

Seven points might the shadow have traversed on the dial, and, before Warwick's axe and Montagu's sword, seven souls had gone to judgment. In that brief crisis, amidst the general torpor and stupefaction and awe of the bystanders, round one little spot centred still a war.

But numbers rushed on numbers, as the fury of conflict urged on the lukewarm. Montagu was beaten to his knee—Warwick covered him with his body—a hundred axes resounded on the earl's stooping casque—a hundred blades gleamed round the joints of his harness:—a simultaneous cry was heard:—over the mounds of the slain, through the press into the shadow of the oaks, dashed Gloucester's charger. The conflict had ceased—the executioners stood mute in a half-circle. Side by side, axe and sword still griped in their iron hands, lay Montagu and Warwick.

The young duke, his visor raised, contemplated the fallen foes in silence. Then dismounting, he unbraced with his own hand the earl's helmet. Revived for a moment by the air, the hero's eyes unclosed, his lips moved, he raised, with a feeble effort, the gory battle-axe, and the armed crowd recoiled in terror. But the earl's soul, dimly conscious, and about to part, had escaped from that scene of strife—its later thoughts of wrath and vengeance—to more gentle memories, to such memories as fade the last from true and manly hearts!

"Wife!—child!" murmured the earl, indistinctly. "Anne—Anne! Dear ones, God comfort ye!" And with these words the breath went—the head fell heavily on its mother earth—the face set, calm and undistorted, as the face of a soldier should be, when a brave death has been worthy of a brave life.

"So," muttered the dark and musing Gloucester, unconscious of the throng; "so perishes the Race of Iron. Low lies the last baron who could control the throne and command the people. The Age of Force expires with knighthood and deeds of arms. And over this dead great man I see the New Cycle dawn. Happy, henceforth, he who can plot, and scheme, and fawn, and smile!" Waking, with a start, from his reverie, the splendid dissimulator said, as in sad reproof,— "Ye have been over hasty, knights and gentlemen. The House of York is mighty enough to have spared such noble foes. Sound trumpets! Fall in file! Way, there—way. King Edward comes! Long live the King!"

---

## CHAPTER VII

### THE LAST PILGRIMS IN THE LONG PROCESSION TO THE COMMON BOURNE

The king and his royal brothers, immediately after the victory, rode back to London to announce their triumph. The foot-soldiers still stayed behind to recruit themselves after the sore fatigue; and towards the eminence by Hadley Church, the peasants and villagers of the district had pressed in awe and in wonder; for on that spot had Henry (now sadly led back to a prison, never again to uncloset his living form) stood to watch the destruction of the host gathered in his name—and to that spot the corpses of Warwick and Montagu were removed, while a bier was prepared to convey their remains to London\*—and on that spot

\*The bodies of Montagu and the earl were exhibited bare-headed at St. Paul's church for three days, "that no pretences



had the renowned friar conjured the mists—exorcised the enchanted guns—and defeated the horrible machinations of the Lancastrian wizard.

And towards the spot, and through the crowd, a young Yorkist captain passed with a prisoner he had captured, and whom he was leading to the tent of the Lord Hastings, the only one of the commanders from whom mercy might be hoped, and who had tarried behind the king and his royal brothers to make preparations for the removal of the mighty dead.

“Keep close to me, Sir Marmaduke,” said the Yorkist; “we must look to Hastings to appease the king; and, if he hope not to win your pardon, he may, at least, after such a victory, aid one foe to fly.”

“Care not for me, Alwyn,” said the knight; “when Somerset was deaf, save to his own fears, I came back to die by my chieftain’s side, alas, too late—too late! Better now death than life! What kin, kith, ambition, love, were to other men, was Lord Warwick’s smile to me!”

Alwyn kindly respected his prisoner’s honest emotion, and took advantage of it to lead him away from the spot where he saw knights and warriors thickest grouped, in soldier-like awe and sadness, round the Hero-Brothers. He pushed through a humbler crowd of peasants, and citizens, and women with babes at their  
of their being alive *might stir up any rebellion afterwards;* “they were then carried down to the Priory of Bisham, in Berkshire, where, among their ancestors by the mother’s side (the Earls of Salisbury), the two unquiet brothers rest in one tomb.” “The large river of their blood, divided now into many streams, runs so small, they are hardly observed as they flow by.” (a)—*Sic transit gloria mundi.*

(a) Habington’s “Life of Edward IV.,” one of the most eloquent compositions in the language, though incorrect as a history.

breast; and suddenly saw a troop of timbrel-women dancing round a leafless tree, and chanting some wild, but mirthful and joyous doggrel.

“What obscene and ill-seasoned revelry is this?” said the trader, to a gaping yeoman.

“They are but dancing, poor girls, round the wicked wizard, whom Friar Bungey caused to be strangled,—and his witch daughter.”

A chill foreboding seized upon Alwyn; he darted forward, scattering peasant and tymbestere, with his yet bloody sword. His feet stumbled against some broken fragments; it was the poor Eureka, shattered, at last, for the sake of the diamond! Valueless to the great friar, since the science of the owner could not pass to his executioner—valueless, the mechanism and the invention, the labour and the genius, but the superstition, and the folly, and the delusion, *had* their value, and the impostor who destroyed the engine clutched the jewel!

From the leafless tree was suspended the dead body of a man, beneath, lay a female, dead too; but whether by the hand of man or the mercy of Heaven, there was no sign to tell. Scholar and Child, Knowledge and Innocence, alike were cold; the grim Age had devoured them as it devours ever those before, as behind, its march—and confounds, in one common doom, the too guileless and the too wise!

“Why crowd ye thus, knaves?” said a commanding voice.

“Ha, Lord Hastings!—approach! behold!” exclaimed Alwyn.

“Ha—ha!” shouted Graul, as she led her sisters from the spot, wheeling, and screaming, and tossing up their timbrels—“Ha! the witch and her lover!—



Ha—ha! Foul is fair!—Ha—ha! Witchcraft and death go together, as thou mayst learn at the last, sleek wooer."

And, peradventure, when, long years afterwards, accusations of witchcraft, wantonness, and treason, resounded in the ears of Hastings, and, at the signal of Gloucester, rushed in the armed doomsmen, those ominous words echoed back upon his soul!

At that very hour the gates of the Tower were thrown open to the multitude. Fresh from his victory, Edward and his brothers had gone to render thanksgivings at St. Paul's (they were devout—those three Plantagenets!), thence to Baynard's Castle, to escort the queen and her children once more to the Tower. And, now, the sound of trumpets stilled the joyous uproar of the multitude, for, in the balcony of the casement that looked towards the chapel, the herald had just announced that King Edward would show himself to the people. On every inch of the courtyard, climbing up wall and palisade, soldier, citizen, thief, harlot,—age, childhood, all the various conditions and epochs of multiform life, swayed, clung, murmured, moved, jostled, trampled;—the beings of the little hour!

High from the battlements against the westering beam floated Edward's conquering flag—a sun shining to the sun. Again, and a third time, rang the trumpets, and on the balcony, his crown upon his head, but his form still sheathed in armour, stood the king. What mattered to the crowd his falseness and his perfidy—his licentiousness and cruelty? All vices ever vanish in success! Hurrah for King Edward! THE MAN OF THE AGE suited the age, had valour for its war and cunning for its peace, and the sympathy of

the age was with him! So there stood the king;—at his right hand, Elizabeth, with her infant boy (the heir of England) in her arms—the proud face of the duchess seen over the queen's shoulder. By Elizabeth's side was the Duke of Gloucester, leaning on his sword, and at the left of Edward, the perjured Clarence bowed his fair head to the joyous throng! At the sight of the victorious king, of the lovely queen, and, above all, of the young male heir, who promised length of days to the line of York, the crowd burst forth with a hearty cry—"Long live the king and the king's son!" Mechanically Elizabeth turned her moistened eyes from Edward to Edward's brother, and suddenly, as with a mother's prophetic instinct, clasped her infant closer to her bosom, when she caught the glittering and fatal eye of Richard, Duke of Gloucester (York's young hero of the day, Warwick's grim avenger in the future), fixed upon that harmless life—destined to interpose a feeble obstacle between the ambition of a ruthless intellect and the heritage of the English throne!



