

# THE LAST OF THE BARONS

## BOOK VII

### THE POPULAR REBELLION

#### CHAPTER I

##### THE WHITE LION OF MARCH SHAKES HIS MANE

"And what news?" asked Hastings, as he found himself amidst the king's squires; while yet was heard the laugh of the *tymbesteres*, and yet gliding through the trees, might be seen the retreating form of Sibyll.

"My lord, the king needs you instantly. A courier has just arrived from the North. The Lords St. John, Rivers, De Fulke, and Scales, are already with his highness."

"Where?"

"In the great council chamber."

To that memorable room,\* in the White Tower, in which the visitor, on entrance, is first reminded of the name and fate of Hastings, strode the unprophetic lord.

He found Edward not reclining on cushions and carpets—not womanlike in loose robes—not with his lazy smile upon his sleek beauty. The king had doffed his gown, and stood erect in the tight tunic, which

\* It was from this room that Hastings was hurried to execution, June 13, 1483.



gave in full perfection the splendid proportions of a frame unsurpassed in activity and strength. Before him, on the long table, lay two or three open letters—beside the dagger with which Edward had cut the silk that bound them. Around him gravely sate Lord Rivers, Anthony Woodville, Lord St. John, Raoul de Fulke, the young and valiant D'Eyncourt, and many other of the principal lords. Hastings saw at once that something of pith and moment had occurred; and by the fire in the king's eye, the dilation of his nostril, the cheerful and almost joyous pride of his mien and brow, the experienced courtier read the signs of WAR.

"Welcome, brave Hastings," said Edward, in a voice wholly changed from its wonted soft affectation—loud, clear, and thrilling as it went through the marrow and heart of all who heard its stirring and trumpet accent—"Welcome now to the field as ever to the banquet! We have news from the North, that bid us brace on the burgonot, and buckle to the brand—a revolt that requires a king's arm to quell. In Yorkshire, fifteen thousand men are in arms, under a leader they call Robin of Redesdale—the pretext, a thrave of corn demanded by the Hospital of St. Leonard's—the true design, that of treason to our realm. At the same time, we hear from our brother of Gloucester, now on the border, that the Scotch have lifted the Lancaster Rose. There is peril if these two armies meet;—no time to lose—they are saddling our war-steeds—we hasten to the van of our royal force. We shall have warm work, my lords. But who is worthy of a throne that cannot guard it?"

"This is sad tidings indeed, sire," said Hastings, gravely.

"Sad! Say it not, Hastings! War is the chase of

kings! Sir Raoul de Fulke!—why lookest thou brooding and sorrowful?"

"Sire, I but thought that had Earl Warwick been in England, this——"

"Ha!" interrupted Edward, haughtily and hastily—"and is Warwick the sun of heaven that no cloud can darken where his face may shine? The rebels shall need no foe, my realm no regent, while I, the heir of the Plantagenets, have the sword for one, the sceptre for the other. We depart this evening ere the sun be set."

"My liege," said the Lord St. John, gravely—"on what forces do you count to meet so formidable an array?"

"All England, Lord of St. John!"

"Alack! my liege, may you not deceive yourself! But in this crisis, it is right that your leal and trusty subjects should speak out and plainly. It seems that these insurgents clamour not against yourself, but against the queen's relations—yes, my Lord Rivers, against you and your house, and I fear me that the hearts of England are with them here."

"It is true, sire," put in Raoul de Fulke, boldly—"and if these new men are to head your armies, the warriors of Touton will stand aloof—Raoul de Fulke serves no Woodville's banner. Frown not, Lord de Scales! it is the griping avarice of you and yours that has brought this evil on the king. For you the commons have been pillaged—for you the daughters of our peers have been forced into monstrous marriages, at war with birth and with nature herself. For you, the princely Warwick, near to the throne in blood, and front and pillar of our time-honoured order of seigneur and of knight, has been thrust from our suzerain's favour. And if now ye are to march at the van of war—you to



be avengers of the strife of which ye are the cause—I say that the soldiers will lack heart, and the provinces ye pass through will be the country of a foe!”

“Vain man!” began Anthony Woodville, when Hastings laid his hand on his arm, while Edward, amazed at this outburst from two of the supporters on whom he principally counted, had the prudence to suppress his resentment—and remained silent, but with the aspect of one resolved to command obedience, when he once deemed it right to interfere.

“Hold, Sir Anthony!” said Hastings, who, the moment he found himself with men, woke to all the manly spirit and profound wisdom that had rendered his name illustrious—“hold, and let me have the word; my Lords St. John and De Fulke, your charges are more against me than against these gentlemen, for I am a new man—a squire by birth—and proud to derive mine honours from the same origin as all true nobility—I mean the grace of a noble liege, and the happy fortune of a soldier’s sword. It may be” (and here the artful favourite, the most beloved of the whole court, inclined himself meekly)—“it may be that I have not borne those honours so mildly as to disarm blame. In the war to be, let me atone. My liege, hear your servant: give me no command—let me be a simple soldier, fighting by your side. My example who will not follow?—proud to ride but as a man of arms along the track which the sword of his sovereign shall cut through the ranks of battle? Not you, Lord de Scales, redoubtable and invincible with lance and axe; let us new men soothe envy by our deeds; and you, Lords St. John and De Fulke—you shall teach us how your fathers led warriors who did not fight more gallantly than we will. And when rebellion is at rest—when we

meet again in our suzerain’s hall—accuse us new men, if you can find us faulty, and we will answer you as we best may?”

This address, which could have come from no man with such effect as from Hastings, touched all present. And though the Woodvilles, father and son, saw in it much to gall their pride, and half believed it a snare for their humiliation, they made no opposition. Raoul de Fulke, ever generous as fiery, stretched forth his hand, and said—

“Lord Hastings, you have spoken well. Be it as the king wills.”

“My lords,” returned Edward, gaily, “my will is that ye be friends while a foe is in the field. Hasten, then, I beseech you, one and all, to raise your vassals, and join our standard at Fotheringay. I will find ye posts that shall content the bravest.”

The king made a sign to break up the conference, and, dismissing even the Woodvilles, was left alone with Hastings.

“Thou hast served me at need, Will,” said the king. “But I shall remember” (and his eye flashed a tiger’s fire) “the mouthing of those mock-pieces of the lords at Runnymede. I am no John, to be bearded by my vassals. Enough of them now. Think you Warwick can have abetted this revolt?”

“A revolt of peasants and yeomen! No, sire. If he did so, farewell for ever to the love the barons bear him.”

“Um! and yet Montagu, whom I dismissed ten days since to the Borders, hearing of disaffection, hath done nought to check it. But come what may, his must be a bold lance that shivers against a king’s mail. And now one kiss of my lady Bessee, one cup of the bright



canary, and then God and St. George for the White Rose!"

---

## CHAPTER II

### THE CAMP AT OLNEY

It was some weeks after the citizens of London had seen their gallant king, at the head of such forces as were collected in haste in the metropolis, depart from their walls to the encounter of the rebels. Surprising and disastrous had been the tidings in the interim. At first, indeed, there were hopes that the insurrection had been put down by Montagu, who had defeated the troops of Robin of Redesdale, near the city of York, and was said to have beheaded their leader. But the spirit of discontent was only fanned by an adverse wind. The popular hatred to the Woodvilles was so great, that in proportion as Edward advanced to the scene of action, the country rose in arms as Raoul de Fulke had predicted. Leaders of lordly birth now headed the rebellion; the sons of the Lords Latimer and Fitzhugh (near kinsmen of the House of Neville) lent their names to the cause: and Sir John Coniers, an experienced soldier, whose claims had been disregarded by Edward, gave to the insurgents the aid of a formidable capacity for war. In every mouth was the story of the Duchess of Bedford's witchcraft; and the waxen figure of the earl did more to rouse the people than perhaps the earl himself could have done in person.\* As yet, however, the language of the insurgents

\* See "Parliamentary Rolls," vi. 232, for the accusations of witchcraft, and the fabrication of a necromantic image of Lord Warwick, circulated against the Duchess of Bedford. She herself quotes, and complains of, them.

was tempered with all personal respect to the king; they declared in their manifestoes that they desired only the banishment of the Woodvilles and the recall of Warwick, whose name they used unscrupulously, and whom they declared they were on their way to meet. As soon as it was known that the kinsmen of the beloved earl were in the revolt, and naturally supposed that the earl himself must countenance the enterprise, the tumultuous camp swelled every hour, while knight after knight, veteran after veteran, abandoned the royal standard. The Lord d'Eyncourt (one of the few lords of the highest birth and greatest following, over whom the Nevilles had no influence, and who bore the Woodvilles no grudge) had, in his way to Lincolnshire,—where his personal aid was necessary to rouse his vassals, infected by the common sedition,—been attacked and wounded by a body of marauders, and thus Edward's camp lost one of its greatest leaders. Fierce dispute broke out in the king's councils; and when the witch Jacquetta's practices against the earl travelled from the hostile into the royal camp, Raoul de Fulke, St. John, and others, seized with pious horror, positively declared they would throw down their arms and retire to their castles, unless the Woodvilles were dismissed from the camp and the Earl of Warwick was recalled to England. To the first demand the king was constrained to yield; with the second he temporized. He marched from Fotheringay to Newark: but the signs of disaffection, though they could not dismay him as a soldier, altered his plans as a captain of singular military acuteness; he fell back on Nottingham, and dispatched, with his own hands, letters to Clarence, the Archbishop of York, and Warwick. To the last he wrote touchingly. "We do not believe"