

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

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## 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"

(said the letter) "that ye should be of any such disposition towards us, as the rumour here runneth, considering the trust and affection we bear you—and cousin, we think ye shall be to us welcome."\* But ere these letters reached the destination, the crown seemed well-nigh lost. At Edgecote, the Earl of Pembroke was defeated and slain, and five thousand royalists were left on the field. Earl Rivers, and his son, Sir John Woodville,† who, in obedience to the royal order, had retired to the earl's country seat of Grafton, were taken prisoners, and beheaded by the vengeance of the insurgents. The same lamentable fate befell the Lord Stafford, on whom Edward relied as one of his most puissant leaders; and London heard with dismay that the king, with but a handful of troops, and those lukewarm and disaffected, was begirt on all sides by hostile and marching thousands.

From Nottingham, however, Edward made good his retreat to a village called Olney, which chanced at that time to be partially fortified with a wall and a strong gate. Here the rebels pursued him; and Edward, hearing that Sir Anthony Woodville, who conceived that the fate of his father and brother cancelled all motive for longer absence from the contest, was busy in col-

\* "Paston Letters," ccxcviii. (Knight's edition), vol. ii., p. 59. See also "Lingard," vol. iii., p. 522 (4to edition), note 43, for the proper date to be assigned to Edward's letter to Warwick, &c.

† This Sir John Woodville was the most obnoxious of the queen's brothers, and infamous for the avarice which had led him to marry the old Duchess of Norfolk, an act which, according to the old laws of chivalry, would have disabled him from entering the lists of knighthood, for the ancient code disqualified and degraded any knight who should marry an old woman for her money! Lord Rivers was the more odious to the people at the time of the insurrection, because, in his capacity of treasurer, he had lately tampered with the coin and circulation.

lecting a force in the neighbourhood of Coventry, while other assistance might be daily expected from London, strengthened the fortifications as well as the time would permit, and awaited the assault of the insurgents.

It was at this crisis, and while throughout all England reigned terror and commotion—that one day, towards the end of July, a small troop of horsemen were seen riding rapidly towards the neighbourhood of Olney. As the village came in view of the cavalcade, with the spire of its church, and its grey stone gateway, so also they beheld, on the pastures that stretched around wide and far, a moving forest of pikes and plumes.

"Holy Mother!" said one of the foremost riders, "Good knight and strong man though Edward be, it were sharp work to cut his way from that hamlet through yonder fields! Brother, we were more welcome, had we brought more bills and bows at our backs!"

"Archbishop," answered the stately personage thus addressed, "we bring what alone raises armies and disbands them—a NAME that a People honours! From the moment the White Bear is seen on yonder archway, side by side with the king's banner—that army will vanish as smoke before the wind."

"Heaven grant it, Warwick!" said the Duke of Clarence, "for, though Edward hath used us sorely, it chafes me as Plantagenet and as prince, to see how peasants and varlets can hem round a king."

"Peasants and varlets are pawns in the chess-board, cousin George," said the prelate, "and knight and bishop find them mighty useful, when pushing forward to an attack. Now knight and bishop appear themselves and take up the game—Warwick," added the

prelate, in a whisper, unheard by Clarence, "forget not, while appeasing rebellion, that the king is in your power."

"For shame, George! I think not now of the unkind king; I think only of the brave boy I dandled on my knee, and whose sword I girded on at Touton. How his lion heart must chafe, condemned to see a foe whom his skill as captain tells him it were madness to confront!"

"Ay, Richard Nevile—ay," said the prelate, with a slight sneer, "play the Paladin, and become the dupe—release the prince, and betray the people!"

"No! I can be true to both. Tush! brother, your craft is slight to the plain wisdom of bold honesty. You slacken your steeds, sirs, on—on—see, the march of the rebels! On, for an Edward and a Warwick!" and, spurring to full speed, the little company arrived at the gates. The loud bugle of the new comers was answered by the cheerful note of the joyous warder,—while dark, slow, and solemn, over the meadows, crept on the mighty cloud of the rebel army.

"We have forestalled the insurgents!" said the earl, throwing himself from his black steed. "Marmaduke Nevile, advance our banner; heralds announce the Duke of Clarence, the Archbishop of York, and the Earl of Salisbury and Warwick."

Through the anxious town, along the crowded walls and house-tops, into the hall of an old mansion (that then adjoined the church), where the king, in complete armour, stood at bay, with stubborn and disaffected officers, rolled the thunder cry—"A Warwick—a Warwick! all saved! a Warwick!"

Sharply, as he heard the clamour, the king turned upon his startled council. "Lords and captains!" said

he, with that inexpressible majesty which he could command in his happier hours, "God and our Patron Saint have sent us at least one man who has the heart to fight fifty times the odds of yon miscreant rabble, by his king's side, and for the honour of loyalty and knighthood!"

"And who says, sire," answered Raoul de Fulke, "that we your lords and captains would not risk blood and life for our king and our knighthood in a just cause? But we will not butcher our countrymen for echoing our own complaint, and praying your grace that a grasping and ambitious family which you have raised to power may no longer degrade your nobles and oppress your commons. We shall see if the Earl of Warwick blame us or approve."

"And I answer," said Edward, loftily, "that whether Warwick approve or blame, come as friend or foe, I will sooner ride alone through yonder archway, and carve out a soldier's grave amongst the ranks of rebellious war, than be the puppet of my subjects, and serve their will by compulsion. Free am I—free ever will I be, while the crown of the Plantagenet is mine, to raise those whom I love, to defy the threats of those sworn to obey me. And were I but Earl of March, instead of king of England, this hall should have swam with the blood of those who have insulted the friends of my youth—the wife of my bosom. Off, Hastings!—I need no mediator with my servants. Nor here, nor anywhere in broad England, have I my equal, and the king forgives or scorns—construe it as ye will, my lords—what the simple gentlemen would avenge."

It were in vain to describe the sensation that this speech produced. There is ever something in courage and in will that awes numbers, though brave them-

selves. And what with the unquestioned valour of Edward—what with the effect of his splendid person, towering above all present by the head, and moving lightly, with each impulse, through the mass of a mail that few there could have borne unsinking, this assertion of absolute power in the midst of mutiny—an army marching to the gates—imposed an unwilling reverence and sullen silence mixed with anger, that, while it chafed, admired. They who, in peace, had despised the voluptuous monarch, feasting in his palace, and reclining on the lap of harlot-beauty, felt that, in war, all Mars seemed living in his person. Then, indeed, he was a king; and had the foe, now darkening the landscape, been the noblest chivalry of France, not a man there but had died for a smile from that haughty lip. But the barons were knit heart in heart with the popular outbreak, and to put down the revolt seemed to them but to raise the Woodvilles. The silence was still unbroken, save where the persuasive whisper of Lord Hastings might be faintly heard in remonstrance with the more powerful or the more stubborn of the chiefs—when the tread of steps resounded without, and, unarmed, bareheaded, the only form in Christendom grander and statelier than the king's, strode into the hall.

Edward, as yet unaware what course Warwick would pursue, and half doubtful whether a revolt that had borrowed his name, and was led by his kinsmen, might not originate in his consent, surrounded by those to whom the earl was especially dear, and aware that if Warwick were against him all was lost, still relaxed not the dignity of his mien; and leaning on his large two-handed sword, with such inward resolves as brave kings and gallant gentlemen form, if the worst

should befall, he watched the majestic strides of his great kinsman, and said as the earl approached, and the mutinous captains louted low—

“Cousin, you are welcome! for truly do I know that when *you* have aught whereof to complain, you take not the moment of danger and disaster. And whatever has chanced to alienate your heart from me, the sound of the rebel's trumpet chases all difference, and marries your faith to mine.”

“Oh, Edward, my king, why did you so misjudge me in the prosperous hour!” said Warwick, simply, but with affecting earnestness: “since in the adverse hour you arede me well?”

As he spoke, he bowed his head, and, bending his knee, kissed the hand held out to him.

Edward's face grew radiant, and, raising the earl, he glanced proudly at the barons who stood round, surprised and mute.

“Yes, my lords and sirs, see—it is not the Earl of Warwick, next to our royal brethren, the nearest subject to the throne, who would desert me in the day of peril!”

“Nor do *we*, sire,” retorted Raoul de Fulke; “you wrong us before our mighty comrade if you so mis-think us. We will fight for the king, but not for the queen's kindred; and this alone brings on us your anger.”

“The gates shall be opened to ye. Go! Warwick and I are men enough for the rabble yonder.”

The earl's quick eye, and profound experience of his time, saw at once the dissension and its causes. Nor, however generous, was he willing to forego the present occasion for permanently destroying an influence which he knew hostile to himself and hurtful to the

realm. His was not the generosity of a boy, but of a statesman. Accordingly, as Raoul de Fulke ceased, he took up the word.

"My liege, we have yet an hour good ere the foe can reach the gates. Your brother and mine accompany me. See, they enter! Please you, a few minutes to confer with them; and suffer me, meanwhile, to reason with these noble captains."

Edward paused; but before the open brow of the earl fled whatever suspicion might have crossed the king's mind.

"Be it so, cousin; but remember this—to councillors who can menace me with desertion in such an hour, I concede nothing."

Turning hastily away, he met Clarence and the prelate, midway in the hall, threw his arm caressingly over his brother's shoulder, and, taking the archbishop by the hand, walked with them towards the battlements.

"Well, my friends," said Warwick, "and what would you of the king?"

"The dismissal of all the Woodvilles, except the queen—the revocation of the grants and land accorded to them, to the despoiling the ancient noble—and, but for your presence, we had demanded your recall."

"And, failing these, what your resolve?"

"To depart, and leave Edward to his fate. These granted, we doubt little but that the insurgents will disband. These not granted, we but waste our lives against a multitude whose cause we must approve."

"The cause! But ye know not the real cause," answered Warwick. "I know it; for the sons of the North are familiar to me, and their rising hath deeper meaning than ye deem. What! have they not decoyed

to their head my kinsmen, the heirs of Latimer and Fitzhugh, and bold Coniers, whose steel casque should have circled a wiser brain? Have they not taken my name as their battle-cry? And do ye think this falsehood veils nothing but the simple truth of just complaint?"

"Was their rising, then," asked St. John, in evident surprise, "wholly unauthorized by you?"

"So help me Heaven! If I would resort to arms to redress a wrong, think not that I myself would be absent from the field? No, my lords, friends, and captains—time presses; a few words must suffice to explain what, as yet, may be dark to you. I have letters from Montagu and others, which reached me the same day as the king's, and which clear up the purpose of our misguided countrymen. Ye know well that ever in England, but especially since the reign of Edward III., strange, wild notions of some kind of liberty other than that we enjoy, have floated loose through the land. Among the commons, a half-conscious recollection that the nobles are a different race from themselves feeds a secret rancour and mislike, which, at any fair occasion for riot, shows itself bitter and ruthless—as in the outbreak of Cade and others. And if the harvest fail, or a tax gall, there are never wanting men to turn the popular distress to the ends of private ambition or state design. Such a man has been the true head and front of this commotion."

"Speak you of Robin of Redesdale, now dead?" asked one of the captains.

"He is not dead.\* Montagu informs me that the

\*The fate of Robin of Redesdale has been as obscure as most of the incidents in this most perplexed part of English history. While some of the chroniclers finish his career according to the report mentioned in the text, Fabyan not only

report was false. He was defeated off York, and retired for some days into the woods; but it is he who has enticed the sons of Latimer and Fitzhugh into the revolt, and resigned his own command to the martial cunning of Sir John Coniers. This Robin of Redesdale is no common man. He hath had a clerkly education—he hath travelled among the Free Towns of Italy—he hath deep purpose in all he doth; and among his projects is the destruction of the nobles here, as it was whilome effected in Florence, the depriving us of all offices and posts, with other changes, wild to think of and long to name.”

“And we would have suffered this man to triumph!” exclaimed De Fulke: “we have been to blame.”

“Under fair pretence he has gathered numbers, and now wields an army. I have reason to know that, had he succeeded in estranging ye from Edward, and had the king fallen, dead or alive, into his hands, his object would have been to restore Henry of Windsor, but on conditions that would have left king and baron little more than pageants in the state. I knew this man years ago. I have watched him since; and, strange though it may seem to you, he hath much in him that I admire as a subject and should fear were I a king. Brief, thus runs my counsel:—For our sake and the realm’s safety we must see this armed multitude dis-

more charitably prolongs his life, but rewards him with the king’s pardon; and according to the annals of his ancient and distinguished family (who will pardon, we trust, a licence with one of their ancestry equally allowed by history and romance), as referred to in Wotton’s “English Baronetage” (Art. Hilyard), and which probably rests upon the authority of the life of Richard III., in Stowe’s “Annals,” he is represented as still living in the reign of that king. But the whole account of this famous demagogue in Wotton is, it must be owned, full of historical mistakes.

banded—that done, we must see the grievances they with truth complain of fairly redressed. Think not, my lords, I avenge my own wrongs alone when I go with you in your resolve to banish from the king’s councils the baleful influence of the queen’s kin. Till that be compassed, no peace for England. As a leprosy, their avarice crawls over the nobler parts of the state, and devours while it sullies. Leave this to me; and, though we will redress ourselves, let us now assist our king!”

With one voice, the unruly officers clamoured their assent to all the earl urged, and expressed their readiness to sally at once from the gates, and attack the rebels.

“But,” observed an old veteran, “what are we amongst so many? Here a handful—there an army!”

“Fear not, reverend sir,” answered Warwick, with an assured smile; “is not this army in part gathered from my own province of Yorkshire? Is it not formed of men who have eaten of my bread and drank of my cup? Let me see the man who will discharge one arrow at the walls which contain Richard Nevile of Warwick. Now each to your posts—I to the king.”

Like the pouring of new blood into a decrepit body seemed the arrival, at that feeble garrison, of the Earl of Warwick. From despair into the certainty of triumph leaped every heart. Already, at the sight of his banner floating by the side of Edward’s, the gunner had repaired to his bombard—the archer had taken up his bow—the village itself, before disaffected, poured all its scanty population—women, and age, and children—to the walls. And when the earl joined the king upon the ramparts, he found that able general sanguine and elated, and pointing out to Clarence the natural

defences of the place. Meanwhile, the rebels, no doubt apprised by their scouts of the new aid, had already halted in their march, and the dark swarm might be seen indistinctly undulating, as bees ere they settle, amidst the verdure of the plain.

"Well, cousin," said the king, "have ye brought these Hotspurs to their allegiance?"

"Sire, yes," said Warwick, gravely, "but we have here no force to resist yon army."

"Bring you not succours?" said the king, astonished. "You must have passed through London. Have you left no troops upon the road?"

"I had no time, sir; and London is well-nigh palsied with dismay. Had I waited to collect troops, I might have found a king's head blackening over those gates."

"Well," returned Edward, carelessly, "few or many, one gentleman is more worth than a hundred varlets. 'We are eno' for glory,' as Henry said at Agincourt."

"No, sire; you are too skilful and too wise to believe your boast. These men we cannot conquer—we may disperse them."

"By what spell?"

"By their king's word to redress their complaints."

"And banish my queen?"

"Heaven forbid that man should part those whom God has joined," returned Warwick. "Not my lady, your queen, but my lady's kindred."

"Rivers is dead, and gallant John," said Edward, sadly—"is not that enough for revenge?"

"It is not revenge that we require, but pledges for the land's safety," answered Warwick. "And to be plain, without such a promise these walls may be your tomb."

Edward walked apart, strongly debating within himself. In his character were great contrasts; no man was more frank in common—no man more false when it suited—no man had more levity in wanton love, or more firm affection for those he once thoroughly took to his heart. He was the reverse of grateful for service yielded, yet he was warm in protecting those on whom service was conferred. He was resolved not to give up the Woodvilles, and, after a short self-commune, he equally determined not to risk his crown and life by persevering in resistance to the demand for their downfall. Inly obstinate, outwardly yielding, he concealed his falsehood with his usual soldierly grace.

"Warwick," he said, returning to the earl's side, "you cannot advise me to what is misbeseeming, and therefore, in this strait, I resign my conduct to your hands. I will not unsay to yon mutinous gentlemen what I have already said; but what you judge it right to promise in my name to them, or to the insurgents, I will not suppose that mine honour will refuse to concede. But go not hence, O noblest friend that ever stood by a king's throne!—go not hence till the grasp of your hand assures me that all past unkindness is gone and buried; yea, and by this hand, and while its pressure is warm in mine, bear not too hard on thy king's affection for his lady's kindred."

"Sire," said Warwick, though his generous nature well-nigh melted into weakness, and it was with an effort that he adhered to his purpose—"Sire, if dismissed for awhile, they shall not be degraded. And if it be, on consideration, wise to recall from the family of Woodville your grants of lands and lordships, take from your Warwick—who, rich in his king's love, hath eno' to spare—take the double of what you would re-

call. O, be frank with me—be true—be steadfast, Edward, and dispose of my lands whenever you would content a favourite.”

“Not to impoverish thee, my Warwick,” answered Edward, smiling, “did I call thee to my aid; for the rest, my revenues as Duke of York are at least mine to bestow. Go now to the hostile camp—go as sole minister and captain-general of this realm—go with all powers and honours a king can give; and when these districts are at peace, depart to our Welsh provinces, as chief judiciary of that principality. Pembroke’s mournful death leaves that high post in my gift. It cannot add to your greatness, but it proves to England your sovereign’s trust.”

“And while that trust is given,” said Warwick, with tears in his eyes, “may Heaven strengthen my arm in battle, and sharpen my brain in council. But I play the laggard. The sun wanes westward; it should not go down while a hostile army menaces the son of Richard of York.”

The earl rode rapidly away, reached the broad space where his followers still stood, dismounted, but beside their steeds—

“Trumpets advance—pursuivants and heralds go before—Marmaduke, mount! The rest I need not. We ride to the insurgent camp.”

## CHAPTER III

## THE CAMP OF THE REBELS

The rebels had halted about a mile from the town, and were already pitching their tents for the night. It was a tumultuous, clamorous, but not altogether undisciplined array; for Coniers was a leader of singular practice in reducing men into the machinery of war, and where his skill might have failed, the prodigious influence and energy of Robin of Redesdale ruled the passions and united the discordant elements. This last was, indeed, in much worthy the respect in which Warwick held his name. In times more ripe for him, he would have been a mighty demagogue and a successful regenerator. His birth was known but to few; his education and imperious temper made him vulgarly supposed of noble origin; but had he descended from a king’s loins, Robert Hilyard had still been the son of the Saxon people. Warwick overrated, perhaps, Hilyard’s wisdom; for, despite his Italian experience, his ideas were far from embracing any clear and definite system of democracy. He had much of the frantic levelism and *jacquerie* of his age and land, and could probably not have explained to himself all the changes he desired to effect; but, coupled with his hatred to the nobles, his deep and passionate sympathy with the poor, his heated and fanatical chimeras of a republic, half-political and half-religious,—he had, with no uncommon inconsistency, linked the cause of a de-throned king. For as the Covenanters linked with the Stuarts against the succeeding and more tolerant dynasty, never relinquishing their own anti-monarchic