

and Prince Edward; and to defeat this alliance was his first object, partly through Clarence, partly through Margaret herself. A gentlewoman in the Duchess of Clarence's train had been arrested on the point of embarking to join her mistress. Richard had already seen and conferred with this lady, whose ambition, duplicity, and talent for intrigue, were known to him. Having secured her by promises of the most lavish dignities and rewards, he proposed that she should be permitted to join the duchess with secret messages to Isabel and the duke, warning them both that Warwick and Margaret would forget their past feud in present sympathy, and that the rebellion against King Edward, instead of placing them on the throne, would humble them to be subordinates and aliens to the real profitters—the Lancastrians.\* He foresaw what effect these warnings would have upon the vain duke and the ambitious Isabel, whose character was known to him from childhood. He startled the king by insisting upon sending, at the same time, a trusty diplomatist to Margaret of Anjou, proffering to give the Princess Elizabeth (betrothed to Lord Montagu's son) to the young Prince Edward.† Thus, if the king, who had, as yet, no son, were to die, Margaret's son, in right of his wife, as well as in that of his own descent, would peaceably ascend the throne. "Need I say that I mean not this in sad and serious earnest," observed Richard, interrupting the astonished king—"I mean it but to amuse the Anjouite, and to deafen her ears to any overtures from Warwick. If she listen, we gain time—that time will inevitably renew irreconcilable quarrel between herself and the earl. His hot temper and desire

\* Comines, 3, c. 5; Hall; Hollinshed.

† "Original Letters from Harleian MSS."—Edited by Sir H. Ellis (Second Series).

of revenge will not brook delay. He will land, unsupported by Margaret and her partisans, and without any fixed principle of action which can strengthen force by opinion."

"You are right, Richard," said Edward, whose faithless cunning comprehended the more sagacious policy it could not originate. "All be it as you will."

"And in the meanwhile," added Richard, "watch well, but anger not, Montagu and the archbishop. It were dangerous to seem to distrust them till proof be clear—it were dull to believe them true. I go at once to fulfil my task."

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## CHAPTER VII

### WARWICK AND HIS FAMILY IN EXILE

We now summon the reader on a longer if less classic journey than from Thebes to Athens, and waft him on a rapid wing from Shene to Amboise. We must suppose that the two emissaries of Gloucester have already arrived at their several destinations—the lady has reached Isabel;—the envoy, Margaret.

In one of the apartments appropriated to the earl in the royal palace, within the embrasure of a vast Gothic casement, sat Anne of Warwick; the small wicket in the window was open, and gave a view of a wide and fair garden, interspersed with thick bosquets, and regular alleys, over which the rich skies of the summer evening, a little before sunset, cast alternate light and shadow. Towards this prospect the sweet face of the Lady Anne was turned musingly. The riveted eye—the bended neck—the arms reclining on the knee—the slender fingers interlaced—gave to her whole person the character of reverie and repose.



In the same chamber were two other ladies; the one was pacing the floor with slow but uneven steps, with lips moving from time to time, as if in self-commune, with the brow contracted slightly: her form and face took also the character of reverie, but not of repose.

The third female (the gentle and lovely mother of the other two) was seated, towards the centre of the room, before a small table, on which rested one of those religious manuscripts, full of the moralities and the marvels of cloister sanctity, which made so large a portion of the literature of the monkish ages. But her eye rested not on the Gothic letter, and the rich blazon of the holy book. With all a mother's fear, and all a mother's fondness, it glanced from Isabel to Anne—from Anne to Isabel, till at length in one of those soft voices, so rarely heard, which makes even a stranger love the speaker, the fair countess said—

“Come hither, my child, Isabel, give me thy hand, and whisper me what hath chafed thee.”

“My mother,” replied the duchess, “it would become me ill to have a secret not known to thee, and yet, methinks, it would become me less to say aught to provoke thine anger!”

“Anger, Isabel! who ever knew anger for those they love?”

“Pardon me, my sweet mother,” said Isabel, relaxing her haughty brow, and she approached and kissed her mother's cheek.

The countess drew her gently to a seat by her side—

“And now tell me all—unless, indeed, thy Clarence hath, in some lover's hasty mood, vexed thy affection; for of the household secrets, even a mother should not question the true wife.”

Isabel paused, and glanced significantly at Anne.

“Nay—see!” said the countess, smiling, though sadly—“*She*, too, hath thoughts that she will not tell to me; but they seem not such as should alarm my fears as thine do. For the moment ere I spoke to thee, *thy* brow frowned, and *her* lip smiled. She hears us not—speak on.”

“Is it then true, my mother, that Margaret of Anjou is hastening hither; and can it be possible that King Louis can persuade my lord and father to meet, save in the field of battle, the arch-enemy of our house?”

“Ask the earl thyself, Isabel; Lord Warwick hath no concealment from his children. Whatever he doth is ever wisest, best, and knightliest—so, at least, may his children always deem!”

Isabel's colour changed, and her eye flashed. But ere she could answer, the arras was raised, and Lord Warwick entered. But no longer did the hero's mien and manner evince that cordial and tender cheerfulness which, in all the storms of his changeful life, he had hitherto displayed when coming from power and danger, from council or from camp, to man's earthly paradise—a virtuous home.

Gloomy and absorbed his very dress—which, at that day, the Anglo-Norman deemed it a sin against self-dignity to neglect—betraying, by its disorder, that thorough change of the whole mind; that terrible internal revolution, which is made but, in strong natures, by the tyranny of a great care, or a great passion, the earl scarcely seemed to heed his countess, who rose hastily, but stopped in the timid fear and reverence of love at the sight of his stern aspect,—he threw himself abruptly on a seat, passed his hand over his face, and sighed heavily.

That sigh dispelled the fear of the wife, and made



her alive only to her privilege of the soother. She drew near, and placing herself on the green rushes at his feet, took his hand and kissed it, but did not speak.

The earl's eyes fell on the lovely face looking up to him through tears, his brow softened, he drew his hand gently from hers, placed it on her head, and said, in a low voice—

“God and Our Lady bless thee, sweet wife!”

Then, looking round, he saw Isabel watching him intently, and, rising at once, he threw his arm round her waist, pressed her to his bosom, and said, “My daughter, for thee and thine, day and night have I striven and planned in vain. I cannot reward thy husband as I would—I cannot give thee, as I had hoped, a throne!”

“What title so dear to Isabel,” said the countess, “as that of Lord Warwick's daughter?”

Isabel remained cold and silent, and returned not the earl's embrace.

Warwick was, happily, too absorbed in his own feelings to notice those of his child. Moving away, he continued, as he paced the room (his habit in emotion, which Isabel, who had many minute external traits, in common with her father, had unconsciously caught from him)—

“Till this morning, I hoped still that my name and services, that Clarence's popular bearing, and his birth of Plantagenet, would suffice to summon the English people round our standard—that the false Edward would be driven, on our landing, to fly the realm; and that, without change to the dynasty of York, Clarence, as next male heir, would ascend the throne. True, I saw all the obstacles—all the difficulties,—I was warned of them before I left England; but still I

hoped. Lord Oxford has arrived—he has just left me. We have gone over the chart of the way before us, weighed the worth of every name, for and against; and, alas! I cannot but allow that all attempt to place the younger brother on the throne of the elder would but lead to bootless slaughter, and irretrievable defeat.”

“Wherefore think you so, my lord?” asked Isabel, in evident excitement. “Your own retainers are sixty thousand; an army larger than Edward, and all his lords of yesterday, can bring into the field.”

“My child,” answered the earl, with that profound knowledge of his countrymen which he had rather acquired from his English heart, than from any subtlety of intellect—“armies may gain a victory, but they do not achieve a throne—unless, at least, they enforce a slavery; and it is not for me and for Clarence to be the violent conquerors of our countrymen, but the regenerators of a free realm, corrupted by a false man's rule.”

“And what then,” exclaimed Isabel,—“what do you propose, my father? Can it be possible that you can unite yourself with the abhorred Lancastrians—with the savage Anjouite, who beheaded my grand-sire, Salisbury? Well do I remember your own words—‘May God and St. George forget me, when I forget those grey and gory hairs!’”

Here Isabel was interrupted by a faint cry from Anne, who, unobserved by the rest, and, hitherto concealed from her father's eye by the deep embrasure of the window, had risen some moments before, and listened, with breathless attention, to the conversation between Warwick and the duchess.

“It is not true—it is not true!” exclaimed Anne, passionately. “Margaret disowns the inhuman deed.”



"Thou art right, Anne," said Warwick; "though I guess not how thou didst learn the error of a report so popularly believed, that till of late, I never questioned its truth. King Louis assures me solemnly, that that foul act was done by the butcher Clifford, against Margaret's knowledge, and, when known, to her grief and anger."

"And you, who call Edward false, can believe Louis true!"

"Cease, Isabel—cease!" said the countess. "Is it thus my child can address my lord and husband? Forgive her, beloved Richard."

"Such heat in Clarence's wife misbeseems her not," answered Warwick. "And I can comprehend and pardon in my haughty Isabel a resentment which her reason must, at last, subdue; for think not, Isabel, that it is without dread struggle and fierce agony that I can contemplate peace and league with mine ancient foe; but here two duties speak to me in voices not to be denied: my honour and my hearth, as noble and as man, demand redress—and the weal and glory of my country demand a ruler who does not degrade a warrior, nor assail a virgin, nor corrupt a people by lewd pleasures, nor exhaust a land by grinding imposts; and that honour shall be vindicated, and that country shall be righted, no matter at what sacrifice of private grief and pride."

The words and the tone of the earl for a moment awed even Isabel, but after a pause, she said, sullenly, "And for this, then, Clarence hath joined your quarrel, and shared your exile!—for this,—that he may place the eternal barrier of the Lancastrian line between himself and the English throne!"

"I would fain hope," answered the earl, calmly,

"that Clarence will view our hard position more charitably than thou. If he gain not all that I could desire, should success crown our arms, he will, at least, gain much; for often and ever did thy husband, Isabel, urge me to stern measures against Edward, when I soothed him and restrained. *Mort Dieu!* how often did he complain of slight and insult from Elizabeth and her minions, of open affront from Edward, of parsimony to his wants as prince—of a life, in short, humbled and made bitter by all the indignity and the gall which scornful power can inflict on dependent pride. If he gain not the throne, he will gain, at least, the succession, in thy right to the baronies of Beauchamp, the mighty duchy and the vast heritage of York, the viceroyalty of Ireland. Never prince of the blood had wealth and honours equal to those that shall await thy lord. For the rest, I drew him not into my quarrel—long before, would he have drawn me into his; nor doth it become thee, Isabel, as child and as sister, to repent, if the husband of my daughter felt as brave men feel, without calculation of gain and profit, the insult offered to his lady's house. But, if here I overgauge his chivalry and love to me and mine, or discontent his ambition and his hopes, *Mort Dieu!* we hold him not a captive. Edward will hail his overtures of peace; let him make terms with his brother, and return."

"I will report to him what you say, my lord," said Isabel, with cold brevity; and, bending her haughty head in formal reverence, she advanced to the door. Anne sprang forward and caught her hand.

"Oh, Isabel!" she whispered; "in our father's sad and gloomy hour can you leave him thus?"—and the sweet lady burst into tears.



"Anne," retorted Isabel, bitterly, "thy heart is Lancastrian; and what, peradventure, grieves my father, hath but joy for thee."

Anne drew back, pale and trembling, and her sister swept from the room.

The earl, though he had not overheard the whispered sentences which passed between his daughters, had watched them closely, and his lip quivered with emotion, as Isabel closed the door.

"Come hither, my Anne," he said, tenderly; "thou who hast thy mother's face, never hast a harsh thought for thy father."

As Anne threw herself on Warwick's breast, he continued—"And how camest thou to learn that Margaret disowns a deed that, if done by her command, would render my union with her cause a sacrilegious impiety to the dead?"

Anne coloured, and nestled her head still closer to her father's bosom. Her mother regarded her confusion and her silence with an anxious eye.

The wing of the palace in which the earl's apartments were situated was appropriated to himself and household, flanked to the left by an abutting pile containing state-chambers, never used by the austere and thrifty Louis, save on great occasions of pomp or revel; and, as we have before observed, looking on a garden,—which was generally solitary and deserted. From this garden, while Anne yet strove for words to answer her father, and the countess yet watched her embarrassment, suddenly came the soft strain of a Provençal lute; while a low voice, rich, and modulated at once by a deep feeling and an exquisite art that would have given effect to even simpler words, breathed

## THE LAY OF THE HEIR OF LANCASTER

"His birthright but a Father's name,  
A Grandsire's hero-sword;  
He dwelt within the Stranger's land,  
The friendless, homeless Lord!

"Yet one dear hope, too dear to tell,  
Consoled the exiled man;  
The Angels have their home in Heaven  
And gentle thoughts in Anne."

At that name the voice of the singer trembled, and paused a moment; the earl, who at first had scarcely listened to what he deemed but the ill-seasoned gallantry of one of the royal minstrels, started in proud surprise, and Anne herself, tightening her clasp round her father's neck, burst into passionate sobs. The eye of the countess met that of her lord, but she put her finger to her lips in sign to him to listen. The song was resumed—

"Recall the single sunny time,  
In childhood's April weather,  
When he and thou, the boy and girl;—  
Roved, hand in hand, together;—

"When round thy young companion knelt  
The Princes of the Isle;—  
And Priest and People pray'd their God,  
On England's Heir to smile."

The earl uttered a half-stifled exclamation, but the minstrel heard not the interruption, and continued—

"Methinks the sun hath never smil'd  
Upon the exiled man,  
Like that bright morning when the boy  
Told all his soul to Anne.



"No; while his birthright but a name,  
A Grandsire's hero-sword,  
He would not woo the lofty maid  
To love the banish'd lord.

"But when, with clarion, fife, and drum,  
He claims and wins his own;  
When o'er the Deluge drifts his Ark,  
To rest upon a throne—

"THEN, wilt thou deign to hear the hope  
That bless'd the exiled man,  
When pining for his Father's crown  
To deck the brows of Anne!"

The song ceased, and there was silence within the chamber, broken but by Anne's low, yet passionate weeping. The earl gently strove to disengage her arms from his neck, but she, mistaking his intention, sank on her knees, and covering her face with her hands, exclaimed—

"Pardon!—pardon!—pardon him, if not me!"

"What have I to pardon? What hast thou concealed from me? Can I think that thou hast met, *in secret*, one who——"

"In secret! Never—never, father! This is the third time only that I have heard his voice since we have been at Amboise, save when—save when——"

"Go on."

"Save when King Louis presented him to me in the revel, under the name of the Count de F——, and he asked me if I could forgive his mother for Lord Clifford's crime."

"It is, then, as the rhyme proclaimed; and it is Edward of Lancaster who loves and woos the daughter of Lord Warwick!"

Something in her father's voice made Anne remove

her hands from her face, and look up to him with a thrill of timid joy. Upon his brow, indeed, frowned no anger—upon his lip smiled no scorn. At that moment all his haughty grief at the curse of circumstance, which drove him to his hereditary foe, had vanished. Though Montagu had obtained from Oxford some glimpse of the desire which the more sagacious and temperate Lancastrians already entertained for that alliance, and though Louis had already hinted its expediency to the earl, yet, till now, Warwick himself had naturally conceived that the prince shared the enmity of his mother, and that such an union, however politic, was impossible; but now, indeed, there burst upon him the full triumph of revenge and pride. Edward of York dared to woo Anne to dishonour—Edward of Lancaster dared not even woo her as his wife till his crown was won! To place upon the throne the very daughter the ungrateful monarch had insulted—to make her he would have humbled not only the instrument of his fall, but the successor of his purple—to unite in one glorious strife, the wrongs of the man and the pride of the father,—these were the thoughts that sparkled in the eye of the king-maker, and flushed with a fierce rapture the dark cheek, already hollowed by passion and care. He raised his daughter from the floor, and placed her in her mother's arms, but still spoke not.

"This, then, was thy secret, Anne," whispered the countess, "and I half foreguessed it, when, last night, I knelt beside thy couch to pray, and overheard thee murmur in thy dreams."

"Sweet mother, thou forgivest me; but my father—ah, he speaks not!—One word! Father, father, not even *his* love could console me if I angered *thee!*"



The earl, who had remained rooted to the spot, his eyes shining thoughtfully under his dark brows, and his hand slightly raised, as if piercing into the future, and mapping out its airy realm, turned quickly—

“I go to the heir of Lancaster; if this boy be bold and true—worthy of England and of thee—we will change the sad ditty of that scrannel lute into such a storm of trumpets as beseems the triumph of a conqueror, and the marriage of a prince!”

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### CHAPTER VIII

#### HOW THE HEIR OF LANCASTER MEETS THE KING- MAKER

In truth, the young prince, in obedience to a secret message from the artful Louis, had repaired to the court of Amboise under the name of the Count de F—. The French king had long before made himself acquainted with Prince Edward's romantic attachment to the earl's daughter, through the agent employed by Edward to transmit his portrait to Anne at Rouen; and from him, probably, came to Oxford the suggestion which that nobleman had hazarded to Montagu; and now that it became his policy seriously and earnestly to espouse the cause of his kinswoman Margaret, he saw all the advantage to his cold statecraft, which could be drawn from a boyish love. Louis had a well-founded fear of the warlike spirit and military talents of Edward IV.; and this fear had induced him hitherto to refrain from openly espousing the cause of the Lancastrians, though it did not prevent his abetting such seditions and intrigues as could confine the atten-

tion of the martial Plantagenet to the perils of his own realm. But now that the breach between Warwick and the king had taken place—now that the earl could no longer curb the desire of the Yorkist monarch to advance his hereditary claims to the fairest provinces of France—nay, peradventure, to France itself,—while the defection of Lord Warwick gave to the Lancastrians the first fair hope of success in urging their own pretensions to the English throne—he bent all the powers of his intellect and his will towards the restoration of a natural ally, and the downfall of a dangerous foe. But he knew that Margaret and her Lancastrian favourers could not of themselves suffice to achieve a revolution—that they could only succeed under cover of the popularity and the power of Warwick, while he perceived all the art it would require to make Margaret forego her vindictive nature and long resentment, and to supple the pride of the great earl into recognising, as a sovereign, the woman who had branded him as a traitor.

Long before Lord Oxford's arrival, Louis, with all that address which belonged to him, had gradually prepared the earl to familiarise himself to the only alternative before him, save that, indeed, of powerless sense of wrong, and obscure and lasting exile. The French king looked with more uneasiness to the scruples of Margaret; and to remove these, he trusted less to his own skill, than to her love for her only son.

His youth passed principally in Anjou—that court of minstrels—young Edward's gallant and ardent temper had become deeply imbued with the southern poetry and romance. Perhaps, the very feud between his house and Lord Warwick's, though both claimed their common descent from John of Gaunt, had tended,