

her first-born)—to the earl's rage and dismay his deputy Vauclerc fired upon his ships. Warwick then steered on towards Normandy, captured some Flemish vessels by the way, in token of defiance to the earl's old Burgundian foe—and landed at Harfleur, where he and his companions were received with royal honours by the Admiral of France, and finally took their way to the court of Louis XI., at Amboise.

"The danger is past for ever!" said King Edward, as the wine sparkled in his goblet. "Rebellion hath lost its head—and now, indeed, and for the first time, a monarch I reign alone!"*

* Before leaving England, Warwick and Clarence are generally said to have fallen in with Anthony Woodville and Lord Audley, and ordered them to execution; from which they were saved by a Dorsetshire gentleman. Carte, who, though his history is not without great mistakes, is well worth reading by those whom the character of Lord Warwick may interest, says, that the earl had "too much magnanimity to put them to death immediately, according to the common practice of the times, and only imprisoned them in the castle of Wardour, from whence they were soon rescued by John Thornhill, a gentleman of Dorsetshire." The whole of this story is, however, absolutely contradicted by the "Warkworth Chronicle" (p. 9, edited by Mr. Halliwell), according to which authority Anthony Woodville was at that time commanding a fleet upon the Channel, which waylaid Warwick on his voyage, but the success therein attributed to the gallant Anthony, in dispersing or seizing all the earl's ships, save the one that bore the earl himself and his family, is proved to be purely fabulous by the earl's well-attested capture of the Flemish vessels, as he passed from Calais to the coasts of Normandy, an exploit he could never have performed with a single vessel of his own. It is very probable that the story of Anthony Woodville's capture and peril at this time originates in a misadventure many years before, and recorded in the Paston letters, as well as in the Chronicles.—In the year 1459, Anthony Woodville and his father, Lord Rivers (then zealous Lancastrians), really did fall into the hands of the Earl of March (Edward IV.), Warwick and Salisbury, and got off with a sound "rating" upon the rude language which such "knaves' sons," and "little squires" had held to those "who were of king's blood."

CHAPTER III

THE PLOT OF THE HOSTELRY—THE MAID AND THE SCHOLAR IN THEIR HOME

The country was still disturbed, and the adherents, whether of Henry or the earl, still rose in many an outbreak, though prevented from swelling into one common army by the extraordinary vigour not only of Edward, but of Gloucester and Hastings,—when one morning, just after the events thus rapidly related, the hostelry of Master Sancroft, in the suburban parish of Marybone, rejoiced in a motley crowd of customers and toppers.

Some half-score soldiers, returned in triumph from the royal camp, sat round a table placed agreeably enough in the deep recess made by the large jutting lattice; with them were mingled about as many women, strangely and gaudily clad. These last were all young; one or two, indeed, little advanced from childhood. But there was no expression of youth in their hard, sinister features: coarse paint supplied the place of bloom; the very youngest had a wrinkle on her brow; their forms wanted the round and supple grace of early years. Living principally in the open air, trained from infancy to feats of activity, their muscles were sharp and prominent—their aspects had something of masculine audacity and rudeness; health itself seemed in them more loathsome than disease. Upon those faces of bronze, vice had set its ineffable, unmistakable seal. To those eyes never had sprung the tears of compassion or woman's gentle sorrow; on those brows never had flushed the glow of modest shame: their very voices

half belied their sex—harsh, and deep, and hoarse—their laughter loud and dissonant. Some amongst them were not destitute of a certain beauty, but it was a beauty of feature with a common hideousness of expression—an expression at once cunning, bold, callous, and licentious. Womanless, through the worst vices of woman—passionless, through the premature waste of passion—they stood between the sexes like foul and monstrous anomalies, made up and fashioned from the rank depravities of both. These creatures seemed to have newly arrived from some long wayfaring—their shoes and the hems of their robes were covered with dust and mire—their faces were heated, and the veins in their bare, sinewy, sun-burnt arms were swollen by fatigue. Each had beside her on the floor a timbrel—each wore at her girdle a long knife in its sheath: well that the sheaths hid the blades, for not one—not even that which yon cold-eyed child of fifteen wore—but had on its steel the dark stain of human blood!

The presence of soldiers fresh from the scene of action had naturally brought into the hostelry several of the idle gossips of the suburb, and these stood round the table, drinking into their large ears the boasting narratives of the soldiers. At a small table, apart from the revellers, but evidently listening with attention to all the news of the hour, sat a friar, gravely discussing a mighty tankard of huffcap, and ever and anon, as he lifted his head for the purpose of drinking, glancing a wanton eye at one of the tymbesteres.

“But an’ you had seen,” said a trooper, who was the mouthpiece of his comrades—“an’ you had seen the raptrils run when King Edward himself led the charge! Marry, it was like a cat in a rabbit burrow! Easy to see, I trow, that Earl Warwick was not amongst them! *His* men, at least, fight like devils!”

“But there was one tall fellow,” said a soldier, setting down his tankard, “who made a good fight and dour, and, but for me and my comrades, would have cut his way to the king.”

“Ay—ay—true; we saved his highness, and ought to have been knighted—but there’s no gratitude now-a-days!”

“And who was this doughty warrior?” asked one of the bystanders, who secretly favoured the rebellion.

“Why, it was said that he was Robin of Redesdale. He who fought my Lord Montagu off York.”

“Our Robin!” exclaimed several voices. “Ay, he was ever a brave fellow—poor Robin!”

“‘Your Robin,’ and ‘poor Robin,’ varlets!” cried the principal trooper. “Have a care! What do ye mean by your Robin?”

“Marry, sir soldier,” quoth a butcher, scratching his head, and in a humble voice—“craving your pardon, and the king’s, this Master Robin sojourned a short time in this hamlet, and was a kind neighbour, and mighty glib of the tongue. Don’t ye mind, neighbours,” he added, rapidly, eager to change the conversation, “how he made us leave off when we were just about burning Adam Warner, the old nigromancer, in his den yonder? Who else could have done that? But an’ we had known Robin had been a rebel to sweet King Edward, we’d have roasted him along with the wizard!”

One of the timbrel-girls, the leader of the choir, her arm round a soldier’s neck, looked up at the last speech, and her eye followed the gesture of the butcher, as he pointed through the open lattice to the sombre, ruinous abode of Adam Warner.

“Was that the house ye would have burned?” she asked, abruptly.

"Yes; but Robin told us the king would hang those who took on them the king's blessed privilege of burning nigromancers; and, sure enough, old Adam Warner was advanced to be wizard-in-chief to the king's own highness a week or two afterwards."

The friar had made a slight movement at the name of Warner; he now pushed his stool nearer to the principal group, and drew his hood completely over his countenance.

"Yea!" exclaimed the mechanic, whose son had been the innocent cause of the memorable siege to poor Adam's dilapidated fortress, related in the first book of this narrative—"yea; and what did he when there? Did he not devise a horrible engine for the destruction of the poor—an engine that was to do all the work in England by the devil's help?—so that if a gentleman wanted a coat of mail, or a cloth tunic—if his dame needed a Norwich worsted—if a yeoman lacked a plough or a wagon, or his good wife a pot or a kettle, they were to go, not to the armourer, and the draper, and the tailor, and the weaver, and the wheelwright, and the blacksmith,—but, hey presto! Master Warner sets his imps a-churning, and turned ye out mail and tunic, worsted and wagon, kettle and pot, spick and span new, from his brewage of vapour and sea-coal? Oh, have I not heard enough of the sorcerer from my brother, who works in the Chepe for Master Stockton, the mercer!—and Master Stockton was one of the worshipful deputies to whom the old nigromancer had the front to boast his devices."

"It is true," said the friar, suddenly.

"Yes, reverend father, it is true," said the mechanic, doffing his cap, and inclining his swarthy face to this unexpected witness of his veracity. A murmur of

wrath and hatred was heard amongst the bystanders. The soldiers indifferently turned to their female companions. There was a brief silence; and, involuntarily, the gossips stretched over the table to catch sight of the house of so demoniac an oppressor of the poor.

"See," said the baker, "the smoke still curls from the roof-top! I heard he had come back. Old Madge, his handmaid, has bought cimmel-cakes of me the last week or so; nothing less than the finest wheat serves him now, I trow. However, right's right and——"

"Come back!" cried the fierce mechanic, "the owl hath kept close in his roost! An' it were not for the king's favour, I would soon see how the wizard liked to have fire and water brought to bear against himself!"

"Sit down, sweetheart," whispered one of the young tymbesteres to the last speaker—

"Come kiss me, my darling,
Warm kisses I trade for——"

"Avaunt!" quoth the mechanic, gruffly, and shaking off the seductive arm of the tymbestere—"Avaunt! I have neither lief nor halfpence for thee and thine. Out on thee—a child of thy years, a rope's end to thy back were a friend's best kindness!"

The girl's eyes sparkled, she instinctively put her hand to her knife; then turning to a soldier by her side, she said—"Hear you that, and sit still?"

"Thunder and wounds!" growled the soldier thus appealed to—"more respect to the sex, knave; if I don't break thy fool's costard with my sword-hilt, it is only because Red Grisell can take care of herself against twenty such lozels as thou. These honest girls have been to the wars with us; King Edward grudges no

man his jolly fere. Speak up for thyself, Grisell! How many tall fellows didst thou put out of their pain, after the battle of Losecote?"

"Only five, Hal," replied the cold-eyed girl, and showing her glittering teeth with the grin of a young tigress;—"but one was a captain. I shall do better next time; it was my first battle, thou knowest!"

The more timid of the bystanders exchanged a glance of horror, and drew back. The mechanic resumed, sullenly—

"I seek no quarrel with lass or lover. I am a plain, blunt man, with a wife and children, who are dear to me; and if I have a grudge to the nigromancer, it is because he glamoured my poor boy Tim. See!"—and he caught up a blue-eyed, handsome boy, who had been clinging to his side, and baring the child's arm, showed it to the spectators; there was a large scar on the limb, and it was shrunk and withered.

"It was my own fault," said the little fellow, deprecatingly.

The affectionate father silenced the sufferer with a cuff on the cheek, and resumed—"Ye note, neighbours, the day when the foul wizard took this little one in his arms: well, three weeks afterwards—that very day three weeks—as he was standing like a lamb by the fire, the good wife's cauldron seethed over, without reason or rhyme, and scalded his arm till it rivelled up like a leaf in November; and if that is not glamour, why have we laws against witchcraft?"

"True—true!" groaned the chorus.

The boy, who had borne his father's blow without a murmur, now again attempted remonstrance. "The hot water went over the grey cat, too, but Master Warner never bewitched *her*, daddy."

"He takes his part!—You hear the daff laddy? He takes the old nigromancer's part—a sure sign of the witchcraft; but I'll leather it out of thee, I will!" and the mechanic again raised his weighty arm. The child did not this time await the blow; he dodged under the butcher's apron, gained the door, and disappeared. "And he teaches our own children to fly in our faces!" said the father, in a kind of whimper.

The neighbours sighed, in commiseration.

"Oh!" he exclaimed, in a fiercer tone, grinding his teeth, and shaking his clenched fist towards Adam Warner's melancholy house—"I say again, if the king did not protect the vile sorcerer, I would free the land from his devilries, ere his black master could come to his help."

"The king cares not a straw for Master Warner or his inventions, my son," said a rough, loud voice. All turned, and saw the friar standing in the midst of the circle. "Know ye not, my children, that the king sent the wretch neck and crop out of the palace, for having bewitched the Earl of Warwick and his grace the Lord Clarence, so that they turned unnaturally against their own kinsman, his highness. But 'Manus malorum suos bonos breaket,'—that is to say—the fists of wicked men only whack their own bones. Ye have all heard tell of Friar Bungey, my children?"

"Ay—ay!" answered two or three in a breath—"a wizard, it's true, and a mighty one; but he never did harm to the poor, though they do say he made a quaint image of the earl, and——"

"Tut—tut!" interrupted the friar, "all Bungey did was to try to disenchant the Lord Warwick, whom yon miscreant had spellbound. Poor Bungey! he is a friend to the people: and when he found that Master

Adam was making a device for their ruin, he spared no toil, I assure ye, to frustrate the iniquity. Oh, how he fasted and watched! Oh, how many a time he fought, tooth and nail, with the devil in person, to get at the infernal invention! for if *he* had that invention once in his hands, he could turn it to good account, I can promise ye: and give ye rain for the green blade, and sun for the ripe sheaf. But the fiend got the better at first; and King Edward, bewitched himself for the moment, would have hanged Friar Bungey for crossing old Adam, if he had not called three times, in a loud voice—'Presto pepranxenon!' changed himself into a bird, and flown out of the window. As soon as Master Adam Warner found the field clear to himself, he employed his daughter to bewitch the Lord Hastings; he set brother against brother, and made the king and Lord George fall to loggerheads; he stirred up the rebellion, and where he would have stopped the foul fiend only knows, if your friend Friar Bungey, who, though a wizard as you say, is only so for your benefit (and a holy priest into the bargain), had not, by aid of a good spirit, whom he conjured up in the Island of Tartary, disenchanting the king, and made him see in a dream what the villanous Warner was devising against his crown and his people,—whereon his highness sent Master Warner and his daughter back to their roost, and, helped by Friar Bungey, beat his enemies out of the kingdom. So, if ye have a mind, to save your children from mischief and malice, ye may set to work with good heart, always provided that ye touch not old Adam's iron invention. Woe betide ye, if ye think to destroy *that!* Bring it safe to Friar Bungey, whom ye will find returned to the palace, and journeyman's wages will be a penny a day

higher for the next ten years to come!" With these words the friar threw down his reckoning, and moved majestically to the door.

"An' I might trust you?" said Tim's father, laying hold of the friar's serge.

"Ye may—ye may!" cried the leader of the tymbesteres starting up from the lap of her soldier, "for it is Friar Bungey himself!"

A movement of astonishment and terror was universal.

"Friar Bungey himself!" repeated the burly impostor. "Right, lassie, right; and he now goes to the palace of the Tower, to mutter good spells in King Edward's ear—spells to defeat the malignant ones, and to lower the price of beer. Wax wobiscum!"

With that salutation, more benevolent than accurate, the friar vanished from the room; the chief of the tymbesteres leaped lightly on the table, put one foot on the soldier's shoulder, and sprang through the open lattice. She found the friar in the act of mounting a sturdy mule, which had been tied to a post by the door.

"Fie, Graul Skellet! Fie, Graul!" said the conjuror. "Respect for my serge. We must not be noted together out of door in the daylight. There's a groat for thee. Vade, execrabilis,—that is, Good day to thee, pretty rogue!"

"A word, friar, a word. Wouldst thou have the old man burned, drowned, or torn piecemeal! He hath a daughter, too, who once sought to mar our trade with her gittern; a daughter, then in a kirtle that I would not have nimmed from a hedge, but whom I last saw in sarcenet and lawn, with a great lord for her fere." The tymbestere's eyes shone with malignant envy, as she added—"Graul Skellet loves not to see

those who have worn worsted and say, walk in sar-cenet and lawn! Graul Skellet loves not wenches who have lords for their feres, and yet who shrink from Graul and her sisters as the sound from the leper."

"Fegs," answered the friar, impatiently, "I know naught against the daughter—a pretty lass, but too high for my kisses. And as for the father, I want not the man's life—that is, not very specially—but his model, his mechanical. He may go free, if that can be compassed; if not,—why; the model at all risks! Serve me in this."

"And thou wilt teach me the last tricks of the cards, and thy great art of making phantoms glide by on the wall?"

"Bring the model intact, and I will teach thee more, Graul;—the dead man's candle, and the charm of the newt—and I'll give thee, to boot, the caul of the parricide, that thou hast prayed me so oft for. Hum!—thou hast a girl in thy troop who hath a blinking eye that well pleases me;—but go now, and obey me. Work before play—and grace before pudding!"

The tymbestere nodded, snapped her fingers in the air, and humming no holy ditty, returned to the house through the doorway.

This short conference betrays to the reader the relations, mutually advantageous, which subsisted between the conjuror and the tymbesteres. Their troop (the mothers, perchance, of the generation we treat of) had been familiar to the friar in his old capacity of mountebank or tregetour, and in his clerical and courtly elevation, he did not disdain an ancient connection that served him well with the populace; for these grim children of vice seemed present in every place, where pastime was gay, or strife was rampant; in peace, at

the merry-makings and the hostelries—in war, following the camp, and seen, at night, prowling through the battle-fields to dispatch the wounded and to rifle the slain:—In merry-making, hostelry, or in camp, they could thus still spread the fame of Friar Bungey, and uphold his repute both for terrible lore and for hearty love of the commons.

Nor was this all; both tymbesteres and conjuror were fortune-tellers by profession. They could interchange the anecdotes each picked up in their different lines. The tymbestere could thus learn the secrets of gentle and courtier—the conjuror those of the artisan and mechanic.

Unconscious of the formidable dispositions of their neighbours, Sibyll and Warner were inhaling the sweet air of the early spring in their little garden. His disgrace had affected the philosopher less than might be supposed. True, that the loss of the king's favour was the deferring indefinitely—perhaps for life—any practical application of his adored theory; and yet, somehow or other, the theory itself consoled him. At the worst, he should find some disciple, some ingenious student, more fortunate than himself, to whom he could bequeath the secret, and who, when Adam was in his grave, would teach the world to revere his name. Meanwhile, his time was his own; he was lord of a home, though ruined and desolate; he was free, with his free thoughts; and therefore, as he paced the narrow garden, his step was lighter, his mind less absent, than when parched with feverish fear and hope, for the immediate practical success of a principle which was to be tried before the hazardous tribunal of prejudice and ignorance.

"My child," said the sage, "I feel, for the first time

for years, the distinction of the seasons. I feel that we are walking in the pleasant spring. Young days come back to me like dreams; and I could almost think thy mother were once more by my side!"

Sibyll pressed her father's hand, and a soft but melancholy sigh stirred her rosy lips. She, too, felt the balm of the young year; yet her father's words broke upon sad and anxious musings. Not to youth as to age, not to loving fancy as to baffled wisdom, has seclusion charms that compensate for the passionate and active world! On coming back to the old house, on glancing round its mildewed walls, comfortless and bare, the neglected, weed-grown garden, Sibyll had shuddered in dismay. Had her ambition fallen again into its old abject state? Were all her hopes to restore her ancestral fortunes, to vindicate her dear father's fame, shrunk into this slough of actual poverty—the butterfly's wings folded back into the chrysalis shroud of torpor? The vast disparity between herself and Hastings had not struck her so forcibly at the court; here, at home, the very walls proclaimed it. When Edward had dismissed the unwelcome witnesses of his attempted crime, he had given orders that they should be conducted to their house through the most private ways. He naturally desired to create no curious comment upon their departure. Unperceived by their neighbours, Sibyll and her father had gained access by the garden gate. Old Madge received them in dismay; for she had been in the habit of visiting Sibyll weekly at the palace, and had gained, in the old familiarity subsisting, then, between maiden and nurse, some insight into her heart. She had cherished the fondest hopes for the fate of her young mistress;—and now, to labour and to penury had the fate re-

turned! The guard who accompanied them, according to Edward's orders, left some pieces of gold, which Adam rejected, but Madge secretly received and judiciously expended. And this was all their wealth. But not of toil nor of penury in themselves thought Sibyll; she thought but of Hastings—wildly, passionately, trustfully, unceasingly, of the absent Hastings. Oh! he would seek her—he would come—her reverse would but the more endear her to him! Hastings came not. She soon learned the wherefore. War threatened the land—he was at his post, at the head of armies.

Oh, with what panoply of prayer she sought to shield that beloved breast! And now the old man spoke of the blessed spring, the holiday time of lovers and of love, and the young girl, sighing, said to her mournful heart, "The world hath its sun—where is mine?"

The peacock strutted up to his poor protectors, and spread his plumes to the gilding beams. And then Sibyll recalled the day when she had walked in that spot with Marmaduke, and he had talked of his youth, ambition, and lusty hopes, while, silent and absorbed, she had thought within herself, "could the world be open to me as to him,—I too have ambition, and it should find its goal." Now what contrast between the two—the man enriched and honoured, if to-day in peril or in exile, to-morrow free to march forward still on his career—the world the country to him whose heart was bold and whose name was stainless! And she, the woman, brought back to the prison-home, scorn around her, impotent to avenge, and forbidden to fly! Wherefore?—Sibyll felt her superiority of mind, of thought, of nature—Wherefore the contrast?

The success was that of man, the discomfiture that of woman. Woe to the man who precedes his age, but never yet has an age been in which genius and ambition are safe to woman!

The father and the child turned into their house; the day was declining; Adam mounted to his studious chamber. Sibyll sought the solitary servant.

"What tidings, oh, what tidings! The war, you say, is over; the great earl, his sweet daughter, safe upon the seas, but Hastings, oh Hastings! what of him?"

"My bonnibell, my lady-bird, I have none but good tales to tell thee. I saw and spoke with a soldier who served under Lord Hastings himself; he is unscathed, he is in London. But they say that one of his bands is quartered in the suburb, and that there is a report of a rising in Hertfordshire."

"When will peace come to England and to me!" sighed Sibyll.

CHAPTER IV

THIS WORLD'S JUSTICE, AND THE WISDOM OF OUR ANCESTORS

The night had now commenced, and Sibyll was still listening,—or, perhaps, listening not—to the soothing babble of the venerable servant. They were both seated in the little room that adjoined the hall, and their only light came through the door opening on the garden—a grey, indistinct twilight, relieved by the few earliest stars. The peacock, his head under his wing, roosted on the balustrade, and the song of the night-gale, from amidst one of the neighbouring copses,

which studded the ground towards the chase of Marybone, came soft and distant on the serene air. The balm and freshness of spring were felt in the dews, in the skies, in the sweet breath of young herb and leaf;—through the calm of ever-watchful nature, it seemed as if you might mark, distinct and visible, minute after minute, the blessed growth of April into May.

Suddenly, Madge uttered a cry of alarm, and pointed towards the opposite wall. Sibyll, startled from her reverie, looked up, and saw something dusk and dwarf-life perched upon the crumbling eminence. Presently this apparition leaped lightly into the garden, and the alarm of the women was lessened on seeing a young boy creep stealthily over the grass, and approach the open door.

"Hey, child!" said Madge, rising. "What wantest thou?"

"Hist, gammer, hist! Ah! the young mistress? That's well. Hist! I say again." The boy entered the room. "I'm in time to save you. In half an hour your house will be broken into, perhaps burnt. The boys are clapping their hands now at the thoughts of the bonfire. Father and all the neighbours are getting ready. Hark! hark! No, it is only the wind! The tymbesteres are to give note. When you hear their bells tinkle, the mob will meet. Run for your lives, you and the old man, and don't ever say it was poor Tim who told you this, for father would beat me to death. Ye can still get through the garden into the fields. Quick!"

"I will go to the master," exclaimed Madge, hurrying from the room.

The child caught Sibyll's cold hand through the dark. "And I say, mistress, if his worship is a wiz-