CHAPTER II

THE PROSPERITY OF THE OUTER SHOW—THE CARES OF THE MAN

The position of the king-maker was, to a superficial observer, such as might gratify to the utmost the ambition and the pride of man. He had driven from the land one of the most gorgeous princes, and one of the boldest warriors that ever sat upon a throne. He had changed a dynasty without a blow. In the alliances of his daughters, whatever chanced, it seemed certain that by one or the other his posterity would be the kings of England.

The easiness of his victory appeared to prove of itself that the hearts of the people were with him; and the parliament that he hastened to summon, confirmed by law the revolution achieved by a bloodless sword.*

Nor was there aught abroad which menaced disturbance to the peace at home. Letters from the Countess of Warwick and Lady Anne announced their triumphant entry at Paris, where Margaret of Anjou was received with honours never before rendered but to a queen of France.

A solemn embassy, meanwhile, was preparing to proceed from Paris to London to congratulate Henry, and establish a permanent treaty of peace and commerce.† While Charles of Burgundy himself (the only ally left to Edward) supplicated for the continuance of amicable relations with England, stating that they were formed with the country, not with any special person who might wear the crown;‡ and forbade his subjects by

* Lingard, Hume, &c. † Hume—Comines.
‡ Rymer, xi., 683—690.

proclamation, to join any enterprise for the recovery of his throne, which Edward might attempt.

The conduct of Warwick, whom the Parliament had declared, conjointly with Clarence, protector of the realm during the minority of the Prince of Wales, was worthy of the triumph he had obtained. He exhibited now a greater genius for government than he had yet displayed. For all his passions were nerved to the utmost, to consummate his victory and sharpen his faculties. He united mildness towards the defeated faction, with a firmness which repelled all attempt at insurrection.*

In contrast to the splendour that surrounded his daughter Anne, all accounts spoke of the humiliation to which Charles subjected the exiled king, and in the Sanctuary, amidst homicides and felons, the wife of the earl's defeated foe gave birth to a male child, baptised and christened (says the chronicler), "as the son of a common man." For the Avenger and his children were regal authority and gorgeous pomp—for the Fugitive and his offspring were the bread of the exile, or the refuge of the outlaw.

But still the earl's prosperity was hollow—the statue of brass stood on limbs of clay.—The position of a man with the name of subject, but the authority of king, was an unpopular anomaly in England. In the principal trading towns had been long growing up that animosity towards the aristocracy, of which Henry VII. availed himself to raise a despotism (and which, even in our day, causes the main disputes of faction); but the recent revolution was one in which the towns *had had no share.* It was a revolution made by the representatives of the barons and his followers. It

* Habington.

was connected with no advancement of the middle class—it seemed to the men of commerce but the violence of a turbulent and disappointed nobility. The very name given to Warwick's supporters was unpopular in the towns. They were not called the Lancastrians, or the friends of King Henry—they were styled then, and still are so, by the old chronicler, "*The Lord's Party.*" Most of whatever was still feudal—the haughtiest of the magnates—the rudest of the yeomanry—the most warlike of the knights—gave to Warwick the sanction of their allegiance; and this sanction was displeasing to the intelligence of the towns.

Classes in all times have a keen instinct of their own class-interests. The revolution which the earl had effected was the triumph of aristocracy; its natural results would tend to strengthen certainly the moral, and probably the constitutional, power already possessed by that martial order. The new parliament was their creature—Henry VI. was a cipher—his son a boy with unknown character, and according to vulgar scandal, of doubtful legitimacy, seemingly bound hand and foot in the trammels of the archbaron's mighty house—the earl himself had never scrupled to evince a distaste to the change in society which was slowly converting an agricultural into a trading population.

It may be observed, too, that a middle class as rarely unites itself with the idols of the populace as with the chiefs of a seignorie. The brute attachment of the peasants and the mobs to the gorgeous and lavish earl, seemed to the burgesses the sign of a barbaric clanship, opposed to that advance in civilisation towards which they half unconsciously struggled.

And here we must rapidly glance at what, as far

as a statesman may foresee, would have been the probable result of Warwick's ascendancy, if durable and effectual. If attached, by prejudice and birth, to the aristocracy, he was yet, by reputation and habit, attached also to the popular party—that party more popular than the middle class—the majority—the masses!—his whole life had been one struggle against despotism in the crown. Though far from entertaining such schemes as in similar circumstances might have occurred to the deep sagacity of an Italian patrician for the interest of his order, no doubt his policy would have tended to this one aim—the limitation of the monarchy by the strength of an aristocracy endeared to the agricultural population, owing to that population its own powers of defence, with the wants and grievances of that population thoroughly familiar and willing to satisfy the one and redress the other: in short, the great baron would have secured and promoted liberty according to the notions of a seigneur and a Norman, by making the king but the first nobleman of the realm. Had the policy lasted long enough to succeed, the subsequent despotism, which changed a limited into an absolute monarchy under the Tudors, would have been prevented, with all the sanguinary reaction, in which the Stuarts were the sufferers. The earl's family, and his own "large father-like heart," had ever been opposed to religious persecution; and timely toleration to the Lollards might have prevented the long-delayed revenge of their posterity—the Puritans. Gradually, perhaps, might the system he represented (of the whole consequences of which he was unconscious) have changed monarchic into aristocratic government, resting, however, upon broad and popular institutions; but no doubt, also, the middle, or rather

the commercial class, with all the blessings that attend their power, would have risen much more slowly than when made as they were already, partially under Edward IV., and more systematically under Henry VII., the instrument for destroying feudal aristocracy, and thereby establishing for a long and fearful interval the arbitrary rule of the single tyrant. Warwick's dislike to the commercial biasses of Edward was, in fact, not a patrician prejudice alone. It required no great sagacity to perceive that Edward had designed to raise up a class that, though powerful when employed against the barons, would long be impotent against the encroachments of the crown; and the earl viewed that class not only as foes to his own order, but as tools for the destruction of the ancient liberties.

Without presuming to decide which policy, upon the whole, would have been the happier for England—the one that based a despotism on the middle class, or the one that founded an aristocracy upon popular affection, it was clear to the more enlightened burgesses of the great towns, that between Edward of York and the Earl of Warwick a vast principle was at stake, and the commercial king seemed to them a more natural ally than the feudal baron; and equally clear is it to us, now, that the true spirit of the age fought for the false Edward, and against the honest earl.

Warwick did not, however, apprehend any serious results from the passive distaste of the trading towns. His martial spirit led him to despise the least martial part of the population. He knew that the towns would not rise in arms, so long as their charters were respected; and that slow undermining hostility which exists only in opinion, his intellect, so vigorous in immediate dangers, was not far-sighted enough to com-

prehend. More direct cause for apprehension would there have been to a suspicious mind in the demeanour of the earl's colleague in the Protectorate—the Duke of Clarence. It was obviously Warwick's policy to satisfy this weak but ambitious person. The duke was, as before agreed, declared heir to the vast possessions of the house of York. He was invested with the Lieutenantcy of Ireland, but delayed his departure to his government till the arrival of the Prince of Wales. The personal honours accorded him in the meanwhile were those due to a sovereign; but still the duke's brow was moody, though, if the earl noticed it, Clarence rallied into seeming cheerfulness, and reiterated pledges of faith and friendship.

The manner of Isabel to her father was varying and uncertain: at one time hard and cold; at another, as if in the reaction of secret remorse, she would throw herself into his arms, and pray him, weepingly, to forgive her wayward humours. But the curse of the earl's position was that which he had foreseen before quitting Amboise, and which, more or less, attends upon those who, from whatever cause, suddenly desert the party with which all their associations, whether of name or friendship, have been interwoven. His vengeance against one had comprehended many still dear to him. He was not only separated from his old companions in arms, but he had driven their most eminent into exile. He stood alone amongst men whom the habits of an active life had indissolubly connected, in his mind, with recollections of wrath and wrong. Amidst that princely company which begirt him, he hailed no familiar face. Even many of those who most detested Edward (or rather the Woodvilles), recoiled from so startling a desertion to the Lancas-

trian foe. It was a heavy blow to a heart already bruised and sore, when the fiery Raoul de Fulke, who had so idolised Warwick, that, despite his own high lineage, he had worn his badge upon his breast, sought him in the dead of night, and thus said—

"Lord of Salisbury and Warwick, I once offered to serve thee as a vassal, if thou wouldst wrestle with lewd Edward for the crown which only a manly brow should wear; and hadst thou now returned, as Henry of Lancaster returned of old, to gripe the sceptre of the Norman with a conqueror's hand, I had been the first to cry, 'Long live King Richard—namesake and emulator of Cœur de Lion!' But to place upon the throne yon monk-puppet, and to call on brave hearts to worship a patterer of aves and a counter of beads —to fix the succession of England in the adulterous offspring of Margaret,* the butcher-harlot—to give the power of the realm to the men against whom thou thyself hast often led me to strive with lance and battle-axe, is to open a path which leads but to dishonour, and thither Raoul de Fulke follows not even the steps of the Lord of Warwick. Interrupt me not—speak not! As thou to Edward, so I now to thee, forswear allegiance, and I bid thee farewell for ever!"

* One of the greatest obstacles to the cause of the Red Rose was the popular belief that the young prince was not Henry's son. Had that belief not been widely spread and firmly maintained, the lords who arbitrated between Henry VI. and Richard Duke of York, in October, 1460, could scarcely have come to the resolution to set aside the Prince of Wales altogether, to accord Henry the crown for his life, and declare the Duke of York his heir. Ten years previously (in November, 1450), before the young prince was born or thought of, and the proposition was really just and reasonable, it was moved in the House of Commons to declare Richard Duke of York next heir to Henry, which, *at least*, by birthright, he certainly was; but the motion met with little favour, and the mover was sent to the Tower.

"I pardon thee," answered Warwick; "and if ever thou art wronged as I have been, thy heart will avenge me—Go!"

But when this haughty visitor was gone, the earl covered his face with his hands, and groaned aloud. A defection perhaps even more severely felt came next. Katherine de Bonville had been the earl's favourite sister: he wrote to her at the convent to which she had retired, praying her affectionately to come to London, "and cheer his vexed spirit, and learn the true cause, not to be told by letter, which had moved him to things once farthest from his thought." The messenger came back—the letter unopened—for Katherine had left the convent, and fled into Burgundy, distrustful, as it seemed to Warwick, of her own brother. The nature of this lion-hearted man was, as we have seen, singularly kindly, frank, and affectionate; and now in the most critical, the most anxious, the most tortured period of his life, confidence and affection were forbidden to him. What had he not given for one hour of the soothing company of his wife, the only being in the world to whom his pride could have communicated the grief of his heart, or the doubts of his conscience! Alas! never on earth should he hear that soft voice again! Anne, too, the gentle, childlike Anne, was afar—but *she* was happy —a basker in the brief sunshine, and blind to the darkening clouds. His elder child, with her changeful moods, added but to his disquiet and unhappiness. Next to Edward, Warwick, of all the House of York, had loved Clarence, though a closer and more domestic intimacy had weakened the affection, by lessening the esteem. But looking farther into the future, he now saw in this alliance the seeds of many a rankling

sorrow. The nearer Anne and her spouse to power and fame, the more bitter the jealousy of Clarence and his wife. Thus, in the very connections which seemed most to strengthen his house, lay all which must destroy the hallowed unity and peace of family and home.

The Archbishop of York had prudently taken no part whatever in the measures that had changed the dynasty—he came now to reap the fruits: did homage to Henry VI., received the Chancellor's seals, and recommenced intrigues for the Cardinal's hat. But between the bold warrior and the wily priest there could be but little of the endearment of brotherly confidence and love. With Montagu alone could the earl confer in cordiality and unreserve; and their similar position, and certain points of agreement in their characters, now more clearly brought out and manifest, served to make their friendship for each other firmer and more tender, in the estrangement of all other ties, than ever it had been before. But the marquis was soon compelled to depart from London, to his post as warden of the northern marches; for Warwick had not the rash presumption of Edward, and neglected no precaution against the return of the dethroned king.

So there, alone, in pomp and in power, vengeance consummated, ambition gratified, but love denied—with an aching heart and a fearless front—amidst old foes made prosperous, and old friends alienated and ruined—stood the king-maker! and, day by day, the untimely streaks of grey showed more and more, amidst the raven curls of the strong man.

CHAPTER III

FARTHER VIEWS INTO THE HEART OF MAN, AND THE CONDITIONS OF POWER

But woe to any man who is called to power with exaggerated expectations of his ability to do good! Woe to the man whom the populace have esteemed a popular champion, and who is suddenly made the guardian of law! The Commons of England had not bewailed the exile of the good earl simply for love of his groaning table and admiration of his huge battle-axe—it was not merely either in pity, or from fame, that his "name had sounded in every song"—and that, to use the strong expression of the chronicler, the people "judged that the sun was clearly taken from the world when he was absent."

They knew him as one who had ever sought to correct the abuses of power—to repair the wrongs of the poor; who, even in war, had forbidden his knights to slay the common men. He was regarded, therefore, as a reformer; and wonderful, indeed, were the things, proportioned to his fame and his popularity, which he was expected to accomplish; and his thorough knowledge of the English character, and experience of every class—especially the lowest as the highest—conjoined with the vigour of his robust understanding, unquestionably—enabled him, from the very first, to put a stop to the lawless violences which had disgraced the rule of Edward. The infamous spoliations of the royal purveyors ceased—the robber-like excesses of the ruder barons and gentry were severely punished—the country felt that a strong hand held the reins of