

duke, to whom these sad words were said—"whenever you visit the king you come back—pardon me, my lord—half unmanned. He would make a monk of you!"

"Ah!" said Warwick, thoughtfully—"there have been greater marvels than that. Our boldest fathers often died the meekest shavelings. An' I had ruled this realm as long as Henry—nay, an' this same life I lead now were to continue two years, with its broil and fever, I could well conceive the sweetness of the cloister and repose. How sets the wind? Against them still!—against them still! I cannot bear this suspense!"

The winds had ever seemed malignant to Margaret of Anjou, but never more than now. So long a continuance of stormy and adverse weather was never known in the memory of man; and we believe that it has scarcely its parallel in history.

The earl's promise to restore King Henry was fulfilled in October. From November to the following April, Margaret with the young and royal pair, and the Countess of Warwick, lay at the sea-side, waiting for a wind.* Thrice, in defiance of all warnings from the mariners of Harfleur, did she put to sea, and thrice was she driven back on the coast of Normandy—her ships much damaged. Her friends protested that this malice of the elements was caused by sorcery †—a belief which gained ground in England, exhilarated the Duchess of Bedford, and gave new fame to Bungey, who arrogated all the merit, and whose weather wisdom, indeed, had here borne out his predictions. Many besought Margaret not to tempt Providence, nor to trust the sea; but the queen was firm to her purpose, and her son laughed at omens—yet still the vessels could only leave the harbour to be driven back upon the land.

* Fabyan, 502.

† Hall, "Warkworth Chronicle."

Day after day the first question of Warwick, when the sun rose, was, "How sets the wind?" Night after night, ere he retired to rest—"Ill sets the wind!" sighed the earl. The gales that forbade the coming of the royal party, sped to the unwilling lingerers—courier after courier—envoy after envoy, and at length Warwick, unable to bear the sickening suspense at distance, went himself to Dover,* and from its white cliffs looked, hour by hour, for the sails which were to bear "Lancaster and its fortunes." The actual watch grew more intolerable than the distant expectation, and the earl sorrowfully departed to his castle of Warwick, at which Isabel and Clarence then were. Alas! where the old smile of home?

CHAPTER IV

THE RETURN OF EDWARD OF YORK

And the winds still blew, and storm was on the tide, and Margaret came not; when, in the gusty month of March, the fishermen of the Humber beheld a single ship, without flag or pennon, and sorely stripped and ravelled by adverse blasts, gallantly struggling towards the shore. The vessel was not of English build, and resembled, in its bulk and fashion, those employed by the Easterlings in their trade;—half merchant-man, half war-ship.

The villagers of Ravenspur—the creek of which, the vessel now rapidly made to—imagining that it was some trading craft in distress, grouped round the banks, and some put out their boats. But the vessel

* Hall.

held on its way, and, as the water was swelled by the tide, and unusually deep, silently cast anchor close ashore, a quarter of a mile from the crowd.

The first who leapt on land, was a knight of lofty stature, and in complete armour, richly inlaid with gold arabesques. To him succeeded another, also in mail, and, though well built and fair proportioned, of less imposing presence. And then, one by one, the womb of the dark ship gave forth a number of armed soldiers, infinitely larger than it could have been supposed to contain, till the knight, who first landed, stood the centre of a group of five hundred men. Then, when lowered from the vessel, barbed and caparisoned, some five score horses; and, finally, the sailors and rowers, armed but with steel caps and short swords, came on shore, till not a man was left on board.

"Now praise," said the chief knight, "to God and St. George, that we have escaped the water! and not with invisible winds, but with bodily foes must our war be waged."

"*Beau sire*," cried one knight who had debarked immediately after the speaker, and who seemed, from his bearing and equipment, of higher rank than those that followed—" *beau sire*, this is a slight army to reconquer a king's realm! Pray Heaven, that our bold companions have also escaped the deep!"

"Why verily, we are not eno', at the best, to spare one man," said the chief knight gaily, "but, lo! we are not without welcomers." And he pointed to the crowd of villagers who now slowly neared the warlike group, but halting at a little distance, continued to gaze at them in some anxiety and alarm.

"Ho there! good fellows!" cried the leader, striding towards the throng—"what name give you to this village?"

"Ravenspur, please your worship," answered one of the peasants.

"Ravenspur—hear you that, lords and friends? Accept the omen! On this spot landed, from exile, Henry of Bolingbroke, known, afterwards, in our annals as King Henry IV.! Bare is the soil of corn and of trees—it disdains meaner fruit; it *grows kings!* Hark!"—The sound of a bugle was heard at a little distance, and in a few moments, a troop of about a hundred men were seen rising above an undulation in the ground, and as the two bands recognised each other, a shout of joy was given and returned.

As this new reinforcement advanced, the peasantry and fishermen, attracted by curiosity and encouraged by the peaceable demeanour of the debarkers, drew nearer, and mingled with the first comers.

"What manner of men be ye, and what want ye?" asked one of the bystanders, who seemed of better nurturing than the rest, and who, indeed, was a small franklin.

No answer was returned by those he more immediately addressed, but the chief knight heard the question, and suddenly unbuckling his helmet, and giving it to one of those beside him, he turned to the crowd a countenance of singular beauty, at once animated and majestic, and said, in a loud voice, "We are Englishmen, like you, and we come here to claim our rights. Ye seem tall fellows and honest. Standard-bearer, unfurl our flag!" And, as the ensign suddenly displayed the device of a sun, in a field azure, the chief continued, "March under this banner, and for every day ye serve, ye shall have a month's hire."

"Marry!" quoth the franklin, with a suspicious, sinister look, "these be big words. And who are you,

sir knight, who would levy men in King Henry's kingdom?"

"Your knees, fellows!" cried the second knight. "Behold your true liege and suzerain, Edward IV.! Long live King Edward!"

The soldiers caught up the cry, and it was re-echoed lustily by the smaller detachment that now reached the spot; but no answer came from the crowd. They looked at each other in dismay, and retreated rapidly from their place amongst the troops. In fact, the whole of the neighbouring district was devoted to Warwick, and many of the peasantry about had joined the former rising under Sir John Coniers. The franklin alone retreated not with the rest; he was a bluff, plain, bold fellow, with good English blood in his veins. And when the shout ceased, he said, shortly, "We, hereabouts, know no king, but King Henry. We fear you would impose upon us. We cannot believe that a great lord like him you call Edward IV. would land, with a handful of men, to encounter the armies of Lord Warwick. We forewarn you to get into your ship, and go back as fast as ye came, for the stomach of England is sick of brawls and blows; and what ye devise is treason!"

Forth from the new detachment stepped a youth of small stature, not in armour, and with many a weather stain on his gorgeous dress. He laid his hand upon the franklin's shoulder, "Honest and plain-dealing fellow," said he, "you are right: pardon the foolish outburst of these brave men, who cannot forget as yet that their chief has worn the crown. We come back not to disturb this realm, nor to effect aught against King Henry, whom the saints have favoured. No, by St. Paul, we come but back to claim our lands unjustly

forfeit. My noble brother here is not king of England, since the people will it not, but he *is* Duke of York, and he will be contented if assured of the style and lands our father left him. For me, called Richard of Gloucester, I ask nothing, but leave to spend my manhood where I have spent my youth, under the eyes of my renowned godfather, Richard Nevile, Earl of Warwick. So report of us. Whither leads yon road?"

"To York," said the franklin, softened, despite his judgment, by the irresistible suavity of the voice that addressed him.

"Thither will we go, my lord duke, and brother, with your leave," said Prince Richard, "peaceably and as petitioners. God save ye, friends and countrymen, pray for us, that King Henry and the parliament may do us justice. We are not over rich now, but better times may come. Largess!" and filling both hands with coins from his gipsire, he tossed the bounty among the peasants.

"*Mille tonnerre!* What means he with this humble talk of King Henry and the parliament?" whispered Edward to the Lord Say, while the crowd scrambled for the largess, and Richard smilingly mingled amongst them, and conferred with the franklin.

"Let him alone, I pray you, my liege; I guess his wise design. And now for our ships. What orders for the master?"

"For the other vessels let them sail or anchor as they list. But for the bark that has borne Edward king of England to the land of his ancestors there is no return!"

The royal adventurer then beckoned the Flemish master of the ship, who, with every sailor aboard, had debarked, and the loose dresses of the mariners made a

strong contrast to the mail of the warriors with whom they mingled.

"Friend!" said Edward, in French, "thou hast said that thou wilt share my fortunes, and that thy good fellows are no less free of courage and leal in trust."

"It is so, sire. Not a man who has gazed on thy face, and heard thy voice, but longs to serve one on whose brow Nature has written *king*."

"And trust me," said Edward, "no prince of my blood shall be dearer to me than you and yours, my friends in danger and in need. And sith it be so, the ship that hath borne such hearts and such hopes should, in sooth, know no meaner freight. Is all prepared?"

"Yes, sire, as you ordered. The train is laid for the brennen."

"Up, then, with the fiery signal, and let it tell, from cliff to cliff, from town to town, that Edward the Plantagenet, once returned to England, leaves it but for the grave!"

The master bowed, and smiled grimly. The sailors, who had been prepared for the burning, arranged before between the master and the prince, and whose careless hearts Edward had thoroughly won to his person and his cause, followed the former towards the ship, and stood silently grouped around the shore. The soldiers, less informed, gazed idly on, and Richard now regained Edward's side.

"Reflect," he said, as he drew him apart, "that, when on this spot landed Henry of Bolingbroke, he gave not out that he was marching to the throne of Richard II. He professed but to claim his duchy—and men were influenced by justice: till they became agents of ambition. This be your policy; with two thousand men you are but Duke of York; with ten

thousand men you are King of England! In passing hither, I met with many, and sounding the temper of the district, I find it not ripe to share your hazard. The world soon ripens when it hath to hail success!"

"O young boy's smooth face!—O old man's deep brain!" said Edward, admiringly—"what a king hadst thou made!"

A sudden flush passed over the prince's pale cheek, and, ere it died away, a flaming torch was hurled aloft in the air—it fell whirling into the ship—a moment, and a loud crash—a moment, and a mighty blaze! Up sprung from the deck, along the sails, the sheeted fire—

"A giant beard of flame."*

It reddened the coast—the skies from far and near; it glowed on the faces and the steel of the scanty army—it was seen, miles away, by the warders of many a castle manned with the troops of Lancaster;—it brought the steed from the stall, the courier to the selle;—it sped, as of old the beacon fire that announced to Clytemnestra the return of the Argive king. From post to post rode the fiery news, till it reached Lord Warwick in his hall, King Henry in his palace, Elizabeth in her sanctuary. The iron step of the dauntless Edward was once more pressed upon the soil of England.

* Φλογος μεγαυ πωγωνα.

Æsch. Agam. 314.

CHAPTER V

THE PROGRESS OF THE PLANTAGENET

A few words suffice to explain the formidable arrival we have just announced. Though the Duke of Burgundy had, by public proclamation, forbidden his subjects to aid the exiled Edward; yet, whether moved by the entreaties of his wife, or wearied by the remonstrances of his brother-in-law, he at length privately gave the dethroned monarch 50,000 florins to find troops for himself, and secretly hired Flemish and Dutch vessels to convey him to England.* But, so small was the force to which the bold Edward trusted his fortunes, that it almost seemed as if Burgundy sent him forth to his destruction. He sailed from the coast of Zealand; the winds, if less unmanageable than those that blew off the seaport where Margaret and her armament awaited a favouring breeze, were still adverse. Scared from the coast of Norfolk by the vigilance of Warwick and Oxford, who had filled that district with armed men, storm and tempest drove him at last to Humber Head, where we have seen him land, and whence we pursue his steps.

The little band set out upon its march, and halted for the night at a small village two miles inland. Some of the men were then sent out on horseback, for news of the other vessels, that bore the remnant of the invading force. These had, fortunately, effected a landing in various places; and, before daybreak, Anthony Woodville, and the rest of the troops, had joined the leader of an enterprise that seemed but the rashness of

* Comines. Hall. Lingard. S. Turner.

despair, for its utmost force, including the few sailors allured to the adventurer's standard, was about two thousand men.* Close and anxious was the consultation then held. Each of the several detachments reported alike of the sullen indifference of the population, which each had sought to excite in favour of Edward. Light riders † were despatched in various directions, still farther to sound the neighbourhood. All returned ere noon, some bruised and maltreated by the stones and staves of the rustics, and not a voice had been heard to echo the cry—"Long live King Edward!" The profound sagacity of Gloucester's guileful counsel was then unanimously recognised. Richard despatched a secret letter to Clarence; and it was resolved immediately to proceed to York, and to publish everywhere along the road that the fugitive had returned but to claim his private heritage, and remonstrate with the parliament which had awarded the Duchy of York to Clarence, his younger brother.

"Such a power," saith the Chronicle, "hath justice ever among men, that all, moved by mercy or compassion, began either to favour or not to resist him." And so, wearing the Lancastrian Prince of Wales's cognisance of the ostrich feather, crying out as they marched—"Long live King Henry," the hardy liars, four days after their debarkation, arrived at the gates of York.

Here, not till after much delay and negotiation, Edward was admitted only as Duke of York, and upon condition that he would swear to be a faithful and loyal servant to King Henry; and at the gate by which he was to enter, Edward actually took that oath, "a priest

* Fifteen hundred, according to the Croyland historian.

† Hall.

being by to say mass in the mass tyme, receiving the body of our blessed Saviour!"*

Edward tarried not long in York; he pushed forward. Two great nobles guarded those districts—Montagu, and the Earl of Northumberland, to whom Edward had restored his lands and titles, and who, on condition of retaining them, had re-entered the service of Lancaster. This last, a true server of the times, who had sided with all parties, now judged it discreet to remain neutral.† But Edward must pass within a few miles of Pontefract Castle, where Montagu lay with a force that could destroy him at a blow. Edward was prepared for the assault, but trusted to deceive the marquis, as he had deceived the citizens of York; the more for the strong personal love Montagu had ever shown him. If not, he was prepared equally to die in the field, rather than eat again the bitter bread of the exile. But to his inconceivable joy and astonishment, Montagu, like Northumberland, lay idle and supine. Edward and his little troop threaded safely the formidable pass. Alas! Montagu had that day received a formal order from the Duke of Clarence, as co-protector of the realm,‡ to suffer Edward to march on,

* Hall.

† This is the most favourable interpretation of his conduct: according to some he was in correspondence with Edward, who showed his letters.

‡ Our historians have puzzled their brains in ingenious conjectures of the cause of Montagu's fatal supineness at this juncture, and have passed over the only probable solution of the mystery, which is to be found simply enough stated thus in Stowe's Chronicle:—"The Marquis Montacute would have fought with King Edward, but that he had received letters from the Duke of Clarence that he should not fight till hee came." This explanation is borne out by the Warkworth Chronicle and others, who, in an evident mistake of the person addressed, state that Clarence wrote word to *Warwick* not to fight till he came. Clarence could not have written so to Warwick, who, according to all authorities, was mustering his

provided his force was small, and he had taken the oaths to Henry, and assumed but the title of Duke of York, "for your brother the earl hath had compunctious visitings, and would fain forgive what hath passed, for my father's sake, and unite all factions by Edward's voluntary abdication of the throne—at all hazards, I am on my way northward, and you will not fight till I come." The marquis, who knew the conscientious doubts which Warwick had entertained in his darker hours, who had no right to disobey the co-protector, who knew no reason to suspect Lord Warwick's son-in-law, and who, moreover, was by no means anxious to be, himself, the executioner of Edward, whom he had once so truly loved,—though a little marvelling at Warwick's softness, yet did not discredit the letter, and the less regarded the free passage he left to the returned exiles, from contempt for the smallness of their numbers, and his persuasion that if the earl saw fit to alter his counsels, Edward was still more in his power the farther he advanced amidst a hostile population, and towards the armies which the Lords Exeter and Oxford were already mustering.

But that free passage was everything to Edward! It made men think that Montagu, as well as Northumberland, favoured his enterprise; that the hazard was less rash and hopeless than it had seemed; that Edward counted upon finding his most powerful allies among those falsely supposed to be his enemies. The popularity Edward had artfully acquired amongst the

troops near London, and not in the way to fight Edward; nor could Clarence have had authority to issue such commands to his colleague, nor would his colleague have attended to them, since we have the amplest testimony that Warwick was urging all his captains to attack Edward at once. The duke's order was, therefore, clearly addressed to Montagu.

captains of Warwick's own troops, on the march to Middleham, now bested him. Many of them were knights and gentlemen residing in the very districts through which he passed. They did not join him, but they did not oppose. Then, rapidly flocked to "the Sun of York,"—first, the adventurers and condottieri, who in civil war adopt any side for pay; next came the disappointed, the ambitious, and the needy. The hesitating began to resolve, the neutral to take a part. From the state of petitioners supplicating a pardon, every league the Yorkists marched advanced them to the dignity of assertors of a cause. Doncaster first, then Nottingham, then Leicester—true to the town spirit we have before described—opened their gates to the trader prince.

Oxford and Exeter reached Newark with their force. Edward marched on them at once. Deceived as to his numbers, they took panic and fled. When once the foe flies, friends ever start up from the very earth! Hereditary partisans—gentlemen, knights, and nobles—now flocked fast round the adventurer. Then came Lovell, and Cromwell, and D'Eyncourt, ever true to York; and Stanley, never true to any cause. Then came the brave knights Parr and Norris, and De Burgh; and no less than three thousand retainers belonging to Lord Hastings—the new man—obeyed the summons of his couriers and joined their chief at Leicester.

Edward of March, who had landed at Ravenspur with a handful of brigands, now saw a king's army under his banner.* Then, the audacious perjurer threw

* The perplexity and confusion which involve the annals of this period may be guessed by this—that two historians, eminent for research (Lingard and Sharon Turner), differ so widely as to the numbers who had now joined Edward, that

away the mask; then, forth went—not the prayer of the attainted Duke of York—but the proclamation of the indignant king. England now beheld *two* sovereigns, equal in their armies. It was no longer a rebellion to be crushed; it was a dynasty to be decided.

CHAPTER VI

LORD WARWICK, WITH THE FOE IN THE FIELD AND THE TRAITOR AT THE HEARTH

Every precaution which human wisdom could foresee had Lord Warwick taken to guard against invasion, or to crush it at the onset.* All the coasts on which it was most probable Edward would land had been strongly guarded. And if the Humber had been left without regular troops, it was because prudence might calculate that the very spot where Edward did land was the very last he would have selected—unless guided by fate to his destruction—in the midst of an unfriendly population, and in face of the armies of Northumberland and of Montagu. The moment the earl heard of Edward's reception at York—far from the weakness which the false Clarence (already in correspondence with Gloucester) imputed to him—he de-

Lingard asserts that at Nottingham he was at the head of fifty or sixty thousand men; and Turner gives him, at the most, between six and seven thousand. The latter seems nearer to the truth. We must here regret that Turner's partiality to the House of York induces him to slur over Edward's detestable perjury at York, and to accumulate all rhetorical arts to command admiration for his progress—to the prejudice of the salutary moral horror we ought to feel for the atrocious perfidy and violation of oath to which he owed the first impunity that secured the after triumph.

* Hall.