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BOOK IV.

INTRIGUES OF THE COURT OF EDWARD IV.

CHAPTER I.

MARGARET OF ANJOU.

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

The purlieu of the Thames, in that day of ineffective police, sheltered many who either lived upon plunder, or sought abodes that proffered, at alarm, the facility of flight. Here, sauntering in twos or threes, or lazily reclined by the threshold of plaster huts, might be seen that refuse population which is the unholy offspring of civil war,--disbanded soldiers of either Rose, too inured to violence and strife for peaceful employment, and ready for any enterprise by which keen steel wins bright gold. At length our friend stopped before the gate of a small house, on the very marge of the river, which belonged to one of the many religious orders then existing; but from its site and aspect denoted the poverty seldom their characteristic. Here he knocked; the door was opened by a lay-brother; a sign and a smile were interchanged, and the visitor was ushered into a room belonging to the superior, but given up for the last few days to a foreign priest, to whom the whole community appeared to consider the reverence of a saint was due. And yet this priest, who, seated alone, by a casement which commanded a partial view of the distant Tower of London, received the conspirator, was clad in the humblest serge. His face was smooth and delicate; and the animation of the aspect, the vehement impatience of the gesture, evinced little of the holy calm that should belong to those who have relinquished the affairs of earth for meditation on the things of heaven. To this personage the sturdy Hilyard bowed his manly knees; and casting himself at the priest's feet, his eyes, his countenance, changed from their customary hardihood and recklessness into an expression at once of reverence and of pity.

"Well, man--well, friend--good friend, tried and leal friend, speak! speak!" exclaimed the priest, in an accent that plainly revealed a foreign birth.

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

"How long, O Lord," said Margaret of Anjou, for she it was, under that reverend disguise, "how long wilt Thou delay the hour of triumph and

revenge?"

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

"The day will dawn at last," said Hilyard; "but the judgments of Heaven are slow. We are favoured, at the least, that our secret is confined to a man more merciful than his tribe." He then related to Margaret his interview with Hastings at the house of the Lady Lougueville, and continued: "This morning, not an hour since, I sought him (for last evening he did not leave Edward, a council met at the Tower), and learned that he had detected the documents in the recesses of Warner's engine. Knowing from your Highness and your spies that he had been open to the gifts of Charolois, I spoke to him plainly of the guerdon that should await his silence. 'Friar,' he answered, 'if in this court and this world I have found it were a fool's virtue to be more pure than others, and if I know that I should but provoke the wrath of those who profit by Burgundian gold, were I alone to disdain its glitter, I have still eno' of my younger conscience left me not to make barter of human flesh. Did I give these papers to King Edward, the heads of fifty gallant men, whose error is but loyalty to their ancient sovereign, would glut the doomsman; but,' he continued, 'I am yet true to my king and his cause; I shall know how to advise Edward to the frustrating all your schemes. The districts where you hoped a rising will be guarded, the men ye count upon will be watched: the Duke of Gloucester, whose vigilance never sleeps, has learned that the Lady Margaret is in England, disguised as a priest. To-morrow all the religious houses will be searched; if thou knowest where she lies concealed, bid her lose not an hour to fly.'"

"I Will NOT fly!" exclaimed Margaret; "let Edward, if he dare, proclaim to my people that their queen is in her city of London. Let him send his hirelings to seize her. Not in this dress shall she be found. In robes of state, the sceptre in her hand, shall they drag the consort of their king to the prison-house of her palace."

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

"My boy; my princely boy, my Edward!" exclaimed Margaret, bursting into tears, all the warrior-queen merged in the remembrance of the

fond mother. "Ah, faithful friend! he is so gallant and so beautiful! Oh, he shall reward thee well hereafter!"

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

"But what! is it not possible yet to strike the blow? Rather let us spur to the north; rather let us hasten the hour of action, and raise the Red Rose through the length and breadth of England!"

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

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

"Let us hope that he will not," replied Hilyard, soothingly; some chance may yet break off these nuptials, and once more give us France as our firm ally. But now we must be patient. Already Edward is fast wearing away the gloss of his crown; already the great lords desert his court; already, in the rural provinces, peasant and franklin complain of the exactions of his minions; already the mighty House of Nevile frowns sullen on the throne it built. Another year, and who knows but the Earl of Warwick,--the beloved and the fearless, whose statesman-art alone hath severed from you the arms and aid of France, at whose lifted finger all England would bristle with armed men--may ride by the side of Margaret through the gates of London?"

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

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

"Ah, lady," he said, with bitterness, "if no misfortune can curb thy pride, in vain would we rebuild thy throne. It is these Commons, Margaret of Anjou--these English Commons--this Saxon People, that can alone secure to thee the holding of the realm which the right arm wins. And, beshrew me, much as I love thy cause, much as thou hast

with thy sorrows and thy princely beauty glomoured and spelled my heart and my hand,--ay, so that I, the son of a Lollard, forget the wrongs the Lollards sustained from the House of Lancaster; so that I, who have seen the glorious fruitage of a Republic, yet labour for thee, to overshadow the land with the throne of ONE--yet--yet, lady--yet, if I thought thou wert to be the same Margaret as of old, looking back to thy dead kings, and contemptuous of thy living people, I would not bid one mother's son lift lance or bill on thy behalf."

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

"O bravest and lealest of friends, forgive thy wretched queen. Her troubles distract her brain,--chide her not if they sour her speech. Saints above! will ye not pardon Margaret if at times her nature be turned from the mother's milk into streams of gall and bloody purpose, when ye see, from your homes serene, in what a world of strife and falsehood her very womanhood hath grown unsexed?" She paused a moment, and her uplifted eyes shed tears fast and large. Then, with a sigh, she turned to Hilyard, and resumed more calmly, "Yes, thou art right, --adversity hath taught me much. And though adversity will too often but feed and not starve our pride, yet thou--thou hast made me know that there is more of true nobility in the blunt Children of the People than in many a breast over which flows the kingly robe. Forgive me, and the daughter of Charlemagne shall yet be a mother to the Commons, who claim thee as their brother!"

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

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

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

Robin, by a gesture, checked the man's impulse to throw himself at the feet of the pretended priest, and bade him put forth his best speed. The princess seated herself by the helm, and the little boat cut rapidly through the noble stream. Galleys, gay and gilded, with armorial streamers, and filled with nobles and gallants, passed them,

noisy with mirth or music, on their way. These the fallen sovereign heeded not; but, with all her faults, the woman's heart beating in her bosom--she who in prosperity had so often wrought ruin, and shame, and woe to her gentle lord; she who had been reckless of her trust as queen; and incurred grave--but, let us charitably hope, unjust--suspicion of her faith as wife, still fixed her eyes on the gloomy tower that contained her captive husband, and felt that she could have forgotten a while even the loss of power if but permitted to fall on that plighted heart, and weep over the past with the woe-worn bridegroom of her youth.

CHAPTER II.

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

Scarcely need it be said to those who have looked with some philosophy upon human life, that the young existence of Master Marmaduke Nevile, once fairly merged in the great common sea, will rarely reappear before us individualized and distinct. The type of the provincial cadet of the day hastening courtwards to seek his fortune, he becomes lost amidst the gigantic characters and fervid passions that alone stand forth in history. And as, in reading biography, we first take interest in the individual who narrates, but if his career shall pass into that broader and more stirring life, in which he mingles with men who have left a more dazzling memory than his own, we find the interest change from the narrator to those by whom he is surrounded and eclipsed,--so, in this record of a time, we scarce follow our young adventurer into the court of the brilliant Edward ere the scene itself allures and separates us from our guide; his mission is, as it were, well-nigh done. We leave, then, for a while this bold, frank nature--fresh from the health of the rural life--gradually to improve, or deprave itself, in the companionship it finds. The example of the Lords Hastings, Scales, and Worcester, and the accomplishments of the two younger Princes of York, especially the Duke of Gloucester, had diffused among the younger and gayer part of the court that growing taste for letters which had somewhat slept during the dynasty of the House of Lancaster; and Marmaduke's mind became aware that learning was no longer the peculiar distinction of the Church, and that Warwick was behind his age when he boasted "that the sword was more familiar to him than the pen." He had the sagacity to perceive that the alliance with the great earl did not conduce to his popularity at court; and even in the king's presence, the courtiers permitted themselves many taunts and jests at the fiery Warwick, which they would have bitten out their tongues ere they would have vented before the earl himself. But though the Nevile sufficiently controlled his native candour not to incur unprofitable quarrel by ill-mannered and unseasonable defence of the hero-baron when sneered at or assailed, he had enough of the soldier and the man in him not to be tainted by the

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

The whole court was animated and pregnant with a spirit of intrigue, which the artful cunning of the queen, the astute policy of Jacquetta, and the animosity of the different factions had fomented to a degree quite unknown under former reigns. It was a place in which the wit of young men grew old rapidly; amidst stratagem, and plot, and ambitious design, and stealthy overreaching, the boyhood of Richard III. passed to its relentless manhood: such is the inevitable fruit of that era in civilization when a martial aristocracy first begins to merge into a voluptuous court.

Through this moving and shifting web of ambition and intrigue the royal Edward moved with a careless grace: simple himself, because his object was won, and pleasure had supplanted ambition. His indolent, joyous temper served to deaden his powerful intellect; or, rather, his intellect was now lost in the sensual stream through which it flowed. Ever in pursuit of some new face, his schemes and counterschemes were limited to cheat a husband or deceive a wife; and dexterous and successful no doubt they were. But a vice always more destructive than the love of women began also to reign over him,--namely, the intemperance of the table. The fastidious and graceful epicurism of the early Normans, inclined to dainties but abhorring excess, and regarding with astonished disdain the heavy meals and deep draughts of the Saxon, had long ceased to characterize the offspring of that noblest of all noble races. Warwick, whose stately manliness was disgusted with whatever savoured of effeminacy or debauch, used to declare that he would rather fight fifty battles for Edward IV. than once sup with him! Feasts were prolonged for hours, and the banquets of this king of the Middle Ages almost resembled those of the later Roman emperors. The Lord Montagu did not share the abstemiousness of his brother of Warwick. He was, next to Hastings, the king's chosen and most favourite companion. He ate almost as much as the king, and drank very little less. Of few courtiers could the same be said!

Over the lavish profligacy and excess of the court, however, a veil dazzling to the young and high-spirited was thrown. Edward was thoroughly the cavalier, deeply imbued with the romance of chivalry, and, while making the absolute woman his plaything, always treated the ideal woman as a goddess. A refined gallantry, a deferential courtesy to dame and demoiselle, united the language of an Amadis with the licentiousness of a Gaolor; and a far more alluring contrast than the court of Charles II. presented to the grim Commonwealth seduced the vulgar in that of this most brave and most beautiful prince, when compared with the mournful and lugubrious circles in which Henry VI. had reigned and prayed. Edward himself, too, it was so impossible to judge with severe justice, that his extraordinary popularity in London, where he was daily seen, was never diminished by his faults; he was so bold in the field, yet so mild in the chamber; when his passions slept, he was so thoroughly good-natured and social, so kind to all about his person, so hearty and gladsome in his talk and in his vices, so magnificent and so generous withal; and, despite his indolence, his capacities for business were marvellous,--and these last commanded the reverence of the good Londoners; he often administered justice himself, like the caliphs of the East, and with great acuteness and address. Like most extravagant men, he had a wholesome touch of avarice. That contempt for commerce which characterizes a modern aristocracy was little felt by the nobles of that day, with the exception of such blunt patricians as Lord Warwick or Raoul de Fulke. The great House of De la Pole (Duke of Suffolk), the heir of which married Edward's sister Elizabeth, had been founded by a merchant of Hull. Earls and archbishops scrupled not to derive revenues from what we should now esteem the literal resources of trade. [The Abbot of St. Alban's (temp. Henry III.) was a vendor of Yarmouth bloaters. The Cistercian Monks were wool-merchants; and Macpherson tells us of a couple of Iceland bishops who got a license from Henry VI. for smuggling. (Matthew Paris. Macpherson's "Annals of Commerce," 10.) As the Whig historians generally have thought fit to consider the Lancastrian cause the more "liberal" of the two, because Henry IV. was the popular choice, and, in fact, an elected, not an hereditary king, so it cannot be too emphatically repeated, that the accession of Edward IV. was the success of two new and two highly--popular principles,--the one that of church reform, the other that of commercial calculation. All that immense section, almost a majority of the people, who had been persecuted by the Lancastrian kings as Lollards, revenged on Henry the aggrieved rights of religious toleration. On the other hand, though Henry IV., who was immeasurably superior to his warlike son in intellect and statesmanship, had favoured the growing commercial spirit, it had received nothing but injury under Henry V., and little better than contempt under Henry VI. The accession of the Yorkists was, then, on two grounds a great popular movement; and it was followed by a third advantage to the popular cause,--namely, in the determined desire both of Edward and Richard III. to destroy the dangerous influence of the old feudal aristocracy. To this end Edward laboured in the creation of a court noblesse; and Richard, with the more dogged resolution that belonged to him, went at once to the root of the feudal power, in forbidding the nobles to give badges and liveries (this also was forbidden, it is

true, by the edict of Edward IV. as well as by his predecessors from the reign of Richard II.; but no king seems to have had the courage to enforce the prohibition before Richard III.),--in other words, to appropriate armies under the name of retainers. Henry VII., in short, did not originate the policy for which he has monopolized the credit; he did but steadily follow out the theory of raising the middle class and humbling the baronial, which the House of York first put into practice.] shown itself on this point more liberal in its policy, more free from feudal prejudices, than that of the Plantagenets. Even Edward II. was tenacious of the commerce with Genoa, and an intercourse with the merchant princes of that republic probably served to associate the pursuits of commerce with the notion of rank and power. Edward III. is still called the Father of English Commerce; but Edward IV. carried the theories of his ancestors into far more extensive practice, for his own personal profit. This king, so indolent in the palace, was literally the most active merchant in the mart. He traded largely in ships of his own, freighted with his own goods; and though, according to sound modern economics, this was anything but an aid to commerce, seeing that no private merchant could compete with a royal trader who went out and came in duty-free, yet certainly the mere companionship and association in risk and gain, and the common conversation that it made between the affable monarch and the homeliest trader, served to increase his popularity, and to couple it with respect for practical sense. Edward IV. was in all this pre-eminently THE MAN OF HIS AGE,--not an inch behind it or before! And, in addition to this happy position, he was one of those darlings of Nature, so affluent and blest in gifts of person, mind, and outward show, that it is only at the distance of posterity we ask why men of his own age admired the false, the licentious, and the cruel, where those contemporaries, over-dazzled, saw but the heroic and the joyous, the young, the beautiful,--the affable to friend, and the terrible to foe!

It was necessary to say thus much on the commercial tendencies of Edward, because, at this epoch, they operated greatly, besides other motives shortly to be made clear, in favour of the plot laid by the enemies of the Earl of Warwick, to dishonour that powerful minister and drive him from the councils of the king.

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

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

The letter was from a gentleman in Warwick's train. It gave a glowing account of the honours accorded to the earl by Louis XI., greater than those ever before manifested to a subject, and proceeded thus:--

"But it is just I should apprise you that there be strange rumours as to the marvellous love that King Louis shows my lord the earl. He

lodgeth in the next house to him, and hath even had an opening made in the partition-wall between his own chamber and the earl's. Men do say that the king visits him nightly, and there be those who think that so much stealthy intercourse between an English ambassador and the kinsman of Margaret of Anjou bodeth small profit to our grace the king."

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"With submission to the Lord Hastings, sire, whom we know that love sometimes blinds, and whose allegiance to the earl's fair sister, the Lady of Bonville, perchance somewhat moves him to forget the day when Lord Warwick--"

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

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

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

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

"Durst not I" exclaimed Edward, starting to his feet, and striking the table with his clenched hand, "durst not! Hastings, hear you that?"

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

"All! and methinks enough."

"Enough, by my halidame!" said Edward, laughing bitterly; "he shall see what a king dares, when a subject threatens. Admit the worshipful the deputies from our city of London,--lord chamberlain, it is thine office,--they await in the anteroom."

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

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

The supplicators then withdrew from the royal presence.

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

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

As the citizens were quitting the palace, Lord Rivers joined them.

"You will thank me for suggesting this deputation, worthy sirs," said he, smiling significantly; "you have timed it well!"--and passing by them, without further comment, he took the way to the queen's chamber.

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

"Well, well! how thrives our policy?"

"The king," answered Rivers, "is in the very mood we could desire. At the words, 'He durst not!' the Plantagenet sprung up in his breast; and now, lest he ask to see the rest of the letter, thus I destroy it; and flinging the scroll in the blazing hearth, he watched it consume."

"Why this, sir?" said the queen.

"Because, my Elizabeth, the bold words glided off into a decent gloss,--'He durst not,' said Warwick, 'because what a noble heart dares least is to belie the plighted word, and what the kind heart shuns most is to wrong the confiding friend.'"

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

"I was prepared, Jacquetta; had he asked to see the rest, I should have dropped the scroll into the brazier, as containing what I would not presume to read. Courage! Edward has seen the merchants; he has flouted Hastings,--who would gainsay us. For the rest, Elizabeth, be it yours to speak of affronts paid by the earl to your highness; be it yours, Jacquetta, to rouse Edward's pride by dwelling on Warwick's overweening power; be it mine to enlist his interest on behalf of his merchandise; be it Margaret's to move his heart by soft tears for the bold Charolois; and ere a month be told, Warwick shall find his embassy a thriftless laughing-stock, and no shade pass between the House of Woodville and the sun of England."

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

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

CHAPTER III.

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

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

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

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

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

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

The princess coloured with complaisant vanity at these words, and, drawing near the queen, looked silently at a collar of pearls, which Elizabeth held.

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

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

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

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

"Of Burgundy!" exclaimed the queen.

"It is true," said the Duchess of Bedford, looking at the ornament with care, and slightly colouring,--for in fact the jewels had been a present from Philip the Good to the Duke of Bedford, and the exigencies of the civil wars had led, some time since, first to their mortgage, or rather pawn, and then to their sale.

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

The two elder ladies exchanged looks and smiles. "Hast thou travelled, young man?" asked the duchess.

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

"Ah, and what say they of the ancient friends of mine House, the princes of Burgundy?"

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

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

Alwyn bit his lip, to restrain a reply that might not have been well received; and the queen, putting aside the emeralds and a few other trinkets, said, smilingly, to the duchess, "Shall the king pay for these, or have thy learned men yet discovered the great secret?"

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"You speak wisely, sir," said the queen; "and your king will yet defend you from the plots of your enemies. You may retire."

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

"Our neighbours the Scotch say, 'It is good fishing in muddy waters;' but he who fishes into the secrets of courts must bait with his head. What mischief doth that crafty queen, the proud duchess, devise? Um! They are thinking still to match the young princess with the hot Count of Charolois. Better for trade, it is true, to be hand in hand with the Flemings; but there are two sides to a loaf. If they play such a trick on the stout earl, he is not a man to sit down and do nothing. More food for the ravens, I fear,--more brown bills and bright lances in the green fields of poor England!--and King Louis is an awful carle to sow flax in his neighbour's house, when the torches are burning. Um! Where is fair Marmaduke. He looks brave in his gay super-tunic. Well, sir and foster-brother, how fare you at court?"

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

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

"A sail, Nicholas! a sail bound to England! Know that the Count of Charolois has permitted Sir Anthony Count de la Roche, his bastard brother, to come over to London, to cross lances with our own Sir

Anthony Lord Scales. It is an old challenge, and right royally will the encounter be held."

"Um!" muttered Alwyn, "this bastard, then, is the carrier pigeon.-- And," said he, aloud, "is it only to exchange hard blows that Sir Anthony of Burgundy comes over to confer with Sir Anthony of England? Is there no court rumour of other matters between them?"

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

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

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

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

"Eh, man?" interrupted Nevile.

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

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

"How so?"

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

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

"Verily, yes!"

"And failed?"

"And failed."

"Poor Marmaduke!"

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

"More's the pity!" said Alwyn, reciprocating his friend's sigh.

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

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

"Yonder, by the little postern, on the third flight of the turret that flanks the corridor, [This description refers to that part of the Tower called the King's or Queen's Lodge, and long since destroyed.] next to Friar Bungey, the magician; but it is broad daylight, and therefore not so dangerous,--not but thou mayest as well patter an ave in going up stairs."

"Farewell, Master Nevile," said Alwyn, smiling; "I will seek the mechanician, and if I find there Mistress Sibyll, what shall I say from thee?"

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

CHAPTER IV.

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

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

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

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

"Remember, oh, certes! doubtless one of the gentlemen present when they proposed to put me to the brake. [the old word for rack] Please to stand a little on this side--what is your will?"

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

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

The alchemist had returned to his furnace, and the young man and the

girl were as much alone as if Adam Warner had been in heaven.

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

"I thank thee for the rebuke, mistress," said Alwyn, delighted with her speech; "for I should have been sorry to see thy heart spoiled by the vanities that kill most natures." Scarcely had he uttered these words, than they seemed to him overbold and presuming; for his eye now took in the great change of which Marmaduke had spoken. Sibyll's dress beseeemed the new rank which she held: the corset, fringed with gold, and made of the finest thread, showed the exquisite contour of the throat and neck, whose ivory it concealed. The kirtle of rich blue became the fair complexion and dark chestnut hair; and over all she wore that most graceful robe, called the sasquenice, of which the old French poet sang,--

"Car nulie robe n'est si belle
A dame ne a 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 airs of courts; still modest indeed, and simple, but with a consciousness of dignity, and almost of power; and in fact the woman had been taught the power that womanhood possesses. She had been admired, followed, flattered; she had learned the authority of beauty. Her accomplishments, uncommon in that age among her sex, had aided her charm of person; her natural pride, which, though hitherto latent, was high and ardent, fed her heart with sweet hopes; a bright career seemed to extend before her; and, at peace as to her father's safety, relieved from the drudging cares of poverty, her fancy was free to follow the phantasms of sanguine youth through the airy land of dreams. And therefore it was that the maid was changed!

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

The girl smiled at the young man's confusion.

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

"May thy trial in these last be over," answered Alwyn; "but the humble must console their state by thinking that the great have their trials

too; and, as our homely adage hath it, 'That is not always good in the maw which is sweet in the mouth.' Thou seest much of my gentle foster-brother, Mistress Sibyll?"

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

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

"The Lady of Bonville!" repeated Sibyll, changing colour; "she is a dame of notable loveliness."

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

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

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

"How runs the tale? Be seated, Master Alwyn."

"Marry, thus: when William Hastings was but a squire, and much favoured by Richard, Duke of York, he lifted his eyes to the Lady Katherine 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 Neville. Marry, Mistress Sibyll, there is a north country and pithy proverb, 'Happy is the man whose father went to the devil.' Had some old Hastings been a robber and extortioner, and left to brave William the heirship of his wickedness in lordships and lands, Lord Warwick had not called him 'a new man.' Master Hastings was dragged, like a serf's son, before the earl on his dais; and be sure he was rated soundly, for his bold blood was up, and he defied the earl, as a

gentleman born, to single battle. Then the earl's followers would have fallen on him; and in those days, under King Henry, he who bearded a baron in his hall must have a troop at his back, or was like to have a rope round his neck; but the earl (for the lion is not as fierce as they paint him) came down from his dais, and said, 'Man, I like thy spirit, and I myself will dub thee knight that I may pick up thy glove and give thee battle.'

"And they fought? Brave Hastings!"

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

"Loves her! Nay, nay,--I trowe not," answered Sibyll, in a low voice, and with a curl of her dewy lip.

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

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

As the goldsmith obeyed, he glanced from Hastings to the blushing face and heaving bosom of Sibyll, and a deep and exquisite pang shot through his heart. It was not jealousy alone; it was anxiety, compassion, terror. The powerful Hastings, the ambitious lord, the accomplished libertine--what a fate for poor Sibyll, if for such a man the cheek blushed and the bosom heaved!

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

The philosopher uttered an impatient groan. "Ah, I comprehend. The goldmaker must not speak of his craft before the goldsmith. Good Alwyn, thou mayest retire. All arts have their mysteries."

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

"In sooth," he said, "I have overtarried, good my lord. The Lady Bonville will chide me; for she is of no patient temper."

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

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

CHAPTER V.

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

And now the one topic at the court of King Edward IV. was the expected arrival of Anthony of Burgundy, Count de la Roche, bastard brother of Charolois, afterwards, as Duke of Burgundy, so famous as Charles the Bold. Few, indeed, out of the immediate circle of the Duchess of Bedford's confidants regarded the visit of this illustrious foreigner as connected with any object beyond the avowed one of chivalrous encounter with Anthony Woodville, the fulfilment of a challenge given by the latter two years before, at the time of the queen's coronation. The origin of this challenge, Anthony Woodville Lord Scales has himself explained in a letter to the bastard, still extant, and of which an extract may be seen in the popular and delightful biographies of Miss Strickland. [Queens of England, vol. iii. p. 380] It seems that, on the Wednesday before Easter Day, 1465, as Sir Anthony was speaking to his royal sister, "on his knees," all the ladies of the court gathered round him, and bound to his left knee a band of gold adorned with stones fashioned into the letters S. S. (souvenance or remembrance), and to this band was suspended an enamelled "Forget-me-not." "And one of the ladies said that 'he ought to take a step fitting for the times.'" This step was denoted by a letter on vellum, bound with a gold thread, placed in his cap; and having obtained the king's permission to bring the adventure of the flower of souvenance to a conclusion, the gallant Anthony forwarded the articles and the enamelled flower to the Bastard of Burgundy, beseeching him to touch the latter with his knightly hand, in token of his accepting the challenge. The Count de la Roche did so, but was not sent by his brother amongst the knights whom Charolois despatched to England, and the combat had been suspended to the present time.

But now the intriguing Rivers and his duchess gladly availed themselves of so fair a pretext for introducing to Edward the able brother of Warwick's enemy and the French prince's rival, Charles of Burgundy; and Anthony Woodville, too gentle and knightly a person to have abetted their cunning projects in any mode less chivalrous, willingly consented to revive a challenge in honour of the ladies of England.

The only one amongst the courtiers who seemed dissatisfied with the meditated visit of the doughty Burgundian champion was the Lord Montagu. This penetrating and experienced personage was not to be duped by an affectation of that chivalry which, however natural at the court of Edward III., was no longer in unison with the more intriguing and ambitious times over which presided the luxurious husband of Elizabeth Woodville. He had noticed of late, with suspicion, that Edward had held several councils with the anti-Nevile faction, from which he himself was excluded. The king, who heretofore had delighted in his companionship, had shown him marks of coldness and estrangement; and there was an exulting malice in the looks of the Duchess of Bedford, which augured some approaching triumph over the great family which the Woodvilles so openly laboured to supplant. One day, as Marmaduke was loitering in the courtyard of the Tower, laughing and jesting with his friends, Lord Montagu, issuing from the king's closet, passed him with a hurried step and a thoughtful brow. This haughty brother of the Earl of Warwick had so far attended to the recommendation of the latter, that he had with some courtesy excused himself to Marmaduke for his language in the archery-ground, and had subsequently, when seeing him in attendance on the king, honoured him with a stately nod, or a brief "Good morrow, young kinsman." But as his eye now rested on Marmaduke, while the group veiled their bonnets to the powerful courtier, he called him forth, with a familiar smile he had never before assumed, and drawing him apart, and leaning on his shoulder, much to the envy of the standers by, he said caressingly,--

"Dear kinsman Guy--"

"Marmaduke, please you, my lord."

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

"If the king would graciously hold me excused."

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

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

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

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

"That it has given a peacock's strut to the popinjay Anthony Woodville."

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

"Nay, take it not so gravely,--a mere pastime."

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

"Small cause have I to be so," answered Hastings, with a quivering lip. "To him and your father I owe as deep a curse as ever fell on the heart of man. I have lived to be above even Lord Warwick's insult. Yet young, I stand amongst the warriors and peers of England with a crest as haught and a scutcheon as stainless as the best. I have drunk deep of the world's pleasures. I command, as I list, the world's gaudy pomps, and I tell thee, that all my success in life countervails not the agony of the hour when all the bloom and loveliness of the earth faded into winter, and the only woman I ever loved was sacrificed to her brother's pride."

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

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

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

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

"I know it," said Hastings, proudly,--"I know it, lord; and why? Because I have gold, and land, and the king's love, and can say, as the Centurion, to my fellow-man, 'Do this, and he doeth it;' and yet I tell thee, Lord Montagu, that I am less worthy now the love of beauty, the right hand of fellowship from a noble spirit, than I was then, when--the simple squire--my heart full of truth and loyalty, with lips that had never lied, with a soul never polluted by unworthy pleasures

or mean intrigues, I felt that Katherine Nevile should never blush to own her fere and plighted lord in William de Hastings. Let this pass, let it pass! You call me no friend to Warwick. True! but I am a friend to the king he has served, and the land of my birth to which he has given peace; and therefore, not till Warwick desert Edward, not till he wake the land again to broil and strife, will I mingle in the plots of those who seek his downfall. If in my office and stated rank I am compelled to countenance the pageant of this mock tournament, and seem to honour the coming of the Count de la Roche, I will at least stand aloof and free from all attempt to apply a gaudy pageant to a dangerous policy; and on this pledge, Montagu, I give you my knightly hand."

"It suffices," answered Montagu, pressing the hand extended to him. "But the other day I heard the king's dissour tell him a tale of some tyrant, who silently showed a curious questioner how to govern a land, by cutting down, with his staff, the heads of the tallest poppies; and the Duchess of Bedford turned to me, and asked, 'What says a Nevile to the application?' 'Faith, lady,' said I, 'the Nevile poppies have oak stems.' Believe me, Hastings, these Woodvilles may grieve and wrong and affront Lord Warwick, but woe to all the pigmy goaders when the lion turns at bay!"

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

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

They had gone several miles at a brisk trot before the earl opened his lips, and then, slackening his pace, he said abruptly, "How dost thou like the king? Speak out, youth; there are no eavesdroppers here."

"He is a most gracious master and a most winning gentleman."

"He is both," said Montagu, with a touch of emotion that surprised Marmaduke; "and no man can come near without loving him. And yet, Marmaduke (is that thy name?)--yet whether it be weakness or falseness, no man can be sure of his king's favour from day to day. We Neviles must hold fast to each other. Not a stick should be lost if the fagot is to remain unbroken. What say you?" and the earl's keen eye turned sharply on the young man.

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

wander, for his bread I would beg."

"Young man," exclaimed Montagu, "from this hour I admit thee to my heart! Give me thy hand. Beggar and outcast?--No! If the storm come, the meaner birds take to shelter, the eagle remains solitary in heaven!" So saying, he relapsed into silence, and put spurs to his steed. Towards the decline of day they drew near to the favourite palace of the Archbishop of York. There the features of the country presented a more cultivated aspect than it had hitherto worn. For at that period the lands of the churchmen were infinitely in advance of those of the laity in the elementary arts of husbandry, partly because the ecclesiastic proprietors had greater capital at their command, partly because their superior learning had taught them to avail themselves, in some measure, of the instructions of the Latin writers. Still the prevailing characteristic of the scenery was pasture land,--immense tracts of common supported flocks of sheep; the fragrance of new-mown hay breathed sweet from many a sunny field. In the rear stretched woods of Druid growth; and in the narrow lanes, that led to unfrequent farms and homesteads, built almost entirely either of wood or (more primitive still) of mud and clay, profuse weeds, brambles, and wild-flowers almost concealed the narrow pathway, never intended for cart or wagon, and arrested the slow path of the ragged horse bearing the scanty produce of acres to yard or mill. But though to the eye of an economist or philanthropist broad England now, with its variegated agriculture, its wide roads, its white-walled villas, and numerous towns, may present a more smiling countenance, to the early lover of Nature, fresh from the child-like age of poetry and romance, the rich and lovely verdure which gave to our mother-country the name of "Green England;" its wild woods and covert alleys, proffering adventure to fancy; its tranquil heaths, studded with peaceful flocks, and vocal, from time to time, with the rude scrannel of the shepherd,--had a charm which we can understand alone by the luxurious reading of our elder writers. For the country itself ministered to that mingled fancy and contemplation which the stirring and ambitious life of towns and civilization has in much banished from our later literature.

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

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

Scarcely had Montagu said these words, before there suddenly emerged from a bosky lane to the right a man mounted upon a powerful roan horse. His dress was that of a substantial franklin; a green surtout of broadcloth, over a tight vest of the same colour, left, to the admiration of a soldierly eye, an expanse of chest that might have

vied with the mighty strength of Warwick himself. A cap, somewhat like a turban, fell in two ends over the left cheek, till they touched the shoulder, and the upper part of the visage was concealed by a half-vizard, not unfrequently worn out of doors with such head-gear, as a shade from the sun. Behind this person rode, on a horse equally powerful, a man of shorter stature, but scarcely less muscular a frame, clad in a leathern jerkin, curiously fastened with thongs, and wearing a steel bonnet, projecting far over the face.

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

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

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

"A caitiff and illegal act," said Montagu.

"Illegal! But the law will notice it not,--why should it? Unjust, if it punish the knight and dare not touch the king's brother!"

"How, sir?"

"I say the king's brother! Scarcely a month since, twenty-four persons under George Duke of Clarence entered by force a lady's house, and seized her jewels and her money, upon some charge, God wot, of contriving mischief to the boy-duke. [See for this and other instances of the prevalent contempt of law in the reign of Edward IV., and, indeed, during the fifteenth century, the extracts from the Parliamentary Rolls, quoted by Sharon Turner, "History of England," vol. iii. p. 399.] Are not the Commons ground by imposts for the queen's kindred? Are not the king's officers and purveyors licensed spoilers and rapiners? Are not the old chivalry banished for new upstarts? And in all this, is peace better than war?"

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

"Ay, in the city! but in the fields and waste thought is free. Frown not, my lord. Ah, I know you, and the time may come when the baron will act what the franklin speaks. What! think you I see not the signs of the storm? Are Warwick and Montagu more safe with Edward than they were with Henry? Look to thyself! Charolois will outwit

King Louis, and ere the year be out, the young Margaret of England will be lady of your brave brother's sternest foe!"

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

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

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

"A sturdy traitor!" muttered the earl, following him with his eye.

"One of the exiled Lancastrian lords, perchance. Strange how they pierce into our secrets! Heardst thou that fellow, Marmaduke?"

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

"True! and misfortune has ever a shrewish tongue."

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

"Art thou sure it is the same man, for his face was masked?"

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

Montagu smiled at this soldierly simplicity. "And heard you the name the raptrils shouted?"

"Robin, my lord. They cried out 'Robin,' as if it had been a 'Montagu I or a 'Warwick.'"

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

On arriving at the More, its stately architecture, embellished by the prelate with a facade of double arches, painted and blazoned somewhat in the fashion of certain old Italian houses, much dazzled Marmaduke. And the splendour of the archbishop's retinue--less martial indeed

than Warwick's--was yet more imposing to the common eye. Every office that pomp could devise for a king's court was to be found in the household of this magnificent prelate,--master of the horse and the hounds, chamberlain, treasurer, pursuivant, herald, seneschal, captain of the body-guard, etc.,--and all emulously sought for and proudly held by gentlemen of the first blood and birth. His mansion was at once a court for middle life, a school for youth, an asylum for age; and thither, as to a Medici, fled the letters and the arts.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"Dismiss my comrade, George,--I would speak to thee," whispered Montagu.

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

"But--"

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

Long and earnest was their conference, and at one time keen were their dispute's.

The archbishop had very little of the energy of Montagu or the impetuosity of Warwick, but he had far more of what we now call mind, as distinct from talent, than either; that is, he had not their capacities for action, but he had a judgment and sagacity that made him considered a wise and sound adviser: this he owed principally to the churchman's love of ease, and to his freedom from the wear and tear of the passions which gnawed the great minister and the aspiring courtier; his natural intellect was also fostered by much learning. George Nevile had been reared, by an Italian ecclesiastic, in all the subtle diplomacy of the Church; and his ambition, despising lay objects (though he consented to hold the office of chancellor), was concentrated in that kingdom over kings which had animated the august dominators of religious Rome. Though, as we have said, still in that age when the affections are usually vivid, [He was consecrated Bishop of Exeter at the age of twenty; at twenty-six he became Archbishop of York, and was under thirty at the time referred to in the text.] George Nevile loved no human creature,--not even his brothers; not even King Edward, who, with all his vices, possessed so eminently the secret that wins men's hearts. His early and entire absorption in the great religious community, which stood apart from the laymen in order to control them, alienated him from his kind; and his superior instruction only served to feed him with a calm and icy contempt for all that prejudice, as he termed it, held dear and precious. He despised the knight's wayward honour, the burgher's crafty honesty. For him no such thing as principle existed; and conscience itself lay dead in the folds of a fancied exemption from all responsibility to

the dull herd, that were but as wool and meat to the churchman shepherd. But withal, if somewhat pedantic, he had in his manner a suavity and elegance and polish which suited well his high station, and gave persuasion to his counsels. In all externals he was as little like a priest as the high-born prelates of that day usually were. In dress he rivalled the fopperies of the Plantagenet brothers; in the chase he was more ardent than Warwick had been in his earlier youth; and a dry sarcastic humour, sometimes elevated into wit, gave liveliness to his sagacious converse.

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

"Nay," said the archbishop, with a bland smile, that fretted Montagu to the quick, "surely even a baron, a knight, a franklin, a poor priest like myself, would rise against the man who dictated to his hospitality. Is a king less irritable than baron, knight, franklin, and priest,--or rather, being, as it were, per legem, lord of all, hath he not irritability eno' for all four? Ay, tut and tush as thou wilt, John, but thy sense must do justice to my counsel at the last. I know Edward well; he hath something of mine own idlesse and ease of temper, but with more of the dozing lion than priests, who have only, look you, the mildness of the dove. Prick up his higher spirit, not by sharp remonstrance, but by seeming trust. Observe to him, with thy gay, careless laugh--which, methinks, thou hast somewhat lost of late --that with any other prince Warwick might suspect some snare, some humiliating overthrow of his 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 had 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 show that our eyes are open, but that we disdain to doubt, and are frank to confide. Meanwhile send messages and warnings privately to Warwick."

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

the verb amo.

CHAPTER VI.

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

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

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

De la Roche, an experienced and profound courtier, and justly deserving Hall's praise as a man of "great witte, courage, valiantness, and liberalitie," did not affect to conceal the admiration which the remarkable presence of Edward never failed to excite; lifting his hand to his eyes, as if to shade them from a sudden blaze of light, he would have fallen on both knees, but Edward with quick condescension raised him, and, rising himself, said gayly,--

"Nay, Count de la Roche, brave and puissant chevalier, who hath crossed the seas in honour of knighthood and the ladies, we would, indeed, that our roialme boasted a lord like thee, from whom we might ask such homage. But since thou art not our subject, it consoles us

at least that thou art our guest. By our halidame, Lord Scales, thou must look well to thy lance and thy steed's girths, for never, I trow, hast thou met a champion of goodlier strength and knightlier mettle."

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

"Your brother, Sir Count, if fame lies not," returned Edward, slightly laughing, and lightly touching the Bastard's shoulder, "were a fearful lance to encounter, even though Charlemagne himself were to revive with his twelve paladins at his back. Tell us, Sir Count," added the king, drawing himself up,--"tell us, for we soldiers are curious in such matters, hath not the Count of Charolois the advantage of all here in sinews and stature?"

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"But it is for the honour of the ladies," said Clarence, falteringly; "in honour of the fairest maid of all--the flower of English beauty--the Lady Isabel--that I--"

"Your Highness will pardon me," interrupted Montagu; "but I do trust to your esteem for our poor and insulted House of Nevile so far as to be assured that the name of my niece Isabel will not be submitted to the ribald comments of a base-born Burgundian."

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

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

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

"My brother," said Montagu, greatly softened, "is much beholden to your Highness for a steady countenance and friendship, for which I also, believe me--and the families of Beauchamp, Montagu, and Nevile--are duly grateful. But to speak plainly (which your Grace's youthful candour, so all-acknowledged, will permit), the kinsmen of the queen do now so aspire to rule this land, to marry or forbid to marry, not only our own children, but your illustrious father's, that I foresee in this visit of the bastard Anthony the most signal disgrace to Warwick that ever king passed upon ambassador or gentleman. And this moves me more!--yea, I vow to Saint George, my patron, it moves me more--by the thought of danger to your royal House than by the grief of slight to mine; for Warwick--but you know him."

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

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

"Ah, think you so?--you rejoice me! I had feared that the barons might, that the commons would, that the Church must, pronounce the unhappy truth, that--but you look amazed, my lord! Alas, my boyish years are too garrulous!"

"I catch not your Highness's meaning."

"Pooh, pooh! By Saint Paul, your seeming dulness proves your loyalty; but with me, the king's brother, frankness were safe. Thou knowest well that the king was betrothed before to the Lady Eleanor Talbot; that such betrothal, not set aside by the Pope, renders his marriage with Elizabeth against law; that his children may (would to Heaven it were not so!) be set aside as bastards, when Edward's life no longer shields them from the sharp eyes of men."

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

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

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

"Happy Clarence!" resumed the prince, with a heavy sigh, and after a brief pause,--"a Neville's husband and a Warwick's son--what can the saints do more for men? You must excuse his errors--all our errors--to your brother. You may not know, peradventure, sweet Montagu, how deep an interest I have in maintaining all amity between Lord Warwick and the king. For methinks there is one face fairer than fair Isabel's, and one man more to be envied than even Clarence. Fairest face to me in the wide world is the Lady Anne's! happiest man between the cradle and the grave is he whom the Lady Anne shall call her lord! and if I--oh, look you, Montagu, let there be no breach between Warwick and the king! Fare you well, dear lord and cousin,--I go to Baynard's Castle till these feasts are over."

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

"Montagu, I love your brother well enough to displease my king. The great earl shall not say, at least, that Richard Plantagenet in his absence forgot the reverence due to loyalty and merit. Tell him that; and if I seem (unlike Clarence) to forbear to confront the queen and her kindred, it is because you should make no enemies,--not the less for that should princes forget no friends."

Richard said this with a tone of deep feeling, and, folding his arms within his furred surcoat, walked slowly on to a small postern admitting to the river; but there, pausing by a buttress which concealed him till Montagu had left the yard, instead of descending to his barge, he turned back into the royal garden. Here several of the court of both sexes were assembled, conferring on the event of the day. Richard halted at a distance, and contemplated their gay dresses and animated countenances with something between melancholy and scorn upon his young brow. One of the most remarkable social characteristics of the middle ages is the prematurity at which the great arrived at manhood, shared in its passions, and indulged its ambitions. Among the numerous instances in our own and other countries that might be selected from history, few are more striking than that of this Duke of Gloucester, great in camp and in council at an age when nowadays a youth is scarcely trusted to the discipline of a college. The whole of his portentous career was closed, indeed, before the public life of modern ambition usually commences. Little could those accustomed to see on our stage "the elderly ruffian" [Sharon Turner] our actors represent, imagine that at the opening of Shakspeare's play of "Richard the Third" the hero was but in his nineteenth year; but at the still more juvenile age in which he appears in this our record, Richard of Gloucester was older in intellect, and almost in experience, than many a wise man at the date of thirty-three,--the fatal age when his sun set forever on the field of Bosworth!

The young prince, then, eyed the gaudy, fluttering, babbling assemblage before him with mingled melancholy and scorn. Not that he

felt, with the acuteness which belongs to modern sentiment, his bodily defects amidst that circle of the stately and the fair, for they were not of a nature to weaken his arm in war or lessen his persuasive influences in peace. But it was rather that sadness which so often comes over an active and ambitious intellect in early youth, when it pauses to ask, in sorrow and disdain, what its plots and counterplots, its restlessness and strife, are really worth. The scene before him was of pleasure,--but in pleasure neither the youth nor the manhood of Richard III. was ever pleased; though not absolutely of the rigid austerity of Amadis or our Saxon Edward, he was comparatively free from the licentiousness of his times. His passions were too large for frivolous excitements. Already the Italian, or, as it is falsely called, the Machiavelian policy, was pervading the intellect of Europe, and the effects of its ruthless, grand, and deliberate statecraft are visible from the accession of Edward IV. till the close of Elizabeth's reign. With this policy, which reconciled itself to crime as a necessity of wisdom, was often blended a refinement of character which disdained vulgar vices. Not skilled alone in those knightly accomplishments which induced Caxton, with propriety, to dedicate to Richard "The Book of the Order of Chivalry," the Duke of Gloucester's more peaceful amusements were borrowed from severer Graces than those which presided over the tastes of his royal brothers. He loved, even to passion, the Arts, Music,--especially of the more Doric and warlike kind,--Painting and Architecture; he was a reader of books, as of men,--the books that become princes,--and hence that superior knowledge of the principles of law and of commerce which his brief reign evinced. More like an Italian in all things than the careless Norman or the simple Saxon, Machiavel might have made of his character a companion, though a contrast to that of Castruccio Castrucani.

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

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

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

"My Lady of Bonville," said the young duke, laying his hand on her arm, "mirth is not in my thoughts at this hour."

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

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

"I understand you, my lord," said the proud lady; and her face, before stern and high, brightened into so lovely a change, so soft and winning a smile, that Gloucester no longer marvelled that that smile had rained so large an influence on the fate and heart of his favourite Hastings. The beauty of this noble woman was indeed remarkable in its degree, and peculiar in its character. She bore a stronger likeness in feature to the archbishop than to either of her other brothers; for the prelate had the straight and smooth outline of the Greeks,--not like Montagu and Warwick, the lordlier and manlier aquiline of the Norman race,--and his complexion was feminine in its pale clearness. But though in this resembling the subtlest of the brethren, the fair sister shared with Warwick an expression, if haughty, singularly frank and candid in its imperious majesty; she had the same splendid and steady brilliancy of eye, the same quick quiver of the lip, speaking of nervous susceptibility and haste of mood. The hateful fashion of that day which pervaded all ranks, from the highest to the lowest, was the prodigal use of paints and cosmetics, and all imaginable artificial adjuncts of a spurious beauty. This extended often even to the men, and the sturdiest warrior deemed it no shame to recur to such arts of the toilet as the vainest wanton in our day would never venture to acknowledge. But the Lady Bonville, proudly confident of her beauty, and possessing a purity of mind that revolted from the littleness of courting admiration, contrasted forcibly in this the ladies of the court. Her cheek was of a marble whiteness, though occasionally a rising flush through the clear, rich, transparent skin showed that in earlier youth the virgin bloom had not been absent from the surface. There was in her features, when they reposed, somewhat of the trace of suffering,--of a struggle, past it may be, but still remembered. But when she spoke, those features lighted up and undulated in such various and kindling life as to dazzle, to bewitch, or to awe the beholder, according as the impulse moulded the expression. Her dress suited her lofty and spotless character. Henry VI. might have contemplated with holy pleasure its matronly decorum; the jewelled gorget ascended to the rounded and dimpled chin; the arms were bare only at the wrists, where the blue veins were seen through a skin of snow; the dark glossy locks, which her tirewoman boasted, when released, swept the ground, were gathered into a modest and simple braid, surmounted by the beseeching coronet that proclaimed her rank. The Lady Bonville might have stood by the side of Cornelia, the model of a young and high-born matron, in whose virtue the honour of man might securely dwell.

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

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

"My lord duke, the head of a noble House hath the right to dispose of the hands of the daughters; I know nothing in Lord Warwick to forgive."

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

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

"The love of Richard Plantagenet honours even Warwick's daughter!"

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

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

Richard looked in some surprise at the fair speaker.

"Can he injure the House of York?--Marry, yes," he replied bluntly.

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

"What if he forgive the Lancastrians? What if--"

"Utter not the thought, prince, breathe it not," exclaimed the Lady Bonville, almost fiercely. "I love and honour my brave brother, despite--despite--" She paused a moment, blushed, and proceeded rapidly, without concluding the sentence. "I love him as a woman of his House must love the hero who forms its proudest boast. But if, for any personal grudge, any low ambition, any rash humour, the son of my father Salisbury could forget that Margaret of Anjou placed the gory head of that old man upon the gates of York, could by word or deed abet the cause of usurping and bloody Lancaster,--I would--I would-- Out upon my sex! I could do nought but weep the glory of Neville and Monthermer gone forever."

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

The Lady of Bonville paused a moment, and in that pause her countenance recovered its composure. She then passed on, with a stately step, towards a group of the ladies of the court, and her eye noted with proud pleasure that the highest names of the English

knighthood and nobility, comprising the numerous connections of her family, formed a sullen circle apart from the rest, betokening, by their grave countenances and moody whispers, how sensitively they felt the slight to Lord Warwick's embassy in the visit of the Count de la Roche, and how little they were disposed to cringe to the rising sun of the Woodvilles. There, collected into a puissance whose discontent had sufficed to shake a firmer throne (the young Raoul de Fulke, the idolater of Warwick, the impersonation in himself of the old Norman seignorie, in their centre), with folded arms and lowering brows, stood the earl's kinsmen, the Lords Fitzhugh and Fauconberg: with them, Thomas Lord Stanley, a prudent noble, who rarely sided with a malcontent, and the Lord St. John, and the heir of the ancient Bergavennies, and many another chief, under whose banner marched an army. Richard of Gloucester had shown his wit in refusing to mingle in intrigues which provoked the ire of that martial phalanx. As the Lady of Bonville swept by these gentlemen, their murmur of respectful homage, their profound salutation, and unbonneted heads, contrasted forcibly with the slight and grave, if not scornful, obeisance they had just rendered to one of the queen's sisters, who had passed a moment before in the same direction. The lady still moved on, and came suddenly across the path of Hastings, as, in his robes of state, he issued from the palace. Their eyes met, and both changed colour.

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

"A charge the chamberlain cannot refuse, and which William Hastings does not covet."

"A king had never asked Montagu and Warwick to consider amongst their duties any charge they had deemed dishonouring."

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

"I crave your pardon," answered Katherine, bitterly. "Mine articles of faith in men's honour are obsolete or heretical. I had deemed it dishonouring in a noble nature to countenance insult to a noble enemy in his absence. I had deemed it dishonouring in a brave soldier, a well-born gentleman (now from his valiantness, merit, and wisdom become a puissant and dreaded lord), to sink into that lackeydom and varletaille which falsehood and cringing have established 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 mummerly 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 Nevilles so large a gratitude, that rather

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

The bystanders smiled at each other as they obeyed; and a heavy, shambling, graceless man, dressed in the most exaggerated fopperies of the day, but with a face which even 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 velvet striped into the royal baudekin, while the stairs themselves were covered with leathern carpets, powdered with the white rose and the fleur de lis; either side lined by the bearers of the many banners of Edward, displaying the white lion of March, the black bull of Clare, the cross of Jerusalem, the dragon of Arragon, and the rising sun, which he had assumed as his peculiar war-badge since the battle of Mortimer's Cross. Again, and louder, came the flourish of music; and a murmur through the crowd, succeeded by deep silence, announced the entrance of the king. He appeared, leading by the hand the Count de la Roche, and followed by the Lords Scales, Rivers, Dorset, and the Duke of Clarence. All eyes were bent upon the count, and though seen to disadvantage by the side of the comeliest and stateliest and most gorgeously-attired prince in Christendom, his high forehead, bright sagacious eye, and powerful frame did not disappoint the expectations founded upon the fame of one equally subtle in council and redoubted

in war.

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

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

"The last hope is already fulfilled," said the count, gallantly, as on his knee he kissed the fair hand extended to him. Then rising, and gazing full and even boldly upon the young Princess Margaret, he added, "I have seen too often the picture of the Lady Margaret not to be aware that I stand in that illustrious presence."

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

"Pardon me, it was done by stealth."

"And where have you seen it?"

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

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

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

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

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

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

Margaret sighed, and the count continued till by degrees he warmed the

royal maiden from her reserve; and his eye grew brighter, and a triumphant smile played about his lips, when, after the visit to the menagerie, the procession re-entered the palace, and the Lord Hastings conducted the count to the bath prepared for him, previous to the crowning banquet of the night. And far more luxurious and more splendid than might be deemed by those who read but the general histories of that sanguinary time, or the inventories of furniture in the houses even of the great barons, was the accommodation which Edward afforded to his guest. His apartments and chambers were hung with white silk and linen, the floors covered with richly-woven carpets; the counterpane of his bed was cloth-of-gold, trimmed with ermine; the cupboard shone with vessels of silver and gold; and over two baths were pitched tents of white cloth of Rennes fringed with silver. [See Madden's Narrative of the Lord Grauthuse; Archaeologia, 1830.]

Agreeably to the manners of the time, Lord Hastings assisted to disrobe the count; and, the more to bear him company, afterwards undressed himself and bathed in the one bath, while the count refreshed his limbs in the other.

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

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

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

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

"But none win the grace of Louis whom Louis does not dupe."

"You know not Lord Warwick, Sir Count. His mind is so strong and so frank, that it is as hard to deceive him as it is for him to be deceived."

"Time will show," said the count, pettishly, and he withdrew his head into the tent.

And now there appeared the attendants, with hippocras, syrups, and comfits, by way of giving appetite for the supper, so that no further opportunity for private conversation was left to the two lords. While

the count was dressing, the Lord Scales entered with a superb gown, clasped with jewels, and lined with minever, with which Edward had commissioned him to present the Bastard. In this robe the Lord Scales insisted upon enduing his antagonist with his own hands, and the three knights then repaired to the banquet. At the king's table no male personage out of the royal family sat, except Lord Rivers--as Elizabeth's father--and the Count de la Roche, placed between Margaret and the Duchess of Bedford.

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

The banquet ended, the dance began. The admirable "featliness" of the Count de la Roche, in the pavon, with the Lady Margaret, was rivalled only by the more majestic grace of Edward and the dainty steps of Anthony Woodville. But the lightest and happiest heart which beat in that revel was one in which no scheme and no ambition but those of love nursed the hope and dreamed the triumph.

Stung by the coldness even more than by the disdain of the Lady Bonville, and enraged to find that no taunt of his own, however galling, could ruffle a dignity which was an insult both to memory and to self-love, Hastings had exerted more than usual, both at the banquet and in the revel, those general powers of pleasing, which, even in an age when personal qualifications ranked so high, had yet made him no less renowned for successes in gallantry than the beautiful and youthful king. All about this man witnessed to the triumph of mind over the obstacles that beset it,--his rise without envy, his safety amidst foes, the happy ease with which he moved through the snares and pits of everlasting stratagem and universal wile! Him alone the arts of the Woodvilles could not supplant in Edward's confidence and love; to him alone dark Gloucester bent his haughty soul; him alone, Warwick, who had rejected his alliance, and knew the private grudge the rejection bequeathed,--him alone, among the "new men," Warwick always treated with generous respect, as a wise patriot and a fearless soldier; and in the more frivolous scenes of courtly life, the same mind raised one no longer in the bloom of youth, with no striking advantages of person, and studiously disdainful of all the fopperies of the time, to an equality with the youngest, the fairest, the gaudiest courtier, in that 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 Sibyll, flushed into rich bloom at the notice it excited. Then as he approached the maiden, his quick glance darting to the woman he had first loved told

him that he had at last discovered the secret how to wound. An involuntary compression of Katherine's proud lips, a hasty rise and fall of the stately neck, a restless, indescribable flutter, as it were, of the whole frame, told the experienced woman-reader of the signs of jealousy and fear. And he passed at once to the young maiden's side. Alas! what wonder that Sibyll that night surrendered her heart to the happiest dreams; and finding herself on the floors of a court, intoxicated by its perfumed air, hearing on all sides the murmured eulogies which approved and justified the seeming preference of the powerful noble, what wonder that she thought the humble maiden, with her dower of radiant youth and exquisite beauty, and the fresh and countless treasures of virgin love, might be no unworthy mate of the "new lord"?

It was morning [The hours of our ancestors, on great occasions, were not always more seasonable than our own. Froissart speaks of court balls, in the reign of Richard II., kept up till day.] before the revel ended; and when dismissed by the Duchess of Bedford, Sibyll was left to herself, not even amidst her happy visions did the daughter forget her office. She stole into her father's chamber. He, too, was astir and up,--at work at the untiring furnace, the damps on his brow, but all Hope's vigour at his heart. So while Pleasure feasts, and Youth revels, and Love deludes itself, and Ambition chases its shadows (chased itself by Death),--so works the world-changing and world-despised SCIENCE, the life within life, for all living,--and to all dead!

CHAPTER VII.

THE RENOWNED COMBAT BETWEEN SIR ANTHONY WOODVILLE AND THE BASTARD OF BURGUNDY.

And now the day came for the memorable joust between the queen's brother and the Count de la Roche. By a chapter solemnly convoked at St. Paul's, the preliminaries were settled; upon the very timber used in decking the lists King Edward expended half the yearly revenue derived from all the forests of his duchy of York. In the wide space of Smithfield, destined at a later day to blaze with the fires of intolerant bigotry, crowded London's holiday population: and yet, though all the form and parade of chivalry were there; though in the open balconies never presided a braver king or a comelier queen; though never a more accomplished chevalier than Sir Anthony Lord of Scales, nor a more redoubted knight than the brother of Charles the Bold, met lance to lance,--it was obvious to the elder and more observant spectators, that the true spirit of the lists was already fast wearing out from the influences of the age; that the gentleman was succeeding to the knight, that a more silken and scheming race had become the heirs of the iron men, who, under Edward III., had realized the fabled Paladins of Charlemagne and Arthur. But the actors were less changed than the spectators,--the Well-born than the People.

Instead of that hearty sympathy in the contest, that awful respect for the champions, that eager anxiety for the honour of the national lance, which, a century or more ago, would have moved the throng as one breast, the comments of the bystanders evinced rather the cynicism of ridicule, the feeling that the contest was unreal, and that chivalry was out of place in the practical temper of the times. On the great chessboard the pawns were now so marshalled, that the knight's moves were no longer able to scour the board and hold in check both castle and king.

"Gramercy," said Master Stokton, who sat in high state as sheriff, [Fabyan] "this is a sad waste of moneys; and where, after all, is the glory in two tall fellows, walled a yard thick in armor, poking at each other with poles of painted wood?"

"Give me a good bull-bait!" said a sturdy butcher, in the crowd below; "that's more English, I take it, than these fooleries."

Amongst the ring, the bold 'prentices of London, up and away betimes, had pushed their path into a foremost place, much to the discontent of the gentry, and with their flat caps, long hair, thick bludgeons, loud exclamations, and turbulent demeanour, greatly scandalized the formal heralds. That, too, was a sign of the times. Nor less did it show the growth of commerce, that, on seats very little below the regal balconies, and far more conspicuous than the places of earls and barons, sat in state the mayor (that mayor a grocer!) [Sir John Yonge.--Fabyan] and aldermen of the city.

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

But Anthony's pages, supporting his banner, shared at least the popular admiration with their gallant lord: they were, according to the old custom, which probably fell into disuse under the Tudors, disguised in imitation of the heraldic beasts that typified his armourial cognizance; [Hence the origin of Supporters] and horrible and laidly looked they in the guise of griffins, with artful scales of thin steel painted green, red forked tongues, and griping the banner in one huge claw, while, much to the marvel of the bystanders, they contrived to walk very statelily on the other. "Oh, the brave monsters!" exclaimed the butcher. "Cogs bones, this beats all the rest!"

But when the trumpets of the heralds had ceased, when the words "Laissez aller!" were pronounced, when the lances were set and the charge began, this momentary admiration was converted into a cry of

derision, by the sudden restiveness of the Burgundian's horse. This animal, of the pure race of Flanders, of a bulk approaching to clumsiness, of a rich bay, where, indeed, amidst the barding and the housings, its colour could be discerned, had borne the valiant Bastard through many a sanguine field, and in the last had received a wound which had greatly impaired its sight. And now, whether scared by the shouting, or terrified by its obscure vision, and the recollection of its wound when last bestrode by its lord, it halted midway, reared on end, and, fairly turning round, despite spur and bit, carried back the Bastard, swearing strange oaths, that grumbled hoarsely through his vizor, to the very place whence he had started.

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

"Ho, marshal!" cried King Edward, "assist to his legs the brave count."

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

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

"I pray thee, noble sieur," quoth the Woodville, mildly, "to let the strife close for this day, and when rest bath--"

"Talk of rest to striplings,--I demand my rights!"

"Heaven forefend," said Anthony Woodville, lifting his hand on high, "that I, favoured so highly by the fair dames of England, should demand repose on their behalf. But bear witness," he said (with the generosity of the last true chevalier of his age, and lifting his vizor, so as to be heard by the king, and even through the foremost ranks of the crowd)--"bear witness, that in this encounter, my cause hath befriended me, not mine arm. The Count de la Roche speaketh truly; and his steed alone be blamed for his mischance."

"It is but a blind beast!" muttered the Burgundian.

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

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

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

The crowd now evinced a more earnest and respectful attention than they had hitherto shown, for the pole-axe, in such stalwart hands, was no child's toy. "Hum," quoth Master Stokton, "there may be some merriment now,--not like those silly poles! Your axe lops off a limb mighty cleanly." The knights themselves seemed aware of the greater gravity of the present encounter. Each looked well to the bracing of his vizor; and poising their weapons with method and care, they stood apart some moments, eying each other steadfastly,--as adroit fencers with the small sword do in our schools at this day.

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

mail were these redoubted champions, that the very wrestlers on the village green, nay, the naked gladiators of old, might have envied their lithe agility and supple quickness.

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

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

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

Edward paused, much perplexed and surprised at finding his intercession so displeasing. He glanced first at the Lord Rivers, who sat a little below him, and whose cheek grew pale at the prospect of his son's renewed encounter with one so determined, then at the immovable aspect of the gentle and apathetic Elizabeth, then at the agitated countenance of the duchess, then at the imploring eyes of Margaret, who, with an effort, preserved herself from swooning; and finally beckoning to him the Duke of Clarence, as high constable, and the Duke of Norfolk, as earl marshal, he said, "Tarry a moment, Sir Count, till we take counsel in this grave affair." The count bowed sullenly; the spectators maintained an anxious silence; the curtain before the king's gallery was closed while the council conferred. At the end of some three minutes, however, the drapery was drawn aside by the Duke of Norfolk; and Edward, fixing his bright blue eye upon the fiery Burgundian, said gravely, "Count de la Roche, your demand is just. According to the laws of the list, you may fairly claim that the encounter go on."

"Oh, knightly prince, well said! My thanks. We lose time.--Squires, my bassinet!"

"Yea," renewed Edward, "bring hither the count's bassinets. By the laws, the combat may go on at thine asking,--I retract my warder. 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 bassinets, Count de la Roche; and thou, Anthony Lord Scales, fix the pike of thine axe, which I now perceive was inserted exactly where the right eye giveth easy access to the brain, precisely in the same place. So renew the contest, and the Lord have mercy on thy soul, Count de la Roche!"

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

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

"Can you dispute it? Can any knight or gentleman gainsay it?"

"Then," quoth the Bastard, gruffly, and throwing his axe to the ground, "by all the saints in the calendar, I have had enough! I came hither to dare all that beseems a chevalier, but to stand still while Sir Anthony Woodville deliberately pokes out my right eye were a feat to show that very few brains would follow. And so, my Lord Scales, I give thee my right hand, and wish thee joy of thy triumph, and the golden collar." [The prize was a collar of gold, enamelled with the flower of the souvenance.]

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

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

CHAPTER VIII.

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

It was some days after the celebrated encounter between the Bastard and Lord Scales, and the court had removed to the Palace of Shene.

The Count de la Roche's favour with the Duchess of Bedford and the young princess had not rested upon his reputation for skill with the pole-axe, and it had now increased to a height that might well recompense the diplomatist for his discomfiture in the lists.

In the mean while, the arts of Warwick's enemies had been attended with signal success. The final preparations for the alliance now virtually concluded with Louis's brother still detained the earl at Rouen, and fresh accounts of the French king's intimacy with the ambassador were carefully forwarded to Rivers, and transmitted to Edward. Now, we have Edward's own authority for stating that his first grudge against Warwick originated in this displeasing intimacy, but the English king was too clear-sighted to interpret such courtesies into the gloss given them by Rivers. He did not for a moment conceive that Lord Warwick was led into any absolute connection with Louis which could link him to the Lancastrians, for this was against common-sense; but Edward, with all his good humour, was implacable and vindictive, and he could not endure the thought that Warwick should gain the friendship of the man he deemed his foe. Putting aside his causes of hatred to Louis in the encouragement which that king had formerly given to the Lancastrian exiles, Edward's pride as sovereign felt acutely the slighting disdain with which the French king had hitherto treated his royalty and his birth. The customary nickname with which he was maligned in Paris was "the Son of the Archer," a taunt upon the fair fame of his mother, whom scandal accused of no rigid fidelity to the Duke of York. Besides this, Edward felt somewhat of the jealousy natural to a king, himself so spirited and able, of the reputation for profound policy and statecraft which Louis XI. was rapidly widening and increasing throughout the courts of Europe. And, what with the resentment and what with the jealousy, there had sprung up in his warlike heart a secret desire to advance the claims of England to the throne of France, and retrieve the conquests won by the Fifth Henry to be lost under the Sixth. Possessing these feelings and these views, Edward necessarily saw in the alliance with Burgundy all that could gratify both his hate and his ambition. The Count of Charolois had sworn to Louis the most deadly enmity, and would have every motive, whether of vengeance or of interest, to associate himself heart in hand with the arms of England in any invasion of France; and to these warlike objects Edward added, as we have so often had cause to remark, the more peaceful aims and interests of commerce. And, therefore, although he could not so far emancipate himself from that influence, which both awe and gratitude invested in the Earl of Warwick, as to resist his great minister's embassy to Louis; and though, despite all these reasons in favour of connection with Burgundy, he could not but reluctantly allow that Warwick urged those of a still larger and wiser policy, when showing that the infant dynasty of York could only be made secure by effectually depriving Margaret of the sole ally that could venture to assist her cause,—yet no sooner had Warwick fairly departed than he inly chafed at the concession he had made, and his mind was open to all the impressions which the earl's enemies sought to stamp upon it. As the wisdom of every man, however able, can but run through those channels which are formed by the soil of the

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

Edward had been thus easily induced to permit the visit of the Count de la Roche, although he had by no means then resolved upon the course he should pursue. At all events, even if the alliance with Louis was to take place, the friendship of Burgundy was worth much to maintain. But De la Roche soon made aware by the Duchess of Bedford of the ground on which he stood, and instructed by his brother to spare no pains and to scruple no promise that might serve to alienate Edward from Louis and win the hand and dower of Margaret, found it a more facile matter than his most sanguine hopes had deemed to work upon the passions and the motives which inclined the king to the pretensions of the heir of Burgundy. And what more than all else favoured the envoy's mission was the very circumstance that should most have defeated it,--namely, the recollection of the Earl of Warwick; for in the absence of that powerful baron and master-minister, the king had seemed to breathe more freely. In his absence, he forgot his power. The machine of government, to his own surprise, seemed to go on as well; the Commons were as submissive, the mobs as noisy in their shouts, as if the earl were by. There was no longer any one to share with Edward the joys of popularity, the sweets of power.

Though Edward was not Diogenes, he loved the popular sunshine, and no Alexander now stood between him and its beams. Deceived by the representations of his courtiers, hearing nothing but abuse of Warwick and sneers at his greatness, he began to think the hour had come when he might reign alone, and he entered, though tacitly, and not acknowledging it even to himself, into the very object of the womankind about him,--namely, the dismissal of his minister.

The natural carelessness and luxurious indolence of Edward's temper did not however permit him to see all the ingratitude of the course he was about to adopt. The egotism a king too often acquires, and no king so easily as one like Edward IV., not born to a throne, made him consider that he alone was entitled to the prerogatives of pride. As sovereign and as brother, might he not give the hand of Margaret as he

listed? If Warwick was offended, pest on his disloyalty and presumption! And so saying to himself, he dismissed the very thought of the absent earl, and glided unconsciously down the current of the hour. And yet, notwithstanding all these prepossessions and dispositions, Edward might no doubt have deferred at least the meditated breach with his great minister until the return of the latter, and then have acted with the delicacy and precaution that became a king bound by ties of gratitude and blood to the statesman he desired to discard, but for a habit,--which, while history mentions, it seems to forget, in the consequences it ever engenders,--the habit of intemperance. Unquestionably to that habit many of the imprudences and levities of a king possessed of so much ability are to be ascribed; and over his cups with the wary and watchful De la Roche Edward had contrived to entangle himself far more than in his cooler moments he would have been disposed to do.

Having thus admitted our readers into those recesses of that cor inscrutable,--the heart of kings,--we summon them to a scene peculiar to the pastimes of the magnificent Edward. Amidst the shades of the vast park, or chase, which then appertained to the Palace of Shene, the noonday sun shone upon such a spot as Armida might have dressed for the subdued Rinaldo. A space had been cleared of trees and underwood, and made level as a bowling-green. Around this space the huge oak and the broad beech were hung with trellis-work, wreathed with jasmine, honeysuckle, and the white rose, trained in arches. Ever and anon through these arches extended long alleys, or vistas, gradually lost in the cool depth of foliage; amidst these alleys and around this space numberless arbours, quaint with all the flowers then known in England, were constructed. In the centre of the sward was a small artificial lake, long since dried up, and adorned then with a profusion of fountains, that seemed to scatter coolness around the glowing air. Pitched in various and appropriate sites were tents of silk and the white cloth of Rennes, each tent so placed as to command one of the alleys; and at the opening of each stood cavalier or dame, with the bow or crossbow, as it pleased the fancy or suited best the skill, looking for the quarry, which horn and hound drove fast and frequent across the alleys. Such was the luxurious "summer-chase" of the Sardanapalus of the North. Nor could any spectacle more thoroughly represent that poetical yet effeminate taste, which, borrowed from the Italians, made a short interval between the chivalric and the modern age. The exceeding beauty of the day, the richness of the foliage in the first suns of bright July, the bay of the dogs, the sound of the mellow horn, the fragrance of the air, heavy with noontide flowers, the gay tents, the rich dresses and fair faces and merry laughter of dame and donzell,--combined to take captive every sense, and to reconcile ambition itself, that eternal traveller through the future, to the enjoyment of the voluptuous hour. But there were illustrious exceptions to the contentment of the general company.

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

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

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

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

Hastings looked grave; but he saw all further remonstrance would be in vain, and hoping much from the intercession of Gloucester, put spurs to his steed and vanished. Edward mused a moment; and Elizabeth, who knew every expression and change of his countenance, rode from the circle of her ladies, and approached him timidly. Casting down her eyes, which she always affected in speaking to her lord, the queen said softly,--

"Something hath disturbed my liege and my life's life."

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

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

"No, sweetheart,--no. Yet had it not been for the strength of the clary, I should have kept the Bastard longer in suspense. But what is done is done. Let not thy roses wither when thou hearest Warwick is in England,--nay, nay, child, look not so appalled; thine Edward is no infant, whom ogre and goblin scare; and"--glancing his eye proudly round as he spoke, and saw the goodly cavalcade of his peers and knights, with his body-guard, tall and chosen veterans, filling up the palace-yard, with the show of casque and pike--"and if the struggle is to come between Edward of England and his subject, never an hour more ripe than this; my throne assured, the new nobility I have raised around it, London true, marrow and heart true, the provinces at peace, the ships and the steel of Burgundy mine allies! Let the white Bear

growl as he list, the Lion of March is lord of the forest. And now, my Bessee," added the king, changing his haughty tone into a gay, careless laugh, "now let the lion enjoy his chase."

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

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

"But our right hands can guard them well, sir," answered Anthony; "and so God and the ladies for our rights!"

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

Amidst this gay scene, then, there were anxious and thoughtful bosoms. Lord Rivers was silent and abstracted; his son's laugh was hollow and constrained; the queen, from her pavilion, cast, ever and anon, down the green alleys more restless and prying looks than the hare or the deer could call forth; her mother's brow was knit and flushed. And keenly were those illustrious persons watched by one deeply interested in the coming events. Affecting to discharge the pleasant duty assigned him by the king, the Lord Montagu glided from tent to tent, inquiring courteously into the accommodation of each group, lingering, smiling, complimenting, watching, heeding, studying, those whom he addressed. For the first time since the Bastard's visit he had joined in the diversions in its honour; and yet so well had Montagu played his part at the court that he did not excite amongst the queen's relatives any of the hostile feelings entertained towards his brother. No man, except Hastings, was so "entirely loved" by Edward; and Montagu, worldly as he was, and indignant against the king as he could not fail to be, so far repaid the affection, that his chief fear at that moment sincerely was not for Warwick but Edward. He alone of those present was aware of the cause of Warwick's hasty return, for he had privately despatched to him the news of the Bastard's visit, its real object, and the inevitable success of the intrigues afloat, unless the earl could return at once, his mission accomplished, and the ambassadors of France in his train; and even before the courier despatched to the king had arrived at Shene, a private hand had conveyed to Montagu the information that Warwick, justly roused and

alarmed, had left the state procession behind at Dover, and was hurrying, fast as relays of steeds and his own fiery spirit could bear him, to the presence of the ungrateful king.

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

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

"Nay, sweet mistress, nay," said a young man's voice, earnest with emotion, "do not 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, Sibyll--O Sibyll! I remember the days when we conversed together; and as a brother, if nothing else--nothing dearer--I pray you to pause well, and consider what manner of man this Lord Hastings is said to be!"

"Master Nevile, is this generous? Why afflict me thus; why couple my name with so great a lord's?"

"Because--beware--the young gallants already so couple it, and their prophecies are not to thine honour, Sibyll. Nay, do not frown on me. I know thou art fair and winsome, and deftly gifted, and thy father may, for aught I know, be able to coin thee a queen's dower out of his 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 frequently wooed in very peremptory tones for their clients and kinsmen, [See, in Miss Strickland's "Life of Elizabeth Woodville," the curious letters which the Duke of York and the Earl of Warwick addressed to her, then a simple maiden, in favour of their protege, Sir R. Johnes.] completed the displeasure which the blunt Marmaduke had already called forth in Sibyll's gentle but proud nature. "Speak, maiden,--ay or no?" continued Montagu, surprised and angered at the haughty silence of one whom he just knew by sight and name, though he had never before addressed her.

"No, my lord," answered Sibyll, keeping down her indignation at this tone, though it burned in her cheek, flashed in her eye, and swelled in the heave of her breast. "No! and your kinsman might have spared

this affront to one whom--but it matters not." She swept from the tent as she said this, and passed up the alley into that of the queen's mother.

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

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

Montagu looked at him in surprise. "Wives, sir," he said, "are not made to look at,--unless, indeed, they be the wives of other men. But dismiss these follies for the nonce. Back to thy post by the king's pavilion; and by the way ask Lord Fauconberg and Aymer Nevile, whom thou wilt pass by yonder arbour, ask them, in my name, to be near the pavilion while the king banquets. A word in thine ear,--ere yon sun gilds the top of those green oaks, the Earl of Warwick will be with Edward IV.; and come what may, some brave hearts should be by to welcome him. Go!"

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

CHAPTER IX.

THE GREAT ACTOR RETURNS TO FILL THE STAGE.

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

"And here, then," said Edward, as he put his lips to a gold goblet, wrought with gems, and passed it to Anthony the Bastard,--"here, count, we take the first wassail to the loves of Charolois and Margaret!"

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

"And with those loves, king," said he, "we bind forever Burgundy and England. Woe to France!"

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

"My liege," said Rivers, wakening himself, "I did but think that if the Earl of Warwick--"

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

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

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

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

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

The earl's dress was disordered and soiled by travel; the black plume on his cap was broken, and hung darkly over his face; his horseman's boots, coming half way up the thigh, were sullied with the dust of the journey; and yet as he entered, before the majesty of his mien, the grandeur of his stature, suddenly De Roche, Rivers, even the gorgeous Edward himself, seemed dwarfed into common men! About the man--his air, his eye, his form, his attitude--there was THAT which, in the earlier times, made kings by the acclamation of the crowd,--an unmistakable sovereignty, as of one whom Nature herself had shaped and stamped for power and for rule. All three had risen as he entered; and to a deep silence succeeded an exclamation from Edward, and then again all was still.

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

"My liege," then said Warwick, doffing his cap, and approaching the king with slow and grave respect, "I crave pardon for presenting myself to your Highness thus travel-worn and disordered; but I announce that news which insures my welcome. The solemn embassy of trust committed to me by your Grace has prospered with God's blessing; and the Fils de Bourbon and the Archbishop of Narbonne are on their way to your metropolis. Alliance between the two great monarchies of Europe is concluded on terms that insure the weal of England and augment the lustre of your crown. Your claims on Normandy and Guienne King Louis consents to submit to the arbitrement of the Roman Pontiff, [The Pope, moreover, was to be engaged to decide the question within four years. A more brilliant treaty for England, Edward's ambassador could not have effected.] and to pay to your treasury annual tribute; these advantages, greater than your Highness even empowered me to demand, thus obtained, the royal brother of your new ally joyfully awaits the hand of the Lady Margaret."

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

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

Edward, more embarrassed at this tone than he could have foreseen, remained silent; but De la Roche, impatient to humble his brother's foe, and judging it also discreet to arouse the king, said carelessly,--

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

Ere the Bastard had concluded, Rivers, leaning back, whispered the king, "For Christ's sake, sire, select some fitter scene for what must follow! Silence your guest!"

But Edward, on the contrary, pleased to think that De la Roche was

breaking the ice, and hopeful that some burst from Warwick would give him more excuse than he felt at present for a rupture, said sternly, "Hush, my lord, and meddle not!"

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

"And the brother of the heir of Burgundy," interrupted De la Roche,--"brother to the betrothed and princely spouse of Margaret of England."

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

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

"And this to me, king!" exclaimed the earl; all his passions at once released--"this to me! Nay, frown not, Edward,--I am of the race of those who, greater than kings, have built thrones and toppled them! I tell thee, thou hast misused mine honour, and belied thine own; thou hast debased thyself in juggling me, delegated as the representative of thy royalty!--Lord Rivers, stand back,--there are barriers eno' between truth and a king!"

"By Saint George and my father's head!" cried Edward, with a rage no less fierce than Warwick's,--"thou abusest, false lord, my mercy and our kindred blood. Another word, and thou leavest this pavilion for the Tower!"

"King," replied Warwick, scornfully, and folding his arms on his broad breast, "there is not a hair on this head which thy whole house, thy guards, and thine armies could dare to touch. ME to the Tower! Send me,--and when the third sun reddens the roof of prison-house and palace, look round broad England, and miss a throne!"

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

"Ah," continued the king, "ye come in time. George of Clarence, Lord High Constable of England, arrest yon haughty man, who dares to menace his liege and suzerain!"

Gliding between Clarence, who stood dumb and thunder-stricken, and the Earl of Warwick, Prince Richard said, in a voice which, though even softer than usual, had in it more command over those who heard than when it rolled in thunder along the ranks of Barnet or of Bosworth, "Edward, my brother, remember Towton, and forbear! Warwick, my

cousin, forget not thy king nor his dead father!"

At these last words the earl's face fell, for to that father he had sworn to succour and defend the sons; his sense, recovering from his pride, showed him how much his intemperate anger had thrown away his advantages in the foul wrong he had sustained from Edward. Meanwhile the king himself, with flashing eyes and a crest as high as Warwick's, was about perhaps to overthrow his throne by the attempt to enforce his threat, when Anthony Woodville, who followed Clarence, whispered to him, "Beware, sire! a countless crowd that seem to have followed the earl's steps have already pierced the chase, and can scarcely be kept from the spot, so great is their desire to behold him. Beware!"--and Richard's quick ear catching these whispered words, the duke suddenly backed them by again drawing aside the curtain of the tent. Along the sward, the guard of the king, summoned from their unseen but neighbouring post within the wood, were drawn up as if to keep back an immense multitude,--men, women, children, who swayed and rustled and murmured in the rear. But no sooner was the curtain drawn aside, and the guards themselves caught sight of the royal princes and the great earl towering amidst them, than supposing in their ignorance the scene thus given to them was intended for their gratification, from that old soldiery or Towton rose a loud and long "Hurrah! Warwick and the king!"--"The king and the stout earl!" The multitude behind caught the cry; they rushed forward, mingling with the soldiery, who no longer sought to keep them back.

"A Warwick! a Warwick!" they shouted. "God bless the people's friend!"

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

De la Roche grew pale; but with the promptness of a practised statesman, he hastily advanced, and drew the curtain. "Shall varlets," he said to Richard, in French, "gloat over the quarrels of their lords?"

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

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

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

"Darest thou gainsay it?" exclaimed De la Roche.

"Interrupt me not, sir!" continued Warwick, with a disdainful gesture.

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

"Begone where thou wilt, earl. From this day Edward IV. reigns alone," said the king. Warwick turned.

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

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

"Edward," said Richard, whisperingly, and laying his finger on his brother's arm, "forgive me if I offended; but had you at such a time resolved on violence--"

"I see it all,--you were right. But is this to be endured forever?"

"Sire," returned Richard, with his dark smile, "rest calm; for the age is your best ally, and the age is outgrowing the steel and hauberk. A little while, and--"

"And what--"

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

"The jongleurs!" exclaimed the king; "why, Richard, thou hast more levity than myself!"

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

CHAPTER X.

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

Mastering the emotions that swelled within him, Lord Warwick returned with his wonted cheerful courtesy the welcome of the crowd and the enthusiastic salutation of the king's guard; but as, at length, he mounted his steed, and attended but by the squire who had followed him from Dover, penetrated into the solitudes of the chase, the recollection of the indignity he had suffered smote his proud heart so sorely that he groaned aloud. His squire, fearing the fatigue he had undergone might have affected even that iron health, rode up at the sound of the groan, and Warwick's face was hueless as he said, with a forced smile, "It is nothing, Walter. But these heats are oppressive, and we have forgotten our morning draught, friend. Hark! I hear the brawl of a rivulet, and a drink of fresh water were more grateful now than the daintiest hippocras." So saying, he flung himself from his steed; following the sound of the rivulet, he gained its banks, and after quenching his thirst in the hollow of his hand, laid himself down upon the long grass, waving coolly over the margin, and fell into profound thought. From this revery he was aroused by a quick footstep, and as he lifted his gloomy gaze, he beheld Marmaduke Nevile by his side.

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

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

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

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

Warwick looked intently upon his young kinsman's face, and said, as to himself, "Why, this is strange! I gave no throne to this man, and he deserts me not! My friend," he added aloud, "have they told thee already that I am disgraced?"

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

"Man, I accept thy loyalty!" exclaimed Warwick, starting to his feet; "and know that thou hast done more to melt and yet to nerve my spirit

than--But complaints in one are idle, and praise were no reward to thee."

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

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

"Is it possible," cried Raoul de Fulke, "that we have heard aright, noble earl? And has Edward IV. suffered the base Woodvilles to triumph over the bulwark of his realm?"

"Knights and gentles!" said Warwick, with a bitter smile, "is it so uncommon a thing that men in peace should leave the battle-axe and brand to rust? I am but a useless weapon, to be suspended at rest amongst the trophies of Towton in my hall of Middleham."

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

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

"Warwick," interrupted Raoul de Fulke, "this deceives us not; and in disgrace to you the ancient barons of England behold the first blow at their own state. We have wrongs we endured in silence while thou wert the shield and sword of yon merchant-king. We have seen the ancient peers of England set aside for men of yesterday; we have seen our daughters, sisters,--nay, our very mothers, if widowed and dowered,--forced into disreputable and base wedlock with creatures dressed in titles, and gilded with wealth stolen from ourselves. Merchants and artificers tread upon our knightly heels, and the avarice of trade eats up our chivalry as a rust. We nobles, in our greater day, have had the crown at our disposal, and William the Norman dared not think what Edward Earl of March hath been permitted with impunity to do. We, Sir Earl--we knights and barons--would a king simple in his manhood and princely in his truth. Richard Earl of Warwick, thou art of royal blood, the descendant of old John of Gaunt. In thee we behold the true, the living likeness of the Third Edward, and the Hero-Prince of Cressy. Speak but the word, and we make thee king!"

The descendant of the Norman, the representative of the mighty faction

that no English monarch had ever braved in vain, looked round as he said these last words, and a choral murmur was heard through the whole of that august nobility, "We make thee king!"

"Richard, descendant of the Plantagenet, [By the female side, through Joan Beaufort, or Plantagenet, Warwick was third in descent from John of Gaunt, as Henry VII., through the male line, was fourth in descent.] speak the word," repeated Raoul de Fulke.

"I speak it not," interrupted Warwick; "nor shalt thou continue, brave Raoul de Fulke. What, my lords and gentlemen," he added, drawing himself up, and with his countenance animated with feelings it is scarcely possible in our times to sympathize with or make clear-- "what! think you that Ambition limits itself to the narrow circlet of a crown Greater, and more in the spirit of our mighty fathers, is the condition of men like us, THE BARONS who make and unmake kings. What! who of us would not rather descend from the chiefs of Runnymede than from the royal craven whom they controlled and chid? By Heaven, my lords, Richard Nevile has too proud a soul to be a king! A king--a puppet of state and form; a king--a holiday show for the crowd, to hiss or hurrah, as the humour seizes; a king--a beggar to the nation, wrangling with his parliament for gold! A king!--Richard II. was a king, and Lancaster dethroned him. Ye would debase me to a Henry of Lancaster. Mort Dieu! I thank ye. The Commons and the Lords raised him, forsooth,--for what? To hold him as the creature they had made, to rate him, to chafe him, to pry into his very household, and quarrel with his wife's chamberlains and labourers. [Laundresses. The parliamentary rolls, in the reign of Henry IV., abound in curious specimens of the interference of the Commons with the household of Henry's wife, Queen Joan.] What! dear Raoul de Fulke, is thy friend fallen now so low, that he--Earl of Salisbury and of Warwick, chief of the threefold race of Montagu, Monthermer, and Nevile, lord of a hundred baronies, leader of sixty thousand followers--is not greater than Edward of March, to whom we will deign still, with your permission, to vouchsafe the name and pageant of a king?"

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

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

With these words he gently waved his hand, motioned to his squire, who stood out of hearing with the steeds, to approach, and mounting,

gravely rode on. Ere he had got many paces, he called to Marmaduke, who was on foot, and bade him follow him to London that night. "I have strange tidings to tell the French envoys, and for England's sake I must soothe their anger, if I can,--then to Middleham."

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

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