cultivated aspect than it had hitherto worn. For at that period the lands of the churchmen were infinitely in advance of those of the laity, in the elementary arts of husbandry, partly because the ecclesiastic

proprietors had greater capital at their command, partly because their superior learning had taught them to avail themselves, in some measure, of the instructions of the Latin writers. Still the prevailing characteristic of the scenery was pasture land—inimmense tracts of common supported flocks of sheep; the fragrance of new-mown hay breathed sweet from many a sunny field. In the rear, stretched woods of Druid growth; and in the narrow lanes, that led to unfrequent farms and homesteads, built almost entirely either of wood or (more primitive still) of mud and clay, profuse weeds, brambles, and wild flowers, almost concealed the narrow pathway, never intended for cart or wagon, and arrested the slow path of the ragged horse bearing the scanty produce of acres to yard or mill. But, though to the eye of an œconomist or philanthropist, broad England now, with its variegated agriculture, its wide roads, its whitewalled villas, and numerous towns, may present a more smiling countenance,—to the early lover of Nature, fresh from the child-like age of Poetry and Romance, the rich and lovely verdure which gave to our mother-country the name of “Green England;” its wild woods and covert alleys, proffering adventure to fancy; its tranquil heaths, studded with peaceful flocks, and vocal, from time to time, with the rude scrannel of the shepherd—had a charm which we can understand alone by the luxurious reading of our

elder writers. For the country itself ministered to that mingled fancy and contemplation which the stirring and ambitious life of towns and civilization has in much banished from our later literature.

Even the thoughtful Montague relaxed his brow as he gazed around, and he said to Marmaduke, in a gentle and subdued voice—

“Methinks, young cousin, that in such scenes, those silly rhymes, taught us in our childhood, of the green woods and the summer cuckoos, of bold Robin and Maid Marian, ring back in our ears. Alas, that this fair land should be so often dyed in the blood of her own children! Here, how the thought shrinks from broils and war—civil war—war between brother and brother, son and father! In the city and the court, we forget others overmuch, from the too keen memory of ourselves.”

Scarcely had Montagu said these words, before there suddenly emerged from a bosky lane to the right a man mounted upon a powerful roan horse. His dress was that of a substantial franklin; a green surtout of broad cloth, over a tight vest of the same colour, left, to the admiration of a soldierly eye, an expanse of chest that might have vied with the mighty strength of Warwick himself. A cap, somewhat like a turban, fell in two ends over the left cheek, till they touched the shoulder, and the upper part of the visage was concealed by

a half vizard, not unfrequently worn out of doors with such head-gear, as a shade from the sun. Behind this person rode, on a horse equally powerful, a man of shorter stature, but scarcely less muscular a frame, clad in a leathern jerkin, curiously fastened with thongs, and wearing a steel bonnet projecting far over the face.

The foremost of these strangers, coming thus unawares upon the courtiers, reined in his steed, and said, in a clear, full voice—"Good evening to you, my masters. It is not often that these roads witness riders in silk and pile."

"Friend," quoth the Montagu, "may the peace we enjoy under the White Rose increase the number of all travellers through our land, whether in pile or russet!"

"Peace, sir!" returned the horseman, roughly—"peace is no blessing to poor men, unless it bring something more than life—the means to live in security and ease. Peace hath done nothing for the Poor of England. Why, look you towards yon grey tower—the owner is, forsooth, gentleman and knight; but yesterday, he and his men broke open a yeoman's house, carried off his wife and daughters to his tower, and refuseth to surrender them till ransomed by half the year's produce on the yeoman's farm."

"A caitiff, and illegal act," said Montagu.

"Illegal! But the law will notice it not—why

should it? Unjust, if it punish the knight, and dare not touch the king's brother!"

"How, sir?"

"I say the King's brother. . . Scarcely a month since, twenty-four persons, under George, Duke of Clarence, entered by force a lady's house, and seized her jewels and her money, upon some charge, God wot, of contriving mischief to the Boy-Duke.* Are not the Commons ground by imposts for the Queen's kindred? Are not the King's officers and purveyors licensed spoilers and rapiners? Are not the old chivalry banished for new upstarts? And in all this, is peace better than war?"

"Knowest thou not that these words are death, man?"

"Ay, in the city! but in the fields and waste, thought is free. Frown not, my lord. Ah! I know you; and the time may come when the Baron will act what the Franklin speaks. What, think you I see not the signs of the storm? Are Warwick and Montagu more safe with Edward than they were with Henry? Look to thyself! Charolois will outwit King Louis, and ere the year be out, the young Margaret of England will be lady of your brave brother's sternest foe!"

* See for this and other instances of the prevalent contempt of law in the reign of Edward IV., and, indeed, during the 15th century, the extracts from the Parliamentary Rolls, quoted by Sharon Turner, *History of England*, vol. iii., p. 399.

“And who art thou, knave?” cried Montagu, aghast, and laying his gloved hand on the bold prophet’s bridle.

“One who has sworn the fall of the House of York, and may live to fight, side by side, in that cause with Warwick; for Warwick, whatever be his faults, has an English heart, and loves the Commons.”

Montagu, uttering an exclamation of astonishment, relaxed hold of the franklin’s bridle; and the latter waved his hand, and spurring his steed across the wild chain of commons, disappeared with his follower.

“A sturdy traitor!” muttered the Earl, following him with his eye. “One of the exiled Lancastrian lords, perchance. Strange how they pierce into our secrets! Heardst thou that fellow, Marmaduke?”

“Only in a few sentences, and those brought my hand to my dagger. But as thou madest no sign, I thought his Grace the King could not be much injured by empty words.”

“True! and misfortune has ever a shrewish tongue.”

“An’ it please you, my lord,” quoth Marmaduke, “I have seen the man before, and it seemeth to me that he holds much power over the rascal rabble.” And here Marmaduke narrated the attack upon Warner’s house, and how it was frustrated by the intercession of Robin of Redesdale.

“Art thou sure it is the same man—for his face was masked?”

“My lord, in the North, as thou knowest, we recognise men by their forms, not faces, as, in truth, we ought, seeing that it is the sinews and bulk, not the lips and nose, that make a man a useful friend or dangerous foe.”

Montagu smiled at this soldierly simplicity.

“And heard you the name the raptrils shouted?”

“Robin! my Lord. They cried out ‘Robin,’ as if it had been a ‘Montagu’ or a ‘Warwick.’”

“Robin! ah, then, I guess the man—a most perilous and staunch Lancastrian. He has more weight with the poor than had Cade the rebel, and they say Margaret trusts him as much as she doth an Exeter or Somerset. I marvel that he should shew himself so near the gates of London. It must be looked to. But come, cousin. Our steeds are breathed—let us on!”

On arriving at the More, its stately architecture, embellished by the prelate with a façade of double arches, painted and blazoned somewhat in the fashion of certain old Italian houses, much dazzled Marmaduke. And the splendour of the archbishop’s retinue—less martial, indeed, than Warwick’s—was yet more imposing to the common eye. Every office that pomp could devise for a king’s court was to be found in the household of this magnificent prelate:—master of the horse and the

hounds, chamberlain, treasurer, pursuivant, herald, seneschal, captain of the body guard, &c.—and all emulously sought for and proudly held by gentlemen of the first blood and birth. His mansion was at once a court for middle life, a school for youth, an asylum for age; and thither, as to a Medici, fled the Letters and the Arts.

Through corridor and hall, lined with pages and squires, passed Montagu and Marmaduke, till they gained a quaint garden, the wonder and envy of the time, planned by an Italian of Mantua, and perhaps the stateliest one of the kind existent in England. Straight walks, terraces, and fountains, clipped trees, green alleys and smooth bowling-greens abounded, but the flowers were few and common; and if here and there a statue might be found, it possessed none of the art so admirable in our earliest ecclesiastical architecture, but its clumsy proportions were made more uncouth by a profusion of barbaric painting and gilding. The fountains, however, were especially curious, diversified, and elaborate: some shot up as pyramids, others coiled in undulating streams, each jet chasing the other as serpents; some, again, branched off in the form of trees, while mimic birds, perched upon leaden boughs, poured water from their bills. Marmaduke, much astounded and bewildered, muttered a pater noster in great haste; and even the clerical rank of the prelate did not preserve him

from the suspicion of magical practices in the youth's mind.

Remote from all his train, in a little arbour overgrown with the honeysuckle and white rose, a small table before him bearing fruits, confectionary, and spiced wines, (for the prelate was a celebrated epicure, though still in the glow of youth,) they found George Nevile, reading lazily a Latin MS.

"Well," my dear lord and brother, "said Montagu, laying his arm on the prelate's shoulder—"first let me present to thy favour a gallant youth, Marmaduke Nevile, worthy his name, and thy love."

"He is welcome, Montagu, to our poor house," said the Archbishop, rising, and complacently glancing at his palace, splendidly gleaming through the trellis-work, "'*Puer ingenui vultus.*' Thou art acquainted, doubtless, young sir, with the Humaner Letters?"

"Well-a-day, my lord, my nurturing was somewhat neglected in the province," said Marmaduke, disconcerted, and deeply blushing, "and only of late have I deemed the languages fit study for those not reared for our Mother Church."

"Fie, sir, fie! Correct that error, I pray thee. Latin teaches the courtier how to thrive, the soldier how to manœuvre, the husbandman how to sow; and if we churchmen are more cunning, as the profane call us, (and the prelate smiled) than ye of the

laity, the Latin must answer for the sins of our learning.”

With this, the Archbishop passed his arm affectionately through his brother's, and said, “Beshrew me, Montagu, thou lookest worn and weary. Surely thou lackest food, and supper shall be hastened. Even I, who have but slender appetite, grow hungered in these cool gloaming hours.”

“Dismiss my comrade, George—I would speak to thee,” whispered Montagu.

“Thou knowest not Latin?” said the Archbishop, turning with a compassionate eye to Neville, whose own eye was amorously fixed on the delicate confectionaries—“never too late to learn. Hold, here is a grammar of the verbs, that, with mine own hand, I have drawn up for youth. Study thine *amo* and thy *moneo*, while I confer on Church matters with giddy Montagu. I shall expect, ere we sup, that thou wilt have mastered the first tenses.”

“But——”

“Oh, nay, nay; but me no buts. Thou art too tough, I fear me, for flagellation, a wondrous improver of tender youth”—and the prelate forced his grammar into the reluctant hands of Marmaduke, and sauntered down one of the solitary alleys with his brother.

Long and earnest was their conference, and at one time keen were their disputes.

The Archbishop had very little of the energy of Montagu or the impetuosity of Warwick, but he had far more of what we now call *mind*, as distinct from *talent*, than either; that is, he had not their capacities for action, but he had a judgment and sagacity that made him considered a wise and sound adviser: this he owed principally to the churchman's love of ease, and to his freedom from the wear and tear of the passions which gnawed the great minister and the aspiring courtier; his natural intellect was also fostered by much learning. George Nevile had been reared, by an Italian ecclesiastic, in all the subtle diplomacy of the Church; and his ambition, despising lay objects, (though he consented to hold the office of chancellor,) was concentrated in that kingdom over kings, which had animated the august dominators of religious Rome. Though, as we have said, still in that age when the affections are usually vivid,* George Nevile loved no human creature—not even his brothers—not even King Edward, who, with all his vices, possessed so eminently the secret that wins men's hearts. His early and entire absorption in the great religious community, which stood apart from the laymen in order to control them, alienated him from his

* He was consecrated Bishop of Exeter at the age of twenty, at twenty-six he became Archbishop of York, and was under thirty at the time referred to in the text.

kind; and his superior instruction only served to feed him with a calm and icy contempt for all, that Prejudice, as he termed it, held dear and precious. He despised the knight's wayward honour—the burgher's crafty honesty. For him no such thing as principle existed; and conscience itself lay dead in the folds of a fancied exemption from all responsibility to the dull herd, that were but as wool and meat to the Churchman-Shepherd. But withal, if somewhat pedantic, he had in his manner a suavity and elegance and polish, which suited well his high station and gave persuasion to his counsels. In all externals, he was as little like a priest as the high-born prelates of that day usually were. In dress, he rivalled the fopperies of the Plantagenet brothers. In the chase, he was more ardent than Warwick had been in his earlier youth; and a dry sarcastic humour, sometimes elevated into wit, gave liveliness to his sagacious converse.

Montagu desired that the Archbishop and himself should demand solemn audience of Edward, and gravely remonstrate with the King on the impropriety of receiving the brother of a rival suitor, while Warwick was negotiating the marriage of Margaret with a Prince of France.

“Nay,” said the Archbishop, with a bland smile, that fretted Montagu to the quick—“surely, even a baron, a knight, a franklin—a poor priest like myself, would rise against the man who dic-

tated to his hospitality. Is a king less irritable than baron, knight, franklin, and priest?—or rather, being, as it were, *per lege*, lord of all, hath he not irritability enow for all four? Ay—tut and tush as thou wilt, John—but thy sense must do justice to my counsel at the last. I know Edward well; he hath something of mine own idlesse and ease of temper, but with more of the dozing lion than priests, who have only, look you, the mildness of the dove. Prick up his higher spirit, not by sharp remonstrance, but by seeming trust. Observe to him, with thy gay, careless laugh—which, methinks, thou hast somewhat lost of late—that with any other prince Warwick might suspect some snare—some humiliating overthrow of his embassy—but that all men know how steadfast in faith and honour is Edward IV.”

“Truly,” said Montagu, with a forced smile, “you understand mankind; but yet, bethink you—suppose this fail, and Warwick return to England to hear that he hath been cajoled and fooled; that the Margaret he hath crossed the seas to affianced to the brother of Louis is betrothed to Charolois—bethink you, I say, what manner of heart beats under our brother’s mail.”

“Impiger, iracundus!” said the Archbishop; “a very Achilles, to whom our English Agamemnon, if he cross him, is a baby. All this is sad truth; our parents spoilt him in his childhood, and glory in his

youth, and wealth, power, success, in his manhood. Ay! if Warwick be chafed, it will be as the stir of the sea-serpent, which, according to the Icelanders, moves a world. Still the best way to prevent the danger is to enlist the honour of the King in his behalf—to shew that our eyes are open, but that we disdain to doubt—and are frank to confide. Meanwhile send messages and warnings privately to Warwick.”

These reasonings finally prevailed with Montagu, and the brothers returned with one mind to the house. Here, as after their ablutions; they sate down to the evening meal, the Archbishop remembered poor Marmaduke, and despatched to him one of his thirty household chaplains. Marmaduke was found fast asleep over the second tense of the verb *amo*.

VI.

THE ARRIVAL OF THE COUNT DE LA ROCHE, AND THE
VARIOUS EXCITEMENT PRODUCED ON MANY PERSONAGES
BY THAT EVENT.

THE prudence of the Archbishop's counsel was so far made manifest, that on the next day Montagu found all remonstrance would have been too late. The Count de la Roche had already landed, and was on his way to London. The citizens, led by Rivers partially to suspect the object of the visit, were delighted not only by the prospect of a brilliant pageant, but by the promise such a visit conveyed of a continued peace with their commercial ally; and the preparations made by the wealthy merchants increased the bitterness and discontent of Montagu. At length, at the head of a gallant and princely retinue, the Count de la Roche entered London. Though Hastings made no secret of his distaste to the Count de la Roche's visit, it became his office as Lord Cham-

berlain to meet the Count at Blackwall, and escort him and his train, in gilded barges, to the Palace.

In the great hall of the Tower, in which the story of Antiochus was painted, by the great artists employed under Henry the Third, and on the elevation of the dais, behind which, across Gothic columns, stretched draperies of cloth of gold, was placed Edward's chair of state. Around him were grouped the Dukes of Clarence and Gloucester, the Lords Worcester, Montagu, Rivers, D'Eyncourt, St. John, Raoul de Fulke, and others. But at the threshold of the chamber stood Anthony Woodville, the knightly challenger, his knee bound by the ladye-badge of the S.S. and his fine person clad in white-flowered velvet of Genoa, adorned with pearls. Stepping forward, as the Count appeared, the gallant Englishman bent his knee half-way to the ground, and raising the Count's hand to his lips, said in French—"Deign, noble sir, to accept the gratitude of one who were not worthy of encounter from so peerless a hand, save by the favour of the ladies of England, and your own courtesy, which ennobles him whom it stoops to." So saying, he led the Count towards the King.

De la Roche, an experienced and profound courtier, and justly deserving Hall's praise as a man of "great witte, courage, valiantness, and liberalitie," did not affect to conceal the admira-

tion which the remarkable presence of Edward never failed to excite ; lifting his hand to his eyes, as if to shade them from a sudden blaze of light, he would have fallen on both knees, but Edward with quick condescension raised him, and, rising himself, said gaily—

“Nay, Count de la Roche, brave and puissant Chevalier, who hath crossed the seas in honour of knighthood and the ladies—we would, indeed, that our roiaulme boasted a lord like thee, from whom we might ask such homage. But since thou art not our subject, it consoles at least that thou art our guest. By our halidame, Lord Scales, thou must look well to thy lance and thy steed’s girths, for never, I trow, hast thou met a champion of goodlier strength and knightlier metal.”

“My lord King,” answered the Count, “I fear me, indeed, that a knight like the Sieur Anthony, who fights under the eyes of such a King, will prove invincible. Did kings enter the lists with kings, where, through broad Christendom, find a compeer for your Highness?”

“Your brother, Sir Count, if fame lies not,” returned Edward, slightly laughing, and lightly touching the bastard’s shoulder, “were a fearful lance to encounter, even though Charlemagne himself were to revive, with his twelve paladins at his back. Tell us, Sir Count,” added the King, drawing himself up—“tell us, for we soldiers are curious

in such matters, hath not the Count of Charolois the advantage of all here in sinews and stature?"

"Sire," returned De la Roche, "my princely brother is indeed mighty with the brand and battle-axe, but your Grace is taller by half the head,—and, peradventure, of even a more stalwart build, but that mere strength in your Highness is not that gift of God which strikes the beholder most."

Edward smiled good-humouredly at a compliment, the truth of which was too obvious to move much vanity, and said, with a royal and knightly grace—"Our House of York hath been taught, Sir Count, to estimate men's beauty by men's deeds, and therefore the Count of Charolois hath long been known to us—who, alas, have seen him not!—as the fairest gentleman of Europe. My Lord Scales, we must here publicly crave your pardon. Our brother-in-law, Sir Count, would fain have claimed his right to hold you his guest, and have graced himself by exclusive service to your person. We have taken from him his lawful office, for we kings are jealous, and would not have our subjects more honoured than ourselves." Edward turned round to his courtiers as he spoke, and saw that his last words had called a haughty and angry look to the watchful countenance of Montagu. "Lord Hastings," he continued, "to your keeping, as our representative, we

entrust this gentleman. He must need refreshment, ere we present him to our Queen."

The Count bowed to the ground, and reverently withdrew from the royal presence, accompanied by Hastings. Edward then, singling Anthony Woodville and Lord Rivers from the group, broke up the audience, and, followed by those two noblemen, quitted the hall.

Montagu, whose countenance had recovered the dignified and high-born calm habitual to it, turned to the Duke of Clarence, and observed, indifferently—"The Count de la Roche hath a goodly mien, and a fair tongue."

"Pest on these Burgundians!" answered Clarence, in an under-tone, and drawing Montagu aside—"I would wager my best greyhound to a scullion's cur, that our English knights will lower their burgonots."

"Nay, sir, an idle holiday show. What matters whose lance breaks, or whose destrier stumbles?"

"Will you not, yourself, cousin Montagu—you, who are so peerless in the joust—take part in the fray?"

"I, your Highness—I, the brother of the Earl of Warwick, whom this pageant hath been devised by the Woodvilles to mortify and disparage in his solemn embassy to Burgundy's mightiest foe!—I!"

“Sooth to say,” said the young prince, much embarrassed, “it grieves me sorely to hear thee speak as if Warwick would be angered at this pastime. For look you, Montagu—I, thinking only of my hate to Burgundy, and my zeal for our English honour, have consented, as high constable, and despite my grudge to the Woodvilles, to bear the bassinet of our own champion—and——”

“Saints in heaven!” exclaimed Montagu, with a burst of his fierce brother’s temper, which he immediately checked, and changed into a tone that concealed, beneath the most outward respect, the most latent irony, “I crave your pardon, humbly, for my vehemence, Prince of Clarence. I suddenly remember me, that humility is the proper virtue of knighthood. Your Grace does indeed set a notable example of that virtue to the peers of England, and my poor brother’s infirmity of pride will stand rebuked for aye, when he hears that George Plantagenet bore the bassinet of Anthony Woodville.”

“But it is for the honour of the ladies,” said Clarence, falteringly, “in honour of the fairest maid of all—the Flower of English beauty—the Lady Isabel—that I——”

“Your Highness will pardon me,” interrupted Montagu, “but I do trust to your esteem for our poor and insulted House of Nevile, so far as to be assured that the name of my niece, Isabel, will

not be submitted to the ribald comments of a base-born Burgundian."

"Then I will break no lance in the lists!"

"As it likes you, Prince," replied Montagu, shortly, and, with a low bow, he quitted the chamber, and was striding to the outer gate of the Tower, when a sweet, clear voice behind him called him by his name. He turned abruptly, to meet the dark eye and all-subduing smile of the boy-Duke of Gloucester.

"A word with you, Montagu—noblest and most prized, with your princely brothers, of the champions of our House,—I read your generous indignation with our poor Clarence. Ay, sir!—ay!—it was a weakness in him, that moved even me. But you have not now to learn that his nature, how excellent soever, is somewhat of the unsteady. His judgment alone lacks weight and substance,—ever persuaded against his better reason by those who approach his infirmer side. But if it be true that our cousin Warwick intends for him the hand of the peerless Isabel, wiser heads will guide his course."

"My brother," said Montagu, greatly softened, "is much beholden to your Highness for a steady countenance and friendship, for which I also, believe me—and the families of Beauchamp, Montagu, and Nevile—are duly grateful. But to speak plainly (which your Grace's youthful candour, so

all-acknowledged, will permit), the kinsmen of the Queen do now so aspire to rule this land, to marry or forbid to marry, not only our own children, but your illustrious father's, that I foresee, in this visit of the Bastard Anthony, the most signal disgrace to Warwick that ever king passed upon ambassador, or even gentleman. And this moves me more!—yea, I vow to God, it moves me more—from the thought of danger to your royal House, than from the grief of slight to mine; for Warwick—but you know him.”

“Montagu, you must soothe and calm your brother if chafed. I impose that task on your love for us. Alack, would that Edward listened more to me and less to the Queen's kith:—These Woodvilles!—and yet they may live to move not wrath but pity. If aught snapped the thread of Edward's life, (Holy Paul forbid!) what would chance to Elizabeth—her brothers—her children?”

“Her children would mount the throne that our right hands built,” said Montagu, sullenly.

“Ah! think you so?—you rejoice me! I had feared that the Barons might, that the Commons would, that the Church *must*, pronounce the unhappy truth, that—but you look amazed, my lord! Alas, my boyish years are too garrulous!”

“I catch not your Highness's meaning.”

“Pooh, pooh! By St. Paul, your seeming dulness proves your loyalty; but, with me, the King's

brother, frankness were safe. Thou knowest well that the King was betrothed before to the lady Eleanor Talbot; that such betrothment, not set aside by the Pope, renders his marriage with Elizabeth against law; that his children may (would to Heaven it were not so!) be set aside as bastards, when Edward's life no longer shields them from the sharp eyes of men."

"Ah!" said Montagu, thoughtfully; "and in that case, George of Clarence would wear the crown, and his children reign in England."

"Our Lord forfend," said Richard, "that I should say that Warwick thought of this when he deemed George worthy of the hand of Isabel. Nay, it could not be so; for, however clear the claim, strong and powerful would be those who would resist it, and Clarence is not, as you will see, the man who can wrestle boldly—even for a throne. Moreover, he is too addicted to wine and pleasure to promise to outlive the King."

Montagu fixed his penetrating eyes on Richard, but dropped them, abashed, before that steady, deep, unrevealing gaze, which seemed to pierce into other hearts, and shew nothing of the heart within.

"Happy Clarence!" resumed the Prince with a heavy sigh, and after a brief pause—"a Nevile's husband and a Warwick's son!—what can the saints do more for men? You must excuse his errors—all our errors—to your brother. You may

not know, peradventure, sweet Montagu, how deep an interest I have in maintaining all amity between Lord Warwick and the King. For methinks there is one face fairer than fair Isabel's, and one man more to be envied than even Clarence. Fairest face to me in the wide world is the Lady Anne's—happiest man, between the cradle and the grave, is he whom the Lady Anne shall call her lord! and if I—oh, look you, Montagu, let there be no breach between Warwick and the King! Fare-you-well, dear lord and cousin—I go to Baynard's Castle till these feasts are over.”

“Does not your Grace,” said Montagu, recovering from the surprise into which one part of Gloucester's address had thrown him—“does not your Grace—so skilled in lance and horsemanship—preside at the lists?”

“Montagu, I love your brother well enough to displease my King. He shall not say, at least, that Richard Plantagenet, in his absence, forgot the reverence due to loyalty and merit. Tell him that; and if I seem (unlike Clarence) to forbear to confront the Queen and her kindred, it is because youth should make no enemies—not the less for that, should princes forget no friends.”

Richard said this with a tone of deep feeling, and, folding his arms within his furred surcoat, walked slowly on to a small postern admitting to the river; but there, pausing by a buttress which

concealed him till Montagu had left the yard, instead of descending to his barge, he turned back into the royal garden. Here several of the Court, of both sexes, were assembled, conferring on the event of the day. Richard halted at a distance, and contemplated their gay dresses and animated countenances with something between melancholy and scorn upon his young brow. One of the most remarkable social characteristics of the Middle Ages is the prematurity at which the great arrived at manhood, shared in its passions, and indulged its ambitions. Among the numerous instances in our own and other countries that might be selected from History, few are more striking than that of this Duke of Gloucester—great in camp and in council, at an age when now-a-days a youth is scarcely trusted to the discipline of a college. The whole of his portentous career was closed, indeed, before the public life of modern ambition usually commences. Little could those accustomed to see, on our stage, “the elderly ruffian”* our actors represent, imagine that at the opening of Shakspeare’s play of ‘Richard the Third,’ the hero was but in his nineteenth year; but at the still more juvenile age in which he appears in this our record, Richard of Gloucester was older in intellect, and almost in experience, than many a wise man at the date of thirty-three—the fatal age when his sun set for ever on the field of Bosworth!

* Sharon Turner.

The young prince, then, eyed the gaudy, fluttering, babbling assemblage before him with mingled melancholy and scorn. Not that he felt, with the acuteness which belongs to modern sentiment, his bodily defects amidst that circle of the stately and the fair, for they were not of a nature to weaken his arm in war or lessen his persuasive influences in peace. But it was rather that sadness which so often comes over an active and ambitious intellect in early youth, when it pauses to ask, in sorrow and disdain, what its plots and counterplots, its restlessness and strife, are really worth. The scene before him was of Pleasure—but in pleasure, neither the youth nor the manhood of Richard III. was ever pleased; though not absolutely of the rigid austerity of Amadis, or our Saxon Edward, he was free from the licentiousness of his times. His passions were too large for frivolous excitements. Already the Italian, or, as it is falsely called, the Machiavelian policy, was pervading the intellect of Europe, and the effects of its ruthless, grand, and deliberate state-craft, are visible from the accession of Edward IV. till the close of Elizabeth's reign. With this policy, which reconciled itself to crime as a necessity of wisdom, was often blended a refinement of character which joyed not in vulgar vices. Not skilled alone in those knightly accomplishments which induced Caxton, with propriety, to dedicate to Richard "The Book

of the Order of Chivalry," the Duke of Gloucester's more peaceful amusements were borrowed from severer graces than those which presided over the tastes of his royal brothers. He loved, even to passion, the Arts, Music—especially of the more Doric and warlike kind—Limning, and Architecture; he was a reader of Books, as of Men—the books that become princes—and hence that superior knowledge of the principles of law and of commerce, which his brief reign evinced. More like an Italian in all things than the careless Norman or the simple Saxon, Machiavel might have made of his character a companion, though a contrast, to that of Castruccio Castrucani.

The crowd murmured and rustled at the distance, and still, with folded arms, Richard gazed aloof, when a lady, entering the garden from the palace, passed by him so hastily, that she brushed his surcoat, and, turning round in surprise, made a low reverence, as she exclaimed—"Prince Richard! and alone amidst so many!"

"Lady," said the Duke, "it was a sudden hope that brought me into this garden,—and that was the hope to see your fair face shining above the rest."

"Your Highness jests," returned the lady, though her superb countenance and haughty carriage evinced no opinion of herself so humble as her words would imply.

"My Lady of Bonville," said the young Duke,

laying his hand on her arm; "mirth is not in my thoughts at this hour."

"I believe your Highness; for the Lord Richard Plantagenet is not one of the Woodvilles. The mirth is theirs to-day."

"Let who will have mirth—it is the breath of a moment. Mirth cannot tarnish Glory—the mirror in which the gods are glassed."

"I understand you, my lord," said the proud lady; and her face, before stern and high, brightened into so lovely a change, so soft and winning a smile, that Gloucester no longer marvelled that that smile had rained so large an influence on the fate and heart of his favourite Hastings. The beauty of this noble woman was indeed remarkable in its degree, and peculiar in its character. She bore a stronger likeness in feature to the Archbishop, than to either of her other brothers; for the prelate had the straight and smooth outline of the Greeks—not, like Montagu and Warwick, the lordlier and manlier aquiline of the Norman race—and his complexion was feminine in its pale clearness. But though in this resembling the subtlest of the brethren, the fair sister shared with Warwick an expression, if haughty, singularly frank and candid in its imperious majesty; she had the same splendid and steady brilliancy of eye—the same quick quiver of the lip, speaking of nervous susceptibility and haste of mood. The

hateful fashion of that day, which pervaded all ranks, from the highest to the lowest, was the prodigal use of paints and cosmetics, and all imaginable artificial adjuncts of a spurious beauty. This extended often even to the men, and the sturdiest warrior deemed it no shame to recur to such arts of the toilette as the vainest wanton in our day would never venture to acknowledge. But the Lady Bonville, proudly confident of her beauty, and of a purity of mind that revolted from the littleness of courting admiration, contrasted forcibly in this the ladies of the court. Her cheek was of a marble whiteness, though occasionally a rising flush through the clear, rich, transparent skin, shewed that in earlier youth the virgin bloom had not been absent from the surface. There was in her features, when they reposed, somewhat of the trace of suffering,—of a struggle, past it may be, but still remembered. But when she spoke, those features lighted up and undulated in such various and kindling life as to dazzle, to bewitch, or to awe the beholder, according as the impulse moulded the expression. Her dress suited her lofty and spotless character. Henry VI. might have contemplated, with holy pleasure, its matronly decorum; the jewelled gorget ascended to the rounded and dimpled chin; the arms were bare only at the wrists, where the blue veins were seen through a skin of snow; the dark purple locks,

which her tire-woman boasted, when released, swept the ground, were gathered into a modest and simple braid, surmounted by the beseeming coronet that proclaimed her rank. The Lady Bonville might have stood by the side of Cornelia, the model of a young and highborn Matron, in whose virtue the Honour of Man might securely dwell.

“I understand you, my lord,” she said, with her bright, thankful smile; “and as Lord Warwick’s sister, I am grateful.”

“Your love for the great Earl proves you are noble enough to forgive,” said Richard, meaningly. “Nay, chide me not with that lofty look; you know that there are no secrets between Hastings and Gloucester.”

“My Lord Duke, the head of a noble house hath the right to dispose of the hands of the daughters; I know nothing in Lord Warwick to forgive.”

But she turned her head as she spoke, and a tear for a moment trembled in that haughty eye.

“Lady,” said Richard, moved to admiration, “to you let me confide my secret. I would be your nephew. Boy though I be in years, my heart beats loudly as a man’s; and that heart beats for Anne.”

“It were a splendid alliance, even for Warwick’s daughter!”

“Think you so. Then stand my friend; and, being thus my friend, intercede with Warwick, if he angers at the silly holiday of this Woodville pageant.”

“Alas, sir! you know that Warwick listens to no interceders between himself and his passions. But what then? Grant him wronged, aggrieved, trifled with,—what then? Can he injure the House of York?”

Richard looked in some surprise at the fair speaker.

“Can he injure the House of York?—Marry, yes,” he replied, bluntly.

“But for what end? Whom else should he put upon the throne?”

“What if he forgive the Lancastrians? What if ——”

“Utter not the thought, Prince, breathe it not,” exclaimed the Lady Bonville, almost fiercely. “I love and honour my brave brother, despite — despite ——.” She paused a moment, blushed, and proceeded rapidly, without concluding the sentence, “I love him as a woman of his house must love the hero who forms its proudest boast. But if for any personal grudge, any low ambition, any rash humour, the son of my father, Salisbury, could forget that Margaret of Anjou placed the gory head of that old man upon the gates of York, could by word or deed abet the cause of usurping

and bloody Lancaster,—I would—I would;—Out upon my sex! I *could* do nought but weep the glory of Nevile and Monthermer gone for ever.”

Before Richard could reply, the sound of musical instruments, and a procession of heralds and pages proceeding from the palace, announced the approach of Edward. He caught the hand of the Dame of Bonville, lifted it to his lips, and saying, “May fortune one day permit me to face as the Earl’s son the Earl’s foes,” made his graceful reverence, glided from the garden, gained his barge, and was rowed to the huge pile of Baynard’s Castle, lately reconstructed, but in a gloomy and barbaric taste, and in which, at that time, he principally resided with his mother, the once peerless Rose of Raby.

The Lady of Bonville paused a moment, and in that pause her countenance recovered its composure. She, then, passed on with a stately step towards a group of the ladies of the court, and her eye noted with proud pleasure that the highest names of the English knighthood and nobility, comprising the numerous connexions of her family, formed a sullen circle apart from the rest, betokening, by their grave countenances and moody whispers, how sensitively they felt the slight to Lord Warwick’s embassy in the visit of the Count de la Roche, and how little they were disposed to cringe to the rising sun of the Wood-

viles. There, collected into a puissance whose discontent had sufficed to shake a firmer throne, (the young Raoul de Fulke, the idolater of Warwick, the personation in himself of the old Norman seignorie, in their centre,) with folded arms and lowering brows, stood the Earl's kinsmen, the Lords Fitzhugh and Fauconberg; with them, Thomas Lord Stanley, a prudent noble, who rarely sided with a malcontent, and the Lord St. John, and the Heir of the ancient Bergavennies, and many another chief, under whose banner marched an army! Richard of Gloucester had shewn his wit in refusing to mingle in intrigues which provoked the ire of that martial phalanx. As the Lady of Bonville swept by these gentlemen, their murmur of respectful homage, their profound salutation, and unbonneted heads, contrasted forcibly with the slight and grave, if not scornful, obeisance they had just rendered to one of the Queen's sisters, who had passed, a moment before, in the same direction. The lady still moved on, and came suddenly across the path of Hastings, as in his robes of state he issued from the palace. Their eyes met, and both changed colour.

"So, my Lord Chamberlain," said the dame, sarcastically, "the Count de la Roche is, I hear, consigned to your especial charge."

"A charge the Chamberlain cannot regret, and which William Hastings does not covet."

“A King had never asked Montagu and Warwick to consider amongst their duties any charge they had deemed dishonouring.”

“Dishonouring, Lady Bonville!” exclaimed Hastings, with a bent brow and a flushed cheek,—“neither Montagu nor Warwick had, with safety, applied to me the word that has just passed your lips.”

“I crave your pardon,” answered Katherine, bitterly. “Mine articles of faith in men’s honour are obsolete or heretical. I had deemed it dishonouring in a noble nature to countenance insult to a noble enemy in his absence. I had deemed it dishonouring in a brave soldier, a well-born gentleman, (now from his valiantness, merit, and wisdom, become a puissant and dreaded lord,) to sink into that lackeydom and varletaille which falsehood and cringing have stablished in these walls, and baptized under the name of ‘courtiers.’ Better had Katherine de Bonville esteemed Lord Hastings had he rather fallen under a King’s displeasure than debased his better self to a Woodville’s dastard schemings.”

“Lady, you are cruel and unjust, like all your haughty race. And idle were reply to one who, of all persons, should have judged me better. For the rest, if this mummary humbles Lord Warwick, Gramercy! there is nothing in my memory that should make my share in it a gall to my conscience; nor do I owe the Neviles so large a gratitude,

that rather than fret the pile of their pride, I should throw down the scaffolding on which my fearless step hath clombe to as fair a height, and one perhaps that may overlook as long a posterity, as the best baron that ever quartered the Raven Eagle and the Dun Bull. But, (resumed Hastings, with a withering sarcasm,) doubtless the Lady de Bonville more admires the happy lord who holds himself, by right of pedigree, superior to all things that make the statesman wise, the scholar learned, and the soldier famous. Way there—back, gentles,”—and Hastings turned to the crowd behind,—“Way there for my Lord of Harrington and Bonville !”

The bystanders smiled at each other as they obeyed; and a heavy, shambling, graceless man, dressed in the most exaggerated fopperies of the day, but with a face which even sickness, that refines most faces, could not divest of the most vacant dulness, and a mien and gait to which no attire could give dignity, passed through the group, bowing awkwardly to the right and left, and saying in a thick husky voice—“You are too good, sirs—too good: I must not presume so overmuch on my seignorie. The King would keep me—he would indeed, sirs; um—um—why, Katherine—dame—thy stiff gorget makes me ashamed of thee. Thou wouldst not think, Lord Hastings, that Katherine had a white skin—a parlous white skin. La, you now—fie on these mufflers !”

The courtiers sneered; Hastings, with a look of malignant and pitiless triumph, eyed the Lady of Bonville. For a moment the colour went and came across her transparent cheek, but the confusion passed, and returning the insulting gaze of her ancient lover with an eye of unspeakable majesty, she placed her arm upon her lord's, and saying calmly—"An English matron cares but to be fair in her husband's eyes"—drew him away; and the words and the manner of the lady were so dignified and simple, that the courtiers hushed their laughter, and for the moment the lord of such a woman was not only envied but respected.

While this scene had passed, the procession, preceding Edward, had filed into the garden in long and stately order. From another entrance, Elizabeth, the Princess Margaret, and the Duchess of Bedford, with their trains, had already issued, and were now ranged upon a flight of marble steps, backed by a columned alcove, hung with velvets striped into the royal baudekin, while the stairs themselves were covered with leathern carpets, powdered with the white rose and the fleur de lis;—either side lined by the bearers of the many banners of Edward, displaying the White Lion of March, the Black Bull of Clare, the Cross of Jerusalem, the Dragon of Arragon, and the Rising Sun, which he had assumed as his peculiar war-badge

since the battle of Mortimer's Cross. Again, and louder, came the flourish of music, and a murmur through the crowd, succeeded by deep silence, announced the entrance of the King. He appeared, leading by the hand the Count de la Roche, and followed by the Lords Scales, Rivers, Dorset, and the Duke of Clarence. All eyes were bent upon the Count, and though seen to disadvantage by the side of the comeliest and stateliest and most gorgeously attired Prince in Christendom, his high forehead, bright sagacious eye, and powerful frame, did not disappoint the expectations founded upon the fame of one equally subtle in council and redoubted in war.

The royal host and the princely guest made their way, where Elizabeth, blazing in jewels and cloth of gold, shone royally, begirt by the ladies of her brilliant court. At her right hand stood her mother, at her left, the Princess Margaret.

"I present to you, my Elizabeth," said Edward, "a princely gentleman, to whom we nevertheless wish all ill-fortune,—for we cannot desire that he may subdue our knights, and we would fain hope that he may be conquered by our ladies."

"The last hope is already fulfilled," said the Count, gallantly, as on his knee he kissed the fair hand extended to him. Then rising, and gazing full and even boldly upon the young Princess Margaret, he added—"I have seen too often the pic-

ture of the Lady Margaret not to be aware that I stand in that illustrious presence."

"Her picture! Sir Count," said the Queen; "we knew not that it had been even limned."

"Pardon me, it was done by stealth."

"And where have you seen it?"

"Worn at the heart of my brother the Count of Charolois!" answered De la Roche, in a whispered tone.

Margaret blushed with evident pride and delight; and the wily envoy, leaving the impression his words had made to take their due effect, addressed himself, with all the gay vivacity he possessed, to the fair Queen and her haughty mother.

After a brief time spent in this complimentary converse, the Count then adjourned to inspect the Menagerie, of which the King was very proud. Edward, offering his hand to his Queen, led the way, and the Duchess of Bedford, directing the Count to Margaret by a shrewd and silent glance of her eye, so far smothered her dislike to Clarence as to ask his Highness to attend herself.

"Ah! lady," whispered the Count, as the procession moved along, "what thrones would not Charolois resign for the hand that his unworthy envoy is allowed to touch!"

"Sir," said Margaret, demurely looking down, "the Count of Charolois is a lord, who, if report be true, makes war his only mistress."

“ Because the only living mistress his great heart could serve is denied to his love! Ah, poor lord and brother, what new reasons for eternal war to Burgundy, when France, not only his foe, becomes his rival!”

Margaret sighed, and the Count continued, till by degrees he warmed the royal maiden from her reserve; and his eye grew brighter, and a triumphant smile played about his lips, when, after the visit to the Menagerie, the procession re-entered the palace, and the Lord Hastings conducted the Count to the bath prepared for him, previous to the crowning banquet of the night. And far more luxurious and more splendid than might be deemed by those who read but the general histories of that sanguinary time, or the inventories of furniture in the houses even of the great barons, was the accommodation which Edward afforded to his guest. His apartments and chambers were hung with white silk and linen, the floors covered with richly woven carpets; the counterpane of his bed was cloth of gold, trimmed with ermine; the cupboard shone with vessels of silver and gold; and over two baths were pitched tents of white cloth of Rennes, fringed with silver.*

Agreeably to the manners of the time, Lord Hastings assisted to disrobe the Count; and, the

* See Madden's Narrative of the Lord Crauthuse: *Archæologia*, 1830.

more to bear him company, afterwards undressed himself, and bathed in the one bath, while the Count refreshed his limbs in the other.

“Pri’thee,” said De la Roche, drawing aside the curtain of his tent, and putting forth his head—
“pri’thee, my Lord Hastings, deign to instruct my ignorance of a Court which I would fain know well, and let me weet, whether the splendour of your king, far exceeding what I was taught to look for, is derived from his revenue, as sovereign of England, or chief of the House of York?”

“Sir,” returned Hastings, gravely, putting out his own head—“it is Edward’s happy fortune to be the wealthiest proprietor in England, except the Earl of Warwick, and thus he is enabled to indulge a state which yet oppresses not his people.”

“Except the Earl of Warwick,” repeated the Count, musingly, as the fumes of the odours, with which the bath was filled, rose in a cloud over his long hair—“ill would fare that subject, in most lands, who was as wealthy as his king. You have heard that Warwick has met King Louis at Rouen, and that they are inseparable?”

“It becomes an ambassador to win grace of him he is sent to please.”

“But none win grace of Louis whom Louis does not dupe.”

“You know not Lord Warwick, Sir Count. His

mind is so strong and so frank, that it is as hard to deceive him, as it is for him to be deceived."

"Time will shew," said the Count, pettishly, and he withdrew his head into the tent.

And now there appeared the attendants, with hippocras, syrups, and comfits, by way of giving appetite for the supper, so that no farther opportunity for private conversation was left to the two lords. While the Count was dressing, the Lord Scales entered with a superb gown, clasped with jewels, and lined with minever, with which Edward had commissioned him to present the Bastard. In this robe, the Lord Scales insisted upon enduing his antagonist with his own hands, and the three knights then repaired to the banquet. At the King's table no male personage out of the royal family sate, except Lord Rivers—as Elizabeth's father—and the Count De la Roche, placed between Margaret and the Duchess of Bedford.

At another table, the great peers of the realm feasted under the presidency of Antony Woodville, while, entirely filling one side of the hall, the ladies of the Court held their "mess," (so called,) apart, and "great and mighty was the eating thereof!"

The banquet ended, the dance begun. The admirable 'featliness' of the Count de la Roche, in the pavon, with the Lady Margaret, was rivalled only by the more majestic grace of Edward and

the dainty steps of Anthony Woodville. But the lightest and happiest heart which beat in that revel was one in which no scheme and no ambition but those of love nursed the hope and dreamed the triumph.

Stung by the coldness, even more than by the disdain of the Lady Bonville, and enraged to find that no taunt of his own, however galling, could ruffle a dignity which was an insult both to memory and to self-love, Hastings had exerted more than usual, both at the banquet and in the revel, those general powers of pleasing, which, even in an age when personal qualifications ranked so high, had yet made him no less renowned for successes in gallantry than the beautiful and youthful King. All about this man witnessed to the triumph of mind over the obstacles that beset it;—his rise without envy, his safety amidst foes, the happy ease with which he moved through the snares and pits of everlasting stratagem and universal wile! Him alone the arts of the Woodvilles could not supplant in Edward's confidence and love; to him alone dark Gloucester bent his haughty soul; him alone, Warwick, who had rejected his alliance, and knew the private grudge the rejection bequeathed;—him alone, among the 'new men,' Warwick always treated with generous respect, as a wise patriot, and a fearless soldier; and in the more frivolous scenes of courtly life, the same mind

raised one no longer in the bloom of youth, with no striking advantages of person, and studiously disdainful of all the fopperies of the time, to an equality with the youngest, the fairest, the gaudiest courtier, in that rivalry, which has pleasure for its object and love for its reward. Many a heart beat quicker as the graceful courtier, with that careless wit which veiled his profound mournfulness of character, or with that delicate flattery which his very contempt for human nature had taught him, moved from dame to donzell;—till at length, in the sight and hearing of the Lady Bonville, as she sat, seemingly heedless of his revenge, amidst a group of matrons elder than herself, a murmur of admiration made him turn quickly, and his eye following the gaze of the bystanders, rested upon the sweet, animated face of Sybill, flushed into rich bloom at the notice it excited. Then as he approached the maiden, his quick glance darting to the woman he had first loved, told him that he had at last discovered the secret how to wound. An involuntary compression of Katherine's proud lips, a hasty rise and fall of the stately neck, a restless, indescribable flutter, as it were, of the whole frame, told the experienced woman-reader of the signs of jealousy and fear. And he passed at once to the young maiden's side. Alas! what wonder that Sybill that night surrendered her heart to the happiest

dreams; and finding herself on the floors of a Court—intoxicated by its perfumed air,—hearing on all sides the murmured eulogies which approved and justified the seeming preference of the powerful noble,—what wonder that she thought the humble maiden, with her dower of radiant youth and exquisite beauty, and the fresh and countless treasures of virgin love, might be no unworthy mate of the “new lord.”

It was morning* before the revel ended; and, when dismissed by the Duchess of Bedford, Sybill was left to herself, not even amidst her happy visions did the daughter forget her office. She stole into her father’s chamber. He, too, was astir and up—at work at the untiring furnace, the damps on his brow, but all hope’s vigour at his heart. So while Pleasure feasts, and Youth revels, and Love deludes itself, and Ambition chases its shadows—(chased itself by Death)—so works the world-changing and world-despised SCIENCE, the life within life, for all living,—and to all dead!

* The hours of our ancestors, on great occasions, were not always more seasonable than our own. Froissart speaks of Court Balls, in the reign of Richard II., kept up till day.

VII.

THE RENOWNED COMBAT BETWEEN SIR ANTHONY WOOD-
VILLE AND THE BASTARD OF BURGUNDY.

AND now the day came for the memorable joust between the Queen's brother and the Count de la Roche. By a chapter solemnly convoked at St. Paul's, the preliminaries were settled;—upon the very timber used in decking the lists, King Edward expended half the yearly revenue derived from all the forests of his Duchy of York. In the wide space of Smithfield, destined at a later day to blaze with the fires of intolerant bigotry, crowded London's holiday population; and yet, though all the form and parade of chivalry were there—though, in the open balconies, never presided a braver king or a comelier queen—though never a more accomplished chevalier than Sir Anthony Lord of Scales, nor a more redoubted knight than the brother of Charles the Bold, met lance to lance,—it was obvious to the elder and more observant spectators, that the true spirit of the lists was already fast wearing out from the

influences of the age; that the *gentleman* was succeeding to the *knight*, that a more silken, and scheming race had become the heirs of the iron men, who, under Edward III., had realized the fabled Paladins of Charlemagne and Arthur. But the actors were less changed than the spectators,—the Well-born than the People. Instead of that hearty sympathy in the contest, that awful respect for the champions, that eager anxiety for the honour of the national lance, which, a century or more ago, would have moved the throng as one breast, the comments of the bystanders evinced rather the cynicism of ridicule, the feeling that the contest was unreal, and that chivalry was out of place in the practical temper of the times. On the great chess-board, the pawns were now so marshalled, that the knights' moves were no longer able to scour the board and hold in check both castle and king.

“Gramercy!” said Master Stokton, who sate in high state as Sheriff,* “this is a sad waste of moneys; and where, after all, is the glory in two tall fellows, walled a yard thick in armour, poking at each other with poles of painted wood?”

“Give me a good bull-bait!” said a sturdy butcher, in the crowd below—“that’s more English, I take it, than these fooleries.”

Amongst the ring, the bold ’prentices of London,

* Fabyan.

up and away betimes, had pushed their path into a foremost place, much to the discontent of the gentry, and with their flat caps, long hair, thick bludgeons, loud exclamations, and turbulent demeanour, greatly scandalized the formal heralds. That, too, was a sign of the times. Nor less did it shew the growth of commerce, that, on seats very little below the regal balconies, and far more conspicuous than the places of earls and barons, sate in state the Mayor (that mayor a grocer*) and Aldermen of the city.

A murmur, rising gradually into a general shout, evinced the admiration into which the spectators were surprised, when Anthony Woodville Lord Scales—his head bare—appeared at the entrance of the lists—so bold and so fair was his countenance, so radiant his armour, and so richly caparisoned his grey steed, in the gorgeous housings that almost swept the ground; and around him grouped such an attendance of knights and peers as seldom graced the train of any subject, with the Duke of Clarence at his right hand, bearing his bassinet.

But Anthony's pages, supporting his banner, shared at least the popular admiration with their gallant lord: they were, according to the old custom, which probably fell into disuse under the Tudors, disguised in imitation of the heraldic beasts

* Sir John Yonge.—Fabyan.

that typified his armorial cognizance;* and horrible and laidley looked they in the guise of griffins, with artful scales of thin steel painted green, red forked tongues, and griping the banner in one huge claw, while, much to the marvel of the bystanders, they contrived to walk very stately on the other. "Oh, the brave monsters!" exclaimed the butcher, "Cogs bones, this beats all the rest!"

But when the trumpets of the heralds had ceased, when the words "*Laissez aller!*" were pronounced, when the lances were set and the charge began, this momentary admiration was converted into a cry of derision, by the sudden restiveness of the Burgundian's horse. This animal, of the pure race of Flanders, of a bulk approaching to clumsiness, of a rich bay, where, indeed, amidst the barding and the housings, its colour could be discerned, had borne the valiant Bastard through many a sanguine field, and in the last had received a wound which had greatly impaired its sight. And now, whether scared by the shouting, or terrified by its obscure vision, and the recollection of its wound when last bestrode by its lord, it halted midway, reared on end, and, fairly turning round, despite spur and bit, carried back the Bastard, swearing strange oaths, that grumbled hoarsely through his vizor, to the very place whence he had started.

The uncourteous mob yelled and shouted and

Hence the origin of *Supporters!*

laughed, and wholly disregarding the lifted wands, and drowning the solemn rebukes, of the heralds, they heaped upon the furious Burgundian all the expressions of ridicule in which the wit of Cockaigne is so immemorially rich. But the courteous Anthony of England, seeing the strange and involuntary flight of his redoubted foe, incontinently reined-in, lowered his lance, and made his horse, without turning round, back to the end of the lists in a series of graceful gambadas and caracols. Again the signal was given, and this time the gallant bay did not fail his rider;—ashamed, doubtless, of its late misdemeanor,—arching its head till it almost touched the breast, laying its ears level on the neck, and with a snort of anger and disdain, the steed of Flanders rushed to the encounter. The Bastard's lance shivered fairly against the small shield of the Englishman, but the Woodville's weapon, more deftly aimed, struck full on the Count's bassinet, and at the same time the pike projecting from the grey charger's chaffron pierced the nostrils of the unhappy bay, whom rage and shame had blinded more than ever. The noble animal, stung by the unexpected pain, and bitten sharply by the rider, whose seat was sorely shaken by the stroke on his helmet, reared again, stood an instant perfectly erect, and then fell backwards, rolling over and over the illustrious burthen it had borne. Then the debonnair Sir Anthony of

England, casting down his lance, drew his sword, and dexterously caused his destrier to curvet in a close circle round the fallen Bastard, courteously shaking at him the brandished weapon, but without attempt to strike.

“Ho, marshal!” cried King Edward, “assist to his legs the brave Count.”

The marshal hastened to obey. “Ventrebieu!” quoth the Bastard, when extricated from the weight of his steed, “I cannot hold by the clouds, but though my horse failed me, surely I will not fail my companions”—and as he spoke, he placed himself in so gallant and superb a posture, that he silenced the inhospitable yell which had rejoiced in the foreigner’s discomfiture. Then, observing that the gentle Anthony had dismounted, and was leaning gracefully against his destrier, the Burgundian called forth—

“Sir Knight, thou hast conquered the steed, not the rider. We are now foot to foot. The pole-axe, or the sword—which? Speak!”

“I pray thee, noble sieur,” quoth the Woodville, mildly, “to let the strife close for this day, and when rest hath——”

“Talk of rest to striplings—I demand my rights!”

“Heaven forefend,” said Anthony Woodville, lifting his hand on high, “that I, favoured so highly by the fair dames of England, should

demand repose on their behalf. But bear witness—” he said, (with the generosity of the last true chevalier of his age, and lifting his vizor, so as to be heard by the King, and even through the foremost ranks of the crowd)—“bear witness, that in this encounter, my cause hath befriended me, not mine arm. The Count de la Roche speaketh truly; and his steed alone be blamed for his mischance.”

“It is but a blind beast!” muttered the Burgundian.

“And,” added Anthony, bowing towards the tiers rich with the beauty of the court—“and the Count himself assureth me that the blaze of yonder eyes blinded his goodly steed.” Having delivered himself of this gallant conceit, so much in accordance with the taste of the day, the Englishman, approaching the King’s balcony, craved permission to finish the encounter with the axe or brand.

“The former, rather, please you, my liege; for the warriors of Burgundy have ever been deemed unconquered in that martial weapon.”

Edward, whose brave blood was up and warm at the clash of steel, bowed his gracious assent, and two pole-axes were brought into the ring.

The crowd now evinced a more earnest and respectful attention than they had hitherto shewn, for the pole-axe, in such stalwart hands, was no child’s toy. “Hum,” quoth Master Stokton,

“there may be some merriment now—not like those silly poles! Your axe lops off a limb mighty cleanly.”

The knights themselves seemed aware of the greater gravity of the present encounter. Each looked well to the bracing of his vizor;—and poising their weapons with method and care, they stood apart some moments, eyeing each other steadfastly,—as adroit fencers with the small sword do in our schools at this day.

At length, the Burgundian, darting forward, launched a mighty stroke at the Lord Scales, which, though rapidly parried, broke down the guard, and descended with such weight on the shoulder, that but for the thrice-proven steel of Milan, the benevolent expectation of Master Stokton had been happily fulfilled. Even as it was, the Lord Scales uttered a slight cry—which might be either of anger or of pain—and lifting his axe with both hands, levelled a blow on the Burgundian’s helmet that well nigh brought him to his knee. And now, for the space of some ten minutes, the crowd, with charmed suspense, beheld the almost breathless rapidity with which stroke on stroke was given and parried; the axe shifted to and fro—wielded now with both hands—now the left, now the right—and the combat reeling, as it were, to and fro, so that one moment it raged at one extreme of the lists—the next at

the other; and so well inured, from their very infancy, to the weight of mail were these redoubted champions, that the very wrestlers on the village green, nay, the naked gladiators of old, might have envied their lithe agility and supple quickness.

At last, by a most dexterous stroke, Anthony Woodville forced the point of his axe into the vizor of the Burgundian, and there so firmly did it stick, that he was enabled to pull his antagonist to and fro at his will, while the Bastard, rendered as blind as his horse by the stoppage of the eye-hole, dealt his own blows about at random, and was placed completely at the mercy of the Englishman. And gracious as the gentle Sir Anthony was, he was still so smarting under many a bruise felt through his dinted mail, that small mercy, perchance, would the Bastard have found, for the gripe of the Woodville's left hand was on his foe's throat, and the right seemed about to force the point deliberately forward into the brain, when Edward, roused from his delight at that pleasing spectacle by a loud shriek from his sister Margaret, echoed by the Duchess of Bedford, who was by no means anxious that her son's axe should be laid at the root of all her schemes, rose, and crying, "Hold!" with that loud voice which had so often thrilled a mightier field, cast down his warderer.

Instantly the lists opened—the marshals ad-

vanced—severed the champions—and unbraced the count's helmet. But the Bastard's martial spirit, exceedingly dissatisfied at the unfriendly interruption, rewarded the attention of the marshals by an oath, worthy his relationship to Charles the Bold; and hurrying straight to the King, his face flushed with wrath, and his eyes sparkling with fire—

“Noble sir and King,” he cried, “do me not this wrong! I am not overthrown, nor scathed, nor subdued—I yield not. By every knightly law, till one champion yields, he can call upon the other to lay on and do his worst.”

Edward paused, much perplexed and surprised at finding his intercession so displeasing. He glanced first at the Lord Rivers, who sat a little below him, and whose cheek grew pale at the prospect of his son's renewed encounter with one so determined—then at the immovable aspect of the gentle and apathetic Elizabeth—then at the agitated countenance of the Duchess—then at the imploring eyes of Margaret, who, with an effort, preserved herself from swooning; and, finally, beckoning to him the Duke of Clarence, as high constable, and the Duke of Norfolk, as earl marshal, he said, “Tarry a moment, Sir Count, till we take counsel in this grave affair.” The Count bowed sullenly—the spectators maintained an anxious silence—the curtain before the King's

gallery was closed while the council conferred. At the end of some three minutes, however, the drapery was drawn aside by the Duke of Norfolk; and Edward fixing his bright blue eye upon the fiery Burgundian, said, gravely, "Count de la Roche, your demand is just. According to the laws of the List, you may fairly claim that the encounter go on."

"Oh! knightly Prince, well said. My thanks! We lose time—squires, my bassinet!"

"Yea," renewed Edward, "bring hither the Count's bassinet. By the laws, the combat may go on at thine asking—I retract my warderer. But, Count de la Roche, by those laws you appeal to, the said combat must go on precisely at the point at which it was broken off. Wherefore brace on thy bassinet, Count de la Roche—and thou, Anthony Lord Scales, fix the pike of thine axe, which I now perceive was inserted exactly where the right eye giveth easy access to the brain, precisely in the same place. So renew the contest, and the Lord have mercy on thy soul, Count de la Roche!"

At this startling sentence, wholly unexpected, and yet wholly according to those laws of which Edward was so learned a judge, the Bastard's visage fell. With open mouth and astounded eyes, he stood gazing at the King, who, majestically reseating himself, motioned to the heralds.

“Is that the law, sire?” at length faltered forth the Bastard.

“Can you dispute it? Can any knight or gentleman gainsay it?”

“Then,” quoth the Bastard, gruffly, and throwing his axe to the ground, “by all the Saints in the calendar! I have had enough. I came hither to dare all that beseems a chevalier, but to stand still while Sir Anthony Woodville deliberately pokes out my right eye, were a feat to shew that very few brains would follow. And so, my Lord Scales, I give thee my right hand, and wish thee joy of thy triumph, and the golden collar.”*

“No triumph,” replied the Woodville, modestly, “for thou art only, as brave knights should be, subdued by the charms of the ladies, which no breast, however valiant, can with impunity dispute.”

So saying, the Lord Scales led the Count to a seat of honour near the Lord Rivers. And the actor was contented, perforce, to become a spectator of the ensuing contests. These were carried on till late at noon between the Burgundians and the English, the last maintaining the superiority of their principal champion; and among those in the *melée*, to which squires were admitted, not the least distinguished and conspicuous was our youthful friend, Master Marmaduke Nevile.

* The prize was a collar of gold, enamelled with the flower of the souvenance.

VIII.

HOW THE BASTARD OF BURGUNDY PROSPERED MORE IN HIS POLICY THAN WITH THE POLE-AXE—AND HOW KING EDWARD HOLDS HIS SUMMER CHASE IN THE FAIR GROVES OF SHENE.

It was some days after the celebrated encounter between the Bastard and Lord Scales; and the Court had removed to the Palace of Shene. The Count de la Roche's favour with the Duchess of Bedford and the young Princess had not rested upon his reputation for skill with the pole-axe, and it had now increased to a height that might well recompense the diplomatist for his discomfiture in the lists.

In the meanwhile, the arts of Warwick's enemies had been attended with signal success. The final preparations for the alliance, now *in re* concluded, with Louis's brother, still detained the Earl at Rouen, and fresh accounts of the French King's intimacy with the ambassador were carefully forwarded to Rivers, and transmitted to Edward. Now, we have

Edward's own authority for stating that his first grudge against Warwick originated in this displeasing intimacy, but the English King was too clear-sighted to interpret such courtesies into the gloss given them by Rivers. He did not for a moment conceive that Lord Warwick was led into any absolute connexion with Louis which could link him to the Lancastrians, for this was against common sense; but Edward was, with all his good-humour, implacable and vindictive, and he could not endure the thought that Warwick should gain the friendship of the man he deemed his foe. Putting aside his causes of hatred to Louis, in the encouragement that king had formerly given to the Lancastrian exiles, Edward's pride as sovereign felt acutely the slighting disdain with which the French King had hitherto treated his royalty and his birth. The customary nickname with which he was maligned in Paris was "the Son of the Archer," a taunt upon the fair fame of his mother, whom scandal accused of no rigid fidelity to the Duke of York. Besides this, Edward felt somewhat of the jealousy natural to a king, himself so spirited and able, of the reputation for profound policy and statecraft, which Louis XI. was rapidly widening and increasing throughout the Courts of Europe. And, what with the resentment, and what with the jealousy, there had sprung up in his

warlike heart a secret desire to advance the claims of England to the throne of France, and retrieve the conquests won by the Fifth Henry, to be lost under the Sixth. Possessing these feelings and these views, Edward necessarily saw, in the alliance with Burgundy, all that could gratify both his hate and his ambition. The Count of Charolois had sworn to Louis the most deadly enmity, and would have every motive, whether of vengeance or of interest, to associate himself heart in hand with the arms of England in any invasion of France; and to these warlike objects Edward added, as we have so often had cause to remark, the more peaceful aims and interests of commerce. And, therefore, although he could not so far emancipate himself from that influence, which both awe and gratitude invested in the Earl of Warwick, as to resist his great minister's embassy to Louis; and though, despite all these reasons in favour of connexion with Burgundy, he could not but reluctantly allow that Warwick urged those of a still larger and wiser policy, when shewing that the infant dynasty of York could only be made secure by effectually depriving Margaret of the sole ally that could venture to assist her cause, yet no sooner had Warwick fairly departed, than he inly chafed at the concession he had made, and his mind was open to all the impressions which the Earl's ene-

mies sought to stamp upon it. As the wisdom of every man, however able, can but run through those channels which are formed by the soil of the character, so Edward, with all his talents, never possessed the prudence which fear of consequences inspires. He was so eminently fearless—so scornful of danger—that he absolutely forgot the arguments on which the affectionate zeal of Warwick had based the alliance with Louis—arguments as to the unceasing peril, whether to his person or his throne, so long as the unprincipled and plotting genius of the French King had an interest against both—and thus he became only alive to the representations of his passions, his pride, and his mercantile advantages. The Duchess of Bedford, the Queen, and all the family of Woodville, who had but one object at heart—the downfall of Warwick and his House—knew enough of the Earl's haughty nature to be aware that he would throw up the reins of government the moment he knew that Edward had discredited and dishonoured his embassy; and, despite the suspicions they sought to instil in their king's mind, they calculated upon the Earl's love and near relationship to Edward—upon his utter, and seemingly irreconcilable breach with the House of Lancaster—to render his wrath impotent—and to leave him only the fallen minister, not the mighty rebel.

Edward had been thus easily induced to permit

the visit of the Count de la Roche, although he had by no means then resolved upon the course he should pursue. At all events, even if the alliance with Louis was to take place, the friendship of Burgundy was worth much to maintain. But De la Roche, soon made aware, by the Duchess of Bedford, of the ground on which he stood, and instructed by his brother to spare no pains and to scruple no promise that might serve to alienate Edward from Louis, and win the hand and dower of Margaret, found it a more facile matter than his most sanguine hopes had deemed, to work upon the passions and the motives which inclined the King to the pretensions of the heir of Burgundy. And what more than all else favoured the envoy's mission was the very circumstance that should most have defeated it—viz., the recollection of the Earl of Warwick. For in the absence of that powerful baron, and master-minister, the King had seemed to breathe more freely. In his absence, he forgot his power. The machine of government, to his own surprise, seemed to go on as well, the Commons were as submissive, the mobs as noisy in their shouts, as if the Earl was by. There was no longer any one to share with Edward the joys of popularity, the sweets of power. Though Edward was not Diogenes, he loved the popular sunshine, and no Alexander now stood between him and its beams. Deceived by the representations of his

courtiers, hearing nothing but abuse of Warwick, and sneers at his greatness, he began to think the hour had come when he might reign alone, and he entered, though tacitly, and not acknowledging it even to himself, into the very object of the womanhood about him—viz., the dismissal of his minister.

The natural carelessness and luxurious indolence of Edward's temper did not, however, permit him to see all the ingratitude of the course he was about to adopt. The egotism a king too often acquires, and noking so easily as one, like Edward IV., not born to a throne, made him consider that he alone was entitled to the prerogatives of pride. As sovereign and as brother, might he not give the hand of Margaret as he listed? If Warwick was offended, pest on his disloyalty and presumption! And so saying to himself, he dismissed the very thought of the absent Earl, and glided unconsciously down the current of the hour. And yet, notwithstanding all these prepossessions and dispositions, Edward might no doubt have deferred, at least, the meditated breach with his great minister until the return of the latter, and then have acted with the delicacy and precaution that became a king bound by ties of gratitude and blood to the statesman he desired to discard, but for a habit,—which, while history mentions, it seems to forget, in the consequences it ever engenders—the

habit of intemperance. Unquestionably, to that habit many of the imprudences and levities of a king possessed of so much ability, are to be ascribed; and over his cups with the wary and watchful De la Roche, Edward had contrived to entangle himself far more than in his cooler moments he would have been disposed.

Having thus admitted our readers into those recesses of that *cor inscrutabile*—the heart of kings—we summon them to a scene peculiar to the pastimes of the magnificent Edward. Amidst the shades of the vast park or chase which then appertained to the Palace of Shene, the noonday sun shone upon such a spot as Armida might have dressed for the subdued Rinaldo. A space had been cleared of trees and underwood, and made level as a bowling green. Around this space the huge oak and the broad beech were hung with trellis-work, wreathed with jasmine, honeysuckle, and the white rose, trained in arches. Ever and anon through these arches extended long alleys or vistas, gradually lost in the cool depth of foliage; amidst these alleys and around this space, numberless arbours, quaint with all the flowers then known in England, were constructed. In the centre of the sward was a small artificial lake, long since dried up, and adorned then with a profusion of fountains, that seemed to scatter coolness around the glowing air. Pitched in various and appropriate

sites, were tents of silk and the white cloth of Rennes, each tent so placed as to command one of the alleys; and at the opening of each stood cavalier or dame, with the bow or cross-bow, as it pleased the fancy or suited best the skill, looking for the quarry, which horn and hound drove fast and frequent across the alleys. Such was the luxurious "summer-chase" of the Sardanapalus of the North. Nor could any spectacle more thoroughly represent that poetical yet effeminate taste, which, borrowed from the Italians, made a short interval between the Chivalric and the Modern age! The exceeding beauty of the day—the richness of the foliage in the first suns of bright July—the bay of the dogs—the sound of the mellow horn—the fragrance of the air, heavy with noontide flowers—the gay tents—the rich dresses and fair faces and merry laughter of dame and donzell—combined to take captive every sense, and to reconcile Ambition itself, that Eternal Traveller through the Future, to the enjoyment of the voluptuous Hour. But there were illustrious exceptions to the contentment of the general company.

A courier had arrived that morning to apprise Edward of the unexpected debarkation of the Earl of Warwick, with the Archbishop of Narbonne and the Bastard of Bourbon,—the ambassadors commissioned by Louis to settle the pre-

liminaries of the marriage between Margaret and his brother.

This unwelcome intelligence reached Edward at the very moment he was sallying from his palace gates to his pleasant pastime. He took aside Lord Hastings, and communicated to that, his most able favourite, the news. — “Put spurs to thy horse, Hastings, and hie thee fast to Baynard’s Castle. Bring back Gloucester. In these difficult matters, that boy’s head is better than a council.”

“Your Highness,” said Hastings, tightening his girdle with one hand, while with the other he shortened his stirrups, “shall be obeyed. I foresaw, sire, that this coming would occasion much that my Lords Rivers and Worcester have overlooked. I rejoice that you summon the Prince Richard, who hath wisely forborne all countenance to the Burgundian envoy. But is this all, sire? Is it not well to assemble also your trustiest lords and most learned prelates, if not to overawe Lord Warwick’s anger, at least to confer on the fitting excuses to be made to King Louis’s ambassadors?”

“And so lose the fairest day this summer hath bestowed upon us? Tush!—the more need for pleasaunce to-day, since business must come to-morrow. Away with you, dear Will!”

Hastings looked grave, but he saw all further remonstrance would be in vain, and hoping much from the intercession of Gloucester, put spurs to his

steed, and vanished. Edward mused a moment; and Elizabeth, who knew every expression and change of his countenance, rode from the circle of her ladies, and approached him timidly. Casting down her eyes, which she always affected in speaking to her lord, the Queen said, softly,

“Something hath disturbed my liege and my life’s life.”

“Marry, yes, sweet Bessee. Last night, to pleasure thee and thy kin (and sooth to say, small gratitude ye owe me, for it also pleased myself), I promised Margaret’s hand, through De la Roche, to the heir of Burgundy.”

“O princely heart!” exclaimed Elizabeth, her whole face lighted up with triumph—“ever seeking to make happy those it cherishes. But is it that which disturbs thee—that which thou repentest?”

“No, sweetheart—no. Yet had it not been for the strength of the clary, I should have kept the Bastard longer in suspense. But what is done is done. Let not thy roses wither when thou hearest Warwick is in England—nay, nay, child, look not so appalled—thine Edward is no infant, whom ogre and goblin scares; and”—glancing his eye proudly round as he spoke, and saw the goodly cavalcade of his peers and knights, with his body-guard—tall and chosen veterans—filling up the palace-yard, with the show of casque and pike,—“and if the struggle is to come between Edward of

England and his subject, never an hour more ripe than this;—my throne assured—the new nobility I have raised, around it—London true, marrow and heart, true—the Provinces at peace—the ships and the steel of Burgundy mine allies! Let the White Bear growl as he list, the Lion of March is lord of the forest. And now, my Bessee,” added the King, changing his haughty tone into a gay, careless laugh, “now let the lion enjoy his chase.”

He kissed the gloved hand of his Queen, gallantly bending over his saddle-bow, and the next moment he was by the side of a younger, if not a fairer lady, to whom he was devoting the momentary worship of his inconstant heart. Elizabeth’s eyes shot an angry gleam as she beheld her faithless lord thus engaged; but so accustomed to conceal and control the natural jealousy, that it never betrayed itself to the Court or to her husband, she soon composed her countenance to its ordinary smooth and artificial smile, and rejoining her mother, she revealed what had passed. The proud and masculine spirit of the Duchess felt only joy at the intelligence. In the anticipated humiliation of Warwick, she forgot all cause for fear—not so her husband and son, the Lords Rivers and Scales, to whom the news soon travelled.

“Anthony,” whispered the father, “in this game we have staked our heads.”

“But our right hands can guard them well, sir,”

answered Anthony ; “ and so God and the ladies for our rights ! ”

Yet this bold reply did not satisfy the more thoughtful judgment of the Lord Treasurer, and even the brave Anthony’s arrows that day wandered wide of their quarry.

Amidst this gay scene, then, there were anxious and thoughtful bosoms. Lord Rivers was silent and abstracted ; his son’s laugh was hollow and constrained ; the Queen, from her pavilion, cast, ever and anon, more restless and prying looks down the green alleys than the hare or the deer could cause ; her mother’s brow was knit and flushed—and keenly were those illustrious persons watched by one deeply interested in the coming events. Affecting to discharge the pleasant duty assigned him by the King, the Lord Montagu glided from tent to tent, inquiring courteously into the accommodation of each group, lingering, smiling, complimenting, watching, heeding, studying, those whom he addressed. For the first time since the Bastard’s visit, he had joined in the diversions in its honour, and yet, so well had Montagu played his part at the Court, that he did not excite amongst the Queen’s relatives any of the hostile feelings entertained towards his brother. No man, except Hastings, was so “ entirely loved ” by Edward ; and Montagu, worldly as he was, and indignant against the King, as at that moment he could not fail to

be, so far repaid the affection, that his chief fear at that moment sincerely was, not for Warwick, but for Edward. He alone of those present was aware of the cause of Warwick's hasty return, for he had privately dispatched to him the news of the Bastard's visit, its real object, and the inevitable success of the intrigues afloat, unless the Earl could return at once, his mission accomplished, and the ambassadors of France in his train; and even before the courier dispatched to the King had arrived at Shene, a private hand had conveyed to Montagu the information that Warwick, justly roused and alarmed, had left the state procession behind at Dover, and was hurrying, fast as relays of steeds and his own fiery spirit could bear him, to the presence of the ungrateful King.

Meanwhile the noon had now declined, the sport relaxed, and the sound of the trumpet from the King's pavilion proclaimed that the lazy pastime was to give place to the luxurious banquet.

At this moment, Montagu approached a tent remote from the royal pavilions, and, as his noiseless footstep crushed the grass, he heard the sound of voices, in which there was little in unison with the worldly thoughts that filled his breast.

"Nay, sweet mistress, nay," said a young man's voice, earnest with emotion—"do not mistake me—do not deem me bold and overweening. I have sought to smother my love, and to rate it,

and bring pride to my aid, but in vain; and, now, whether you will scorn my suit or not, I remember, Sybill—O Sybill! I remember the days when we conversed together, and as a brother, if nothing else—nothing dearer—I pray you to pause well, and consider what manner of man this Lord Hastings is said to be!”

“Master Nevile, is this generous?—why afflict me thus?—why couple my name with so great a lord’s?”

“Because—beware—the young gallants already so couple it, and their prophecies are not to thine honour, Sybill. Nay, do not frown at me. I know thou art fair and winsome, and deftly gifted, and thy father may, for aught I know, be able to coin thee a queen’s dower out of his awesome engines. But Hastings will not wed thee, and his wooing, therefore, but stains thy fair repute; while I——”

“You!” said Montagu, entering suddenly—“you, kinsman, may look to higher fortunes than the Duchess of Bedford’s waiting-damsel can bring to thy honest love. How now, mistress, say—wilt thou take this young gentleman for loving fere and plighted spouse? If so, he shall give thee a manor for jointure, and thou shalt wear velvet robe and gold chain, as a knight’s wife.”

This unexpected interference, which was perfectly in character with the great lords, who fre-

quently wooed in very peremptory tones for their clients and kinsmen,* completed the displeasure which the blunt Marmakuke had already called forth in Sybill's gentle but proud nature. "Speak, maiden, ay or no?" continued Montagu, surprised and angered at the haughty silence of one whom he just knew by sight and name, though he had never before addressed her.

"No, my lord," answered Sybill, keeping down her indignation at this tone, though it burned in her cheek, flashed in her eye, and swelled in the heave of her breast. "No! and your kinsman might have spared this affront to one whom—but it matters not." She swept from the tent as she said this, and passed up the alley, into that of the Queen's mother.

"Best so; thou art too young for marriage, Marmaduke," said Montagu, coldly. "We will find thee a richer bride ere long. There is Mary of Winstown—the Archbishop's ward—with two castles, and seven knight's fees."

"But so marvellously ill-featured, my lord," said poor Marmaduke, sighing.

Montagu looked at him in surprise. "Wives, sir," he said, "are not made to look at,—unless,

* See, in Miss Strickland's 'Life of Elizabeth Woodville,' the curious letters which the Duke of York and the Earl of Warwick addressed to her, then a simple maiden, in favour of their protégé, Sir R. Johnes.

indeed, they be the wives of other men. But dismiss these follies for the nonce. Back to thy post by the king's pavilion; and by the way, ask Lord Fauconberg and Aymer Nevile, whom thou wilt pass by yonder arbour—ask them in my name, to be near the pavilion while the king banquets. A word in thine ear—ere yon sun gilds the tops of those green oaks, the Earl of Warwick will be with Edward IV.; and come what may, some brave hearts should be by to welcome him. Go?"

Without tarrying for an answer, Montagu turned into one of the tents, wherein Raoul de Fulke and the Lord St. John, heedless of hind and hart, conferred, and Marmaduke, much bewildered, and bitterly wroth with Sybill, went his way.

IX.

THE GREAT ACTOR RETURNS TO FILL THE STAGE.

AND now, in various groups, these summer foresters were at rest in their afternoon banquet; some lying on the smooth sward around the lake—some in the tents—some again in the arbours; here and there the forms of dame and cavalier might be seen, stealing apart from the rest, and gliding down the alleys till lost in the shade—for under that reign, gallantry was universal. Before the king's pavilion a band of those merry jongleurs, into whom the ancient and honoured minstrels were fast degenerating, stood waiting for the signal to commence their sports, and listening to the laughter that came in frequent peals from the royal tent. Within feasted Edward, the Count de la Roche, the Lord Rivers; while in a larger and more splendid pavilion, at some little distance, the Queen, her mother, and the great dames of the Court, held their own slighter and less noisy repast.

“And here, then,” said Edward, as he put his lips to a gold goblet, wrought with gems, and passed it to Anthony the Bastard—“here, Count, we take the first waisall to the loves of Charolois and Margaret!”

The Count drained the goblet, and the wine gave him new fire.

“And with those loves, King,” said he, “we bind for ever Burgundy and England. Woe to France!”

“Ay, woe to France!” exclaimed Edward, his face lighting up with that martial joy which it ever took at the thoughts of war—“for we will wrench her lands from this huckster, Louis. By Heaven! I shall not rest in peace till York hath regained what Lancaster hath lost; and out of the parings of the realm which I will add to England, thy brother of Burgundy shall have enow to change his Duke’s diadem for a King’s. How now, Rivers? Thou gloomest, father mine.”

“My liege,” said Rivers, wakening himself, “I did but think that if the Earl of Warwick ——”

“Ah! I had forgotten,” interrupted Edward; “and, sooth to say, Count Anthony, I think if the Earl were by, he would not much mend our boon-fellowship!”

“Yet a good subject,” said De la Roche, sneeringly, “usually dresses his face by that of his king.”

“A subject! Ay, but Warwick is much such a subject to England as William of Normandy or Duke Rollo was to France. Howbeit, let him come—our realm is at peace—we want no more his battle-axe; and in our new designs on France, thy brother, bold Count, is an ally that might compensate for a greater loss than a sullen minister. Let him come!”

As the King spoke, there was heard gently upon the smooth turf the sound of the hoofs of steeds. A moment more, and from the outskirts of the scene of revel, where the King’s guards were stationed, there arose a long, loud shout. Nearer and nearer came the hoofs of the steeds—they paused. “Doubtless Richard of Gloucester, by that shout! The soldiers love that brave boy,” said the King.

Marmaduke Nevile, as gentleman in waiting, drew aside the curtain of the pavilion; and as he uttered a name that paled the checks of all who heard, the Earl of Warwick entered the royal presence.

The Earl’s dress was disordered and soiled by travel; the black plume on his cap was broken, and hung darkly over his face; his horseman’s boots coming half way up the thigh, were sullied with the dust of the journey; and yet as he entered, before the majesty of his mien, the grandeur of his stature, suddenly De la Roche, Rivers, even the

gorgeous Edward himself, seemed dwarfed into common men! About the man—his air, his eye, his form, his attitude—there was THAT which, in the earlier times, made kings, by the acclamation of the crowd,—an unmistakable sovereignty, as of one whom Nature herself had shaped and stamped for power and for rule. All three had risen as he entered; and to a deep silence succeeded an exclamation from Edward, and then again all was still.

The Earl stood a second or two calmly gazing on the effect he had produced; and turning his dark eye from one to the other, till it rested full upon De la Roche, who, after vainly striving not to quail beneath the gaze, finally smiled with affected disdain, and, resting his hand on his dagger, sunk back into his seat.

“My liege,” then said Warwick, doffing his cap, and approaching the King with slow and grave respect, “I crave pardon for presenting myself to your Highness thus travel-worn and disordered, but I announce that news which ensures my welcome. The solemn embassy of trust committed to me by your Grace has prospered, with God’s blessing; and the Fils de Bourbon and the Archbishop of Narbonne are on their way to your metropolis. Alliance between the two great monarchies of Europe is concluded on terms that insure the weal of England, and augment the lustre of your

crown. Your claims on Normandy and Guienne, King Louis consents to submit to the arbitrement of the Roman Pontiff,* and to pay to your treasury annual tribute; these advantages, greater than your Highness even empowered me to demand, thus obtained, his royal brother joyfully awaits the hand of the Lady Margaret.

“Cousin,” said Edward, who had thoroughly recovered himself, and motioning the Earl to a seat, “you are ever welcome, no matter what your news; but I marvel much that so deft a statesman should broach these matters of council in the unseasonable hour, and before the gay comrades, of a revel.”

“I speak, sire,” said Warwick, calmly, though the veins in his forehead swelled, and his dark countenance was much flushed—“I speak openly of that which hath been done nobly; and this truth has ceased to be matter of council, since the meanest citizen who hath ears and eyes, ere this, must know for what purpose the ambassadors of King Louis arrive in England with your Highness’s representative.

Edward, more embarrassed at this tone than he could have foreseen, remained silent; but De la Roche, impatient to humble his brother’s foe, and

* The Pope, moreover, was to be engaged to decide the question within four years. A more brilliant treaty for England, Edward’s ambassador could not have effected.

judging it also discreet to arouse the King, said carelessly—

“It were a pity, Sir Earl, that the citizens, whom you thus deem privy to the thoughts of Kings, had not prevised the Archbishop of Narbonne, that, if he desire to see a fairer show than even the palaces of Westminster and the Tower, he will hasten back to behold the banners of Burgundy and England waving from the spires of Notre Dame.”

Ere the Bastard had concluded, Rivers, leaning back, whispered the King—“For Christ’s sake, sire, select some fitter scene for what must follow! Silence your guest!”

But Edward, on the contrary, pleased to think that De la Roche was breaking the ice, and hopeful that some burst from Warwick would give him more excuse than he felt at present for a rupture, said, sternly, “Hush, my lord, and meddle not!”

“Unless I mistake,” said Warwick, coldly, “he who now accosts me is the Count de la Roche—a foreigner.”

“And the brother of the heir of Burgundy,” interrupted De la Roche—“brother to the betrothed and princely spouse of Margaret of England.”

“Doth this man lie, sire?” said Warwick, who had seated himself a moment, and who now rose again.

The Bastard sprung also to his feet, but Edward, waving him back, and reassuming the external dignity which rarely forsook him, replied, — “Cousin, thy question lacketh courtesy to our noble guest: since thy departure, reasons of state, we will impart to thee at a meeter season, have changed our purpose, and we will now that our sister Margaret shall wed with the Count of Charolois.”

“And this to me, King!” exclaimed the Earl, all his passions at once released—“this to me!—Nay frown not, Edward—I am of the race of those who, greater than kings, have built thrones and toppled them! I tell thee, thou hast misused mine honour, and belied thine own—thou hast debased thyself in juggling me, delegated as the Representative of thy Royalty!—Lord Rivers, stand back—there are barriers enow between Truth and a King!”

“By St. George and my father’s head!” cried Edward, with a rage no less fierce then Warwick’s—“thou abusest, false lord, my mercy and our kindred blood. Another word, and thou leavest this pavilion for the Tower!”

“King!” replied Warwick, scornfully, and folding his arms on his broad breast—“there is not a hair on this head which thy whole House, thy guards, and thine armies could dare to touch. ME to the Tower! Send me—and when the

third sun reddens the roof of prison-house and palace,—look round broad England, and miss a throne!”

“What ho there!” exclaimed Edward, stamping his foot; and at that instant the curtain of the pavilion was hastily torn aside, and Richard of Gloucester entered, followed by Lord Hastings, the Duke of Clarence, and Anthony Woodville.

“Ah!” continued the King, “ye come in time. George of Clarence, Lord High Constable of England—arrest you haughty man, who dares to menace his liege and suzerain!”

Gliding between Clarence, who stood dumb and thunderstricken, and the Earl of Warwick,—Prince Richard said, in a voice which though even softer than usual, had in it more command over those who heard than when it rolled in thunder along the ranks of Barnet or of Bosworth,—“Edward, my brother, remember Touton, and forbear—Warwick, my cousin, forget not thy king nor his dead father!”

At these last words the Earl’s face fell; for to that father he had sworn to succour and defend the sons: his sense recovering from his pride, shewed him how much his intemperate anger had thrown away his advantages in the foul wrong he had sustained from Edward. Meanwhile the King himself, with flashing eyes, and a crest as high as Warwick’s, was about, perhaps, to overthrow his

throne, by the attempt to enforce his threat, when Anthony Woodville, who followed Clarence, whispered to him—"Beware, sire! a countless crowd that seem to have followed the Earl's steps, have already pierced the chase, and can scarcely be kept from the spot, so great is their desire to behold him. Beware!"—and Richard's quick ear catching these whispered words, suddenly backed them by again drawing aside the curtain of the tent. Along the sward, the guard of the King summoned from their unseen but neighbouring post within the wood, were drawn up as if to keep back an immense multitude—men, women, children, who swayed, and rustled, and murmured in the rear. But no sooner was the curtain drawn aside, and the guards themselves caught sight of the Royal Princes, and the great Earl towering amidst them, than supposing, in their ignorance, the scene thus given to them was intended for their gratification, from that old soldiery of Touthon rose a loud and long "Hurrah—Warwick and the King"—"The King and the stout Earl." The multitude behind caught the cry; they rushed forward, mingling with the soldiery, who no longer sought to keep them back.

"A Warwick! a Warwick!" they shouted.

"God bless the People's Friend!"

Edward, startled and aghast, drew sullenly into the rear of the tent.

De la Roche grew pale, but with the promptness of a practised statesman, he hastily advanced, and drew the curtain.

“ Shall varlets,” he said to Richard, in French, “ gloat over the quarrels of their lords ?”

“ You are right, Sir Count,” murmured Richard, meekly; his purpose was effected, and leaning on his riding staff, he awaited what was to ensue.

A softer shade had fallen over the Earl’s face, at the proof of the love in which his name was held; it almost seemed to his noble, though haughty and impatient nature, as if the affection of the People had reconciled him to the ingratitude of the King. A tear started to his proud eye, but he twinkled it away, and approaching Edward, who remained erect, and with all a sovereign’s wrath, though silent on his lip, lowering on his brow, he said, in a tone of suppressed emotion:—

“ Sire, it is not for me to crave pardon of living man, but the grievous affront put upon my state and mine honour, hath led my words to an excess which my heart repents. I grieve that your Grace’s highness hath chosen this alliance; hereafter you may find at need what faith is to be placed in Burgundy.”

“ Darest thou gainsay it ?” exclaimed De la Roche.

“ Interrupt me not, sir !” continued Warwick, with a disdainful gesture. “ My liege, I lay down

mine offices, and I leave it to your Grace to account as it lists you to the ambassadors of France—I shall vindicate myself to their king. And now, ere I depart for my hall of Middleham, I alone here, unarmed, and unattended, save, at least, by a single squire, I, Richard Nevile, say, that if any man, peer or knight, can be found to execute your Grace's threat, and arrest me, I will obey your royal pleasure, and attend him to the Tower." Haughtily he bowed his head as he spoke, and raising it again, gazed around—"I await your Grace's pleasure."

"Begone where thou wilt, Earl. From this day Edward the Fourth reigns alone," said the King. Warwick turned—

"My Lord Scales," said he, "lift the curtain; nay, sir, it misdemeans you not. You are still the son of the Woodville, I still the descendant of John of Gaunt."

"Not for the dead ancestor, but for the living warrior," said the Lord Scales, lifting the curtain, and bowing with knightly grace as the Earl passed. And scarcely was Warwick in the open space, than the crowd fairly broke through all restraint, and the clamour of their joy filled with its hateful thunders the royal tent.

"Edward," said Richard, whisperingly, and laying his finger on his brother's arm—"forgive

me if I offended, but had you, at such a time, resolved on violence——”

“I see it all—you were right. But is this to be endured for ever?”

“Sire,” returned Richard, with his dark smile, “rest calm; for the Age is your best ally, and the Age is outgrowing the steel and hauberk. A little while, and——”

“And what——”

“And—ah, sire, I will answer that question when our brother George (mark him!) either refrains from listening, or is married to Isabel Nevile, and hath quarrel with her father about the dowry.—What, ho, there!—let the jongleurs perform.”

“The jongleurs!” exclaimed the King; “why, Richard, thou hast more levity than myself!”

“Pardon me! Let the jongleurs perform, and bid the crowd stay. It is by laughing at the mountebanks that your Grace can best lead the people to forget their Warwick!”

X.

HOW THE GREAT LORDS COME TO THE KING-MAKER, AND
WITH WHAT PROFFERS.

MASTERING the emotions that swelled within him, Lord Warwick returned, with his wonted cheerful courtesy, the welcome of the crowd, and the enthusiastic salutations of the King's guard; but as, at length, he mounted his steed, and attended but by the squire who had followed him from Dover, penetrated into the solitudes of the chase, the recollection of the indignity he had suffered smote his proud heart so sorely, that he groaned aloud. His squire, fearing the fatigue he had undergone might have affected even that iron health, rode up at the sound of the groan, and Warwick's face was hueless as he said, with a forced smile—"It is nothing, Walter. But these heats are oppressive, and we have forgotten our morning draught, friend. Hark! I hear the brawl of a rivulet, and a drink of fresh water were more grateful now than the

daintiest hippocras." So saying, he flung himself from his steed; following the sound of the rivulet, he gained its banks, and after quenching his thirst in the hollow of his hand, laid himself down upon the long grass, waving coolly over the margin, and fell into profound thought. From this reverie he was roused by a quick footstep, and as he lifted his gloomy gaze, he beheld Marmaduke Nevile by his side.

"Well, young man," said he, sternly, "with what messages art thou charged?"

"With none, my lord Earl. I await now no commands but thine."

"Thou knowest not, poor youth, that I can serve thee no more. Go back to the Court."

"Oh, Warwick," said Marmaduke, with simple eloquence, "send me not from thy side! This day I have been rejected by the maid I loved. I loved her well, and my heart chafed sorely, and bled within; but now, methinks, it consoles me to have been so cast off—to have no faith, no love, but that which is best of all, to a brave man,—love and faith for a hero-chief! Where thy fortunes, there be my humble fate—to rise or fall with thee!"

Warwick looked intently upon his young kinsman's face, and said, as to himself, "Why this is strange! I gave no throne to this man, and he deserts me not. My friend," he added, aloud;

“have they told thee already that I am disgraced?”

“I heard the Lord Scales say to the young Lovell, that thou wert dismissed from all thine offices; and I came hither; for I will serve no more the king who forgets the arm and heart to which he owes a kingdom.”

“Man, I accept thy loyalty!” exclaimed Warwick, starting to his feet; “and know that thou hast done more to melt, and yet to nerve my spirit than—but complaints in me are idle, and praise were no reward to thee.”

“But see, my lord, if the first to join thee, I am not the sole one. See, brave Raoul de Fulke, the Lords of St. John, Bergavenny, and Fitzhugh, ay, and fifty others of the best blood of England, are on thy track.”

And as he spoke, plumes and tunics were seen gleaming up the forest path, and in another moment a troop of knights and gentlemen, comprising the flower of such of the ancient nobility as yet lingered round the Court, came up to Warwick, bareheaded.

“Is it possible,” cried Raoul de Fulke, “that we have heard aright, noble Earl? And has Edward the Fourth suffered the base Woodvilles to triumph over the bulwark of his realm?”

“Knights and gentles!” said Warwick, with a bitter smile, “is it so uncommon a thing that men

in peace should leave the battle-axe and brand to rust? I am but an useless weapon, to be suspended at rest amongst the trophies of Touton in my hall of Middleham."

"Return with us," said the Lord of St. John, "and we will make Edward do thee justice, or, one and all, we will abandon a Court where knaves and varlets have become mightier than English valour, and nobler than Norman birth."

"My friends," said the Earl, laying his hand on St. John's shoulder, "not even in my just wrath will I wrong my King. He is punished enow in the choice he hath made. Poor Edward and poor England! What woes and wars await ye both, from the gold, and the craft, and the unsparing hate of Louis XI.! No; if I leave Edward, he hath more need of you. Of mine own free will, I have resigned mine offices."

"Warwick," interrupted Raoul de Fulke, "this deceives us not; and in disgrace to you, the ancient barons of England behold the first blow at their own state. We have wrongs we endured in silence, while thou wert the shield and sword of yon merchant-King. We have seen the ancient peers of England set aside for men of yesterday; we have seen our daughters, sisters,—nay, our very mothers—if widowed and dowered—forced into disreputable and base wedlock, with creatures dressed in titles, and gilded with wealth stolen from our-

selves. Merchants and artificers tread upon our knightly heels, and the Avarice of Trade eats up our Chivalry as a rust. We nobles, in our greater day, have had the crown at our disposal, and William the Norman dared not *think* what Edward Earl of March hath been permitted with impunity to *do*. We, Sir Earl—we knights and barons—*would* a King man enough to make men respect him, prince enough to make peers confide. Richard Earl of Warwick, thou art of royal blood—the descendant of old John of Gaunt. In thee we behold the true, the living likeness of the Third Edward, and the Hero-Prince of Cressy. Speak but the word, and we make thee king!”

The descendant of the Norman, the Representative of the mighty Faction that no English monarch had ever braved in vain, looked round as he said these last words, and a choral murmur was heard through the whole of that august nobility—“ We make thee king !”

“Richard, descendant of the Plantagenet,* speak the word,” repeated Raoul de Fulke.

“I speak it not,” interrupted Warwick; “nor shalt thou continue, brave Raoul de Fulke. What, my lords and gentlemen,” he added, drawing himself up, and with his countenance animated

* By the female side, through Joan Beaufort, or Plantagenet, Warwick was third in descent from John of Gaunt, as Henry the Seventh, through the male line, was *fourth* in descent.

with feelings it is scarcely possible in our times to sympathize with or make clear—"what! think you that Ambition limits itself to the narrow circlet of a Crown? Greater, and more in the spirit of our mighty fathers, is the condition of men like us, THE BARONS who make and unmake kings. What! who of us would not rather have been as our sires at Runnymede than the craven monarch whom those sires controlled and chid? By Heaven, my lords, Richard Nevile has too proud a soul to be a king! A king—a puppet of state and form! A king—a holiday show for the crowd, to hiss or hurrah, as the humour seizes! A king—a pauper to the nation, wrangling with his parliament for gold! A king!—Richard the Second was a king, and Lancaster dethroned him. Ye would debase me to a Henry of Lancaster. Mort Dieu! I thank ye. The Commons and the Lords raised *him*, forsooth,—for what? To hold him as the creature they had made, to rate him, to chafe him, to pry into his very household, and quarrel with his wife's chamberlings and labourers.* What! dear Raoul de Fulke, is thy friend fallen now so low, that he—Earl of Salisbury and of Warwick, chief of the threefold race of Montagu, Monthermer, and Nevile, lord of

* Laundresses. The parliamentary rolls in the reign of Henry the Fourth abound in curious specimens of the interference of the Commons with the household of Henry's wife, Queen Joan

a hundred baronies, leader of sixty thousand followers—is not greater than Edward of March, to whom we will deign still, with your permission, to vouchsafe the name and pageant of a king?”

This extraordinary address, strange to say, so thoroughly expressed the peculiar pride of the old barons, that when it ceased a sound of admiration and applause circled through that haughty audience, and Raoul de Fulke, kneeling suddenly, kissed the Earl's hand: “Oh, noble Earl,” he said, “ever live as one of us, to maintain our Order, and teach kings and nations what we are.”

“Fear it not, Raoul! fear it not—we will have our rights yet. Return, I beseech ye. Let me feel I have such friends about the king. Even at Middleham, my eye shall watch over our common cause; and till seven feet of earth suffice him, your brother baron, Richard Nevile, is not a man whom kings and courts can forget, much less dishonour. Sir, our honour is in our bosoms,—and there, is the only throne armies cannot shake, nor cozeners mine away.”

With these words he gently waved his hand, motioned to his squire, who stood out of hearing with the steeds, to approach, and mounting, gravely rode on. Ere he had got many paces, he called to Marmaduke, who was on foot, and bade him follow him to London that night. “I have strange tidings

to tell the French envoys, and for England's sake I must soothe their anger if I can,—then to Middleham.”

The nobles returned slowly to the pavilions. And as they gained the open space, where the gaudy tents still shone against the setting sun, they beheld the mob of that day, whom Shakspeare hath painted with such contempt, gathering, laughing and loud, around the mountebank and the conjurer, who had already replaced in their thoughts (as Gloucester had foreseen) the hero-idol of their worship.

END OF BOOK IV.

1870
The following is a list of the names of the persons who have been admitted to the membership of the Society since the last meeting of the Council, viz. at the meeting held on the 15th of December, 1869.

1. Mr. J. H. [Name illegible]
2. Mr. J. H. [Name illegible]
3. Mr. J. H. [Name illegible]
4. Mr. J. H. [Name illegible]
5. Mr. J. H. [Name illegible]
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8. Mr. J. H. [Name illegible]
9. Mr. J. H. [Name illegible]
10. Mr. J. H. [Name illegible]

BOOK THE FIFTH.

THE LAST OF THE BARONS IN HIS
FATHER'S HALLS.

BOOK THE FIFTH.

I.

RURAL ENGLAND IN THE MIDDLE AGES—NOBLE VISITORS
SEEK THE CASTLE OF MIDDLEHAM.

AUTUMN had succeeded to Summer—Winter to Autumn—and the Spring of 1468 was green in England, when a gallant cavalcade were seen slowly winding the ascent of a long and gradual hill, towards the decline of day. Different, indeed, from the aspect which that part of the country now presents was the landscape that lay around them, bathed in the smiles of the westering sun. In a valley to the left, a full view of which the steep road commanded, (where now roars the din of trade through a thousand factories,) lay opposite a long secluded village. The houses, if so they might be called, were constructed entirely of wood, and that of the more perishable kind—willow, sallow, elm, and plumbtree. Not one could boast a

chimney; but the smoke from the single fire in each, after duly darkening the atmosphere within, sent its surplusage, lazily and fitfully, through a circular aperture in the roof. In fact, there was long in the provinces a prejudice against chimneys! The smoke was considered good both for house and owner; the first it was supposed to season, and the last to guard “from rheums, catarrhs, and poses.”* Neither did one of these habitations boast the comfort of a glazed window, the substitute being lattice, or chequer-work—even in the house of the franklin, which rose stately above the rest, encompassed with barns and out-sheds. And yet greatly should we err, did we conceive that these deficiencies were an index to the general condition of the working-class. Far better off was the labourer, *when employed*, than now. Wages were enormously high, meat extremely low; † and

* So worthy Hollinshed, (Book II., c. 22)—“Then had we none but reredosses, and our heads did never ache. For as the smoke, in those days, was supposed to be a sufficient hardening for the timber of the house, so it was reputed a far better medicine to keep the goodman and his familie from the quacke, or pose, wherewith as then very few were oft acquainted.”

† See Hallam’s “Middle Ages,” chap. xx., part 2. So also Hollinshed, book 11, c. 12, comments on the amazement of the Spaniards, in Queen Mary’s time, when they saw “what large diet was used in these so homelie cottages,” and reports one of the Spaniards to have said, “These English have their houses of sticks and dirt, but they fare commonlie so well as the king!”

our Mother Land bountifully maintained her Children.

On that greensward, before the village (now foul and reeking with the squalid population, whom Commerce rears up—the Victims, as the Movers of the Modern World) were assembled youth and age; for it was a holiday evening, and the grim Puritan had not yet risen to sour the face of Mirth. Well clad in leathern jerkin, or even broadcloth, the young peasants vied with each other in quoits, and wrestling; while the merry laughter of the girls, in their gay-coloured kirtles, and ribboned hair, rose oft and cheerily to the ears of the cavalcade. From a gentle eminence beyond the village, and half veiled by trees, on which the first verdure of spring was budding, (where now, around the gin-shop, gather the fierce and sickly Children of Toil and of Discontent,) rose the venerable walls of a monastery, and the chime of its heavy bell swung far and sweet over the pastoral landscape. To the right of the road (where now stands the sober Meeting-House) was one of those small shrines, so frequent in Italy, with an Image of the Virgin gaudily painted, and before it each cavalier in the procession halted an instant to cross himself, and mutter an ave. Beyond still, to the right, extended vast chains of woodland, interspersed with strips of pasture, upon which numerous flocks were grazing, with horses, as yet unbroken to bit and selle, that

neighed and snorted as they caught scent of their more civilized brethren pacing up the road.

In front of the cavalcade rode two, evidently of superior rank to the rest. The one small and slight, with his long hair flowing over his shoulders; and the other, though still young, many years older; and indicating his clerical profession by the absence of all love-locks, compensated by a curled and glossy beard, trimmed with the greatest care. But the dress of the ecclesiastic was as little according to our modern notions of what beseems the church as can well be conceived: his tunic and surcoat, of a rich amber, contrasted well with the clear darkness of his complexion; his piked shoes, or beakers, as they were called, turned up half-way to the knee; the buckles of his dress were of gold, inlaid with gems; and the housings of his horse, which was of great power, were edged with gold fringe. By the side of his steed walked a tall greyhound, upon which he ever and anon glanced with affection. Behind these, rode two gentlemen, whose golden spurs announced knighthood; and then followed a long train of squires and pages, richly clad and accoutred, bearing generally the Nevile badge of the Bull; though interspersed amongst the retinue might be seen the grim Boar's Head, which Richard of Gloucester, in right of his duchy, had assumed as his cognizance.

“Nay, sweet Prince,” said the ecclesiastic, “I

pray thee to consider that a greyhound is far more of a gentleman than any other of the canine species. Mark his stately, yet delicate length of limb—his sleek coat—his keen eye—his haughty neck.”

“These are but the externals, my noble friend. Will the greyhound attack the lion, as our mastiff doth? The true character of the *gentilhomme* is to know no fear, and to rush through all danger at the throat of his foe; wherefore I uphold the dignity of the mastiff above all his tribe, though others have a daintier hide, and a statelier crest. Enough of such matters, Archbishop,—we are nearing Middleham.”

“God be praised! for I am hungered,” observed the Archbishop, piously; “but, sooth to say, my cook at the More far excelleth what we can hope to find at the board of my brother. He hath some faults, our Warwick! Hasty and careless, he hath not thought enow of the blessings he might enjoy, and many a poor abbot hath daintier fare on his humble table.”

“Oh, George Nevile! who that heard thee, when thou talkest of hounds and interments,* would recognise the Lord Chancellor of England—the most learned dignitary—the most subtle statesman?”

“And oh, Richard Plantagenet!” retorted the Archbishop, dropping the mincing and affected tone, which he, in common with the coxcombs of

* Interments, *entremets*.

that day, usually assumed, "who that heard thee, when thou talkest of humility and devotion, would recognise the sternest heart and the most daring ambition God ever gave to prince?"

Richard started at these words, and his eye shot fire as it met the keen, calm gaze of the prelate.

"Nay, your Grace wrongs me," he said, gnawing his lip—"or I should not say wrongs, but flatters; for sternness and ambition are no vices in a Nevile's eyes."

"Fairly answered, royal son," said the Archbishop, laughing; "but let us be frank. Thou hast persuaded me to accompany thee to Lord Warwick as a mediator: the provinces in the North are disturbed; the intrigues of Margaret of Anjou are restless; the King reaps what he has sown in the Court of France, and, as Warwick foretold, the emissaries and gold of Louis are ever at work against his throne: the great barons are moody and discontented; and our liege King Edward is at last aware that, if the Earl of Warwick do not return to his councils, the first blast of a hostile trumpet may drive him from his throne. Well, I attend thee: my fortunes are woven with those of York, and my interest and my loyalty go hand in hand. Be equally frank with me. Hast thou, Lord Richard, no interest to serve in this mission save that of the public weal?"

"Thou forgettest that the Lady Isabel is dearly

loved by Clarence, and that I would fain see removed all barrier to his nuptial bliss. But you rise the towers of Middleham. Beloved walls, which sheltered my childhood! and, by holy Paul, a noble pile, which would resist an army, or hold one.”

While thus conversed the Prince and the Archbishop, the Earl of Warwick, musing and alone, slowly paced the lofty terrace that crested the battlements of his outer fortifications.

In vain had that restless and powerful spirit sought content in retirement. Trained from his childhood to active life—to move mankind to and fro at his beck—this single and sudden interval of repose in the prime of his existence, at the height of his fame, served but to swell the turbulent and dangerous passions to which all vent was forbidden.

The statesman of modern days has at least food for intellect, in letters, when deprived of action; but with all his talents, and thoroughly cultivated as his mind was in the camp, the council, and the state, the great Earl cared for nothing in book-lore, except some rude ballad that told of Charlemagne or Rollo. The sports that had pleased the leisure of his earlier youth were tedious and flat to one snatched from so mighty a career. His hound lay idle at his feet, his falcon took holiday on

the perch, his jester was banished to the page's table—Behold the repose of this great unlettered spirit! But while his mind was thus debarred from its native sphere, all tended to pamper Lord Warwick's infirmity of pride. The ungrateful Edward might forget him; but the King seemed to stand alone in that oblivion. The mightiest peers, the most renowned knights gathered to his hall. Middleham, not Windsor, nor Shene, nor Westminster, nor the Tower, seemed the COURT OF ENGLAND. As the Last of the Barons paced his terrace, far as his eye could reach his broad domains extended, studded with villages, and towns, and castles, swarming with his retainers. The whole country seemed in mourning for his absence. The name of Warwick was in all men's mouths, and not a group gathered in market-place or hostel, but what the minstrel who had some ballad in praise of the stout Earl found a rapt and thrilling audience.

“And is the river of my life,” muttered Warwick, “shrunk into this stagnant pool! Happy the man who hath never known what it is to taste of Fame—to have it is a purgatory, to want it is a hell!”

Wrapt in this gloomy self-commune, he heard not the light step that sought his side, till a tender arm was thrown around him, and a face, in which

sweet temper and pure thought had preserved to matronly beauty all the bloom of youth, looked up smilingly to his own.

“My Lord—my Richard,” said the Countess, “why didst thou steal so churlishly from me? Hath there, alas! come a time when thou deemest me unworthy to share thy thoughts, or soothe thy troubles?”

“Fond one! no,” said Warwick, drawing the form still light, though rounded, nearer to his bosom. “For nineteen years hast thou been to me a leal and loving wife. Thou wert a child on our wedding-day, *m’amie*, and I but a beardless youth; yet wise enough was I then to see, at the first glance of thy blue eye, that there was more treasure in thy heart than in all the lordships thy hand bestowed.”

“My Richard!” murmured the Countess, and her tears of grateful delight fell on the hand she kissed.

“Yes, let us recall those early and sweet days,” continued Warwick, with a tenderness of voice and manner that strangers might have marvelled at, forgetting how tenderness is almost ever a part of such peculiar manliness of character—“yes, sit we here under this spacious elm, and think that our youth has come back to us once more. For verily, *m’amie*, nothing in life has ever been so fair to me,

as those days when we stood hand in hand on its threshold, and talked, boy-bridegroom and child-bride as we were, of the morrow that lay beyond."

"Ah, Richard, even in those days thy ambition sometimes vexed my woman vanity, and shewed me that I could never be all in all to so large a heart!"

"Ambition! No, thou mistakest—Montagu is ambitious, I but proud. Montagu ever seeks to be higher than he is, I but assert the right to be what I am and have been; and my pride, sweet wife, is a part of my love for thee. It is thy title, Heiress of Warwick, and not my father's, that I bear; thy badge, and not the Neviles', which I have made the symbol of my power. Shame, indeed, on my knighthood, if the fairest dame in England could not justify my pride! Ah! *belle amie*, why have we not a son?"

"Peradventure, fair lord," said the Countess, with an arch, yet half-melancholy smile, "because that pride or ambition, name it as thou wilt, which thou excusest so gallantly, would become too insatiate and limitless, if thou sawest a male heir to thy greatness; and God, perhaps, warns thee that, spread and increase as thou wilt,—yea, until half our native country becometh as the manor of one man—all must pass from the Beauchamp and the Neville into new houses; thy glory, indeed, an

eternal heir-loom, but only to thy land—thy lordships and thy wealth melting into the dowry of a daughter.”

“At least, no king hath daughters so dowried,” answered Warwick; “and though I disdain for myself the hard vassalage of a throne, yet, if the channel of our blood must pass into other streams—into nothing meaner than the veins of royalty should it merge.” He paused a moment, and added, with a sigh—“Would that Clarence were more worthy Isabel!”

“Nay,” said the Countess, gently, “he loveth her as she merits. He is comely, brave, gracious, and learned.”

“A pest upon that learning—it sicklies and womanizes men’s minds!” exclaimed Warwick, bluntly. “Perhaps it is his learning that I am to thank for George of Clarence’s fears, and doubts, and calculations, and scruples. His brother forbids his marriage with any English donzell, for Edward dares not specialize what alone he dreads. His letters burn with love, and his actions freeze with doubt. It was not thus I loved thee, sweetheart. By all the Saints in the calendar, had Henry the Fifth, or the Lion Richard started from the tomb to forbid me thy hand, it would but have made me a hotter lover! Howbeit Clarence shall decide ere the moon wanes, and but for Isabel’s tears and thy entreaties, my father’s grandchild should not have

waited thus long the coming of so hesitating a wooer. But lo, our darlings! Anne hath thine eyes, *m'amie*; and she groweth more into my heart every day, since daily she more favours thee."

While he thus spoke, the fair sisters came lightly and gaily up the terrace: the arm of the statelier Isabel was twined round Anne's slender waist; and as they came forward in that gentle link, with their lithesome and bounding step, a happier blending of contrasted beauty was never seen. The months that had passed since the sisters were presented first to the reader had little changed the superb and radiant loveliness of Isabel, but had added surprisingly to the attractions of Anne. Her form was more rounded, her bloom more ripened, and though something of timidity and bashfulness still lingered about the grace of her movements and the glance of her dove-like eye, the more earnest thoughts of the awakening woman gave sweet intelligence to her countenance, and that divinest of all attractions—the touching and conscious Modesty to the shy, but tender smile—and the blush that so came and went, so went and came, that it stirred the heart with a sort of delighted pity for one so evidently susceptible to every emotion of pleasure and of pain. Life seemed too rough a thing for so soft a nature, and gazing on her, one sighed to guess her future.

"And what brings ye hither, young truants?"

said the Earl, as Anne, leaving her sister, clung lovingly to his side, (for it was ever her habit to cling to some one,) while Isabel kissed her mother's hand, and then stood before her parents, colouring deeply, and with downcast eyes. "What brings ye hither, whom I left so lately deep engaged in the loom, upon the helmet of Goliath, with my burgonot before you as a sample? Wife, you are to blame—our room of state will be arrasless for the next three generations, if these rosy fingers are suffered thus to play the idlers."

"My father," whispered Anne, "guests are on their way hither, a noble cavalcade; you note them not from this part of the battlements, but from our turret it was fair to see how their plumes and banners shone in the setting sun."

"Guests!" echoed the Earl; "well, is that so rare an honour, that your hearts should beat like village girls at a holiday? Ah, Isabel! look at her blushes. Is it George of Clarence at last? Is it?"

"We see the Duke of Gloucester's cognizance," whispered Anne, "and our own Nevile Bull. Perchance our cousin George, also, may——"

Here she was interrupted by the sound of the warder's horn, followed a moment after by the roar of one of the bombards on the keep.

"At least," said Warwick, his face lighting up, "that signal announces the coming of King's blood. We must honour it,—for it is our own. We

will go forth and meet our guests—your hand, Countess.”

And gravely and silently, and in deep, but no longer gloomy thought, Warwick led the way to his hall, followed by the fair sisters; and who that could have looked upon that princely pair, and those lovely and radiant children, could have foreseen, that in that hour, Fate, in tempting the Earl once more to action, was busy on their doom!

II.

COUNCILS AND MUSINGS.

THE lamp shone through the lattice of Warwick's chamber at the unwonted hour of midnight, and the Earl was still in deep commune with his guests. The Archbishop, whom Edward, alarmed by the state of the country, and the disaffection of his barons, had reluctantly commissioned to mediate with Warwick, was, as we have before said, one of those men peculiar to the early Church. There was nothing more in the title of Archbishop of York than in that of the Bishop of Osnaburg, (borne by the royal son of George the Third,*) to prevent him who enjoyed it from leading armies, guiding states, or indulging pleasure. But beneath the coxcomby of George Nevile, which was what he shewed most in common with the courtiers of the laity, there lurked a true ecclesiastic's mind. He would have made, in later times, an admirable Jesuit, and no doubt,

* The late Duke of York.

in his own time, a very brilliant pope. His objects in his present mission were clear and perspicuous, any breach between Warwick and the King must necessarily weaken his own position, and the power of his house was essential to all his views. The object of Gloucester in his intercession, was less defined, but not less personal: in smoothing the way to his brother's marriage with Isabel, he removed all apparent obstacle to his own with Anne. And it is probable that Richard, who, whatever his crimes, was far from inaccessible to affection, might have really loved his early play-mate, even while his ambition calculated the baronies that would swell the dower of the heiress, and gild the barren coronet of his duchy.*

“God's truth!” said Warwick, as he lifted his eyes from the scroll in the King's writing, “ye know well, princely cousin, and thou, my brother, ye know well how dearly I have loved King Edward; and the mother's milk overflows my heart, when I read these gentle and tender words, which he deigns to bestow upon his servant. My blood is hasty and over hot, but a kind thought from those I love puts out much fire. Sith he thus beseeches me to return to his councils, I will not be sullen enough to hold back; but, oh, Prince

* Majerus, the Flemish Chronicler, quoted by Bucke (*Life of Richard III.*), mentions the early attachment of Richard to Anne. They were much together, as children, at Middleham.

Richard! is it indeed a matter past all consideration that your sister, the Lady Margaret, must wed with the Duke of Burgundy?"

"Warwick," replied the Prince, "thou mayst know that I never looked with favour on that alliance; that when Clarence bore the Bastard's burgenot, I withheld my countenance from the Bastard's presence. I incurred Edward's anger by refusing to attend his court while the Count de la Roche was his guest. And therefore you may trust me when I say now that Edward, after promises, however rash, most solemn and binding, is dishonoured for ever if he break off the contract. New circumstances, too, have arisen, to make what were dishonour, danger also. By the death of his father, Charolois has succeeded to the Duke of Burgundy's diadem. Thou knowest his warlike temper, and though in a contest popular in England we need fear no foe, yet thou knowest also that no subsidies could be raised for strife with our most profitable commercial ally. Wherefore, we earnestly implore thee magnanimously to forgive the past, accept Edward's assurance of repentance, and be thy thought—as it has been ever—the weal of our common country."

"I may add, also," said the Archbishop, observing how much Warwick was touched and softened—"that in returning to the helm of state, our gracious King permits me to say, that, save

only in the alliance with Burgundy, which toucheth his plighted word, you have full liberty to name conditions, and to ask whatever grace or power a monarch can bestow."

"I name none but my Prince's confidence," said Warwick, generously, "in that, all else is given, and in return for that, I will make the greatest sacrifice that my nature knoweth, or can conceive—I will mortify my familiar demon—I will subdue my PRIDE. If Edward can convince me that it is for the good of England that his sister should wed with mine antient and bitter foe, I will myself do honour to his choice. But of this hereafter. Enough, now that I forget past wrongs in present favour. And that for peace or war, I return to the side of that man whom I loved as my son, before I served him as my king."

Neither Richard nor the Archbishop was prepared for a conciliation so facile, for neither quite understood that peculiar magnanimity which often belongs to a vehement and hasty temper, and which is as eager to forgive as prompt to take offence—which, ever in extremes, is not contented with anything short of fiery aggression, or trustful generosity—and where it once passes over an offence, seeks to oblige the offender. So, when, after some further conversation on the state of the country, the Earl lighted Gloucester to his chamber, the young Prince said to himself musingly:—

“Does ambition besot and blind men?—or can Warwick think that Edward can ever view him but as one to be destroyed when the hour is ripe?”

Catesby, who was the Duke’s chamberlain, was in attendance, as the Prince unrobed:—“A noble castle this,” said the Duke, “and one in the midst of a warlike population—our own countrymen of York.”

“It would be no mean addition to the dowry of the Lady Isabel,” said Catesby with his bland, false smile.

“Methinks rather that the lordships of Salisbury, (and this is the chief,) pass to the Lady Anne,” said Richard, musingly. “No, Edward were imprudent to suffer this stronghold to fall to the next heir to his throne. Marked you the Lady Anne—her beauty is most excellent.”

“Truly, your Highness,” answered Catesby, unsuspectingly; “the Lady Isabel seems to me the taller and the statelier.”

“When man’s merit and woman’s beauty are measured by the ell, Catesby, Anne will certainly be less fair than Isabel, and Richard a dolt to Clarence. Open the casement—my dressing robe—good night to you!”

III.

THE SISTERS.

THE next morning at an hour when modern beauty falls into its first sickly sleep, Isabel and Anne conversed on the same terrace, and near the same spot which had witnessed their father's meditations the day before. They were seated on a rude bench in an angle of the wall, flanked by a low heavy bastion. And from the parapet their gaze might have wandered over a goodly sight, for on a broad space, covered with sand and sawdust, within the vast limits of the castle range, the numerous knights, and youths who sought apprenticeship in arms and gallantry under the Earl, were engaged in those martial sports which falling elsewhere into disuse, the Last of the Barons kinglily maintained. There, boys of fourteen, on their small horses, ran against each other with blunted lances. There, those of more advanced adolescence, each following the other in a circle, rode at

the ring; sometimes (at the word of command from an old knight who had fought at Agincourt, and was the preceptor in these valiant studies,) leaping from their horses at full speed, and again vaulting into the saddle. A few grim old warriors sate by to censure or applaud. Most skilled among the younger, was the son of the Lord Montagu, among the maturer, the name of Marmaduke Nevile was the most often shouted. If the eye turned to the left, through the Barbican might be seen flocks of beeves entering to supply the mighty larder; and at a smaller postern, a dark crowd of mendicant friars, and the more destitute poor waited their daily crumbs from the rich man's table. What need of a poor law then! the baron and the abbot made the parish! But not on these evidences of wealth and state turned the eyes—so familiar to them, that they woke no vanity, and roused no pride.

With downcast looks and a pouting lip, Isabel listened to the silver voice of Anne.

“Dear sister, be just to Clarence. He cannot openly defy his King and brother. Believe that he would have accompanied our uncle and cousin had he not deemed that their mediation would be more welcome, at least to King Edward, without his presence.”

“But not a letter—not a line!”

“ Art thou sure, Isabel, that he even knew of the visit of the Archbishop and his brother ?”

“ How could he fail to know ?”

“ The Duke of Gloucester, last evening, told me that the King had sent him southward.”

“ Was it about Clarence that the Duke whispered to thee so softly by the oriel window ?”

“ Surely, yes !” said Anne, simply. “ Was not Richard as a brother to us when we played as children on yon greensward ?”

“ Never as a brother to me—never was Richard of Gloucester one whom I could think of without fear, and even loathing,” answered Isabel, quickly.

It was at this turn in their conversation that the noiseless step of Richard himself neared the spot, and hearing his own name thus discourteously treated, he paused, screened from their eyes by the bastion, in the angle.

“ Nay, nay, sister,” said Anne ; “ what is there in Richard that misbeseems his princely birth ?”

“ I know not, but there is no youth in his eye and in his heart. Even as a child he had the hard will and the cold craft of grey hairs. Pray God you give me not Gloucester for a brother !”

Anne sighed and smiled—“ Ah no,” she said, after a short pause—“ when thou art Princess of Clarence, may I——”

“ May thou, what ?”

“ Pray for thee and thine in the house of God ! Ah ! thou knowest not, sweet Isabel, how often at morn and eve mine eyes and heart turn to the spires of yonder convent : ” she rose as she said this, her lip quivered, and she moved on in the opposite direction to that in which Richard stood, still unseen, and no longer within his hearing. Isabel rose also, and hastening after her, threw her arms round Anne’s neck, and kissed away the tears that stood in those meek eyes.

“ My sister—my Anne ! Ah ! trust in me, thou hast some secret, I know it well—I have long seen it. Is it possible that thou canst have placed thy heart, thy pure love—thou blushest ! Ah ! Anne, Anne ! thou canst not have loved beneath thee.”

“ Nay,” said Anne, with a spark of her ancestral fire lighting her meek eyes through its tears, “ not beneath me, but above. What do I say ! Isabel, ask me no more. Enough that it is a folly—a dream—and that I could smile with pity at myself, to think from what light causes love and grief can spring.”

“ Above thee ! ” repeated Isabel, in amaze, “ and who in England is above the daughter of Earl Warwick ? Not Richard of Gloucester : if so, pardon my foolish tongue.”

“ No, not Richard—though I feel kindly towards him, and his sweet voice soothes me when I listen—not Richard. Ask no more.”

“Oh, Anne—speak—speak!—we are not both so wretched. Thou lovest not Clarence? It is—it must be!”

“Canst thou think me so false and treacherous—a heart pledged to thee? Clarence! Oh no!”

“But who then—who then?” said Isabel still suspiciously; “nay, if thou wilt not speak, blame thyself if I must still wrong thee.”

Thus appealed to, and wounded to the quick by Isabel’s tone and eye, Anne at last, with a strong effort, suppressed her tears, and, taking her sister’s hand, said in a voice of touching solemnity—“Promise, then, that the secret shall be ever holy; and, since I know that it will move thine anger—perhaps thy scorn—strive to forget what I will confess to thee.”

Isabel for answer pressed her lips on the hand she held; and the sisters, turning under the shadow of a long row of venerable oaks, placed themselves on a little mound, fragrant with the violets of spring. A different part of the landscape beyond was now brought in view;—calmly slept in the valley the roofs of the subject town of Middleham—calmly flowed through the pastures the noiseless waves of Ure. Leaning on Isabel’s bosom, Anne thus spake, “Call to mind, sweet sister, that short breathing-time in the horrors of the Civil War, when a brief peace was made between our father and Queen Margaret. We

were left in the palace—mere children that we were—to play with the young Prince, and the children in Margaret’s train.”

“I remember.”

“And I was unwell, and timid, and kept aloof from the sports with a girl of my own years, whom I think—see how faithful my memory!—they called Sybill; and Prince Edward, Henry’s son, stealing from the rest, sought me out; and we sate together, or walked together alone, apart from all, that day and the few days we were his mother’s guests. Oh! if you could have seen him and heard him then—so beautiful, so gentle, so wise beyond his years, and yet so sweetly sad; and when we parted, he bade me ever love him, and placed his ring on my finger, and wept,—as we kissed each other, as children will.”

“Children!—ye were infants!” exclaimed Isabel, whose wonder seemed increased by this simple tale.

“Infant though I was, I felt as if my heart would break when I left him; and then the wars ensued; and do you not remember how ill I was, and like to die, when our House triumphed, and the Prince and Heir of Lancaster was driven into friendless exile? From that hour my fate was fixed. Smile if you please at such infant folly, but children often feel more deeply than later years can weet of.”

“My sister, this is indeed a wilful invention of sorrow for thine own scourge. Why, ere this, believe me, the boy-prince hath forgotten thy very name.”

“Not so, Isabel,” said Anne, colouring, and quickly, “and perchance, did all rest here, I might have outgrown my weakness. But last year, when we were at Rouen with my father——”

“Well?”

“One evening, on entering my chamber, I found a packet—how left I know not, but the French King and his suite, thou rememberest, made our house almost their home—and in this packet was a picture, and on its back these words, *‘Forget not the exile, who remembers thee!’*”

“And that picture was Prince Edward’s?”

Anne blushed, and her bosom heaved beneath the slender and high-laced gorget. After a pause, looking round her, she drew forth a small miniature, which lay on the heart that beat thus sadly, and placed it in her sister’s hands.

“You see I deceive you not, Isabel. And is not this a fair excuse for——”

She stopped short, her modest nature shrinking from comment upon the mere beauty that might have won the heart.

And fair indeed was the face upon which Isabel gazed admiringly, in spite of the stiff and rude art of

the limner ; full of the fire and energy which characterized the countenance of the mother, but with a tinge of the same profound and inexpressible melancholy that gave its charm to the pensive features of Henry the Sixth—a face, indeed, to fascinate a young eye, even if not associated with such remembrances of romance and pity.

Without saying a word, Isabel gave back the picture, but she pressed the hand that took it, and Anne was contented to interpret the silence into sympathy.

“ And now you know why I have so often incurred your anger—by compassion for the adherents of Lancaster ; and for this, also, Richard of Gloucester hath been endeared to me ;—for fierce and stern as he may be called, he hath ever been gentle in his mediation for that unhappy House.”

“ Because it is his policy to be well with all parties. My poor Anne, I cannot bid you hope ; and yet, should I ever wed with Clarence, it may be possible—that—that—but you in turn will chide me for ambition.”

“ How ?”

“ Clarence is heir to the throne of England, for King Edward has no male children ; and the hour may arrive when the son of Henry of Windsor may return to his native land, not as Sovereign, but as Duke of Lancaster, and thy hand may reconcile him to the loss of a crown.”

“Would love reconcile thee to such a loss, proud Isabel?” said Anne, shaking her head and smiling mournfully.

“No,” answered Isabel, emphatically.

“And are men less haught than we?” said Anne. “Ah! I know not if I could love him so well could he resign his rights, or even could he regain them. It is his position that gives him a holiness in my eyes. And this love, that must be hopeless, is half pity and half respect.”

At this moment a loud shout arose from the youths in the yard, or sporting ground, below, and the sisters, startled, and looking up, saw that the sound was occasioned by the sight of the young Duke of Gloucester, who was standing on the parapet near the bench the demoiselles had quitted, and who acknowledged the greeting by a wave of his plumed cap and a lowly bend of his head; at the same time the figures of Warwick and the Archbishop, seemingly in earnest conversation, appeared at the end of the terrace. The sisters rose hastily, and would have stolen away, but the Archbishop caught a glimpse of their robes, and called aloud to them. The reverent obedience, at that day, of youth to relations, left the sisters no option but to advance towards their uncle, which they did with demure reluctance.

“Fair brother,” said the Archbishop, “I would

that Gloucester were to have my stately niece instead of the gaudy Clarence."

"Wherefore?"

"Because he can protect those he loves, and Clarence will ever need a protector."

"I like George not the less for that," said Warwick, "for I would not have my son-in-law my master."

"Master!" echoed the Archbishop, laughing, "the soldan of Babylon himself, were he your son-in-law, would find Lord Warwick a tolerably stubborn servant!"

"And yet," said Warwick, also laughing, but with a franker tone, "beshrew me, but much as I approve young Gloucester, and deem him the hope of the House of York, I never feel sure, when we are of the same mind, whether I agree with him, or whether he leadeth me. Ah, George! Isabel should have wedded the King, and then Edward and I would have had a sweet mediator in all our quarrels. But not so hath it been decreed."

There was a pause.

"Note how Gloucester steals to the side of Anne. Thou mayst have him for a son-in-law, though no rival to Clarence. Montagu hath hinted that the Duke so aspires."

"He has his father's face—well," said the Earl, softly. "But yet," he added, in an altered and reflective tone, "the boy is to me a riddle. That

he will be bold in battle and wise in council I foresee; but would he had more of a young man's honest follies! There is a medium between Edward's wantonness and Richard's sanctimony; and he who in the hey-day of youth's blood scowls alike upon sparkling wine and smiling woman, may hide in his heart darker and more sinful fancies. But fie on me! I will not wrongfully mistrust his father's son. Thou spokest of Montagu; he seems to have been mighty cold to his brother's wrongs—ever at the court—ever sleek with Villein and Woodville."

"But the better to watch thy interests;—I so counselled him."

"A priest's counsel! Hate frankly or love freely is a knight's and soldier's motto. A murrain on all double-dealing!"

The Archbishop shrugged his shoulders, and applied to his nostril a small pouncet-box of dainty essences.

"Come hither, my haughty Isabel," said the prelate, as the demoiselles now drew near. He placed his niece's arm within his own, and took her aside to talk of Clarence. Richard remained with Anne, and the young cousins were joined by Warwick. The Earl noted in silence the soft address of the eloquent prince, and his evident desire to please Anne. And, strange as it may seem, although he had hitherto regarded Richard

with admiration and affection, and although his pride for both daughters coveted alliances not less than royal, yet, in contemplating Gloucester for the first time as a probable suitor to his daughter, (and his favourite daughter,) the anxiety of a father sharpened his penetration, and placed the character of Richard before him in a different point from that in which he had hitherto looked only on the fearless heart and accomplished wit of his royal godson.

IV.

THE DESTRIER.

It was three days afterwards that the Earl, as, according to custom, Anne knelt to him for his morning blessing in the oratory, where the Christian Baron at matins and vespers offered up his simple worship, drew her forth into the air, and said, abruptly—

“Wouldst thou be happy if Richard of Gloucester were thy betrothed?”

Anne started, and with more vivacity than usually belonged to her, exclaimed, “O no, my father!”

“This is no maiden’s silly coyness, Anne? It is a plain yea or nay that I ask from thee!”

“Nay, then,” answered Anne, encouraged by her father’s tone—“nay, if it so please you.”

“It doth please me,” said the Earl, shortly; and after a pause, he added, “Yes, I am well pleased. Richard gives promise of an illustrious manhood; but Anne, thou growest so like thy mother, that, whenever my pride seeks to see thee great, my

heart steps in, and only prays that it may see thee happy!—so much so, that I would not have given thee to Clarence, whom it likes me well to view as Isabel's betrothed, for, to her, greatness and bliss are one; and she is of firm nature, and can rule in her own house; but thou,—where out of romaunt can I find a lord loving enough for thee, soft child?"—

Inexpressibly affected, Anne threw herself on her father's breast and wept. He caressed and soothed her fondly; and, before her emotion was well over, Gloucester and Isabel joined them.

"My fair cousin," said the Duke, "hath promised to shew me thy renowned steed, Saladin; and since, on quitting thy halls, I go to my apprenticeship in war on the turbulent Scottish frontier, I would fain ask thee for a Destrier of the same race as that which bears the thunderbolt of Warwick's wrath through the storm of battle."

"A steed of the race of Saladin," answered the Earl, leading the way to the destrier's stall, apart from all other horses, and rather a chamber of the castle than a stable, "were indeed a boon worthy a soldier's gift and a prince's asking. But, alas! Saladin, like myself, is sonless—the last of a long line."

"His father, methinks, fell for us on the field of Toton. Was it not so? I have heard Edward say, that when the archers gave way, and the victory more than wavered, thou, dismounting, didst slay thy steed with thine own hand, and kissing

the cross of thy sword, swore, on that spot, to stem the rush of the foe, and win Edward's crown or Warwick's grave."*

"It was so; and the shout of my merry men, when they saw me amongst their ranks on foot—all flight forbid—was Malech's death-dirge! It is a wondrous race that of Malech and his son Saladin," (continued the Earl, smiling.) When my ancestor, Aymer de Nevile, led his troops to the Holy Land, under Cœur de Lion, it was his fate to capture a lady beloved by the mighty Saladin. Need I say that Aymer, under a flag of truce, escorted her ransomless, her veil never raised from her face, to the tent of the Saracen King. Saladin, too gracious for an Infidel, made him tarry awhile, an honoured guest; and Aymer's chivalry became sorely tried, for the lady he had delivered loved and tempted him; but the good knight prayed and fasted, and defied Satan and all his works. The lady (so runs the legend) grew wroth at the pious crusader's disdainful coldness; and when Aymer returned to his comrades, she sent, amidst the gifts of the soldan, two coal-black steeds, male and mare, over which some foul and weird spells had

* "Every Palm Sunday, the day on which the Battle of Tooton was fought, a rough figure, called the Red Horse, on the side of a hill in Warwickshire, is scoured out. This is suggested to be done in commemoration of the horse which the Earl of Warwick slew on that day, determined to vanquish or die."—*Roberts's York and Lancaster*, vol. i., p. 429.

been duly muttered. Their beauty, speed, art, and fierceness were a marvel. And Aymer, unsuspecting, prized the boon, and selected the male destrier for his war-horse. Great were the feats, in many a field, which my forefather wrought, bestriding his black charger. But one fatal day, on which the sudden war-trump made him forget his morning ave, the beast had power over the Christian, and bore him, against bit and spur, into the thickest of the foe. He did all a knight can do against many—(pardon his descendant's vaunting,—so runs the tale)—and the Christians for awhile beheld him solitary in the *melée*, mowing down moon and turban. Then the crowd closed, and the good knight was lost to sight. 'To the rescue!' cried bold King Richard, and on rushed the crusaders to Aymer's help; when lo! and suddenly, the ranks severed, and the black steed emerged! Aymer still on the selle, but motionless, and his helm battered and plumeless—his brand broken—his arm drooping. On came man and horse, on—charging on, not against Infidel, but Christian. On dashed the steed, I say, with fire bursting from eyes and nostrils, and the pike of his chaffron bent lance-like against the crusaders' van. The foul fiend seemed in the destrier's rage and puissance. He bore right against Richard's standard bearer, and down went the lion and the cross. He charged the King himself; and Richard, unwilling to harm his own dear soldier Aymer, halted wondering, till

the pike of the destrier pierced his own charger through the barding, and the King lay rolling in the dust. A panic seized the cross-men—they fled—the Saracens pursued—and still with the Saracens came the black steed and the powerless rider. At last, when the crusaders reached the camp, and the flight ceased, there, halted also Aymer. Not a man dared near him. He spoke not—none spoke to him—till a holy priest and palmer approached and sprinkled the good knight and the black barb with holy water, and exorcised both—the spell broke, and Aymer dropped to the earth. They unbraced his helm—he was cold and stark. The fierce steed had but borne a dead man.”

“Holy Paul!” cried Gloucester, with seeming sanctimony, though a covert sneer played round the firm beauty of his pale lips—“a notable tale, and one that proveth much of Sacred Truth, now lightly heeded. But, verily, Lord Earl, I should have little loved a steed with such a pedigree!”

“Hear the rest,” said Isabel—“King Richard ordered the destrier to be slain forthwith; but the holy palmer who had exorcised it, forbade the sacrifice. ‘Mighty shall be the service,’ said the reverend man, ‘which the posterity of this steed shall render to thy royal race, and great glory shall they give to the sons of Nevile. Let the war-horse, now duly exorcised from infidel spells, live long to bear a Christian warrior!’”

“And so,” quoth the Earl, taking up the tale—

“ so mare and horse were brought by Aymer’s squires to his English hall; and Aymer’s son, Sir Reginald, bore the cross, and bestrode the fatal steed, without fear and without scathe. From that hour the House of Nevile rose amain, in fame and in puissance, and the legend further saith, that the same palmer encountered Sir Reginald at Joppa, bade him treasure that race of war-steeds as his dearest heritage, for with that race his own should flourish and depart; and the sole one of the Infidel’s spells which could not be broken, was that which united the gift—generation after generation, for weal or for woe, for honour or for doom—to the fate of Aymer and his house. ‘And,’ added the palmer, ‘as with woman’s love and woman’s craft was woven the indissoluble charm, so shall woman, whether in craft or in love, ever shape the fortunes of thee and thine.’ ”

“As yet,” said the Prince, “the prophecy is fulfilled in a golden sense, for nearly all thy wide baronies, I trow, have come to thee through the female side. A woman’s hand brought to the Nevile this castle and its lands.* From a woman came the heritage of Monthermer and Montagu,

* Middleham Castle was built by Robert Fitz Ranulph, grandson of Ribald, younger brother of the Earl of Bretagne and Richmond, nephew to the Conqueror. The founder’s line failed in male heirs, and the heiress married Robert Nevile, son of Lord Raby. Warwick’s father held the earldom of Salisbury in right of his wife, the heiress of Thomas de Montacute.

and Salisbury's famous earldom ;—and the dower of thy peerless countess was the broad domains of Beauchamp."

"And a woman's craft, young Prince, wrought my King's displeasure ! But enough of these dissour's tales : behold the son of poor Malech, whom, forgetting all such legends, I slew at Touton. Ho ! Saladin—greet thy master !"

They stood now in the black steed's stall—an ample and high-vaulted space, for halter never insulted the fierce destrier's mighty neck, which the God of Battles had clothed in thunder. A marble cistern contained his lymphid drink, and in a gilded manger the finest wheaten bread was mingled with the oats of Flanders. On entering, they found young George, Montagu's son, with two or three boys, playing familiarly with the noble animal, who had all the affectionate docility inherited from an Arab origin. But at the sound of Warwick's voice, its ears rose, its mane dressed itself, and with a short neigh it came to his feet, and kneeling down, in slow and stately grace, licked its master's hand. So perfect and so matchless a steed never had knight bestrode ! Its hide without one white hair, and glossy as the sheenest satin ; a lady's tresses were scarcely finer than the hair of its noble mane ; the exceeding smallness of its head, its broad frontal, the remarkable and almost human intelligence of its eye, seemed actually to elevate its conformation above

that of its species. Though the race had increased, generation after generation, in size and strength, Prince Richard still marvelled (when, obedient to a sign from Warwick, the destrier rose, and leant its head, with a sort of melancholy and quiet tenderness, upon the Earl's shoulder) that a horse, less in height and bulk than the ordinary battle steed, could bear the vast weight of the giant Earl in his ponderous mail. But his surprise ceased when the Earl pointed out to him the immense strength of the steed's ample loins, the sinewy cleanness, the iron muscle, of the stag-like legs, the bull-like breadth of chest, and the swelling power of the shining neck."

"And after all," added the Earl, "both in man and beast, the spirit and the race, not the stature and the bulk, bring the prize. *Mort Dieu*, Richard! it often shames me of mine own thews and broad breast—I had been more vain of laurels had I been shorter by the head!"

"Nevertheless," said young George of Montagu, with a page's pertness, "I had rather have thine inches than Prince Richard's, and thy broad breast than his Grace's short neck."

The Duke of Gloucester turned as if a snake had stung him. He gave but one glance to the speaker, but that glance lived for ever in the boy's remembrance, and the young Montagu turned pale and trembled, even before he heard the Earl's stern rebuke.

"Young magpies chatter, boy—young eagles in

silence measure the space between the eyrie and the sun !”

The boy hung his head, and would have slunk off, but Richard detained him with a gentle hand—“My fair young cousin,” said he, “thy words gall no sore, and if ever thou and I charge side by side into the foeman’s ranks, thou shalt comprehend what thy uncle designed to say,—how in the hour of strait and need, we measure men’s stature not by the body but the soul !”

“A noble answer,” whispered Anne, with something like sisterly admiration.

“Too noble,” said the more ambitious Isabel, in the same voice, “for Clarence’s future wife not to fear Clarence’s dauntless brother.”

“And so,” said the Prince, quitting the stall with Warwick, while the girls still lingered behind, “so Saladin hath no son ! Wherefore ? Can you mate him with no bride ?”

“Faith,” answered the Earl, “the females of his race sleep in yonder dell, their burial place, and the proud beast disdains all meaner loves. Nay, were it not so, to continue the breed if adulterated, were but to mar it.”

“You care little for the legend, meseems.”

“Pardieu ! at times, yes, overmuch ; but in sober moments, I think that the brave man who does his duty lacks no wizard prophecy to fulfil his doom ; and whether in prayer or in death, in fortune or defeat, his soul goes straight to God !”

“Umph,” said Richard, musingly, and there was a pause.

“Warwick,” resumed the Prince, “doubtless even on your return to London, the Queen’s enmity and her mother’s will not cease. Clarence loves Isabel, but Clarence knows not how to persuade the King and rule the King’s womankind. Thou knowest how I have stood aloof from all the factions of the Court. Unhappily I go to the Borders, and can but slightly serve thee. But ——” (he stopped short, and sighed heavily.)

“Speak on, Prince.”

“In a word, then, if I were thy son, Anne’s husband—I see—I see—I see——” (thrice repeated the Prince, with a vague dreaminess in his eye, and stretching forth his hand)—“a Future that might defy all foes, opening to me and thee !”

Warwick hesitated in some embarrassment.

“My gracious and princely cousin,” he said, at length, “this proffer is indeed sweet incense to a father’s pride. But pardon me, as yet, noble Richard, thou art so young that the King and the world would blame me did I suffer my ambition to listen to such temptation. Enough at present, if all disputes between our House and the King can be smoothed and laid at rest, without provoking new ones. Nay, pardon me, Prince, let this matter cease,—at least, till thy return from the Borders.”

“May I take with me hope?”

“Nay,” said Warwick, “thou knowest that I am a plain man; to bid thee hope, were to plight my word. And,” he added, seriously, “there be reasons grave, and well to be considered, why both the daughters of a subject should not wed with their King’s brothers. Let this cease now, I pray thee, sweet lord.”

Here the demoiselles joined their father, and the conference was over; but when Richard, an hour after, stood musing alone on the battlements, he muttered to himself—“Thou art a fool, stout Earl, not to have welcomed the union between thy power and my wit. Thou goest to a Court where, without wit, power is nought. Who may foresee the Future? Marry, that was a wise ancient fable, that he who seized and bound Proteus, could extract from the changeful god, the prophecy of the days to come. Yea! the man who can seize Fate, can hear its voice predict to him. And by my own heart and brain, which never yet relinquished what affection yearned for or thought aspired to, I read, as in a book, Anne, that thou shalt be mine; and that where wave on yon battlements the ensigns of Beauchamp, Monthermer, and Nevile, the Boar of Gloucester shall liege it over their broad baronies and hardy vassals.”

BOOK THE SIXTH.

WHEREIN ARE OPENED SOME GLIMPSES OF THE FATE, BELOW,
THAT ATTENDS THOSE WHO ARE BETTER THAN OTHERS,
AND THOSE WHO DESIRE TO MAKE OTHERS BETTER. LOVE,
DEMAGOGUY, AND SCIENCE ALL EQUALLY OFFSPRING OF
THE SAME PROLIFIC DELUSION—VIZ., THAT MEAN SOULS
(THE EARTH'S MAJORITY) ARE WORTH THE HOPE AND
THE AGONY OF NOBLE SOULS, THE EVERLASTINGLY SUFFER-
ING AND ASPIRING FEW.

BOOK THE SIXTH.

I.

NEW DISSENSIONS.

WE must pass over some months. Warwick and his family had returned to London, and the meeting between Edward and the Earl, had been cordial and affectionate. Warwick was reinstated in the offices which gave him apparently the supreme rule in England. The Princess Margaret had left England, as the bride of Charles the Bold; and the Earl had attended the procession, in honour of her nuptials. The King, agreeably with the martial objects he had had long at heart, had then declared war on Louis XI., and parliament was addressed, and troops were raised for that impolitic purpose.* To this war, however, Warwick was inflexibly opposed. He pointed out

* Parliamentary Rolls, 623. The fact in the text has been neglected by most historians.

the madness of withdrawing from England all her best affected chivalry, at a time when the adherents of Lancaster, still powerful, would require no happier occasion to raise the Red Rose banner. He shewed how hollow was the hope of steady aid from the hot, but reckless and unprincipled Duke of Burgundy, and how different now was the condition of France under a King of consummate sagacity, and with an overflowing treasury, to its distracted state in the former conquests of the English. This opposition to the King's will, gave every opportunity for Warwick's enemies to renew their old accusation of secret and treasonable amity with Louis. Although the proud and hasty Earl had not only forgiven the affront put upon him by Edward, but had sought to make amends for his own intemperate resentment, by public attendance on the ceremonials that accompanied the betrothal of the Princess, it was impossible for Edward ever again to love the minister who had defied his power, and menaced his Crown. His humour and his suspicions broke forth despite the restraint that policy dictated to him; and in the disputes upon the invasion of France, a second and more deadly breach between Edward and his minister must have yawned, had not events suddenly and unexpectedly proved the wisdom of Warwick's distrust of Burgundy. Louis XI. bought off the Duke of Bretagne, patched up a peace with Charles the Bold,

and thus frustrated all the schemes, and broke all the alliances of Edward at the very moment his military preparations were ripe.*

Still the angry feelings that the dispute had occasioned between Edward and the Earl were not removed with the cause; and, under pretence of guarding against hostilities from Louis, the King requested Warwick to depart to his government of Calais, the most important and honourable post, it is true, which a subject could then hold; but Warwick considered the request as a pretext for his removal from the Court. A yet more irritating and insulting cause of offence was found in Edward's withholding his consent to Clarence's often-urged demand for permission to wed with the Lady Isabel. It is true that this refusal was accompanied with the most courteous protestations of respect for the Earl, and placed only upon the general ground of state policy.

“My dear George,” Edward would say, “the heiress of Lord Warwick is certainly no mal-alliance for a King's brother; but the safety of the throne imperatively demands, that my brothers should strengthen my rule, by connexions with foreign potentates. I, it is true, married a subject, and see all the troubles that have sprung from my boyish passion! No, no! Go to Bretagne. The Duke hath a fair daughter, and we will make up for

* W. Wyr, 518.

any scantiness in the dower. Weary me no more, George. *Fiat voluntas mea!*"

But the motives assigned were not those which influenced the King's refusal. Reasonably enough, he dreaded that the next male heir to his crown should wed the daughter of the subject who had given that crown, and might at any time take it away. He knew Clarence to be giddy, unprincipled, and vain. Edward's faith in Warwick was shaken by the continual and artful representations of the Queen and her family. He felt that the alliance between Clarence and the Earl would be the union of two interests, almost irresistible, if once arrayed against his own.

But Warwick, who penetrated into the true reasons for Edward's obstinacy, was yet more resentful against the reasons than the obstinacy itself. The one galled him through his affections, the other through his pride; and the first were as keen as the last was morbid. He was the more chafed, inasmuch as his anxiety of father became aroused. Isabel was really attached to Clarence, who, with all his errors, possessed every superficial attraction that graced his house; gallant and handsome, gay and joyous, and with manners that made him no less popular than Edward himself.

And if Isabel's affections were not deep, disinterested, and tender, like those of Anne, they were strengthened by a pride which she inherited from

her father, and a vanity which she took from her sex. It was galling in the extreme to feel that the loves between her and Clarence were the Court gossip, and the king's refusal the Court's jest. Her health gave way, and pride and love both gnawed at her heart.

It happened, unfortunately for the King and for Warwick, that Gloucester, whose premature acuteness and sagacity would have the more served both, inasmuch as the views he had formed in regard to Anne, would have blended his interest, in some degree, with that of the Duke of Clarence, and certainly with the object of conciliation between Edward and his minister,—it happened, we say, unfortunately, that Gloucester was still absent with the forces employed on the Scottish frontier, whither he had repaired on quitting Middleham, and where his extraordinary military talents found their first brilliant opening,—and he was therefore absent from London during all the disgusts he might have removed, and the intrigues he might have frustrated.

But the interests of the House of Warwick, during the Earl's sullen and indignant sojourn at his government of Calais, were not committed to unskilful hands; and Montagu and the Archbishop were well fitted to cope with Lord Rivers and the Duchess of Bedford.

Between these able brothers, one day, at the More, an important conference took place.

“I have sought you,” said Montagu, with more than usual care upon his brow—“I have sought you in consequence of an event that may lead to issues of no small moment, whether for good or evil. Clarence has suddenly left England for Calais.”

“I know it, Montagu; the Duke confided to me his resolution to proclaim himself old enough to marry—and discreet enough to choose for himself.”

“And you approved?”

“Certes; and, sooth to say, I brought him to that modest opinion of his own capacities. What is more still, I propose to join him at Calais!”

“George!”

“Look not so scared, O valiant Captain, who never lost a battle—where the church meddles all prospers. Listen!” And the young prelate gathered himself up from his listless posture, and spoke with earnest unction—“Thou knowest that I do not much busy myself in lay schemes—when I do, the object must be great. Now, Montagu, I have of late, narrowly and keenly watched that spidery web which ye call a Court, and I see that the spider will devour the wasp, unless the wasp boldly break the web—for womancraft I call the spider, and soldier-pride I style the wasp. To speak plainly, these Woodvilles must be bravely breasted and determinately abashed. I do not mean that we can deal with the King’s wife and her family as

with any other foes; but we must convince them that they cannot cope with us, and that their interest will best consist in acquiescing to that condition of things which places the rule of England in the hands of the Neviles."

"My own thought, if I saw the way!"

"I see the way in this alliance; the Houses of York and Warwick must become so indissolubly united, that attempt to injure the one, must destroy both. The Queen and the Woodvilles plot against us; we must raise in the King's family a counterpoise to their machinations. It brings no scandal on the Queen to conspire against Warwick, but it would ruin her in the eyes of England to conspire against the King's brother; and Clarence and Warwick must be as one. This is not all! If our sole aid was in giddy George, we should but buttress our house with a weathercock. This connexion is but as a part of the grand scheme on which I have set my heart—Clarence shall wed Isabel, Gloucester wed Anne, and (let thy ambitious heart beat high, Montagu) the King's eldest daughter shall wed thy son—the male representative of our triple honours. Ah, thine eyes sparkle now! Thus the whole royalty of England shall centre in the Houses of Nevile and York; and the Woodvilles will be caught and hampered in their own meshes—their resentment impotent; for how can Elizabeth stir against us, if her daughter be

betrotthed to the son of Montagu, the nephew of Warwick. Clarence, beloved by the shallow Commons;* Gloucester, adored both by the army and the church; and Montagu and Warwick, the two great captains of the age—is not this a combination of power, that may defy Fate?"

"Oh, George!" said Montagu, admiringly, "what pity that the church should spoil such a statesman!"

"Thou art profane, Montagu; the church spoils no man—the church leads and guides ye all; and, mark, I look farther still. I would have intimate league with France; I would strengthen ourselves with Spain and the German Emperor; I would buy, or seduce the votes of the sacred college; I would have thy poor brother, whom thou so pitiest because he has no son to marry a King's daughter—no daughter to wed with a King's son—I would have thy unworthy brother, Montagu, the Father of the whole Christian world, and, from the chair of the Vatican, watch over the weal of kingdoms. And now, seest thou why with to-morrow's sun I depart for Calais, and lend my voice in aid of Clarence's, for the first knot in this complicated bond?"

* Singular as it may seem to those who know not that popularity is given to the vulgar qualities of men, and that where a noble nature becomes popular (a rare occurrence), it is despite the nobleness—not because of it, Clarence was a popular idol, even to the time of his death.—*Croyl.* 562.

“ But, will Warwick consent while the King opposes? Will his pride——”

“ His pride serves us here; for, so long as Clarence did not dare to gainsay the King, Warwick, in truth, might well disdain to press his daughter’s hand upon living man. The King opposes, but with what right? Warwick’s pride will but lead him, if well addressed, to defy affront, and to resist dictation. Besides, our brother has a woman’s heart to his children; and Isabel’s face is pale, and that will plead more than all my eloquence.”

“ But can the King forgive your intercession, and Warwick’s contumacy?”

“ Forgive!—the marriage once over, what is left for him to do? He is then one with us, and when Gloucester returns all will be smooth again—smooth for the second and more important nuptials—and the second shall preface the third; meanwhile, you return to the Court. To these ceremonials you need be no party: keep but thy handsome son from breaking his neck in over-riding his hobby, and ‘ bide thy time!’ ”

Agreeably with the selfish, but sagacious policy, the Prelate thus detailed, he departed the next day for Calais, where Clarence was already urging his suit with the ardent impatience of amorous youth. The Archbishop found, however, that Warwick was more reluctant than he had anticipated to suffer his daughter to enter any House without the con-

sent of its chief, nor would the Earl, in all probability, have acceded to the prayers of the princely suitor, had not Edward, enraged at the flight of Clarence, and worked upon by the artful Queen, committed the imprudence of writing an intemperate and menacing letter to the Earl, which called up all the passions of the haughty Warwick.

“What!” he exclaimed, “thinks this ungrateful man not only to dishonour me, by his method of marrying his sisters, but will he also play the tyrant with me in the disposal of mine own daughter! He threatens! he!—enough. It is due to me to shew that there lives no man whose threats I have not the heart to defy!” And the Prelate, finding him in this mood, had no longer any difficulty in winning his consent. This ill-omened marriage was, accordingly, celebrated with great and regal pomp at Calais, and the first object of the Archbishop was attained.

While thus stood affairs between the two great factions of the state, those discontents which Warwick's presence at Court had awhile laid at rest, again spread, broad and far, throughout the land. The luxury and indolence of Edward's disposition, in ordinary times, always surrendered him to the guidance of others. In the commencement of his reign he was eminently popular, and his government, though stern, suited to the times; for then the presiding influence was that of Lord Warwick.

As the Queen's counsels prevailed over the consummate experience and masculine vigour of the Earl, the King's government lost both popularity and respect, except only in the Metropolis; and if, at the close of his reign, it regained all its earlier favour with the people, it must be principally ascribed to the genius of Hastings, then England's most powerful subject, and whose intellect calmly moved all the springs of action. But now everywhere the royal authority was weakened; and while Edward was feasting at Shene, and Warwick absent at Calais, the Provinces were exposed to all the abuses which most gall a population. The Poor complained that undue exactions were made on them by the Hospitals, Abbeys, and Barons; the Church complained that the Queen's relations had seized and spent church moneys; the men of birth and merit complained of the advancement of new men who had done no service; and all these several discontents fastened themselves upon the odious Woodvilles, as the cause of all. The second breach now, notorious, between the King and the all-beloved Warwick, was a new aggravation of the popular hatred to the Queen's family, and seemed to give occasion for the malcontents to appear with impunity, at least so far as the Earl was concerned; it was, then, at this critical time that the circumstances we are about to relate occurred.

II.

THE WOULD-BE IMPROVERS OF JOVE'S FOOT-BALL, EARTH
—THE SAD FATHER AND THE SAD CHILD—THE FAIR
RIVALS.

ADAM WARNER was at work on his crucible when the servitor commissioned to attend him opened the chamber door, and a man dressed in the black gown of a student entered.

He approached the alchemist, and after surveying him for a moment in a silence that seemed not without contempt, said, "What, Master Warner, are you so wedded to your new studies, that you have not a word to bestow on an old friend?"

Adam turned, and after peevishly gazing at the intruder a few moments, his face brightened up into recognition.

"*En iterum!*" he said. "Again, bold Robin Hilyard, and in a scholar's garb. Ha! doubtless thou hast learned, ere this, that peaceful studies do best ensure man's weal below, and art come to labour with me in the high craft of mind-work!"

“Adam,” quoth Hilyard, “ere I answer, tell me this—Thou, with thy science wouldst change the world,—art thou a jot nearer to thy end?”

“Well-a-day,” said poor Adam, “you know little what I have undergone; for danger to myself by rack and gibbet, I say naught. Man’s body is fair prey to cruelty, and what a king spares to-day the worm shall gnaw to-morrow. But mine invention—my Eureka—look!” and stepping aside, he lifted a cloth, and exhibited the mangled remains of the unhappy model.

“I am forbid to restore it,” continued Adam, dolefully. “I must work day and night to make gold, and the gold comes not; and my only change of toil is when the Queen bids me construct little puppet-boxes for her children! How, then, can I change the world? And thou,” he added, doubtfully and eagerly—“thou, with thy plots and stratagem, and active demagoguy, thinkest thou that *thou* hast changed the world, or extracted one drop of evil out of the mixture of gall and hyssop Man is born to drink?”

Hilyard was silent, and the two World-Betterers—the Philosopher and the Demagogue—gazed on each other, half in sympathy, half contempt. At last Robin said—

“Mine old friend, Hope sustains us both; and in the Wilderness we yet behold the Pisgah! But

to my business. Doubtless thou art permitted to visit Henry in his prison."

"Not so," replied Adam; "and for the rest, since I now eat King Edward's bread, and enjoy what they call his protection, ill would it beseem me to lend myself to plots against his throne."

"Ah! man—man—man," exclaimed Hilyard, bitterly, "thou art like all the rest—scholar or serf, the same slave; a king's smile bribes thee from a people's service!"

Before Adam could reply, a panel in the wainscot slid back, and the bald head of a friar peered into the room. "Son Adam," said the holy man, "I crave your company an instant, *oro vestrem aurem*;" and with this abominable piece of Latinity the Friar vanished.

With a resigned and mournful shrug of the shoulders, Adam walked across the room, when Hilyard, arresting his progress, said, crossing himself, and in a subdued and fearful whisper, "Is not that Friar Bungey, the notable magician?"

"Magician or not," answered Warner, with a lip of inexpressible contempt and a heavy sigh, "God pardon his mother for giving birth to such a numb-skull!" and with this pious and charitable ejaculation Adam disappeared in the adjoining chamber, appropriated to the friar.

"Hum," soliloquized Hilyard, "they say that Friar Bungey is employed by the witch Duchess

in everlasting diabolisms against her foes. A peep into his den might suffice me for a stirring tale to the people."

No sooner did this daring desire arise, than the hardy Robin resolved to gratify it; and stealing on tiptoe along the wall, he peered cautiously through the aperture made by the sliding panel. An enormous stuffed lizard hung from the ceiling, and various strange reptiles, dried into mummy, were ranged around, and glared at the spy with green glass eyes. A huge book lay open on a tripod stand, and a caldron seethed over a slow and dull fire. A sight yet more terrible presently awaited the rash beholder.

"Adam," said the Friar, laying his broad palm on the student's reluctant shoulders, "*inter sapentes.*"

"*Sapientes*, brother," groaned Adam.

"That's the old form, Adam," quoth the Friar, superciliously—" *sapentes* is the last improvement. I say, between wise men there is no envy. Our noble and puissant patroness, the Duchess of Bedford, hath committed to me a task that promiseth much profit. I have worked at it night and day *stotis filibus.*"

"O, man, what lingo speakest thou?—*stotis filibus!*"

"Tush, if it is not good Latin it does as well, son Adam. I say I have worked at it night and

day, and it is now advanced enow for experiment. But thou art going to sleep."

"Dispatch—speak out—speak on!" said Adam, desperately—"what is thy achievement?"

"See!" answered the Friar, majestically; and drawing aside a black pall, he exhibited to the eyes of Adam, and to the more startled gaze of Robin Hilyard, a pale, cadaverous, corpse-like image, of pigmy proportions, but with features moulded into a coarse caricature of the lordly countenance of the Earl of Warwick.

"There," said the Friar, complacently, and rubbing his hands; "that is no piece of bungling, eh! As like the stout Earl as one pea to another."

"And for what hast thou kneaded up all this waste of wax?" asked Adam. "Forsooth I knew not you had so much of ingenious art; algates, the toy is somewhat ghastly."

"Ho, ho!" quoth the Friar, laughing so as to shew a set of jagged, discoloured fangs from ear to ear, "surely thou, who art so notable a wizard and scholar, knowest for what purpose we image forth our enemies. Whatever the Duchess inflicts upon this figure, the Earl of Warwick, whom it representeth, will feel through his bones and marrow—waste wax, waste man!"

"Thou art a devil to do this thing, and a block-head to think it, O miserable friar!" exclaimed Adam, roused from all his gentleness.

“Ha!” cried the Friar, no less vehemently, and his burly face purple with passion, “dost thou think to bandy words with me? Wretch! I will set goblins to pinch thee black and blue. I will drag thee at night over all the jags of Mount Pepanon, at the tail of a mad nightmare. I will put aches in all thy bones, and the blood in thy veins shall run into sores and blotches. Am I not Friar Bungey? and what art thou?”

At these terrible denunciations, the sturdy Robin, though far less superstitious than most of his contemporaries, was seized with a trembling from head to foot; and expecting to see goblins and imps start forth from the walls, he retired hastily from his hiding place, and, without waiting for further commune with Warner, softly opened the chamber door, and stole down the stairs. Adam, however, bore the storm unquailingly, and when the holy man paused to take breath, he said, calmly—

“Verily, if thou canst do these things, there must be secrets in Nature, which I have not yet discovered. Howbeit, though thou art free to try all thou canst against me, thy threats make it necessary that this communication between us should be nailed up, and I shall so order.”

The Friar, who was ever in want of Adam’s aid, either to construe a bit of Latin, or to help him in some chemical illusion, by no means relished this

quiet retort; and, holding out his huge hand to Adam, said, with affected cordiality—

“Pooh! we are brothers, and must not quarrel. I was over hot, and thou too provoking; but I honour and love thee, man—let it pass. As for this figure, doubtless we might pink it all over, and the Earl be never the worse. But if our employers order these things, and pay for them, we cunning men make profit by fools!”

“It is men like thee that bring shame on science,” answered Adam, sternly; “and I will not listen to thee longer.”

“Nay, but you must,” said the Friar, clutching Adam’s robe, and concealing his resentment by an affected grin. “Thou thinkest me a mere ignoramus—ha! ha!—I think the same of thee. Why, man, thou hast never studied the parts of the human body, I’ll swear.”

“I’m no leech,” said Adam. “Let me go.”

“No—not yet. I will convict thee of ignorance. Thou dost not even know where the liver is placed.”

“I do,” answered Adam, shortly, “but what then?”

“Thou dost!—I deny it. Here is a pin; stick it into this wax, man, where thou sayest the liver lies in the human frame.”

Adam unsuspectingly obeyed.

“ Well!—the liver is there, eh. Ah! but where are the lungs?”

“ Why, here.”

“ And the midriff?”

“ Here, certes.”

“ Right!—thou mayest go now,” said the Friar, drily. Adam disappeared through the aperture, and closed the panel.

“ Now I know where the lungs, midriff, and liver are,” said the Friar to himself, “ I shall get on famously. ’Tis an useful fellow, that, or I should have had him hanged long ago!”

Adam did not remark, on his re-entrance, that his visitor, Hilyard, had disappeared, and was soon re-immersed in the fiery interest of his thankless labours.

It might be an hour afterwards, when, wearied and exhausted by perpetual hope and perpetual disappointment, he flung himself on his seat, and that deep sadness, which they who devote themselves in this noisy world to wisdom and to truth alone can know—suffused his thoughts, and murmured from his feverish lips.

“ Oh, hard condition of my life!” groaned the Sage—“ ever to strive, and never to accomplish. The sun sets and the sun rises upon my eternal toils, and my Age stands as distant from the goal, as stood my Youth! Fast, fast, the mind is wearing out the frame, and my schemes have but woven

the ropes of sand, and my name shall be writ in water. Golden dreams of my young hope, where are ye? Methought once, that could I obtain the grace of royalty, the ear of power, the command of wealth, my path to glory was made smooth and sure—I should become the grand inventor of my time and land; I should leave my lore a heritage and blessing wherever labour works to civilize the round globe. And now my lodging is a palace—royalty my patron—they give me gold at my desire—my wants no longer mar my leisure. Well! and for what? On condition that I forego the sole task for which patronage, wealth, and leisure were desired! There, stands the broken iron, and there, simmers the ore I am to turn to gold—the iron worth more than all the gold, and—the gold, never to be won! Poor, I was an inventor, a creator, the true magician—protected, patronized, enriched, I am but the alchemist, the bubble, the dupe or duper, the fool's fool. God, brace up my limbs! Let me escape—give me back my old dream, and die, at least, if accomplishing nothing, hoping all!”

He rose as he spoke, he strode across the chamber with majestic step, with resolve upon his brow. He stopped short, for a sharp pain shot across his heart. Premature age, and the disease that labour brings, were at their work of decay within: the mind's excitement gave way to the body's weak-

ness. And he sank again upon his seat, breathing hard, gasping, pale, the icy damps upon his brow. Bubblingly seethed the molten metals, redly glowed the poisonous charcoal, the air of death was hot within the chamber where the victim of royal will pandered to the desire of gold:—Terrible and eternal moral for Wisdom and for Avarice, for sages and for kings—ever shall he who would be the maker of gold, breathe the air of death!

“Father,” said the low and touching voice of one who had entered unperceived, and who now threw her arms round Adam’s neck, “father, thou art ill, and sorely suffering—”

“At heart—yes, Sybill. Give me thine arm; let us forth and taste the fresher air.”

It was so seldom that Warner could be induced to quit his chamber, that these words almost startled Sybill, and she looked anxiously in his face, as she wiped the dews from his forehead.

“Yes—air—air!” repeated Adam, rising.

Sybill placed his bonnet over his silvered locks, drew his gown more closely round him, and they slowly, and in silence, left the chamber, and took their way across the court to the ramparts of the fortress-palace.

The day was calm and genial, with a low but fresh breeze stirring gently through the warmth of noon. The father and child seated themselves on the parapet, and saw, below, the gay and numerous

vessels that glided over the sparkling river, while the dark walls of Baynard's castle, the adjoining bulwark and battlements of Montfichet, and the tall watch-tower of Warwick's mighty mansion, frowned, in the distance, against the soft blue sky.

"There," said Adam, quietly, and pointing to the feudal roofs, "there seems to rise Power—and yonder, (glancing to the river,)—yonder seems to flow Genius! A century or so hence, the walls shall vanish, but the river shall roll on. Man makes the castle, and founds the power—God forms the river, and creates the genius. And yet, Sybill, there may be streams as broad and stately as yonder Thames, that flow afar in the waste, never seen, never heard by man. What profits the river unmarked?—what the genius never to be known?"

It was not a common thing with Adam Warner to be thus eloquent. Usually silent and absorbed, it was not his gift to moralize or declaim. His soul must be deeply moved before the profound and buried sentiment within it could escape into words.

Sybill pressed her father's hand, and, though her own heart was very heavy, she forced her lips to smile, and her voice to soothe. Adam interrupted her.

"Child, child, ye women know not what presses darkest and most bitterly on the minds of men. You know not what it is to form out of immaterial

things some abstract but glorious object—to worship—to serve it—to sacrifice to it, as on an altar, youth, health, hope, life—and suddenly, in old age, to see that the idol was a phantom, a mockery, a shadow laughing us to scorn, because we have sought to clasp it.”

“Oh, yes, father, women have known that illusion.”

“What! Do they study?”

“No, father, but they feel!”

“Feel! I comprehend thee not.”

“As man’s genius to him, is woman’s heart to her,” answered Sybill, her dark and deep eyes suffused with tears. “Doth not the heart create—invent? Doth it not dream? Doth it not form its idol out of air? Goeth it not forth into the Future, to prophesy to itself? And, sooner or later, in age or youth, doth it not wake at last, and see how it hath wasted its all on follies? Yes, Father, my heart can answer, when thy genius would complain.”

“Sybill,” said Warner, roused, and surprised, and gazing on her wistfully, “time flies apace. Till this hour I have thought of thee but as a child—an infant. Thy words disturb me now.”

“Think not of them, then. Let me never add one grief to thine.”

“Thou art brave and gay in thy silken sheen,”

said Adam, curiously stroking down the rich, smooth stuff of Sybill's tunic; "her Grace the Duchess is generous to us. Thou art surely happy here!"

"Happy!"

"Not happy!" exclaimed Adam, almost joyfully, "wouldst thou that we were back once more in our desolate ruined home?"

"Yes, oh, yes!—but rather away, far away, in some quiet village, some green nook; for the desolate ruined home was not safe for thine old age."

"I would we could escape, Sybill," said Adam, earnestly, in a whisper, and with a kind of innocent cunning in his eye, "we and the poor Eureka! The palace is a prison-house to me. I will speak to the Lord Hastings, a man of great excellence, and gentle too. He is ever kind to us."

"No, no, father, not to him," cried Sybill, turning pale,—“let him not know a word of what we would purpose, or whither we would fly.”

"Child, he loves me, or why does he seek me so often, and sit and talk not?"

Sybill pressed her clasped hands tightly to her bosom, but made no answer; and, while she was summoning courage to say something that seemed to oppress her thoughts with intolerable weight, a footstep sounded gently near, and the Lady of Bonville, (then on a visit to the Queen,) unseen, and unheard by the two, approached the spot. She

paused, and gazed at Sybill, at first haughtily ; and then, as the deep sadness of that young face struck her softer feelings, and the pathetic picture of father and child, thus alone in their commune, made its pious and sweet effect, the gaze changed from pride to compassion, and the Lady said, courteously—

“Fair Mistress, canst thou prefer this solitary scene to the gay company about to take the air in her Grace’s gilded barge?”

Sybill looked up in surprise, not unmixed with fear. Never before had the great Lady spoken to her thus gently. Adam, who seemed for awhile restored to actual life, saluted Katherine with simple dignity, and took up the word—

“Noble Lady, whoever thou art, in thine old age, and thine hour of care, may thy child, like this poor girl, forsake all gayer comrades for a parent’s side!”

The answer touched the Lady of Bonville, and involuntarily she extended her hand to Sybill. With a swelling heart, Sybill, as proud as herself, bent silently over that rival’s hand. Katherine’s marble cheek coloured, as she interpreted the girl’s silence.

“Gentle sir,” she said, after a short pause, “wilt thou permit me a few words with thy fair daughter? and if in aught, since thou speakest of care, Lord Warwick’s sister can serve thee,

prithce bid thy young maiden impart it, as to a friend."

"Tell her, then, my Sybill—tell Lord Warwick's sister, to ask the King to give back to Adam Warner his poverty, his labour, and his Hope," said the scholar, and his noble head sank gloomily on his bosom.

The Lady of Bonville, still holding Sybill's hand, drew her a few paces up the walk, and then she said suddenly, and with some of that blunt frankness which belonged to her great brother, "Maiden, can there be confidence between thee and me?"

"Of what nature, Lady?"

Again Katherine blushed, but she felt the small hand she held tremble in her clasp, and was emboldened—

"Maiden, thou mayest resent and marvel at my words; but, when I had fewer years than thou, my father said, 'There are many carks in life which a little truth could end.' So would I heed his lesson. William de Hastings has followed thee with a homage that has broken, perchance, many as pure a heart—nay, nay, fair child, hear me on. Thou hast heard that in youth he wooed Katherine Neville—that we loved, and were severed. They who see us now marvel whether we hate or love,—no, *not* love—that question were an insult to Lord Bonville's wife!—Ofttimes we seem pitiless to each other,—why? Lord Hastings would have wooed me,

an English matron, to forget mine honour and my House's. *He* chafes that he moves me not. *I* behold him debasing a great nature, to unworthy triflings with man's conscience and a knight's bright faith. But mark me!—the heart of Hastings is everlastingly mine, and mine alone! What seek I in this confidence? To warn thee. Wherefore? Because for months, amidst all the vices of this foul court-air—amidst the flatteries of the softest voice that ever fell upon woman's ear—amidst, peradventure, the pleadings of thine own young and guileless love—thine innocence is unscathed. And therefore Katherine of Bonville may be the friend of Sybill Warner."

However generous might be the true spirit of these words, it was impossible that they should not gall and humiliate the young and flattered beauty to whom they were addressed. They so wholly discarded all belief in the affection of Hastings for Sybill; they so haughtily arrogated the mastery over his heart; they so plainly implied that his suit to the poor maiden was but a mockery or dishonour, that they made even the praise for virtue an affront to the delicate and chaste ear on which they fell. And, therefore, the reader will not be astonished, though the Lady of Bonville certainly was, when Sybill, drawing her hand from Katherine's clasp, stopping short, and calmly folding her arms upon her bosom, said,—

“To what this tends, lady, I know not. The Lord Hastings is free to carry his homage where he will. He has sought me—not I Lord Hastings. And if to-morrow he offered me his hand, I would reject it, if I were not convinced that the heart——”

“Damsel,” interrupted the Lady Bonville, in amazed contempt, “the hand of Lord Hastings! Look ye indeed so high, or has he so far paltered with your credulous youth as to speak to you, the daughter of the alchemist, of marriage? If so, poor child, beware!”

“I knew not,” replied Sybill, bitterly, “that Sybill Warner was more below the state of Lord Hastings, than Master Hastings was once below the state of Lady Katherine Nevile.”

“Thou art distraught with thy self-conceit,” answered the Dame, scornfully; and, losing all the compassion and friendly interest she had before felt, “my rede is spoken—reject it, if thou wilt, in pride. Rue thy folly thou wilt, in shame.”

She drew her wimple round her face as she said these words, and, gathering up her long robe, swept slowly on.

III.

WHEREIN THE DEMAGOGUE SEEKS THE COURTIER.

ON quitting Adam's chamber, Hilyard paused not till he reached a stately house, not far from Warwick Lane, which was the residence of the Lord Montagu.

That nobleman was employed in reading, or rather, in pondering over, two letters, with which a courier from Calais had just arrived—the one from the Archbishop, the other from Warwick. In these epistles were two passages, strangely contrary in their counsel. A sentence in Warwick's letter ran thus: "It hath reached me, that certain disaffected men meditate a rising against the King, under pretext of wrongs from the Queen's kin. It is even said that our kinsmen, Coniers and Fitzhugh, are engaged therein. Need I caution thee to watch well that they bring our name into no disgrace or attainit. We want no aid to right our own wrongs; and if the misguided men rebel, Warwick will best punish Edward, by proving that he is yet of use.'

On the other hand, thus wrote the Pre-
late :—

“The King, wroth with my visit to Calais, has taken from me the Chancellor’s seal. I humbly thank him, and shall sleep the lighter for the fardel’s loss. Now, mark me, Montagu: our kinsman, Lord Fitzhugh’s son, and young Henry Nevile, aided by old Sir John Coniers, meditate a fierce and well-timed assault upon the Woodvilles. Do thou keep neuter—neither help nor frustrate it. Howsoever it end, it will answer our views, and shake our enemies.”

Montagu was yet musing over these tidings, and marvelling that he in England should know less than his brethren in Calais of events so important, when his page informed him that a stranger, with urgent messages from the north country, craved an audience. Imagining that these messages would tend to illustrate the communications just received, he ordered the visitor to be admitted.

He scarcely noticed Hilyard on his entrance, and said, abruptly, “Speak shortly, friend—I have but little leisure.”

“And yet, Lord Montagu, my business may touch thee home !”

Montagu, surprised, gazed more attentively on his visitor: “Surely, I know thy face, friend—we have met before.”

“ True ; thou wert then on thy way to the More.”

“ I remember me ; and thou then seem'dst, from thy bold words, on a still shorter road to the gallows.”

“ The tree is not planted,” said Robin, carelessly, “ that will serve for my gibbet. But were there no [words uttered by me that thou couldst not disapprove ? I spoke of lawless disorders—of shameful malfaisance throughout the land—which the Woodvilles govern under a lewd tyrant——”

“ Traitor, hold !”

“ A tyrant,” continued Robin (heeding not the interruption nor the angry gesture of Montagu), “ a tyrant who, at this moment, meditates the destruction of the House of Nevile. And not contented with this world's weapons, palters with the Evil One for the snares and devilries of witchcraft.”

“ Hush, man ! Not so loud,” said Montagu, in an altered voice. “ Approach nearer—nearer yet. They who talk of a crowned King—whose right hand raises armies, and whose left hand reposes on the block—should beware how they speak above their breath. Witchcraft, sayest thou ? Make thy meaning clear.”

Here Robin detailed, with but little exaggeration, the scene he had witnessed in Friar Bungey's chamber—the waxen image, the menaces against the Earl of Warwick, and the words of the friar,

naming the Duchess of Bedford as his employer. Montagu listened in attentive silence. Though not perfectly free from the credulities of the time, shared even by the courageous heart of Edward, and the piercing intellect of Gloucester, he was yet more alarmed by such proofs of determined earthly hostility in one so plotting and so near to the throne as the Duchess of Bedford, than by all the pins and needles that could be planted into the Earl's waxen counterpart——

“A devilish malice indeed,” said he, when Hilyard had concluded; “and yet this story, if thou wilt adhere to it, may serve us well at need. I thank thee, trusty friend, for thy confidence, and beseech thee to come at once with me to the King. There will I denounce our foe, and, with thine evidence, we will demand her banishment.”

“By your leave, not a step will I budge, my Lord Montagu,” quoth Robin bluntly—“I know how these matters are managed at Court. The King will patch up a peace between the Duchess and you, and chop off my ears and nose as a liar and common scandal-maker. No, no; denounce the Duchess and all the Woodvilles, I will:—but it shall be not in the Halls of the Tower, but on the broad plains of Yorkshire, with twenty thousand men at my back.”

“Ha! thou a leader of armies—and for what end?—to dethrone the King?”

“That as it may be—but first for justice to the People; it is the People’s rising, that I will head, and not a faction’s. Neither White Rose nor Red shall be on my banner, but our standard shall be the gory head of the first oppressor we can place upon a pole.”

“What is it, the People, as you word it, would demand?”

“I scarce know what we demand as yet—that must depend upon how we prosper,” returned Hilyard, with a bitter laugh; “but the rising will have some good, if it shews only to you Lords and Normans, that a Saxon People does exist, and will turn when the iron heel is upon its neck. We are taxed, ground, pillaged, plundered—sheep, maintained to be sheared for your peace, or butchered for your war. And now will we have a petition and a charter of our own, Lord Montagu. I speak frankly—I am in thy power—thou canst arrest me—thou canst strike off the head of this revolt. Thou art the King’s friend—wilt thou do so? No, thou and thy House have wrongs as well as we, the People. And a part at least of our demands and our purpose is your own.”

“What part, bold man?”

“This: we shall make our first complaint the baneful domination of the Queen’s family; and demand the banishment of the Woodvilles, root and stem.”

“Hem!” said Montagu, involuntarily glancing over the Archbishop’s letter,—“hem, but without outrage to the King’s state and person?”

“Oh, trust me, my Lord, the franklin’s head contains as much north-country cunning as the noble’s. They who would speed well, must feel their way cautiously.”

“Twenty thousand men—impossible! Who art thou, to collect and head them?”

“Plain Robin of Redesdale.”

“Ha!” exclaimed Montagu, “is it indeed, as I was taught to suspect! Art thou that bold, strange, mad fellow, whom, by pike and brand—a soldier’s oath—I a soldier, have often longed to see. Let me look at thee. ’Fore God, a tall man, and well knit, with dareiment in thy brow. Why, there are as many tales of thee in the North, as of my brother the Earl. Some say thou art a Lord of degree and birth, others that thou art the robber of Hexham, to whom Margaret of Anjou trusted her own life and her son’s.”

“Whatever they say of me,” returned Robin, “they all agree in this, that I am a man of honest word, and bold deed—that I can stir up the hearts of men, as the wind stirreth fire—that I came an unknown stranger into the parts where I abide, and that no peer in this roialme, save Warwick himself, can do more to raise an army, or shake a throne.”

“ But by what spell ? ”

“ By men’s wrongs, Lord,” answered Robin, in a deep voice ;—“ and now, ere this moon wanes, Redesdale is a camp ! ”

“ What the immediate cause of complaint ? ”

“ The hospital of St. Leonard’s has compelled us unjustly to render them a thrave of corn.”

“ Thou art a cunning knave ! Pinch the belly if you would make Englishmen rise.”

“ True,” said Robin, smiling grimly—“ and now—what say you—will you head us ? ”

“ Head you ! No ! ”

“ Will you betray us ? ”

“ It is not easy to betray twenty thousand men ; if ye rise merely to free yourselves from a corn-tax, and England from the Woodvilles, I see no treason in your revolt.”

“ I understand you, Lord Montagu,” said Robin with a stern and half-scornful smile—“ you are not above thriving by our danger ; but we need now no lord and baron—we will suffice for ourselves. And the hour will come, believe me, when Lord Warwick, pursued by the King, must fly to the Commons. Think well of these things and this prophecy, when the news from the North startles Edward of March in the lap of his harlots.”

Without saying another word, he turned and quitted the chamber as abruptly as he had entered.

Lord Montagu was not, for his age, a bad man; though worldly, subtle, and designing; with some of the craft of his prelate brother, he united something of the high soul of his brother soldier. But that age had not the virtue of later times, and cannot be judged by its standard. He heard this bold dare-devil menace his country with civil war upon grounds not plainly stated, nor clearly understood—he aided not, but he connived: “Twenty thousand men in arms,” he muttered to himself—“say half—well, ten thousand—not against Edward, but the Woodvilles! It must bring the King to his senses—must prove to him how odious the mushroom race of the Woodvilles, and drive him for safety and for refuge to Montagu and Warwick. If the knaves presume too far,” (and Montagu smiled,)—“what are undisciplined multitudes to the eye of a skilful captain? Let the storm blow, we will guide the blast. In this world man must make use of man.”

IV.

SYBILL.

WHILE Montagu, in anxious forethought, awaited the revolt that Robin of Redesdale had predicted—while Edward feasted and laughed, merry-made with his courtiers, and aided the conjugal duties of his good citizens in London—while the Queen and her father, Lord Rivers, more and more in the absence of Warwick, encroached on all the good things power can bestow and avarice seize—while the Duchess of Bedford and Friar Bungey toiled hard at the waxen effigies of the great Earl, who still held his royal son-in-law in his Court at Calais—the stream of our narrative winds from its noisier channels, and lingers, with a quiet wave, around the temple of a virgin's heart. Wherefore is Sybill sad? Some short months since, and we beheld her gay with hope, and basking in the sunny atmosphere of pleasure and of love. The mind of this girl was a singular combination of

tenderness and pride—the first wholly natural, the last the result of circumstance and position. She was keenly conscious of her gentle birth, and her earlier prospects in the Court of Margaret; and the poverty and distress and solitude in which she had grown up from the Child into the Woman, had only served to strengthen what, in her nature, was already strong, and to heighten whatever was already proud. Ever in her youngest dreams of the Future, ambition had visibly blent itself with the vague ideas of love. The imagined wooer was less to be young and fair, than renowned and stately. She viewed him through the mists of the Future, as the protector of her persecuted father—as the rebuilder of a fallen House—as the ennobler of a humbled name. And from the moment in which her girl's heart beat at the voice of Hastings, the ideal of her soul seemed found. And when transplanted to the Court, she learned to judge of her native grace and loveliness, by the common admiration they excited, her hopes grew justified to her inexperienced reason. Often and ever the words of Hastings, at the house of the Lady Longuevie, rang in her ear, and thrilled through the solitude of night—"Whoever is fair and chaste, gentle and loving, is, in the eyes of William de Hastings, the mate and equal of a king." In visits that she had found opportunity to make to the Lady Longueville, these hopes were duly fed;

for the old Lancastrian detested the Lady Bonville, as Lord Warwick's sister, and she would have reconciled her pride to view with complacency his alliance with the Alchemist's daughter, if it led to his estrangement from the memory of his first love ; and, therefore, when her quick eye penetrated the secret of Sybill's heart, and when she witnessed—for Hastings often encountered (and seemed to seek the encounter) the young maid at Lady Longueville's house—the unconcealed admiration which justified Sybill in her high-placed affection, she scrupled not to encourage the blushing girl, by predictions in which she forced her own better judgment to believe. Nor, when she learned Sybill's descent from a family that had once ranked at least as high as that of Hastings, would she allow that there was any disparity in the alliance she foretold. But more, far more than Lady Longueville's assurances, did the delicate and unceasing gallantries of Hastings himself flatter the fond faith of Sybill. True, that he spoke not actually of love, but every look implied, every whisper seemed to betray it. And to her he spoke as to an equal, not in birth alone, but in mind ; so superior was she in culture, in natural gifts, and, above all, in that train of high thought, and elevated sentiment, in which genius ever finds a sympathy, to the court-flutterers of her sex, that Hastings, whether or not he cherished a warmer

feeling, might well take pleasure in her converse, and feel the lovely infant worthy the wise man's trust. He spoke to her without reserve of the Lady Bonville, and he spoke with bitterness. "I loved her," he said, "as woman is rarely loved. She deserted me for another—rather should she have gone to the convent than the altar; and now, forsooth, she deems she hath the right to taunt and to rate me, to dictate to me the way I should walk, and to flaunt the honours I have won."

"May that be no sign of a yet tender interest?" said Sybill, timidly.

The eyes of Hastings sparkled for a moment, but the gleam vanished. "Nay, you know her not. Her heart is marble, as hard and as cold. Her very virtue but the absence of emotion—I would say of gentler emotion—for, God wot, such emotions as come from ire and pride and scorn, are the daily growth of that stern soil. Oh, happy was my escape!—happy the desertion, which my young folly deemed a curse. No!" he added, with a sarcastic quiver of his lip—"No; what stings and galls the Lady of Harrington and Bonville—what makes her countenance change in my presence, and her voice sharpen at my accost, is plainly this: in wedding her dull lord, and rejecting me, Katherine Nevile deemed she wedded power, and rank, and station; and now, while we are both young, how proves her choice? The

Lord of Harrington and Bonville is so noted a dolt, that even the Neviles cannot help him to rise—the meanest office is above his mind's level; and, dragged down by the heavy clay to which her wings are yoked, Katherine, Lady of Harrington and Bonville—oh, give her her due titles!—is but a pageant figure in the court. If the war-trump blew, his very vassals would laugh at a Bonville's banner, and beneath the flag of poor William Hastings would gladly march the best chivalry of the land. And this it is, I say, that galls her. For evermore she is driven to compare the state she holds, as the dame of the accepted Bonville, with that she lost as the wife of the disdained Hastings.'

And if, in the heat and passion that such words betrayed, Sybill sighed to think that something of the old remembrance yet swelled and burned, they but impressed her more with the value of a heart, in which the characters once writ endured so long,—and roused her to a tender ambition to heal and to console.

Then looking into her own deep soul, Sybill beheld there a fund of such generous, pure, and noble affection—such reverence as to the fame—such love as to the man, that she proudly felt herself worthier of Hastings than the haughty Katherine. She entered then, as it were, the lists

with this rival—a memory rather, so she thought, than a corporeal being ; and her eye grew brighter, her step statelier, in the excitement of the contest—the anticipation of the triumph. For, what diamond without its flaw?—what rose without its canker? And bedded deep in that exquisite and charming nature, lay the dangerous and fatal weakness which has cursed so many victims, broken so many hearts—the Vanity of the Sex. We may now readily conceive how little predisposed was Sybill to the blunt advances and displeasing warnings of the Lady Bonville, and the more so from the time in which they chanced. For here comes the answer to the question—“Why was Sybill sad?”

The reader may determine for himself what were the ruling motives of Lord Hastings in the court he paid to Sybill. Whether to pique the Lady Bonville, and force upon her the jealous pain he restlessly sought to inflict—whether, from the habit of his careless life, seeking the pleasure of the moment, with little forethought of the future, and reconciling itself to much cruelty, by that profound contempt for human beings, man, and woman more, which sad experience often brings to acute intellect—or whether, from the purer and holier complacency with which one, whose youth has fed upon nobler aspirations than manhood cares to

pursue, suns itself back to something of its earlier lustre in the presence and the converse of a young bright soul:—Whatever, in brief, the earlier motives of gallantries to Sybill, once begun, constantly renewed,—by degrees wilder, and warmer, and guiltier emotions, roused up in the universal and all-conquering lover the vice of his softer nature. When calm and unimpassioned, his conscience had said to him—“Thou shalt spare that flower.” But when once the passion was roused within him, the purity of the flower was forgotten in the breath of its voluptuous sweetness.

And but three days before the scene we have described with Katherine, Sybill’s fabric of hope fell to the dust. For Hastings spoke for the first time of love—for the first time knelt at her feet—for the first time, clasping to his heart that virgin hand, poured forth the protestation and the vow. And oh! woe—woe! for the first time she learned how cheaply the great man held the poor maiden’s love, how little he deemed that purity and genius and affection equalled the possessor of fame and wealth and power; for plainly visible, boldly shewn and spoken, the love that she had foreseen as a glory from the Heaven, sought but to humble her to the dust.

The anguish of that moment was unspeakable—and she spoke it not. But as she broke from the

profaning clasp, as escaping to the threshold, she cast on the unworthy wooer one look of such reproachful sorrow, as told at once all her love and all her horror,—the first act in the eternal tragedy of man's wrong and woman's grief was closed. And therefore was Sybill sad!

V.

KATHERINE.

FOR several days Hastings avoided Sybill; in truth, he felt remorse for his design, and in his various, active, and brilliant life, he had not the leisure for obstinate and systematic siege to a single virtue, nor was he, perhaps, any longer capable of deep and enduring passion; his heart, like that of many a chevalier in the earlier day, had lavished itself upon one object, and sullenly, upon regrets and dreams, and vain anger and idle scorn, it had exhausted those sentiments which make the sum of true love. And so, like Petrarch, whom his taste and fancy worshipped, and many another votary of the *gentil Dieu*, while his imagination devoted itself to the chaste and distant Ideal—the Spiritual Laura,—his senses, ever vagrant and disengaged, settled, without scruple, upon the thousand Cynthias of the minute. But then, those Cynthias were, for the most part, and especially of

late years, facile and light-won Nymphs: their coyest were of another clay from the tender but lofty Sybill. And Hastings shrunk from the cold-blooded and deliberate seduction of one so pure, while he could not reconcile his mind to contemplate marriage with a girl who could give nothing to his ambition; and yet it was not, in this last reluctance, only his ambition that startled and recoiled. In that strange tyranny over his whole soul, which Katherine Bonville secretly exercised, he did not dare to place a new barrier evermore between her and himself. The Lord Bonville was of infirm health; he had been more than once near to death's door, and Hastings, in every succeeding fancy that beguiled his path, recalled the thrill of his heart, when it had whispered, "Katherine, the loved of thy youth, may yet be thine!" And then that Katherine rose before him, not as she now swept the earth, with haughty step, and frigid eye, and disdainful lip, but as—in all her bloom of maiden beauty, before the temper was soured, or the pride aroused,—she had met him in the summer twilight, by the trysting-tree;—broken with him the golden ring of Faith, and wept upon his bosom.

And yet, during his brief and self-inflicted absence from Sybill, this wayward and singular personage, who was never weak but to women, and ever weak to them, felt that she had made herself

far dearer to him than he had at first supposed it possible. He missed that face, ever, till the last interview, so confiding in the unconsciously betrayed affection. He felt how superior in sweetness, and yet in intellect, Sybill was to Katherine; there was more in common between her mind and his in all things, save one. But oh, *that one exception!*—what a world lies within it—*the memories of the spring of life!* In fact, though Hastings knew it not, he was in love with two objects at once: the one, a chimera, a fancy, an ideal, an Eidolon, under the name of Katherine; the other, youth, and freshness, and mind, and heart, and a living shape of beauty, under the name of Sybill. Often does this double love happen to men; but when it does, alas for the human object! for the shadowy and the spiritual one is immortal,—until, indeed, it be possessed!

It might be, perhaps, with a resolute desire to conquer the new love and confirm the old, that Hastings, one morning, repaired to the house of the Lady Bonville, for her visit to the Court had expired. It was a large mansion, without the Lud Gate.

He found the dame in a comely chamber, seated in the sole chair the room contained, to which was attached a foot-board that served as a dais, while around her, on low stools, sate—some spinning, others broidering—some ten or twelve young

maidens of good family, sent to receive their nurturing under the high-born Katherine,* while two other and somewhat elder virgins sate a little apart, but close under the eye of the lady, practising the courtly game of "Prime;" for the diversion of cards was in its zenith of fashion under Edward IV., and even half a century later was considered one of the essential accomplishments of a well-educated young lady.† The exceeding stiffness, the solemn silence of this female circle, but little accorded with the mood of the graceful visitor. The demoiselles stirred not at his entrance, and Katherine quietly motioned him to a seat at some distance.

"By your leave, fair lady," said Hastings, "I rebel against so distant an exile from such sweet company;" and he moved the tabouret close to the formidable chair of the presiding chieftainess.

* And strange as it may seem to modern notions, the highest lady who received such pensioners accepted a befitting salary for their board and education.

† So the Princess Margaret, daughter of Henry VII., at the age of fourteen, exhibits her skill, in prime or trump, to her betrothed husband, James IV. of Scotland; so, among the womanly arts of the unhappy Katherine of Arragon, it is mentioned that she could play at "cardis and dyce." (See Strutt's *Games and Pastimes*, Hone's edition, p. 327.) The legislature was very anxious to keep these games sacred to the aristocracy, and very wroth with 'prentices and the vulgar for imitating the ruinous amusements of their betters.

Katherine smiled faintly, but not in displeasure.

“So gay a presence,” she said, “must, I fear me, a little disturb these learners.”

Hastings glanced at the prim demureness written on each blooming visage, and replied—

“You wrong their ardour in such noble studies. I would wager that nothing less than my entering your bower on horseback, with helm on head and lance in rest, could provoke even a smile from one pair of the twenty rosy lips round which, methinks, I behold Cupido hovering in vain !”

The Baroness bent her stately brows, and the twenty rosy lips were all tightly pursed up, to prevent the indecorous exhibition which the wicked courtier had provoked. But it would not do: one and all the twenty lips broke into a smile—but a smile so tortured, constrained, and nipped in the bud, that it only gave an expression of pain to the features it was forbidden to enliven.

“And what brings the Lord Hastings hither ?” asked the Baroness, in a formal tone.

“Can you never allow, for motive, the desire of pleasure, fair Dame ?”

That peculiar and exquisite blush, which at moments changed the whole physiognomy of Katherine, flitted across her smooth cheek, and vanished. She said, gravely—

“So much do I allow it in you, my lord, that hence my question.”

“Katherine!” exclaimed Hastings, in a voice of tender reproach, and attempting to seize her hand, forgetful of all other presence save that to which the blush, that spoke of old, gave back the ancient charm.

Katherine cast a hurried and startled glance over the maiden group, and her eye detected on the automaton faces one common expression of surprise. Humbled and deeply displeased, she rose from the awful chair, and then, as suddenly re-seating herself, she said, with a voice and lip of the most cutting irony, “My Lord Chamberlain is, it seems, so habituated to lackey his King amidst the goldsmiths and grocers, that he forgets the form of language and respect of bearing which a noblewoman of repute is accustomed to consider seemly.”

Hastings bit his lip, and his falcon eye shot indignant fire. “Pardon, my Lady of Bonville and Harrington, I did indeed forget what reasons the dame of so wise and so renowned a lord hath to feel pride in the titles she hath won. But I see that my visit hath chanced out of season. My business, in truth, was rather with my lord, whose counsel in peace is as famous as his truncheon in the war!”

“It is enough,” replied Katherine, with a dignity that rebuked the taunt, “that Lord Bonville has the name of an honest man,—who never rose at Court.”

“Woman, without one soft woman-feeling!” muttered Hastings, between his ground teeth, as he approached the lady and made his profound obeisance. The words were intended only for Katherine’s ear, and they reached it. Her bosom swelled beneath the brocaded gorget, and when the door closed on Hastings, she pressed her hands convulsively together, and her dark eyes were raised upward.

“My child, thou art entangling thy skein,” said the Lady of Bonville, as she passed one of the maidens, towards the casement, which she opened, —“The air to-day weighs heavily!”

VI.

JOY FOR ADAM, AND HOPE FOR SYBILL—AND POPULAR
FRIAR BUNGEY!

LEAPING on his palfrey, Hastings rode back to the Tower—dismounted at the gate—passed on to the little postern in the inner court,—and paused not till he was in Warner's room.

“How now, friend Adam? Thou art idle.”

“Lord Hastings, I am ill.”

“And thy child not with thee?”

“She is gone to her Grace the Duchess, to pray her to grant me leave to go home, and waste no more life on making gold.”

“Home! Go hence! We cannot hear it! The Duchess must not grant it. I will not suffer the King to lose so learned a philosopher.”

“Then pray the King to let the philosopher achieve that which is in the power of labour.” He pointed to the Eureka. “Let me be heard in the King's council, and prove to sufficing judges what this iron can do for England.”

“Is that all? So be it. I will speak to his

Higness forthwith. But promise that thou wilt think no more of leaving the King's palace."

"Oh, no, no! If I may enter again into mine own palace—mine own royalty of craft and hope—the court or the dungeon all one to me!"

"Father," said Sybill, entering, "be comforted. The Duchess forbids thy departure, but we will yet flee——"

She stopped short as she saw Hastings. He approached her timidly, and with so repentant, so earnest a respect, in his mien and gesture, that she had not the heart to draw back the fair hand he lifted to his lips.

"No, flee not, sweet donzell; leave not the desert Court, without the flower and the laurel, the beauty and the wisdom, that scent the hour, and foretype eternity. I have conferred with thy father—I will obtain his prayer from the King. His mind shall be free to follow its own impulse, and thou—he whispered)—pardon—pardon an offence of too much love. Never shall it wound again."

Her eyes, swimming with delicious tears, were fixed upon the floor. Poor child! with so much love, how could she cherish anger? With so much purity, how distrust herself? And while, at least, he spoke, the dangerous lover was sincere. So from that hour peace was renewed between Sybill and Lord Hastings.—Fatal peace! alas for the girl who loves, and has no mother!

True to his word, the courtier braved the displeasure of the Duchess of Bedford, in inducing the King to consider the expediency of permitting Adam to relinquish alchemy, and repair his model. Edward summoned a deputation from the London merchants and traders, before whom Adam appeared, and explained his device. But these practical men at first ridiculed the notion, as a madman's fancy, and it required all the art of Hastings to overcome their contempt, and appeal to the native acuteness of the King. Edward, however, was only caught by Adam's incidental allusions to the application of his principle to ships. The Merchant-King suddenly roused himself to attention, when it was promised to him that his galleys could cross the seas without sail, and against wind and tide."

"By St. George!" said he then, "let the honest man have his whim. Mend thy model, and God speed thee! Master Heyford, tell thy comely wife that I and Hastings will sup with thee to-morrow, for her hippocras is a rare dainty. God day to you, worshipful my masters. Hastings, come hither—enough of these trifles—I must confer with thee on matters really pressing—this damnable marriage of Gentle Georgie's!"

And now Adam Warner was restored to his native element of thought; now the crucible was at rest, and the Eureka began to rise from its ruins. He knew not the hate that he had acquired, in the

permission he had gained ; for the London deputies, on their return home, talked of nothing else for a whole week, but the favour the King had shewn to a strange man, half-maniac, half-conjurer, who had undertaken to devise a something which would throw all the artisans and journey-men out of work ! From merchant to mechanic travelled the news, and many an honest man cursed the great scholar, as he looked at his young children, and wished to have one good blow at the head that was hatching such devilish malice against the poor ! The name of Adam Warner became a byword of scorn and horror. Nothing less than the deep ditch and strong walls of the Tower could have saved him from the popular indignation ; and these prejudices were skilfully fed by the jealous enmity of his fellow-student, the terrible Friar Bungey. This man, though in all matters of true learning and science, worthy the utmost contempt Adam could heap upon him, was by no means of despicable abilities in the arts of imposing upon men. In his youth he had been an itinerant mountebank, or, as it was called, *tregetour*. He knew well all the curious tricks of juggling that, then, amazed the vulgar, and, we fear, are lost to the craft of our modern necromancers. He could clothe a wall with seeming vines, that vanished as you approached ; he could conjure up in his quiet cell the likeness of a castle manned

with soldiers, or a forest tenanted by deer.* Besides these illusions, probably produced by more powerful magic lanthorns than are now used, the Friar had stumbled upon the wondrous effects of animal magnetism, which was then unconsciously practised by the alchemists and cultivators of white or sacred magic. He was an adept in the craft of fortune-telling; and his intimate acquaintance with all noted characters in the metropolis, their previous history, and present circumstances, enabled his natural shrewdness to hit the mark, at least, now and then, in his oracular predictions. He had taken for safety and for bread, the Friar's robes, and had long enjoyed the confidence of the Duchess of Bedford, the traditional descendant of the Serpent-witch, Melusina. Moreover, and in this the Friar especially valued himself, Bungey had, in the course of his hardy, vagrant, early life, studied, as shepherds and mariners do now, the signs of the weather, and as weather-glasses were then unknown, nothing could be more convenient to the royal planners of a summer chase or a hawking company, than the neighbourhood of a skilful predictor of storm and sunshine. In fact, there was no part in the lore of magic which the popular seers

* See Chaucer, *House of Time*, Book iii.; also the Account given by Baptista Porta, of his own *Magical Delusions*, of which an extract may be seen in the *Curiosities of Literature*—Art. “*Dreams at the Dawn of Philosophy.*”

found so useful and studied so much as that which enabled them to prognosticate the humours of the sky, at a period when the lives of all men were principally spent in the open air.

The fame of Friar Bungey had travelled much farther than the repute of Adam Warner: it was known in the distant provinces; and many a northern peasant grew pale as he related to his gaping listeners the tales he had heard of the Duchess Jacquetta's dread magician.

And yet, though the Friar was an atrocious knave, and a ludicrous impostor, on the whole he was by no means unpopular, especially in the metropolis, for he was naturally a jolly, social fellow: he often ventured boldly forth into the different hostels and reunions of the populace, and enjoyed the admiration he there excited, and pocketed the groats he there collected. He had no pride—none in the least, this Friar Bungey!—and was as affable, as a magician could be, to the meanest mechanic who crossed his broad horn palm. A vulgar man is never unpopular with the vulgar. Moreover, the Friar, who was a very cunning person, wished to keep well with the mob: he was fond of his own impudent, cheating, burly carcase, and had the prudence to foresee that a time might come when his royal patrons might forsake him, and a mob might be a terrible monster to meet in his path;

therefore he always affected to love the poor, often told their fortunes gratis, now and then gave them something to drink, and was esteemed a man exceedingly good-natured, because he did not always have the devil at his back.

Now Friar Bungey had, naturally enough, evinced, from the first, a great distaste and jealousy of Adam Warner; but occasionally profiting by the science of the latter, he suffered his resentment to sleep latent till it was roused into fury by learning the express favour shewn to Adam by the King, and the marvellous results expected from his contrivance. His envy, then, forbid all tolerance and mercy; the world was not large enough to contain two such giants—Bungey and Warner—the genius and the quack. To the best of our experience, the quacks have the same creed to our own day. He vowed deep vengeance upon his associate, and spared no arts to foment the popular hatred against him.—Friar Bungey would have been a great critic in our day!

But besides his jealousy, the fat Friar had another motive for desiring poor Adam's destruction;—he coveted his model! True, he despised the model, he jeered the model, he abhorred the model; but, nevertheless, for the model, every string in his bowels fondly yearned. He believed that if that model were once repaired, and in his possession,

he could do—what he knew not—but certainly all that was wanting to complete his glory, and to bubble the public.

Unconscious of all that was at work against him, Adam threw his whole heart and soul into his labour, and, happy in his happiness, Sybill once more smiled gratefully upon Hastings, from whom the rapture came.

VII.

A LOVE SCENE.

MORE than ever chafed against Katherine, Hastings surrendered himself, without reserve, to the charm he found in the society of Sybill. Her confidence being again restored, again her mind shewed itself to advantage, and the more because her pride was farther roused, to assert the equality with Rank and Gold which she took from Nature and from God.

It so often happens that the first love of woman is accompanied with a bashful timidity, which overcomes the effort, while it increases the desire, to shine, that the union has been called inseparable, in the hackneyed language of every love-tale. But this is no invariable rule, as Shakspeare has shewn us in the artless Miranda, in the eloquent Juliet, in the frank and healthful Rosalind;—and the love of Sybill was no common girl's spring-fever of sighs and blushes. It lay in the mind, the imagination,

the intelligence, as well as in the heart and fancy. It was a breeze that stirred from the modest leaves of the rose all their diviner odour. It was impossible but what this strong, fresh, young nature, with its free gaiety when happy—its earnest pathos when sad—its various faculties of judgment and sentiment, and covert play of innocent wit—should not contrast forcibly, in the mind of a man who had the want to be amused and interested,—with the cold pride of Katherine, the dull atmosphere in which her stiff, unbending virtue, breathed unintellectual air, and still more with the dressed puppets, with painted cheeks and barren talk, who filled up the common world, under the name of women.

His feelings for Sybill, therefore, took a more grave and respectful colour, and his attentions, if gallant ever, were those of a man wooing one whom he would make his wife, and studying the qualities in which he was disposed to entrust his happiness; and so pure was Sybill's affection, that she could have been contented to have lived for ever thus—have seen and heard him daily—have talked but the words of friendship, though with the thoughts of love; for some passions refine themselves through the very fire of the imagination into which the senses are absorbed, and by the ideal purification elevated up to spirit. Wrapped in the exquisite happiness she now enjoyed, Sybill perceived not, or, if perceiving, scarcely heeded

that the admirers, who had before fluttered round her, gradually dropped off—that the ladies of the Court, the damsels who shared her light duties, grew distant and silent at her approach—that strange looks were bent on her—that sometimes, when she and Hastings were seen together, the stern frowned and the godly crossed themselves.

The popular prejudices had reacted on the Court. The wizard's daughter was held to share the gifts of her sire, and the fascination of beauty was imputed to evil spells. Lord Hastings was regarded,—especially by all the ladies he had once courted and forsaken,—as a man egregiously bewitched!

One day, it chanced that Sybill encountered Hastings in the walk that girded the ramparts of the Tower. He was pacing musingly, with folded arms, when he raised his eyes and beheld her.

“And whither go you thus alone, fair mistress?”

“The Duchess bade me seek the Queen, who is taking the air yonder. My lady has received some tidings she would impart to her Highness.”

“I was thinking of thee, fair damsel, when thy face brightened on my musings, and I was comparing thee to others, who dwell in the world's high places;—and marvelling at the whims of fortune.”

Sybill smiled faintly, and answered, “Provoke not too much the aspiring folly of my nature. Content is better than ambition.”

“Thou ownest thy ambition?” asked Hastings, curiously.

“Ah, sir, who hath it not?”

“But, for thy sweet sex, ambition has so narrow and cribbed a field.”

“Not so, for it lives in others. I would say,” continued Sybill, colouring, fearful that she had betrayed herself, “that, for example, so long as my father toils for fame, I breathe in his hope, and am ambitious for his honour.”

“And so, if thou wert wedded to one worthy of thee, in his ambition thou wouldst soar and dare?”

“Perhaps,” answered Sybill, coyly.

“But, if thou wert wedded to sorrow, and poverty, and troublous care, thine ambition, thus struck dead, would, of consequence, strike dead thy love?”

“Nay, noble lord, nay—canst thou so wrong womanhood in me unworthy? for surely true ambition lives not only in the goods of fortune. Is there no nobler ambition than that of the vanity? Is there no ambition of the heart?—an ambition to console, to cheer the griefs of those who love and trust us?—an ambition to build a happiness out of the reach of fate?—an ambition to soothe some high soul, in its strife with a mean world—to lull to sleep its pain, to smile to serenity its cares? Oh, methinks a woman’s true ambition would rise the bravest when, in the very sight of death itself, the

voice of Him in whom her glory had dwelt through life should say, 'Thou fearest not to walk to the grave, and to heaven, by my side!'"

Sweet and thrilling were the tones in which these words were said—lofty and solemn the upward and tearful look with which they closed.

And the answer struck home to the native and original heroism of the listener's nature, before debased into the cynic sourness of worldly wisdom. Never had Katherine herself more forcibly recalled to Hastings the pure and virgin glory of his youth.

"Oh, Sybill!" he exclaimed, passionately, and yielding to the impulse of the moment—"oh, that *for* me, as *to* me, such high words were said! Oh that all the triumphs of a life *mén* call prosperous were excelled by the one triumph of waking such an ambition in such a heart!"

Sybill stood before him transformed—pale, trembling, mute—and Hastings, clasping her hand and covering it with kisses, said—

"Dare I arede thy silence? Sybill, thou lovest me!—Oh, Sybill, speak!"

With a convulsive effort, the girl's lips moved, then closed, then moved again, into low and broken words.

"Why this—why this? Thou hadst promised not to—not to ——"

"Not to insult thee by unworthy vows! Nor

do I! But *as my wife*”—he paused abruptly, alarmed at his own impetuous words, and scared by the Phantom of the World that rose like a bodily thing before the generous impulse, and grinned in scorn of his folly.

But Sybill heard only that one holy word of WIFE, and so sudden and so great was the transport it called forth, that her senses grew faint and dizzy, and she would have fallen to the earth but for the arms that circled her, and the breast upon which, now, the virgin might veil the blush that did not speak of shame.

With various feelings, both were a moment silent. But, oh, that moment! what centuries of bliss were crowded into it for the nobler and fairer nature!

At last, gently releasing herself, she put her hands before her eyes, as if to convince herself she was awake, and then, turning her lovely face full upon the wooer, Sybill said, ingenuously—

“Oh, my lord—oh, Hastings! if thy calmer reason repent not these words—if thou canst approve in me what thou didst admire in Elizabeth the Queen—if thou canst raise one who has no dower but her heart, to the state of thy wife and partner—by this hand, which I place fearlessly in thine, I pledge to thee such a love as minstrel hath never sung. No!” she continued, drawing loftily up her light stature,—“no, thou shalt not find me

unworthy of thy name—mighty though it is, mightier though it shall be! I have a mind that can share thine objects, I have pride that can exult in thy power, courage to partake thy dangers, and devotion—” she hesitated, with the most charming blush—“but of *that*, sweet lord, thou shalt judge hereafter!—This is my dowry!—it is all!”

“And all I ask or covet,” said Hastings. But his cheek had lost its first passionate glow. Lord of many a broad land and barony, victorious captain in many a foughten field, wise statesman in many a thoughtful stratagem, high in his King’s favour, and linked with a nation’s history—William de Hastings at that hour was as far below, as earth is to heaven, the poor maiden whom he already repented to have so honoured, and whose sublime answer woke no echo from his heart.

Fortunately, as he deemed it, at that very instant he heard many steps rapidly approaching, and his own name called aloud by the voice of the King’s body squire.

“Hark, Edward summons me,” he said, with a feeling of reprieve. “Farewell, dear Sybill, farewell for a brief while—we shall meet anon.”

At this time, they were standing in that part of the rampart walk which is now backed by the barracks of a modern soldiery, and before which, on the other side of the moat, lay a space that had

seemed solitary and deserted ; but, as Hastings, in speaking his adieu, hurriedly pressed his lips on Sybill's forehead—from a hostel without the fortress, and opposite the spot on which they stood, suddenly sallied a disorderly troop of half-drunken soldiers, with a gang of the wretched women that always continue the classic association of a false Venus with a brutal Mars ; and the last words of Hastings were scarcely spoken, before a loud laugh startled both himself and Sybill, and a shudder came over her when she beheld the tinsel robes of the tymbesteres glittering in the sun, and heard their leader sing, as she darted from the arms of a reeling soldier :—

“ Ha ! Death to the dove
Is the falcon's love.—
Oh ! sharp is the kiss of the falcon's beak !”

END OF BOOK VI.

BOOK THE SEVENTH.

THE POPULAR REBELLION.



BOOK THE SEVENTH.

I.

THE WHITE LION OF MARCH SHAKES HIS MANE.

“AND what news?” asked Hastings, as he found himself amidst the King’s squires; while yet was heard the laugh of the tymbesteres, and yet, gliding through the trees, might be seen the retreating form of Sybill.

“My Lord, the King needs you instantly. A courier has just arrived from the North. The Lords St. John, Rivers, De Fulke, and Scales, are already with his Highness.”

“Where?”

“In the great council chamber.”

To that memorable room,* in the White Tower, in which the visitor, on entrance, is first reminded

* It was from this room that Hastings was hurried to execution, June 13, 1483.

of the name and fate of Hastings, strode the unprophetic lord.

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

“Welcome, brave Hastings,” said Edward, in a voice wholly changed from its wonted soft affectation—loud, clear, and thrilling as it went through the marrow and heart of all who heard its stirring and trumpet accent—“Welcome now to the field, as ever to the banquet! We have news from the North, that bid us brace on the burgonot, and buckle-to the brand—a revolt that requires a King's arm to quell. In Yorkshire, fifteen thousand

men are in arms, under a leader they call Robin of Redesdale—the pretext, a thrave of corn demanded by the Hospital of St. Leonard's—the true design, that of treason to our realm. At the same time, we hear from our brother of Gloucester, now on the border, that the Scotch have lifted the Lancaster Rose. There is peril if these two armies meet;—no time to lose—they are saddling our warsteeds—we hasten to the van of our royal force. We shall have warm work, my lords. But who is worthy of a throne that cannot guard it!"

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

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

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

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

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

"All England, Lord of St. John!"

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

“ It is true, Sire,” put in Raoul de Fulke, boldly —“ and if these new men are to head your armies, the warriors of Touton will stand aloof—Raoul de Fulke serves nō Woodville’s banner. Frown not, Lord de Scales ! it is the griping avarice of you and yours that have brought this evil on the King. For you the Commons have been pillaged—for you the daughters of our peers have been forced into monstrous marriages, at war with birth and with nature herself. For you, the princely Warwick, near to the throne in blood, and front and pillar of our time-honoured order of Seigneur and of Knight, has been thrust from our Suzerain’s favour. And if now ye are to march at the van of war—*you* to be avengers of the strife of which *ye* are the cause—I say that the soldiers will lack heart, and the provinces ye pass through, will be the country of a foe !”

“ Vain man !” began Anthony Woodville, when Hastings laid his hand on his arm, while Edward, amazed at this outburst from two of the supporters

on whom he principally counted, had the prudence to suppress his resentment—and remained silent, but with the aspect of one resolved to command obedience, when he once deemed it right to interfere.

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

fathers led warriors who did not fight more gallantly than we will. And when rebellion is at rest—when we meet again in our Suzerain's hall—accuse us new men, if you can find us faulty, and we will answer you as we best may!"

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

"Lord Hastings, you have spoken well. Be it as the King wills."

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

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

"Thou hast served me at need, Will," said the King. "But I shall remember" (and his eye flashed a tiger's fire) "the mouthing of those mock-pieces of the Lords at Runnymede. I am no John, to be bearded by my vassals. Enough of

them now. Think you Warwick can have abetted this revolt?"

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

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

II.

THE CAMP AT OLNEY.

IT was some weeks after the citizens of London had seen their gallant King, at the head of such forces as were collected in haste in the metropolis, depart from their walls to the encounter of the rebels. Surprising and disastrous had been the tidings in the interim. At first, indeed, there were hopes that the insurrection had been put down by Montagu, who had defeated the troops of Robin of Redesdale, near the City of York, and was said to have beheaded their leader. But the spirit of discontent was only fanned by an adverse wind. The popular hatred to the Woodvilles was so great, that in proportion as Edward advanced to the scene of action, the country rose in arms as Raoul de Fulke had predicted. Leaders of lordly birth now headed the rebellion; the sons of the Lords Latimer and Fitzhugh, (near kinsmen of the House of Nevile,) lent their names to the

cause; and Sir John Coniers, an experienced soldier, whose claims had been disregarded by Edward, gave to the insurgents the aid of a formidable capacity for war. In every mouth was the story of the Duchess of Bedford's witchcraft; and the waxen figure of the Earl did more to rouse the people, than perhaps the Earl himself could have done in person.* As yet, however, the language of the insurgents was tempered with all personal respect to the King; they declared in their manifestoes that they desired only the banishment of the Woodvilles, and the recall of Warwick, whose name they used unscrupulously, and whom they declared they were on their way to meet. As soon as it was known that the kinsmen of the beloved Earl were in the revolt, and naturally supposed that the Earl himself must countenance the enterprise, the tumultuous camp swelled every hour, while knight after knight, veteran after veteran, abandoned the Royal Standard. The Lord d'Eyncourt, (one of the few lords of the highest birth and greatest following, over whom the Neviles had no influence, and who bore the Woodvilles no grudge,) had, in his way to Lincolnshire, where his personal aid was necessary to rouse his vassals, infected by

* See Parliamentary Rolls, vi. 232, for the accusations of witchcraft, and the fabrication of a necromantic image of Lord Warwick, circulated against the Duchess of Bedford. She herself quotes, and complains of, them.

the common sedition,—been attacked and wounded by a body of marauders, and thus Edward's camp lost one of its greatest leaders. Fierce dispute broke out in the King's councils; and, when the witch Jacquetta's practices against the Earl travelled from the hostile into the royal camp, Raoul de Fulke, St John, and others, seized with pious horror, positively declared they would throw down their arms and retire to their castles, unless the Woodvilles were dismissed from the camp, and the Earl of Warwick was recalled to England. To the first demand the King was constrained to yield; with the second he temporized. He marched from Fotheringay to Newark; but the signs of disaffection, though they could not dismay him as a soldier, altered his plans as a captain of singular military acuteness; he fell back on Nottingham, and dispatched, with his own hands, letters to Clarence, the Archbishop of York, and Warwick. To the last he wrote touchingly. "We do not believe" (said the letter) "that ye should be of any such disposition toward us, as the rumour here runneth, considering the trust and affection we bear you—and cousin, ne think ye shall be to us welcome."* But ere these letters reached

* Paston Letters, ccxcviii., (Knight's edition,) vol. ii., p. 59. See also Lingard, vol. iii., p. 522, (4to edition,) note 43, for the proper date to be assigned to Edward's letter to Warwick, &c.

the destination, the crown seemed well nigh lost. At Edgocote, the Earl of Pembroke was defeated and slain, and five thousand Royalists were left on the field. Earl Rivers, and his son, Sir John Woodville,* who, in obedience to the royal order, had retired to the Earl's country seat of Grafton, were taken prisoners, and beheaded by the vengeance of the insurgents. The same lamentable fate befel the Lord Stafford, on whom Edward relied as one of his most puissant leaders; and London heard with dismay, that the King, with but a handful of troops, and those lukewarm and disaffected, was begirt on all sides by hostile and marching thousands.

From Nottingham, however, Edward made good his retreat to a village called Olney, which chanced at that time to be partially fortified with a wall and a strong gate. Here the rebels pursued him; and Edward, hearing that Sir Anthony Woodville, who conceived that the fate of his father and brother cancelled all motive for longer absence

* This Sir John Woodville was the most obnoxious of the Queen's brothers, and infamous for the avarice which had led him to marry the old Duchess of Norfolk, an act which, according to the old laws of chivalry, would have disabled him from entering the lists of knighthood, for the ancient code disqualified and degraded any knight who should marry an old woman for her money! Lord Rivers was the more odious to the people at the time of the insurrection, because, in his capacity of treasurer, he had lately tampered with the coin and circulation.

from the contest, was busy in collecting a force in the neighbourhood of Coventry, while other assistance might be daily expected from London, strengthened the fortifications as well as the time would permit, and awaited the assault of the insurgents.

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

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

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

“God grant it, Warwick!” said the Duke of Clarence, “for, though Edward hath used us sorely,

it chafes me as Plantagenet and as Prince, to see how peasants and varlets can hem round a king."

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

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

"Ay, Richard Nevile!—ay," said the Prelate, with a slight sneer, "play the Paladin, and become the dupe—release the Prince, and betray the People!"

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

slow, and solemn, over the meadows, crept on the mighty cloud of the rebel army.

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

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

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

“And who says, sire,” answered Raoul de Fulke, “that we your lords and captains would not risk blood and life for our King and our knighthood in a just cause? But we will not butcher our countrymen for echoing our own complaint, and praying your Grace that a grasping and ambitious

family which you have raised to power may no longer degrade your nobles and oppress your Commons. We shall see if the Earl of Warwick blame us or approve !”

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

It were in vain to describe the sensation that this speech produced. There is ever something in courage and in will that awes numbers, though brave themselves. And what with the unquestioned valour of Edward—what with the effect of his splendid person, towering above all present by the head, and moving lightly, with each impulse,

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

Edward, as yet unaware what course Warwick would pursue, and half doubtful whether a revolt that had borrowed his name, and was led by his kinsmen, might not originate in his consent, surrounded by those to whom the Earl was especially dear, and aware that if Warwick were against him

all was lost, still relaxed not the dignity of his mien ; and leaning on his large two-handed sword, with such inward resolves as brave kings and gallant gentlemen form, if the worst should befall, he watched the majestic strides of his great kinsman, and said, as the Earl approached, and the mutinous captains louted low—

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

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

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

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

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

“Nor do *we*, Sire,” retorted Raoul de Fulke ; “you wrong us before our mighty comrade if you so misthink us. We will fight for the King, but not

for the Queen's kindred; and this alone brings on us your anger."

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

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

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

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

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

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

“ Well, my friends,” said Warwick, and what would you of the King ?”

“ The dismissal of all the Woodvilles, except the Queen—the revocation of the grants and lands accorded to them, to the despoiling the ancient noble—and, but for your presence, we had demanded your recal.”

“ And, failing these, what your resolve ?”

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

“ The cause ! But ye know not the real cause,” answered Warwick. “ I know it ; for the sons of the North are familiar to me, and their rising hath deeper meaning than ye deem. What ! have they not decoyed to their head my kinsmen, the heirs of Latimer and Fitzhugh, and bold Coniers, whose steel casque should have circled a wiser brain ? Have they not taken my name as their battle-cry ? And do ye think this falsehood veils nothing but the simple truth of just complaint ?”

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

“ So help me Heaven ! If I would resort to arms to redress a wrong, trow not that I myself would be absent from the field. No, my lords, friends, and captains—time presses ; a few words

must suffice to explain what, as yet, may be dark to you. I have letters from Montagu and others, which reached me the same day as the King's, and which clear up the purpose of our misguided countrymen. Ye know well that ever in England, but especially since the reign of Edward III., strange, wild notions of some kind of liberty other than that we enjoy, have floated loose through the land. Among the commons, a half-conscious recollection that the nobles are a different race from themselves feeds a secret rancour and dislike, which at any fair occasion for riot, shews itself bitter and ruthless—as in the outbreak of Cade and others. And if the harvest fail, or a tax gall, there are never wanting men to turn the popular distress to the ends of private ambition or state design. Such a man has been the true head and front of this commotion.”

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

“He is not dead.* Montagu informs me that the report was false. He was defeated off York, and retired for some days into the woods; but it is he who has enticed the sons of Latimer and Fitz-

* The fate of Robin of Redesdale has been as obscure as most of the incidents in this most perplexed part of English history. While some of the chroniclers finish his career according to the report mentioned in the text, Fabyan not only more charitably prolongs his life, but rewards him with the king's pardon; and according to the annals of his ancient and distinguished family, (who will pardon, we trust, a licence with one of their ancestry

hugh into the revolt, and resigned his own command to the martial cunning of Sir John Coniers. This Robin of Redesdale is no common man. He hath had a clerkly education—he hath travelled among the Free Towns of Italy—he hath deep purpose in all he doth; and among his projects is the destruction of the nobles here, as it was whilome effected in Florence, the depriving us of all offices and posts, with other changes, wild to think of, and long to name.”

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

“Under fair pretence he has gathered numbers, and now wields an army. I have reason to know that, had he succeeded in estranging ye from Edward, and had the King fallen, dead or alive, into his hands, his object would have been to restore Henry of Windsor, but on conditions that would have left king and baron little more than pageants in the state. I knew this man years ago. I have watched him since; and, strange though it may seem to you, he hath much in him that I ad-

equally allowed by history and romance,) as referred to in Wotton's English Baronetage, (Art., Hilyard,) and which probably rests upon the authority of the life of Richard III., in Stowe's Annals, he is represented as still living in the reign of that king. But the whole account of this famous demagogue in Wotton is, it must be owned, full of historical mistakes.

mire as a subject and should fear were I a king. Brief, thus runs my counsel:—For our sake and the realm's safety we must see this armed multitude disbanded—that done, we must see the grievances they with truth complain of fairly redressed. Think not, my lords, I avenge my own wrongs alone, when I go with you in your resolve to banish from the King's councils the baleful influence of the Queen's kin. Till that be compassed, no peace for England. As a leprosy, their avarice crawls over the nobler parts of the state, and devours while it sullies. Leave this to me; and, though we will redress ourselves, let us now assist our King!"

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

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

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

Like the pouring of new blood into a decrepit

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

“Well, cousin,” said the King, “have ye brought these Hotspurs to their allegiance?”

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

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

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

“Well,” returned Edward, carelessly, “few or

many, one gentleman is more worth than a hundred varlets. 'We are enow for glory,' as Henry said, at Agincourt."

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

"By what spell?"

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

"And banish my Queen?"

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

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

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

Edward walked apart, strongly debating within himself. In his character were great contrasts; no man was more frank in common—no man more false when it suited—no man had more levity in wanton love, or more firm affection for those he once thoroughly took to his heart. He was the reverse of grateful for service yielded, yet he was warm in protecting those on whom service was conferred. He was resolved not to give up the Woodvilles, and, after a short self-commune, he

equally determined not to risk his crown and life by persevering in resistance to the demand for their downfall. Inly obstinate, outwardly yielding, he concealed his falsehood with his usual soldierly grace.

“Warwick,” he said, returning to the Earl’s side, “you cannot advise me to what is misbeseeming, and therefore, in this strait, I resign my conduct to your hands. I will not unsay to you mutinous gentlemen what I have already said; but what you judge it right to promise in my name to them, or to the insurgents, I will not suppose that mine honour will refuse to concede. But go not hence, O noblest friend that ever stood by a king’s throne!—go not hence till the grasp of your hand assures me that all past unkindness is gone and buried; yea, and by this hand, and while its pressure is warm in mine, bear not too hard on thy King’s affection for his lady’s kindred.”

“Sire,” said Warwick, though his generous nature well nigh melted into weakness, and it was with an effort that he adhered to his purpose—“Sire, if dismissed for awhile, they shall not be degraded. And if it be, on consideration, wise to recall from the family of Woodville your grants of lands and lordships, take from your Warwick—who, rich in his King’s love, hath enow to spare—take the double of what you would recall. O, be frank with me—be true—be steadfast, Edward,

and dispose of my lands whenever you would content a favourite."

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

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

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

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

III.

THE CAMP OF THE REBELS.

THE rebels had halted about a mile from the town, and were already pitching their tents for the night. It was a tumultuous, clamorous, but not altogether undisciplined array; for Coniers was a leader of singular practice in reducing men into the machinery of war, and where his skill might have failed, the prodigious influence and energy of Robin of Redesdale ruled the passions and united the discordant elements. This last was, indeed, in much worthy the respect in which Warwick held his name. In times more ripe for him, he had been a mighty demagogue and a successful regenerator. His birth was known but to few; his education and imperious temper made him vulgarly supposed of noble origin; but had he descended from a king's loins, Robert Hilyard had still been the son of the Saxon people. Warwick overrated, perhaps, Hilyard's wisdom; for, despite his Italian experience, his ideas were far

from embracing any clear and definite system of democracy. He had much of the frantic levelism and *jacquerie* of his age and land, and could probably not have explained to himself all the changes he desired to effect; but, coupled with his hatred to the nobles, his deep and passionate sympathy with the poor, his heated and fanatical chimeras of a republic, half-political and half-religious,—he had, with no uncommon inconsistency, linked the cause of a dethroned king. For as the Covenanters leagued with the Stuarts against the succeeding and more tolerant dynasty never relinquishing their own anti-monarchic theories; as in our time, the extreme party on the popular side has leagued with the extreme of the aristocratic, in order to crush the medium policy, as a common foe; so the bold leveller united with his zeal for Margaret the very cause which the House of Lancaster might be supposed the least to favour. He expected to obtain from a sovereign, dependent upon a popular reaction for restoration, great popular privileges. And as the church had deserted the Red Rose for the White, he sought to persuade many of the Lollards, ever ready to shew their discontent, that Margaret, (in revenge on the hierarchy,) would extend the protection they had never found in the previous sway of her husband and Henry V. Possessed of extraordinary craft, and even cunning in secular intrigues—energetic, versatile, bold, indefatigable, and, above all, mar-

vellously gifted with the arts that inflame, stir up, and guide the physical force of masses, Robert Hilyard had been, indeed, the soul and life of the present revolt ; and his prudent moderation in resigning the nominal command to those whose military skill and high birth raised a riot into the dignity of rebellion, had given that consistency and method to the rising which popular movements never attain without aristocratic aid.

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

There was Sir John Coniers, who had married one of the Neviles, the daughter of Fauconberg, Lord High Admiral, but who had profited little by this remote connexion with Warwick ; for, with all his merit, he was a greedy, grasping man, and he had angered the hot Earl in pressing his claims too imperiously. This renowned knight was a tall, gaunt man, whose iron frame sixty winters had not bowed ; there, were the young heirs of Latimer and Fitzhugh, in gay gilded armour and scarlet mantelines ; and there, in a plain cuirass, trebly welded, and of immense weight, but the lower limbs, left free and unencumbered, in thick leathern hose, stood Robin of Redesdale. Other captains there were, whom different motives had led to the common confederacy. There, might be seen the secret Lollard, hating either Rose, stern and sour, and acknowledging no leader but Hilyard, whom he

knew as a Lollard's son; there might be seen the ruined spendthrift, discontented with fortune, and regarding civil war as the cast of a die—death for the forfeiture, lordships for the gain; there, the sturdy Saxon squire, oppressed by the little baron of his province, and rather hopeful to abase a neighbour than dethrone a king, of whom he knew little, and for whom he cared still less; and there, chiefly distinguished from the rest by grizzled beard, upturned moustache, erect mien, and grave, not thoughtful aspect, were the men of a former period—the soldiers who had fought against the Maid of Arc—now without place, station, or hope, in peaceful times, already half robbers by profession, and decoyed to any standard that promised action, pay, or plunder.

The conclave were in high and warm debate.

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

“And by whom, Sir Knight and cousin?” said the Heir of Fitzhugh, reddening.

“By you, young kinsman, and this hot-mouthed dare-devil, Robin of Redesdale! Ye

assured me, both, that the Earl approved the rising—that he permitted the levying yon troops in his name—that he knew well the time was come to declare against the Woodvilles, and that no sooner was an army mustered than he would place himself at its head; and, I say, if this be not true, you have brought these grey hairs into dishonour!”

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

“And,” began the Heir of Fitzhugh, encouraged by the boldness of Hilyard, “we had all reason to believe my noble uncle, the Earl of Warwick, approved our emprise. When this brave fellow (pointing to Robin) came to inform me that, with his own eyes, he had seen the waxen effigies of my great kinsman, the hellish misdeed of the Queen’s witch-dam, I repaired to my Lord Montagu; and, though that prudent courtier refused to declare openly, he let me see that war with the Woodvilles was not unwelcome to him.”

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

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

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

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

separate, till we have redressed the wrongs of our countrymen !”

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

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

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

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

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

“ For look you, my masters,” continued Sir Geoffrey—“ as long as I and my comrades here believed that the rich Earl, who hath half England for his provant, was at the head or the tail of this matter, we were contented to wait awhile ; but devil a groat hath yet gone into my gipsire, and as for pillage, what is a farm or a homestead ! an’ it were a church or a castle, there might be pickings.”

“ There is much plate of silver, and a sack or so

of marks and royals in the stronghold of the Baron of Bullstock," quoth the Saxon squire, doggedly hounding on to his revenge.

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

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

"That is true!" observed Coniers, musingly.

"Not ill thought of, sir," said Sir Geoffrey Gates—"and my advice is to proclaim Clarence King and Warwick Lord Protector. We have some chance of the angels then."

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

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

"As for Clarence," said Hilyard, who saw, with dismay and alarm, that the rebellion he designed to turn at the fitting hour to the service of Lancaster, might now only help to shift, from one

shoulder to the other, the hated dynasty of York—
“as for Clarence, he hath Edward’s vices without his manhood.” He paused, and seeing that the crisis had ripened the hour for declaring himself, his bold temper pushed at once to its object. “No!” he continued, folding his arms, raising his head, and comprehending the whole council in his keen and steady gaze—“no! Lords and Gentlemen—since speak I must, in this emergency, hear me calmly. Nothing hath prospered in England since we abandoned our lawful king. If we rid ourselves of Edward, let it not be to sink from a harlot-monger to a drunkard. In the Tower pines our true Lord, already honoured as a saint. Hear me, I say—hear me out! On the frontiers, an army that keeps Gloucester at bay, hath declared for Henry and Margaret. Let us, after seizing Olney, march thither at once, and unite forces. Margaret is already prepared to embark for England. I have friends in London who will attack the Tower, and deliver Henry. To you, Sir John Coniers, in the Queen’s name, I promise an Earldom and the Garter. To you, the Heirs of Latimer and Fitzhugh, the high posts that bescem your birth; to all of you Knights and Captains, just share and allotment in the confiscated lands of the Woodvilles and the Yorkists. To you, brethren,” and addressing the Lollards, his voice softened into a meaning accent, that,

compelled to worship in secret, they yet understood—"shelter from your foes, and mild laws; and to you, brave soldiers, that pay which a King's coffers alone can supply. Wherefore I say, down with all subject banners! up with the Red Rose and the Antelope, and long live Henry the Sixth!"

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

The Lollards remembered the fires lighted for their martyrs by the House of Lancaster; and though blindly confident in Hilyard, were not yet prepared to respond to his call. The young Heir of Fitzhugh, who had, in truth, but taken arms to avenge the supposed wrongs of Warwick, whom he idolized, saw no object gained in the rise of Warwick's enemy—Queen Margaret. The mercenaries called to mind the woful state of Henry's exchequer in the former time. The Saxon squire muttered to himself—"And what the devil is to become of the Castle of Bullstock?" But Sir Henry Nevile (Lord Latimer's son) who belonged to that branch of his house which had espoused the Lancaster cause, and who was in the secret councils of Hilyard, caught up the cry, and said—"Hilyard doth not exceed his powers; and he who strikes for the Red Rose, shall carve

out his own lordship from the manors of every Yorkist that he slays!" Sir John Coniers hesitated: poor, long neglected, ever enterprising and ambitious, he was dazzled by the proffered bribe—but age is slow to act, and he expressed himself with the measured caution of grey hairs.

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

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

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

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

“The crowd separates—he rides this way!” said the Heir of Fitzhugh. “Shall we go forth to meet him?”

“Not so!” exclaimed Hilyard, “we are still

the leaders of this army; let him find us deliberating on the siege of Olney!"

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

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

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

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

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

"Cousin and lord," said the Heir of Fitzhugh, reddening but not abashed, "we could not believe but what you would smile on those who have risen to assert your wrongs and defend your life." And

he then briefly related the tale of the Duchess of Bedford's waxen effigies, and pointed to Hilyard as the eye-witness.

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

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

"Meanwhile," said Robin of Redesdale, "the Commons were oppressed, the People discontented, the Woodvilles plundering us, and the King wasting our substance on concubines and minions. We have had cause enow for our rising!"

The Earl listened to each speaker in stern silence.

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

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

"But," resumed Warwick, not seeming to heed

his nephew's humility, "I, who have ever loved the People of England, and before King and Parliament have ever pleaded their cause—I, as captain-general and first officer of these realms, here declare, that whatever motives of ambition or interest may have misled men of mark and birth, I believe that the Commons at least never rise in arms without some excuse for their error. Speak out then, you, their leaders; and putting aside all that relates to me as the one man, say what are the grievances of which the many would complain."

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

he spoke of wives and maidens violated—of industry defrauded—of houses forcibly entered—of barns and granaries despoiled—of the impunity of all offenders, if high-born—of the punishment of all complainants, if poor and lowly. “Tell us not,” he said, “that this is the necessary evil of the times, the hard condition of mankind. It was otherwise, Lord Warwick, when Edward first swayed; for *you* then made yourself dear to the people by your justice. Still men talk, hereabouts, of the golden rule of Earl Warwick; but since you have been, though great in office, powerless in deed, absent in Calais, or idle at Middleham, England hath been but the plaything of the Woodvilles, and the King’s ears have been stuffed with flattery as with wool. And,” continued Hilyard, warming with his subject, and, to the surprise of the Lollards, entering boldly on their master-grievance—“and this is not all. When Edward ascended the throne, there was, if not justice, at least repose, for the persecuted believers who hold that God’s Word was given to man to read, study, and digest into godly deeds. I speak plainly. I speak of that faith which your great father, Salisbury, and many of the House of York, were believed to favour—that faith which is called the Lollard, and the oppression of which, more than aught else, lost to Lancaster the Hearts of England. But of late, the Church, assuming the power it ever grasps the

most under the most licentious kings, (for the Sinner Prince hath ever the Tyrant Priest!) hath put in vigour old laws, for the wronging man's thought and conscience;* and we sit at our doors under the shade, not of the vine-tree, but the gibbet. For all these things we have drawn the sword; and if now, you, taking advantage of the love borne to you by the sons of England, push that sword back into the sheath, you, generous, great, and princely though you be, well deserve the fate that I foresee and can foretell. Yes!" cried the speaker, extending his arms, and gazing fixedly on the proud face of the Earl, which was not inexpressive of emotion—"yes! I see you, having deserted the people, deserted by them also, in your need—I see you, the hate and the dupe of an ungrateful King, stripped of power and honour, an exile and an outlaw; and when you call in vain upon the people, in whose hearts you now reign, remember, O fallen Star, Son of the Morning! that in the hour of their might you struck down the people's right arm, and paralyzed their power. And now, if you will, let your friends

* The Lollards had greatly contributed to seat Edward on the throne; and much of the subsequent discontent, no doubt, arose from their disappointment, when, as Sharon Turner well expresses it, "his indolence allied him to the church," and he became, "*hereticorum severissimus hostis.*"—Croyl. p. 564.

and England's champions glut the scaffolds of your Woman-King!"

He ceased—a murmur went round the conclave; every breast breathed hard—every eye turned to Warwick. That mighty statesman mastered the effect the thrilling voice of the popular pleader produced on him; but at that moment he had need of all his frank and honourable loyalty to remind him that he was there but to fulfil a promise and discharge a trust—that he was the King's delegate, not the King's judge.

“You have spoken, bold men,” said he, “as, in an hour when the rights of princes are weighed in one scale, the subject's swords in the other, I, were I king, would wish free men to speak. And now you, Robert Hilyard, and you, gentlemen, hear me, as envoy to King Edward IV. To all of you I promise complete amnesty and entire pardon. His Highness believes you misled, not criminal, and your late deeds will not be remembered in your future services. So much for the leaders. Now for the commons. My liege the King is pleased to recall me to the high powers I once exercised, and to increase rather than to lessen them. In his name, I pledge myself to full and strict inquiry into all the grievances Robin of Redesdale hath set forth, with a view to speedy and complete redress. Nor is this all. His Highness, laying aside his purpose of

war with France, will have less need of imposts on his subjects, and the burthens and taxes will be reduced. Lastly—his Grace, ever anxious to content his people, hath most benignly empowered me to promise that, whether or no ye rightly judge the Queen's kindred, they will no longer have part or weight in the King's councils. The Duchess of Bedford, as beseems a lady so sorrowfully widowed, will retire to her own home; and the Lord Scales will fulfil a mission to the Court of Spain. Thus, then, assenting to all reasonable demands—promising to heal all true grievances—proffering you gracious pardon—I discharge my duty to King and to People. I pray that these unhappy sores may be healed evermore, under the blessing of God and our Patron Saint; and in the name of Edward the Fourth, Lord Suzerain of England, and of France, I break up this truncheon and disband this army!"

Among those present, this moderate and wise address produced a general sensation of relief; for the Earl's disavowal of the revolt took away all hope of its success. But the common approbation was not shared by Hilyard. He sprang upon the table, and seizing the broken fragments of the truncheon which the Earl had snapped as a willow twig, exclaimed—"And thus, in the name of the people, I seize the command that ye unworthily resign! Oh, yes, what fools were yonder drudges

of the hard hand and the grimed brow, and the leather jerkin, to expect succour from knight and noble !”

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

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

The Earl strode from the tent, sprang on his steed, and was in the midst of the troops with his heralds by his side, ere Hilyard had been enabled to begin the harangue he had intended. Warwick’s trumpets sounded to silence ; and the Earl himself, in his loud clear voice, briefly addressed the immense audience. Master, scarcely less than Hilyard, of the popular kind of eloquence, which—short, plain, generous and simple—cuts its way at once through the feelings to the policy, Warwick briefly but forcibly recapitulated to the Commons the promises he had made to the captains ; and as soon as they heard of taxes removed, the coinage reformed, the corn thrave abolished, the Woodvilles dismissed, and the Earl recalled to power, the rebellion was at an end. They answered with a joyous shout his order to disperse and retire to their homes forthwith. But the indomitable Hilyard, ascending a small eminence, began his counter agitation. The Earl saw his robust form and waving hand—he saw the crowd sway towards him ; and too well

acquainted with mankind to suffer his address, he spurred to the spot, and turning to Marmaduke, said, in a loud voice, "Marmaduke Nevile, arrest that man in the King's name!"

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

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

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

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

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

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

Slowly the Earl and his scanty troop turned the rein: as he receded, the multitude broke up rapidly, and when the moon rose, that camp was a solitude!*

Such, ever grander in the individual than the mass, is the power of Man above Mankind!

* The dispersion of the rebels at Olney is forcibly narrated by a few sentences, graphic from their brief simplicity, in "The Pictorial History of England," book v., p. 104. "They (Warwick, &c.) repaired in a very friendly manner to Olney, where they found Edward in a most unhappy condition; his friends were dead or scattered, flying for their lives, or hiding themselves in remote places: the insurgents were almost upon him. *A word from Warwick sent the insurgents quietly back to the North.*"

IV.

THE NORMAN EARL AND THE SAXON DEMAGOGUE
CONFER.

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

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

“Your noble brother, my Lord,” answered Robin, drily—“is, perhaps, not aware of the service I once rendered you. Methinks he spared me rather, because, without me, an enterprise which has shaken the Woodvilles from their roots around the throne, and given back England to the Neviles, had been

nipped in the bud!—Your brother is a deep thinker!”

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

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

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

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

Robin looked hard at the Earl’s face, which was dark and gloomy, as he thus spoke, and approaching nearer, he said—“Lord Warwick, I take from you liberty and life the more willingly, because a voice I cannot mistake tells me, and hath long told, that, sooner or later, time will bind us to each other. Unlike other nobles, you have owed your power not so much to lordship, land, and birth, and a king’s smile, as to the love you have nobly won; you alone, true Knight and princely Christian—you alone, in war, have spared the humble—you alone, stalwart and resistless champion, have directed your lance against your equals, and your

order hath gone forth to the fierce of heart—
‘Never smite the Commons!’ In peace, you alone
have stood up in your haughty parliament for just
law or for gentle mercy; your castle hath had a
board for the hungry, and a shelter for the house-
less; your pride, which hath bearded kings and
humbled upstarts, hath never had a taunt for the
lowly; and therefore I—Son of the People—in the
People’s name, bless you living, and sigh to ask
whether a People’s gratitude will mourn you dead!
Beware Edward’s false smile—beware Clarence’s
fickle faith—beware Gloucester’s inscrutable wile.
Mark, the sun sets!—and while we speak, yon
dark cloud gathers over your plumed head.”

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

V.

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

EDWARD received his triumphant Envoy with open arms and profuse expressions of gratitude. He exerted himself to the utmost in the banquet that crowned the day, not only to conciliate the illustrious new comers, but to remove from the minds of Raoul de Fulke and his officers all memory of their past disaffection. No gift is rarer or more successful in the intrigues of life than that which Edward eminently possessed—viz., the *hypocrisy of frankness*. Dissimulation is often humble—often polished—often grave, sleek, smooth, decorous; but it is rarely gay and jovial, a hearty laugh, a merry, cordial, boon companion. Such, however, was the felicitous craft of Edward IV.; and, indeed, his spirits were naturally so high—his good humour so flowing—that this joyous hypocrisy cost him no effort. Elated at the dispersion of his foes—at the prospect of his return to his ordinary

life of pleasure—there was something so kindly and so winning in his mirth, that he subjugated entirely the fiery temper of Raoul de Fulke and the steadier suspicions of the more thoughtful St. John. Clarence, wholly reconciled to Edward, gazed on him with eyes swimming with affection, and soon drank himself into uproarious joviality. The Archbishop, more reserved, still animated the society by the dry and epigrammatic wit not uncommon to his learned and subtle mind; but Warwick, in vain, endeavoured to shake off an uneasy, ominous gloom. He was not satisfied with Edward's avoidance of discussion upon the grave matters involved in the Earl's promise to the insurgents, and his masculine spirit regarded with some disdain, and more suspicion, a levity that he considered ill-suited to the emergence.

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

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

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

“So vanish all the King’s enemies!”

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

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

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

“Beau Sire,” returned the favourite, calmly, “I was seeking to discover if your pride spoke, or your nobler nature.”

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

Hastings, who in this went thoroughly with the Earl and the popular feeling, and whose only

enemies in England were the Woodvilles, replied simply—

“These are cheap terms, Sire, for a King’s life, and the crown of England.”

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

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

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

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

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

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

“Prince Richard is a great reader of Italian lere. He saith that those small states are treasuries of all experience. From that lere Prince Richard would say to you—where a subject is so great as to be feared, and too much beloved to be destroyed, the King must remember how Tarpeia was crushed.”

“I remember nought of Tarpeia, and I detest parables.”

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

“And how, O wise in thine own conceit?”—

“Beau Sire,” resumed Hastings, not heeding the rebuke—and strangely enough he proceeded to point out, as the means of destroying the Earl’s influence, the very method that the Archbishop had detailed to Montagu, as that which would make the influence irresistible and permanent,—
“Beau sire,” resumed Hastings, “Lord Warwick is beloved by the people, because they consider

him maltreated; he is esteemed by the people, because they consider him above all bribe; he is venerated by the people, because they believe that in all their complaints and struggles he is independent (he alone) of the King. Instead of love, I would raise envy; for instead of cold countenance I would heap him with grace. Instead of esteem and veneration I would raise suspicion, for I would so knit him to your house, that he could not stir hand or foot against you; I would make his heirs your brothers. The Duke of Clarence hath married one daughter—wed the other to Lord Richard. Betroth your young princess to Montagu's son, the representative of all the Neviles. The Earl's immense possessions must thus ultimately pass to your own kindred. The Earl himself will be no longer a power apart from the throne, but a part of it. The barons will chafe against one who half ceases to be of their order, and yet monopolizes their dignities; the people will no longer see in the Earl their champion, but a king's favourite and deputy. Neither barons nor people will flock to his banner."

"All this is well and wise," said Edward, musing. "but meanwhile my Queen's blood—am I to reign in a solitude?—for look you, Hastings, you know well that, uxorious as fools have deemed me, I had purpose and design in the elevation of new families, I wished to raise a fresh nobility to counteract the

pride of the old, and only upon new nobles can a new dynasty rely."

"My lord, I will not anger you again; but still, for awhile, the Queen's relations will do well to retire."

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

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

This want of ceremony displeased the pride of Warwick; but he made no complaint, and took his place by the King's side, when Edward said, shortly, but with that customary outward frankness in which he cloaked his falsehood—

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

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

“ I misthink the King,” said Warwick, gloomily, “ but my word is pledged to the people, and it shall be kept!”

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

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

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

"Whither shall I send the report?"

"To my castle of Warwick!"

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

VI.

WHAT BEFALS KING EDWARD ON HIS ESCAPE FROM
OLNEY.

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

“Dear Will,” said the King, “I have thought over thy counsel, and will find the occasion to make experiment thereof. But, methinks, thou wilt agree with me, that concessions come best from a king who has an army of his own. Fore Heaven! in the camp of a Warwick I have less power than a lieutenant! Now mark me. I go to head some recruits raised in haste near Coventry. The scene of contest must be in the Northern counties. Wilt thou, for love of me, ride night and day, thorough brake thorough brier, to Gloucester, on the Borders? Bid him march, if the Scot will let him, back to York; and if he cannot himself quit the borders, let him send what men can be spared under thy banner. Failing this,

raise through Yorkshire all the men at arms thou canst collect. But, above all, see Montagu. Him and his army secure at all hazards. If he demur, tell him his son shall marry his King's daughter, and wear the coronal of a duke. Ha! ha! a large bait for so large a fish! I see this is no casual outbreak, but a general convulsion of the realm; and the Earl of Warwick must not be the only man to smile or to frown back the angry elements."

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

"Go, dear Hastings, I trust all to thee!" answered the King."

The nobleman kissed his sovereign's extended hand, closed his visor, and, motioning to his body squire to follow him, disappeared down a green lane, avoiding such broader thoroughfares as might bring him in contact with the officers left at Olney.

In a small village near Coventry, Sir Anthony Woodville had collected about two thousand men; chiefly composed of the tenants and vassals of the new nobility, who regarded the brilliant Anthony as their head. The leaders were gallant and am-

bitious gentlemen, as they who arrive at fortunes above their birth mostly are—but their vassals were little to be trusted. For in that day clanship was still strong, and these followers had been bred in allegiance to Lancastrian lords, whose confiscated estates were granted to the Yorkist favourites. The shout that welcomed the arrival of the King was therefore feeble and lukewarm—and, disconcerted by so chilling a reception, he dismounted, in less elevated spirits than those in which he had left Olney, at the pavilion of his brother-in-law.

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

But Woodville's account of the Queen's grief and horror at the afflictions of her House, and of Jacquetta's indignation at the foul language which the report of her practices put into the popular mouth, served to endear to the King's mind the family that he considered unduly persecuted. Even in the coldest breasts affection is fanned by opposition, and the more the Queen's kindred were assailed, the more obstinately Edward clung to them. By suiting his humour, by winking at his gallantries, by a submissive sweetness of temper, which soothed his own hasty moods and contrasted with the rough pride of Warwick and the peevish fickleness of Clarence, Elizabeth had completely

wound herself into the King's heart. And the charming graces, the elegant accomplishments, of Anthony Woodville, were too harmonious with the character of Edward, who in all—except truth and honour—was the perfect model of the gay *gentilhomme* of the time, not to have become almost a necessary companionship. Indolent natures may be easily ruled—but they grow stubborn when their comforts and habits are interfered with. And the whole current of Edward's merry, easy life, seemed to him to lose flow and sparkle, if the faces he loved best were banished or even clouded.

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

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

“Oh, my King,” said Anthony, now Earl of Rivers,—who, by far the least selfish of his House, was struck with remorse at the penalty Edward paid for his love marriage,—“now that your

Highness can relieve me of my command, let me retire from the camp. I would fain go, a pilgrim to the shrine of Compostella, to pray for my father's sins and my Sovereign's weal."

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

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

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

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

"We will not now waste words, King," answered Warwick. "Please you to mount, and

ride Northward. The Scotch have gained great advantages on the marches. The Duke of Gloucester is driven backwards. All the Lancastrians in the North have risen. Margaret of Anjou is on the coast of Normandy,* ready to set sail at the first decisive victory of her adherents.”

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

“ A steed prepared for your grace awaits you.”

“ Whither ride we first?”

“ To my Castle of Warwick, hard by. At noon to-morrow all will be ready for our Northward march.”

Edward, by this time, having armed himself, strode from the tent into the open air. The scene was striking—the moon was extremely bright and the sky serene, but around the tent stood a troop of torch-bearers, and the red glare shone luridly upon the steel of the serried horsemen and the banners of the Earl, in which the grim White Bear was wrought upon an ebon ground, quartered with the Dun Bull, and crested in gold, with the Eagle of the Monthermers. Far as the King’s eye could reach, he saw but the spears of Warwick; while a confused hum in his own encampment

* At this time, Margaret was at Horfleur.—WILL. WYRE.

told that the troops Anthony Woodville had collected were not yet marshalled into order—Edward drew back.

“And the Lord Anthony of Scales and Rivers,” said he, hesitatingly.

“Choose between the Lord Anthony of Scales and Rivers, and Richard Nevile, King!” answered Warwick, in a stern whisper.

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

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

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

“Go or stay, as you will, Anthony!” said he, “but let these proud men know that neither time

nor absence can tear you from your King's heart. But envy must have its hour! Lord Warwick, I attend you, but, it seems, rather as your prisoner than your Liege."

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

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

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

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

VII.

HOW KING EDWARD ARRIVES AT THE CASTLE OF
MIDDLEHAM.

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

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

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

“My sweet Anne,” returned Isabel, passing her arm tenderly round her sister’s slender waist, “when thou hast conquered the vain folly of thy childhood, thou wilt find a Clarence of thine own. And yet,” added the young Duchess, smiling, “it must be the opposite of a Clarence, to be to thy heart what a Clarence is to mine. I love George’s gay humour—thou lovest a melancholy brow. I love that charming weakness which supple to my woman will—thou lovest a proud nature to command thine own. I do not respect George less, because I know my mind stronger than his own; but thou (like my gentle mother) wouldst have thy mate, lord and chief in all things, and live from his life as the shadow from the sun. But where left you our mother?”

“In the oratory, at prayer!”

“She has been sad of late.”

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

“Ha!” exclaimed the Duchess, eagerly, “my mother confides in thee more than me. Saw you the letter?”

“No.”

“Edward will make himself unfit to reign,” said Isabel, abruptly. “The Barons will call on

him to resign ; and then—and *then*, Anne—sister Anne,—Warwick's daughters cannot be born to be simple subjects !”

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Before, however, they had reached the castle, a shrill blast rang at the outer gate. The portcullis was raised; the young Duke of Clarence, with a bridegroom's impatience, spurred alone through the gloomy arch, and Isabel, catching sight of his countenance, lifted towards the ramparts, uttered

a cry and waived her hand. Clarence heard and saw, leapt from his steed, and had clasped Isabel to his breast, almost before Anne or the Countess had recognised the new comer.

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

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

"Is the King still with my Father?" asked Isabel hastily, and interrupting the Countess's reply.

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

"All is prepared for his Highness," said the Countess, "save our own homage. We must quicken our steps—come Anne."

The Countess took the arm of the younger sister, while the Duchess made a sign to Clarence,

—he lingered behind, and Isabel drawing him aside, asked—

“Is my father reconciled to Edward?”

“No—nor Edward to him.”

“Good! The King has no soldiers of his own amidst yon armed train?”

“Save a few of Anthony Woodville’s recruits—none. Raoul de Fulke and St. John have retired to their towers in sullen dudgeon. But have you no softer questions for my return, *Bella mia*?”

“Pardon me—many—my *King*.”

“*King!*”

“What other name should the successor of Edward the Fourth bear?”

“Isabel,” said Clarence, in great emotion, “what is it you would tempt me to? Edward the Fourth spares the life of Henry the Sixth, and shall Edward the Fourth’s Brother conspire against his own?”

“God forefend!” exclaimed Isabel—“can you so wrong my honest meaning? O George! can you conceive that your wife—Warwick’s daughter—harbours the thought of murder? No! surely the career before you seems plain and spotless! Can Edward reign? Deserted by the Barons, and wearing away even my father’s long credulous love; odious! except in luxurious and unwarlike

London, to all the Commons—how reign? What other choice left? none—save Henry of Lancaster or George of York.”

“Were it so,” said the weak Duke, and yet he added, falteringly—“believe me, Warwick meditates no such changes in my favour.”

“Time is a rapid ripener,” answered Isabel—“but hark, they are lowering the drawbridge for our guests.”

VIII.

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

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

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

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

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

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

“My daughter, Sire.”

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

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

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

The Archbishop, who had followed close to Warwick and the King, whispered now to his brother—

“Why would Edward address the Captains?”

“I know not.”

“He hath made himself familiar with many in the march.”

“Familiarity with a steel casque better becomes a King, than wassail with a greasy flat-cap.”

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

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

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

Without pausing for reply, he passed on and seated himself on the throne, while Isabel and her husband took possession of the state chairs on either hand. At a gesture of the King's, the Countess and Anne placed themselves on seats less raised, but still upon the dais. But now as

Edward sat, the hall grew gradually full of lords and knights who commanded in Warwick's train, while the Earl and the Archbishop stood mute in the centre, the one armed cap-a-pie, leaning on his sword, the other with his arms folded in his long robes.

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

“Lords and Gentlemen,” he said, (arrogating to himself at once, as a thing of course, that gorgeous following,) “we have craved leave of our host to address to you some words—words which it pleases a king to utter, and which may not be harsh to the ears of a loyal subject. Nor will we, at this great current of unsteady fortune, make excuse, noble ladies, to you, that we speak of war to knighthood, which

is ever the sworn defender of the daughter and the wife—the daughters and the wife of our cousin, Warwick, have too much of hero-blood in their blue veins to grow pale at the sight of heroes. Comrades in arms! thus far towards our foe upon the frontiers we have marched, without a sword drawn or an arrow launched from an archer's bow. We believe that a blessing settles on the head of a true king, and that the trumpet of a good angel goes before his path, announcing the victory which awaits him. Here, in the hall of the Earl of Warwick, our Captain-General, we thank you for your cheerful countenance, and your loyal service; and here, as befits a king, we promise to you those honours *a king alone* worthily can bestow." He paused, and his keen eye glanced from chief to chief as he resumed: "We are informed that certain misguided and traitor lords have joined the Rose of Lancaster. Whoever so doth is attainted, life and line, evermore! His lands and dignities are forfeit to enrich and to ennoble the men who strike for me. Heaven grant I may have foes enow to reward all my friends! To every baron who owns Edward the Fourth king, (ay, and not king in name—king in banquet and in bower—but leader and captain in the war,) I trust to give a new barony—to every knight a new knight's fee—to every yeoman a hyde of land—to every soldier a year's pay. What more I can do, let it

be free for any one to suggest—for my domains of York are broad, and my heart is larger still!”

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

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

“Three days, Sire!” repeated Warwick, in a voice of surprise.

“Yes; and this, Fair Cousin, and ye, Lords and Gentlemen, is my reason for the delay. I have despatched Sir William, Lord de Hastings, to the Duke of Gloucester, with command to join us here—(the Archbishop started, but instantly resumed his earnest, placid aspect)—to the Lord Montagu, Earl of Northumberland, to muster all the vassals of our shire of York. As three streams that dash into the ocean, shall our triple army meet and rush to the war. Not even, Gentlemen, not even to the great Earl of Warwick will Edward the Fourth be so beholden for roialme and renown, as to march but a companion to the conquest. If ye were raised in Warwick’s name, not mine—why, be it so! I envy him such friends; but I will have an army of mine own, to shew mine English soldiery how a Plantagenet battles for his crown. Gentlemen, ye are dismissed to your repose. In three days we march! and if any of you know in these

fair realms the man, be he of York or Lancaster, more fit to command brave subjects than he who now addresses you, I say to that man—turn rein, and leave us! Let tyrants and cowards enforce reluctant service, *my* crown was won by the hearts of my people! Girded by those hearts, let me reign—or, mourned by them, let me fall! So God and St George favour me as I speak the truth!”

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

As the King lifted on high the cross of his sword, every blade leapt from its scabbard, and glittered in the air; and the dusty banners in the hall waved, as to a mighty blast, when, amidst the rattle of armour, burst forth the universal cry—“Long live Edward the Fourth! Long live the King!”

The sweet Countess, even amidst the excitement, kept her eyes anxiously fixed on Warwick, whose countenance, however, shaded by the black plumes of his casque, though the visor was raised,

revealed nothing of his mind. Her daughters were more powerfully affected; for Isabel's intellect was not so blinded by her ambition, but that the kingliness of Edward forced itself upon her with a might and solemn weight, which crushed, for the moment, her aspiring hopes—Was *this* the man unfit to reign? *This* the man voluntarily to resign a crown? *This* the man whom George of Clarence, without fratricide, could succeed? No!—*there*, spoke the soul of the First and the Third Edward! *Thère*, shook the mane, and there, glowed the eye, of the indomitable lion of the august Plantagenets! And the same conviction, rousing softer and holier sorrow, sate on the heart of Anne: she saw, as for the first time, clearly before her, the awful Foe with whom her ill-omened and beloved Prince had to struggle for his throne. In contrast beside that form, in the prime of manly youth—a giant in its strength, a god in its beauty—rose the delicate shape of the melancholy boy who, afar in exile, coupled in his dreams the sceptre and the bride! By one of those mysteries magnetism seeks to explain, in the strong intensity of her emotions, in the tremor of her shaken nerves, fear seemed to grow prophetic. A steam as of blood rose up from the dizzy floors. The image of her young Prince, bound and friendless, stood before the throne of

that Warrior-King. In the waving glitter of the countless swords raised on high, she saw the murderous blade against the boy-heir of Lancaster descend—descend! Her passion, her terror, at the spectre which fancy thus evoked, seized and overcame her; and ere the last hurrah sent its hollow echo to the raftered roof, she sank from her chair to the ground, hueless and insensible as the dead.

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

With the tender grace that always characterized his service to women, he descended promptly from his throne, and raised the lifeless form in his stal-

wart arms; and Anne, as he bent over her, looked so strangely lovely, in her marble stillness, that even in that hour a sudden thrill shot through a heart always susceptible to beauty, as the harp-string to the breeze.

“It is but the heat, Lady,” said he to the alarmed Countess, “and let me hope that interest which my fair kinswoman may take in the fortunes of Warwick and of York, *hitherto* linked together——”

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

“Behold! Warwick and Edward, thus hand in hand, as they stood when the clarions sounded the charge at Toton! and that link, what

swords, forged on a mortal's anvil, can rend or sever?"

In an instant, every knee, there, knelt; and Edward exultingly beheld, that what before had been allegiance to the Earl was now only homage to the King!

IX.

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

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

“Brother,” said he, throwing himself with some petulance into the only chair the room, otherwise splendid, contained—“when you left me, to seek Edward in the camp of Anthony Woodville, what was the understanding between us?”

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

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

The Earl knit his brows—“A prisoner, Archbishop!”

The Prelate regarded him with a cold smile.

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

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

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

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

“ That is, from the Lord Warwick!”

“ Perhaps I *am* the personation of both Seignorie and People; but I design this solely for his welfare. Ah, the gallant Prince—how well he bore himself to-day!”

“ Ay, when stealing all hearts from thee to him.”

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The Earl's voice trembled, and the tears stood in his dark eyes.

“Speak thus, dear Lord, to Isabel, for I fear her over-vaulting spirit——”

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

During the banquet, the King, at whose table sate only the Duke of Clarence and the Earl's family, was gracious as day to all, but especially to the Lady Anne; attributing her sudden illness to some cause not unflattering to himself, her beauty which somewhat resembled that of the Queen, save that it had more advantage of expression and of youth, was precisely of the character he most admired. Even her timidity, and the reserve with which she answered him, had their charm; for like many men, themselves of imperious nature and fiery will, he preferred even imbecility in a woman to whatever was energetic or

determined; and hence, perhaps, his indifference to the more dazzling beauty of Isabel. After the feast, the numerous Demoiselles, highborn and fair, who swelled the more than regal train of the Countess, were assembled in the long gallery, which was placed in the third story of the Castle, and served for the principal State apartment. The dance began; but Isabel excused herself from the Pavon, and the King led out the reluctant and melancholy Anne.

The proud Isabel, who had never forgiven Edward's slight to herself, resented deeply his evident admiration of her sister, and conversed apart with the Archbishop, whose subtle craft easily drew from her lips confessions of an ambition higher even than his own. He neither encouraged nor dissuaded; he thought there were things more impossible than the accession of Clarence to the throne, but he was one who never plotted,—save for himself and for the church.

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

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

“*All!*” muttered the Archbishop, as he turned away, “but that *all* is everything to provoke quarrel for you, and nothing to bring power to *me!*”

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

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

The Earl half smiled at the candour—half sighed at the levity—of the royal answer, and silently left the room. The King, drawing round him his loose dressing robe, threw himself upon the gorgeous coverlid of the bed, and lying at lazy length, motioned to the Prelate to seat himself at the foot. The Archbishop obeyed. Edward raised himself on his elbow, and, by the light of seven gigantic tapers, set in sconces of massive silver, the

Priest and the King gravely gazed on each other, without speaking.

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

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

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

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

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

"On the contrary, Sire, unlike other priests, I have ever deemed that persecution heals no schism.

Blow not dying embers. Rather do I think of late that too much severity hath helped to aid, by Lollard bows and pikes, the late rising. My lady, the Queen's mother, unjustly accused of witchcraft, hath sought to clear herself, and perhaps too zealously; in exciting your Grace against that invisible giant—ycleped heresy."

"Pass on," said Edward. "It is not then indifference to the Ecclesia that you complain of. Is it neglect of the Ecclesiastic? Ha! ha! you and I, though young, know the colours that make up the patchwork world. Archbishop, I love an easy life, if your brother and his friends will but give me *that*, let them take all else. Again, I say, to the point,—I cannot banish my lady's kindred, but I will bind your house still more to mine. I have a daughter, failing male issue, the heiress to my crown. I will betroth her to your nephew, my beloved Montagu's son. They are children yet, but their ages not unsuited. And when I return to London, young Nevile shall be Duke of Bedford, a title hitherto reserved to the royal race.* Let that be a pledge of peace between the Queen's mother, bearing the same honours, and the House of Nevile, to which they pass."

* And indeed there was but one Yorkist Duke then in England out of the Royal Family—viz., the young boy, Buckingham, who afterwards vainly sought to bend the Ulysses bow of Warwick against Richard the Third.

The cheek of the Archbishop flushed with proud pleasure; he bowed his head, and Edward, ere he could answer, went on,—“Warwick is already so high that, pardie, I have no other step to give him save my throne itself, and God’s truth, I would rather be Lord Warwick than King of England! But for you—listen—our only English Cardinal is old and sickly—whenever he pass to Abraham’s bosom, who but you should have the suffrage of the Holy College? Thou knowest that I am somewhat in the good favour of the Sovereign Pontiff. Command me to the utmost. Now, George, are we friends?”

The Archbishop kissed the gracious hand extended to him, and, surprised to find, as by magic, all his schemes frustrated by sudden acquiescence in the objects of them all, his voice faltered with real emotion as he gave vent to his gratitude. But abruptly he checked himself, his brow lowered, and with a bitter remembrance of his brother’s plain, blunt sense of honour, he said, “Yet, alas, my Liege, in all this there is nought to satisfy our stubborn host.”

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

“You know,” answered the Archbishop, “that Warwick’s pride is only roused when he deems his honour harmed. Unhappily, as he thinks, by

your Grace's full consent, he pledged himself to the insurgents of Olney to the honourable dismissal of the lords of the Woodville race. And unless this be conceded, I fear me that all else he will reject, and the love between ye can be but hollow!"

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

"Not, Sire."

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

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

"Well, then, if I refuse to satisfy Warwick's pride, and disdain to give up to rebel insolence loyal servants, what will Warwick do? Speak out, Archbishop."

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

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

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

“I understand thee,” said the King, half laughing; “but I have my pride as well as Warwick. To concede this point is to humble the conceder.”

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

“Ah! cunning Prelate, thou knowest how my proud mother hates the Woodvilles—thou knowest how her judgment will decide.”

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

“Will Warwick consent to this?”

“I trust so.”

“Learn, and report to me. Enough for to-night’s conference.”

Edward was left alone, and his mind ran rapidly over the field of action open to him.

“I have half won the Earl’s army,” he thought; “but it would be to lose all hold in their hearts again, if they knew that these unhappy Woodvilles were the cause of a second breach between us. Certes, the Lancastrians are making strong head! Certes, the times must be played with and appeased! And yet these poor gentlemen love me after my own fashion, and not with the bear’s hug of that intolerable Earl. How came the grim man by so fair a daughter? Sweet Anne! I caught her eye often fixed on me, and with a soft fear which my heart beat loud to read aright. Verily, this is the fourth week I have passed without hearing a woman’s sigh! What marvel that so fair a face enamours me! Would that Warwick made her his ambassador; and yet it were all over with the Woodvilles if he did. These men know not how to manage me, and well-a-day, that task is easy enow to women!”

He laughed gaily to himself as he thus concluded his soliloquy, and extinguished the tapers. But rest did not come to his pillow; and after tossing to and fro for some time in vain search for sleep, he rose and opened his casement to cool the air which the tapers had overheated. In a single

casement, in a broad turret, projecting from an angle in the building,—below the tower in which his chamber was placed, the King saw a solitary light burning steadily. A sight so unusual at such an hour, surprised him. “Peradventure the wily prelate,” thought he. “Cunning never sleeps.” But a second look shewed him the very form that chased his slumbers. Beside the casement, which was partially open, he saw the soft profile of the Lady Anne; it was bent downwards; and what with the clear moonlight, and the lamp within her chamber, he could see distinctly that she was weeping. “Ah! Anne,” muttered the amorous King, “would that I were by to kiss away those tears!” While yet the unholy wish murmured on his lips, the lady rose. The fair hand, that seemed almost transparent in the moonlight, closed the casement; and though the light lingered for some minutes ere it left the dark walls of the castle without other sign of life than the step of the sentry, Anne was visible no more.

“Madness—madness—madness!” again murmured the King. “These Nevilles are fatal to me in all ways—in hatred or in love!”

NOTE TO VOL. II.

Hume, Rapin, and Carte, all dismiss the story of Edward's actual imprisonment at Middleham, while Lingard, Sharon Turner, and others, adopt it implicitly. And yet, though Lingard has successfully grappled with some of Hume's objections, he has left others wholly unanswered. Hume states that no such fact is mentioned in Edward's subsequent proclamation against Clarence and Warwick. Lingard answers, after correcting an immaterial error in Hume's dates,—“that the proclamation ought not to have mentioned it, because it was confined to the enumeration of offences only committed after the general amnesty in 1469.” And then, surely with some inconsistency, quotes the attainder of Clarence many years afterwards, in which the king enumerates it among his offences, “as jeopardyng the king's royal estate, person, and life, in strait warde, putting him thereby from all his libertye after procuring great commotions.” But it is clear that if the amnesty hindered Edward from charging Warwick with this imprisonment only one year after it was granted, it would, *à fortiori*, hinder him from charging Clarence with it *nine* years after. Most probable is it that this article of accusation does not refer to any imprisonment, real or supposed, at Middleham, in 1469, but to Clarence's invasion of England in 1470, when Edward's state, person, and life were indeed jeopardized by his narrow escape from the fortified house, where he might fairly be called, “in strait warde;” especially as the words, “after procuring great commotions,” could not apply to the date of the sup-

posed detention in Middleham, when, instead of procuring commotions, Clarence had helped Warwick to allay them, but *do* properly apply to his subsequent rebellion in 1470. Finally, Edward's charges against his brother, as Lingard, himself, has observed elsewhere, are not proofs, and that king never scrupled at any falsehood to serve his turn. Nothing, in short, can be more improbable than this tale of Edward's captivity—there was no object in it. At the very time it is said to have taken place, Warwick is absolutely engaged in warfare against the king's foes. The moment Edward leaves Middleham, instead of escaping to London, he goes carelessly and openly to York, to judge and execute the very Captain of the rebels whom Warwick has subdued, and in the very midst of Warwick's armies! Far from appearing to harbour the natural resentment so vindictive a king must have felt (had so great an indignity been offered to him)—almost immediately after he leaves York, he takes the Nevile family into greater power than ever, confers new dignities upon Warwick, and betroths his eldest daughter to Warwick's nephew. On the whole, then, perhaps some such view of the king's visit to Middleham, which has been taken in this narrative, may be considered not the least probable compromise of the disputed and contradictory evidence on the subject.

END OF VOL. II.



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