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BOOK II.

THE KING'S COURT.

CHAPTER I.

EARL WARWICK THE KING-MAKER.

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

And this dress, marvellous as it seemed to the Nevile, the tailor gravely assured him was far under the mark of the highest fashion, and that an' the noble youth had been a knight, the shoes would have stretched at least three inches farther over the natural length of the

feet, the placard have shone with jewels, and the tunic luxuriated in flowers of damascene. Even as it was, however, Marmaduke felt a natural diffidence of his habiliments, which cost him a round third of his whole capital; and no bride ever unveiled herself with more shamefaced bashfulness than did Marmaduke Nevile experience when he remounted his horse, and, taking leave of his foster-brother, bent his way to Warwick Lane, where the earl lodged.

The narrow streets were, however, crowded with equestrians whose dress eclipsed his own, some bending their way to the Tower, some to the palaces of the Flete. Carriages there were none, and only twice he encountered the huge litters, in which some aged prelate or some high-born dame veiled greatness from the day. But the frequent vistas to the river gave glimpses of the gay boats and barges that crowded the Thames, which was then the principal thoroughfare for every class, but more especially the noble. The ways were fortunately dry and clean for London, though occasionally deep holes and furrows in the road menaced perils to the unwary horseman. The streets themselves might well disappoint in splendour the stranger's eye; for although, viewed at a distance, ancient London was incalculably more picturesque and stately than the modern, yet when fairly in its tortuous labyrinths, it seemed to those who had improved the taste by travel the meanest and the mirkiest capital of Christendom. The streets were marvellously narrow, the upper stories, chiefly of wood, projecting far over the lower, which were formed of mud and plaster. The shops were pitiful booths, and the 'prentices standing at the entrance bare-headed and cap in hand, and lining the passages, as the old French writer avers, *comme idoles*, [Perlin] kept up an eternal din with their clamorous invitations, often varied by pert witticisms on some churlish passenger, or loud vituperations of each other. The whole ancient family of the London criers were in full bay. Scarcely had Marmaduke's ears recovered the shock of "Hot peascods,--all hot!" than they were saluted with "Mackerel!" "Sheep's feet! hot sheep's feet!" At the smaller taverns stood the inviting vociferaters of "Cock-pie," "Ribs of beef,--hot beef!" while, blended with these multi-toned discords, whined the *vielle*, or primitive hurdy-gurdy, screamed the pipe, twanged the harp, from every quarter where the thirsty paused to drink, or the idler stood to gape. [See Lydgate: London Lyckpenny.]

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

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

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

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

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

And now Nevile entered the last side of the quadrangle. The huge hall, divided from the passage by a screen of stone fretwork, so fine as to attest the hand of some architect in the reign of Henry III., stretched to his right; and so vast, in truth, it was, that though more than fifty persons were variously engaged therein, their number was lost in the immense space. Of these, at one end of the longer and lower table beneath the dais, some squires of good dress and mien were engaged at chess or dice; others were conferring in the gloomy

embrasures of the casements; some walking to and fro, others gathered round the shovel-board. At the entrance of this hall the porter left Marmaduke, after exchanging a whisper with a gentleman whose dress eclipsed the Nevile's in splendour; and this latter personage, who, though of high birth, did not disdain to perform the office of chamberlain, or usher, to the king-like earl, advanced to Marmaduke with a smile, and said,--

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

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

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

He heard his guide pronounce his name, and saw him smile maliciously at the momentary embarrassment the young man displayed, as the boy passed by Marmaduke, and vanished. The Earl of Warwick was seated near a door that opened upon an inner court, or rather garden, which gave communication to the river. The chamber was painted in the style of Henry III., with huge figures representing the battle of Hastings, or rather, for there were many separate pieces, the conquest of Saxon England. Over each head, to enlighten the ignorant, the artist had taken the precaution to insert a label, which told the name and the subject. The ceiling was groined, vaulted, and emblazoned with the richest gilding and colours. The chimneypiece (a modern ornament) rose to the roof, and represented in bold reliefs, gilt and decorated, the signing of Magna Charta. The floor was strewed thick with dried

rushes and odorous herbs; the furniture was scanty, but rich. The low-backed chairs, of which there were but four, carved in ebony, had cushions of velvet with fringes of massive gold; a small cupboard, or beaufet, covered with carpetz de cuir (carpets of gilt and painted leather), of great price, held various quaint and curious ornaments of plate inwrought with precious stones; and beside this--a singular contrast--on a plain Gothic table lay the helmet, the gauntlets, and the battle-axe of the master. Warwick himself, seated before a large, cumbrous desk, was writing,--but slowly and with pain,--and he lifted his finger as the Nevile approached, in token of his wish to conclude a task probably little congenial to his tastes. But Marmaduke was grateful for the moments afforded him to recover his self-possession, and to examine his kinsman.

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

vain or proud of it, it matters not which; grateful as a child for love, and inexorable as a woman for slight or insult: in rude ages, one sex has often the qualities of the other.

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

"It is here, noble lord."

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Than is a clock or any abbey orloge."]

The more the pity!--our red-faced yeomen, alas, are fast sinking into lank-jawed mechanics! We shall find the king in his garden within the next half-hour. Thou shalt attend me."

Marmaduke expressed, with more feeling than eloquence, the thanks he owed for an offer that, he was about to say, exceeded his hopes; but

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

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

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

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

The two girls had started from their father's arms at the first address to Marmaduke, and their countenances had relapsed from their caressing and childlike expression into all the stately demureness with which they had been brought up to regard a stranger. Howbeit, this reserve, to which he was accustomed, awed Marmaduke less than the alternate gayety and sadness of the wilder Sibyll, and he addressed them with all the gallantry to the exercise of which he had been reared, concluding his compliments with a declaration that he would

rather forego the advantage proffered him by the earl's favour with the king, than foster one obnoxious and ungracious memory in damozels so fair and honoured.

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

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

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

And at these words a proud flash broke from the earl's dark eyes, betraying even to Marmaduke the secret of perhaps his earliest alienation from Edward IV.

Isabella pouted her rich lip, but said nothing. "As for thee, Anne," continued the earl, "it is a pity that monks cannot marry,--thou wouldst have suited some sober priest better than a mailed knight. 'Fore George, I would not ask thee to buckle my baldrick when the war-steeds were snorting, but I would trust Isabel with the links of my hauberk."

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

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

"Is he not to be pitied?--Crown, wife, son, and Earl Warwick's stout

arm lost--lost!"

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

witched him!"

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

"Ah, Isabel, Isabel!"

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

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

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

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

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

So speaking, he shook back his surcoat, drew his cap over his brow, and passed to the broad stairs, at the foot of which fifty rowers, with their badges on their shoulders, waited in the huge barge, gilt richly at prow and stern, and with an awning of silk, wrought with the earl's arms and cognizance. As they pushed off, six musicians, placed towards the helm, began a slow and half Eastern march, which, doubtless, some crusader of the Temple had brought from the cymbals and trumps of Palestine.

CHAPTER II.

KING EDWARD THE FOURTH.

The Tower of London, more consecrated to associations of gloom and blood than those of gayety and splendour, was, nevertheless, during the reign of Edward IV., the seat of a gallant and gorgeous court. That king, from the first to the last so dear to the people of London, made it his principal residence when in his metropolis; and its ancient halls and towers were then the scene of many a brawl and galliard. As Warwick's barge now approached its huge walls, rising from the river, there was much that might either animate or awe, according to the mood of the spectator. The king's barge, with many lesser craft reserved for the use of the courtiers, gay with awnings and streamers and painting and gilding, lay below the wharfs, not far from the gate of St. Thomas, now called the Traitor's Gate. On the walk raised above the battlemented wall of the inner ward, not only paced the sentries, but there dames and knights were inhaling the noonday breezes, and the gleam of their rich dresses of cloth-of-gold glanced upon the eye at frequent intervals from tower to tower. Over the vast round turret, behind the Traitor's Gate, now called "The Bloody Tower," floated cheerily in the light wind the royal banner. Near the Lion's Tower, two or three of the keepers of the menagerie, in the king's livery, were leading forth, by a strong chain, the huge white bear that made one of the boasts of the collection, and was an especial favourite with the king and his brother Richard. The sheriffs of London were bound to find this grisly minion his chain and his cord, when he deigned to amuse himself with bathing or "fishing" in the river; and several boats, filled with gape-mouthed passengers, lay near the wharf, to witness the diversions of Bruin. These folks set up a loud shout of--"A Warwick! a Warwick!" "The stout earl, and God bless him!" as the gorgeous barge shot towards the fortress. The earl acknowledged their greeting by vailing his plumed cap; and passing the keepers with a merry allusion to their care of his own badge, and a friendly compliment to the grunting bear, he stepped ashore, followed by his kinsman. Now, however, he paused a moment; and a more thoughtful shade passed over his countenance, as, glancing his eye carelessly aloft towards the standard of King Edward, he caught sight of the casement in the neighbouring tower, of the very room in which the sovereign of his youth, Henry the Sixth, was a prisoner, almost within hearing of the revels of his successor; then,

with a quick stride, he hurried on through the vast court, and, passing the White Tower, gained the royal lodge. Here, in the great hall, he left his companion, amidst a group of squires and gentlemen, to whom he formally presented the Nevile as his friend and kinsman, and was ushered by the deputy-chamberlain (with an apology for the absence of his chief, the Lord Hastings, who had gone abroad to fly his falcon) into the small garden, where Edward was idling away the interval between the noon and evening meals,--repasts to which already the young king inclined with that intemperate zest and ardour which he carried into all his pleasures, and which finally destroyed the handsomest person and embroiled one of the most vigorous intellects of the age.

The garden, if bare of flowers, supplied their place by the various and brilliant-coloured garbs of the living beauties assembled on its straight walks and smooth sward. Under one of those graceful cloisters, which were the taste of the day, and had been recently built and gayly decorated, the earl was stopped in his path by a group of ladies playing at closheys (ninepins) of ivory; [Narrative of Louis of Bruges, Lord Grauthuse. Edited by Sir F. Madden, "Archaeologia," 1836.] and one of these fair dames, who excelled the rest in her skill, had just bowled down the central or crowned pin,--the king of the closheys. This lady, no less a person than Elizabeth, the Queen of England, was then in her thirty-sixth year,--ten years older than her lord; but the peculiar fairness and delicacy of her complexion still preserved to her beauty the aspect and bloom of youth. From a lofty headgear, embroidered with fleur-de-lis, round which wreathed a light diadem of pearls, her hair, of the pale yellow considered then the perfection of beauty, flowed so straight and so shining down her shoulders, almost to the knees, that it seemed like a mantle of gold. The baudekin stripes (blue and gold) of her tunic attested her royalty. The blue courtpie of satin was bordered with ermine, and the sleeves, sitting close to an arm of exquisite contour, shone with seed pearls. Her features were straight and regular, yet would have been insipid, but for an expression rather of cunning than intellect; and the high arch of her eyebrows, with a slight curve downward of a mouth otherwise beautiful, did not improve the expression, by an addition of something supercilious and contemptuous, rather than haughty or majestic.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The king rose as Warwick now approached him; and the appearance of these two eminent persons was in singular contrast. Warwick, though richly and even gorgeously attired,--nay, with all the care which in that age was considered the imperative duty a man of station and birth owed to himself,--held in lofty disdain whatever vagary of custom tended to cripple the movements or womanize the man. No loose flowing robes, no shoon half a yard long, no flaunting tawdriness of fringe and aiglet, characterized the appearance of the baron, who, even in peace, gave his address a half-martial fashion.

But Edward, who, in common with all the princes of the House of York, carried dress to a passion, had not only reintroduced many of the most

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

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

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

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

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

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

"Mort-Dieu!" returned Warwick, bluntly, "and what business have the flat-caps with the marriage of a king's sister? Is it for them to breathe garlic on the alliances of Bourbons and Plantagenets? Faugh! You have spoiled them, good my lord king,--you have spoiled them by your condescensions. Henry IV. staid not his majesty to consultations with the mayor of his city. Henry V. gave the knighthood of the bath to the heroes of Agincourt, not to the vendors of cloth and spices."

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

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

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

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

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

"Then, in God's name, so conclude it!" said the earl, hastily, but

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

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

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

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

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

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

"Thou aimest at Elizabeth's kin," interrupted Edward, withdrawing his hand from his minister's arm, "and I tell thee once for all times,

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

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

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

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

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

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

faithful servant. But I should have remembered me that his name of Nevile would have procured him a taunt in the place of advancement."

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

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

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

CHAPTER III.

THE ANTECHAMBER.

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

Over the left arm hung a rich jacket of furs and velvet, something like that adopted by the modern hussar. His hat, or cap, was high and

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

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

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

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

this accomplished nobleman, at the prolonged sojourn of Warwick.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

streets in her penance-shift."

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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