

they stood, an armed horseman with the well-known crest of Hastings on his helmet, and, with lifted visor, calling his men to the return, in the loud voice of rage and scorn. And then, she herself sprang forwards, and forgetting his past cruelty in his present danger, cried his name—weak cry, lost in the roar of war! But the friar, now fearing he had taken the wrong side, began to turn from his spells, to address the most abject apologies to Adam, to assure him that he would have been slaughtered at the Tower, but for the friar's interruption; and that the rope round his neck was but an insignificant ceremony due to the prejudices of the soldiers. "Alas, Great Man," he concluded; "I see still that thou art mightier than I am; thy charms, though silent, are more potent than mine, though my lungs crack beneath them! *Confusio Inimicis Taralorolu*—I mean no harm to the earl,—*Garrabora, mistes et nubes*;—Lord, what will become of me!"

Meanwhile, Hastings, with a small body of horse, who being composed of knights and squires, specially singled out for the sword, fought with the pride of disdainful gentlemen, and the fury of desperate soldiers—finding it impossible to lure back the fugitives, hewed their own way through Oxford's ranks, to the centre, where they brought fresh aid to the terrible arm of Edward.

CHAPTER V

THE BATTLE

The mist still continued so thick that Montagu was unable to discern the general prospects of the field. But, calm and resolute in his post, amidst the arrows which whirled round him, and often struck, blunted against his Milan mail, the marquis received the reports of his aides-de-camp (may that modern word be pardoned?) as one after one they emerged through the fog to his side.

"Well," he said, as one of these messengers now spurred to the spot, "we have beaten off Hastings and his hirelings; but I see not 'the Silver Star' of Lord Oxford's banner."*

"Lord Oxford, my lord, has followed the enemy he routed to the farthest verge of the heath."

"Saints help us! Is Oxford thus headstrong? He will ruin all if he be decoyed from the field! Ride back, sir! Yet—hold!"—as another of the aides-de-camp appeared. "What news from Lord Warwick's wing?"

"Sore beset, bold marquis. Gloucester's line seems countless; it already outflanks the earl. The duke himself seems inspired by hell! Twice has his slight arm braved even the earl's battle-axe, which spared the boy but smote to the dust his comrades!"

"Well, and what of the centre, sir?" as a third form

*The Silver Star of the De Veres had its origin in a tradition that one of their ancestors, when fighting in the Holy Land saw a falling star descend upon his shield. Fatal to men, nobler even than the De Veres, was that silver falling star.

now arrived. "There rages Edward in person. He hath pierced into the midst. But Somerset still holds on gallantly!"

Montagu turned to the first aide-de-camp.

"Ride, sir! Quick! This to Oxford—No pursuit! Bid him haste, with all his men, to the left wing, and smite Gloucester in the rear. Ride, ride—for life and victory! If he come but in time, the day is ours!"*

The aide-de-camp darted off, and the mist swallowed up horse and horseman.

"Sound trumpets to the return!" said the marquis;—then, after a moment's musing—"Though Oxford hath drawn off our main force of cavalry, we have still some stout lances left; and Warwick must be strengthened. On to the earl! *Laissez aller!* A Montagu! a Montagu!" And lance in rest, the marquis and the knights immediately around him, and hitherto not personally engaged, descended the hillock at a hand gallop, and were met by a troop outnumbering their own, and commanded by the Lords D'Eyncourt and Say.

At this time, Warwick was indeed in the same danger that had routed the troops of Hastings; for, by a similar position, the strength of the hostile numbers being arrayed with Gloucester, the duke's troops had almost entirely surrounded him.† And Gloucester himself wondrously approved the trust that had consigned to his stripling arm the flower of the Yorkist army. Through the mists, the blood-red manteline he wore over his mail, the grinning teeth of the boar's head which crested his helmet, flashed and gleamed wherever his presence was most needed to encourage the flagging or spur on the fierce. And there seemed to both armies something ghastly and preternatural in

* Fabyan.

† Sharon Turner.

the savage strength of this small, slight figure thus startlingly caparisoned, and which was heard evermore uttering its sharp war-cry—"Gloucester, to the onslaught! Down with the rebels, down!"

Nor did this daring personage disdain, in the midst of his fury, to increase the effect of valour by the art of a brain that never ceased to scheme on the follies of mankind. "See! see!" he cried, as he shot meteor-like from rank to rank. "See—these are no natural vapours! Yonder the mighty friar, who delayed the sails of Margaret, chants his spells to the Powers that ride the gale. Fear not the bombards—their enchanted balls swerve from the brave! The dark legions of Air fight for us! For the hour is come when the fiend shall rend his prey!" And fiendlike seemed the form thus screeching forth its predictions from under the grim head-gear; and then darting and disappearing amidst the sea of pikes, cleaving its path of blood!

But still the untiring might of Warwick defied the press of numbers that swept round him, tide upon tide. Through the mists, his black armour, black plume, black steed, gloomed forth like one thunder-cloud in the midst of a dismal heaven. The noble charger bore along that mighty rider, animating, guiding all, with as much ease and lightness as the racer bears its puny weight; the steed itself was scarce less terrible to encounter than the sweep of the rider's axe. Protected from arrow and lance by a coat of steel, the long chaffron or pike which projected from its barbed frontal dropped with gore as it scoured along. No line of men, however serried, could resist the charge of that horse and horseman. And vain even Gloucester's dauntless presence and thrilling battle-cry, when the stout earl was seen looming through the vapour, and

his cheerful shout was heard, "My merry men, fight on!"

For a third time, Gloucester, spurring forth from his recoiling and shrinking followers, bending low over his saddle-bow, covered by his shield, and with the tenth lance (his favourite weapon, because the one in which skill best supplied strength) he had borne that day, launched himself upon the vast bulk of his tremendous foe. With that dogged energy—that rapid calculation which made the basis of his character, and which ever clove through all obstacles at the one that, if destroyed, destroyed the rest,—in that, his first great battle, as in his last at Bosworth, he singled out the leader, and rushed upon the giant as the mastiff on the horns and dewlap of the bull. Warwick, in the broad space which his arm had made around him in the carnage, reined in as he saw the foe, and recognised the grisly cognisance and scarlet mantle of his godson. And even in that moment, with all his heated blood and his remembered wrong, and his imminent peril, his generous and lion heart felt a glow of admiration at the valour of the boy he had trained to arms—of the son of the beloved York. "His father little thought," muttered the earl, "that that arm should win glory against his old friend's life!" And as the half-uttered word died on his lips, the well-poised lance of Gloucester struck full upon his basinet, and, despite the earl's horsemanship and his strength, made him reel in his saddle, while the prince shot by, and suddenly wheeling round, cast away the shivered lance, and assailed him sword in hand.

"Back, Richard—boy, back!" said the earl, in a voice that sounded hollow through his helmet—"It is not against thee that my wrongs call for blood—pass on!"

"Not so, Lord Warwick," answered Richard, in a sobered, and almost solemn voice, dropping for the moment the point of his sword, and raising his visor, that he might be the better heard,—“On the field of battle all memories, sweet in peace, must die! St. Paul be my judge, that even in this hour I love you well; but I love renown and glory more. On the edge of my sword sit power and royalty, and what high souls prize most—ambition; these would nerve me against mine own brother's breast, were that breast my barrier to an illustrious future. Thou hast given thy daughter to another! I smite the father, to regain my bride. Lay on, and spare not!—for he who hates thee most would prove not so fell a foe as the man who sees his fortunes made or marred—his love crushed, or yet crowned, as this day's battle closes in triumph or defeat.—REBEL, DEFEND THYSELF!”

No time was left for further speech; for as Richard's sword descended, two of Gloucester's followers, Parr and Milwater by name, dashed from the halting lines at the distance, and bore down to their young prince's aid. At the same moment, Sir Marmaduke Nevile and the Lord Fitzhugh spurred from the opposite line; and thus encouraged, the band on either side came boldly forward, and the *mêlée* grew fierce and general. But still Richard's sword singled out the earl, and still the earl, parrying his blows, dealt his own upon meaner heads. Crushed by one swoop of the axe, fell Milwater to the earth—down, as again it swung on high, fell Sir Humphrey Bouchier, who had just arrived to Gloucester with messages from Edward, never uttered in the world below. Before Marmaduke's lance fell Sir Thomas Parr; and these three corpses making a barrier between Gloucester

and the earl, the duke turned fiercely upon Marmaduke, while the earl, wheeling round, charged into the midst of the hostile line, which scattered to the right and left.

"On! my merry men, on!" rang once more through the heavy air. "They give way—the London tailors,—on!" and on dashed, with their joyous cry, the merry men of Yorkshire and Warwick, the warrior-yeomen! Separated thus from his great foe, Gloucester, after unhorsing Marmaduke, galloped off to sustain that part of his following which began to waver and retreat before the rush of Warwick and his chivalry.

This, in truth, was the regiment recruited from the loyalty of London, and little accustomed, we trow, were the worthy heroes of Cockaigne, to the discipline of arms, nor trained to that stubborn resistance which makes, under skilful leaders, the English *peasants* the most enduring soldiery that the world has known since the day when the Roman sentinel perished amidst the falling columns and lava floods,* rather than, though society itself dissolved, forsake his post unbidden. "St. Thomas defend us!" muttered a worthy tailor, who in the flush of his valour, when safe in the Chepe, had consented to bear the rank of lieutenant—"it is not reasonable to expect men of pith and substance to be crushed into jellies, and carved into subtleties by horse-hoofs and pole-axes. Right about face! Fly!"—and throwing down his sword and shield, the lieutenant fairly took to his heels as he saw the charging column, headed by the raven steed of Warwick, come giant-like through the fog. The terror of one man is contagious, and the Londoners actually turned their backs, when Nicholas Alwyn cried, in his shrill voice

* At Pompeii.

and northern accent, "Out on you! What will the girls say of us in East-gate and the Chepe?—Hurrah for the bold hearts of London!—Round me, stout 'prentices! let the boys shame the men! This shaft for Cockaigne!" And as the troop turned irresolute, and Alwyn's arrow left his bow, they saw a horseman by the side of Warwick reel in his saddle and fall at once to the earth, and so great evidently was the rank of the fallen man, that even Warwick reined in, and the charge halted midway in its career. It was no less a person than the Duke of Exeter whom Alwyn's shaft had disabled for the field. This incident, coupled with the hearty address of the stout goldsmith, served to reanimate the flaggers, and Gloucester, by a circuitous route, reaching their line a moment after, they dressed their ranks, and a flight of arrows followed their loud "Hurrah for London Town!"

But the charge of Warwick had only halted, and (while the wounded Exeter was borne back by his squires to the rear) it dashed into the midst of the Londoners, threw their whole line into confusion, and drove them, despite all the efforts of Gloucester, far back along the plain. This well-timed exploit served to extricate the earl from the main danger of his position; and, hastening to improve his advantage, he sent forthwith to command the reserved forces under Lord St. John, the Knight of Lytton, Sir John Coniers, Dymoke, and Robert Hilyard, to bear down to his aid.

At this time Edward had succeeded, after a most stubborn fight, in effecting a terrible breach through Somerset's wing; and the fogs continued still so dense and mirk, that his foe itself—for Somerset had prudently drawn back to reform his disordered squadron—seemed vanished from the field. Halting now, as

through the dim atmosphere came from different quarters the many battle-cries of that feudal-day, by which alone he could well estimate the strength or weakness of those in the distance, his calmer genius as a general cooled, for a time, his individual ferocity of knight and soldier. He took his helmet from his brow to listen with greater certainty; and the lords and riders round him were well content to take breath and pause from the weary slaughter.

The cry of "Gloucester to the *onslaught!*" was heard no more. Feebler and feebler, scatteringly as it were, and here and there, the note had changed into "Gloucester to the *rescue!*"

Farther off rose, mingled and blent together, the opposing shouts—"A Montagu—a Montagu!"—"Strike for D'Eyncourt and King Edward!"—"A Say—a Say!"

"Ha!" said Edward, thoughtfully, "bold Gloucester fails—Montagu is bearing on to Warwick's aid—Say and D'Eyncourt stop his path. Our doom looks dark! Ride Hastings—ride; retrieve thy laurels, and bring up the reserve under Clarence. But harkye, leave not his side—he may desert again! Ho! ho! Again, 'Gloucester to the rescue!' Ah! how lustily sounds the cry of 'Warwick!' By the flaming sword of St. Michael, we will slacken that haughty shout, or be evermore dumb ourself, ere the day be an hour nearer to the eternal judgment!"

Deliberately, Edward rebraced his helm, and settled himself in his saddle, and with his knights riding close each to each, that they might not lose themselves in the darkness, regained his infantry and led them on to the quarter where the war now raged fiercest, round the black steed of Warwick and the blood-red manteline of the fiery Richard.

CHAPTER VI

THE BATTLE

It was now scarcely eight in the morning, though the battle had endured three hours; and, as yet, victory so inclined to the earl that nought but some dire mischance could turn the scale. Montagu had cut his way to Warwick; Somerset had re-established his array. The fresh vigour brought by the earl's reserve had well nigh completed his advantage over Gloucester's wing. The new infantry under Hilyard, the unexhausted riders under Sir John Coniers and his knightly compeers, were dealing fearful havoc, as they cleared the plain; and Gloucester, fighting inch by inch, no longer outnumbering but outnumbered, was driven nearer and nearer towards the town, when suddenly a pale, sickly, and ghost-like ray of sunshine, rather resembling the watery gleam of a waning moon than the radiance of the Lord of Light, broke through the mists, and showed to the earl's eager troops the banner and badges of a new array hurrying to the spot. "Behold," cried the young Lord Fitzhugh, "the standard and the badge of the Usurper—a silver sun! Edward himself is delivered into our hands! Upon them—bill and pike, lance and brand, shaft and bolt! Upon them, and crown the day!"

The same fatal error was shared by Hilyard, as he caught sight of the advancing troop, with their silvery cognisance. He gave the word, and every arrow left its string. At the same moment, as both horse and foot assailed the fancied foe, the momentary beam vanished from the heaven, the two forces mingled in