

CHAPTER VII.

Popular support of the house of York.—Coronation of Edward IV.—Executions.—Attainders.—Renewed attempts of queen Margaret.—Insurrections.—Battle of Hexham.—Edward in peace.—Debasement of the coin.—The king's marriage.—Warwick's estrangement.—Marriage of Edward's sister to the duke of Burgundy.—Marriage of Clarence to Warwick's daughter.—Power of Warwick.—Yorkshire insurrection.—Insurrection under sir Robert Welles.—Warwick and Clarence defeated.—They fly to France.—Invasion of Warwick and Clarence.—Restoration of Henry VI.—Edward in exile.—His return.—Landing at Ravenspur.—Reconciliation of Edward and Clarence.—The march to London.—Battle of Barnet.—Henry again a prisoner.—Landing of queen Margaret.—Battle of Tewkesbury.—Richard of Gloucester.—Falconbridge.—Death of Henry VI.

EDWARD of York has been borne to the throne upon the shoulders of the people. Public opinion was not then formed through journals, reported speeches, pamphlets—even events of great importance were slowly and imperfectly known—but still there was public opinion. An historian, who speaks of public opinion as an important element of the social life of modern Europe at this period, says, "It derives its origin and its nutriment from hidden sources; and, requiring little support from reason or from evidence, takes possession of the minds of men by involuntary conviction."* It was this public opinion, especially of London and the great towns, which swept away a well-disposed, but incapable king,—afflicted by mental and bodily infirmities; the instrument of a violent woman and her crafty favourites,—to substitute a youth of extraordinary vigour, of eminent beauty, of popular manners, but whose cruel and licentious nature was with difficulty controlled by the commanding will of the great noble who had identified himself with the cause of the house of York. That Warwick would have risked every thing merely for the assertion of the superior right to inheritance of the descendants of one son of Edward III. in preference to those of another son, is utterly inconsistent with the principle upon which the crown of England had been held for centuries, when there was no constitutional doubt that it was in the power of the great Council, afterwards called Parliament, to depose a king,

* Ranke, "History of the Pope," vol. i. p. 133.

and appoint a successor, who should have personal as well as hereditary claims. Sixty-one years had passed since the deposition of Richard II. and the election of Henry IV. During that time, there had been thirteen years of sagacious government; ten years of national glory; and thirty-eight years of a legal minority and weakness, during which a military people were constantly incensed by the disasters and disgraces of their arms, and an industrious people by the miserable intrigues and scandalous contests for power of grasping nobles. The English nation would endure a certain amount of vigorous despotism; taxation they would bear, for warlike attack or defence; but incapacity in the king, whom they regarded as the leader in all heroic enterprise, the wisest in council, the bravest in danger, they would not endure. They deposed the gentle Henry, and set up the fierce Edward.

Edward IV. was crowned at Westminster, on the 29th of June, 1461, by Thomas Bouchier, archbishop of Canterbury. His brother George was then created duke of Clarence, and his brother Richard duke of Gloucester. The king afterwards went a progress through the south and west, amidst some of the towns which had been so faithful to his interests. "He progressed," says Stow, "about the land to understand the estate thereof." His course was marked by executions as frequent as banquets. At Bristol, he was present when sir Baldwin Fulford was beheaded, who was taken, "sailing into Brittany to rouse people against king Edward." One whose mind was deeply penetrated with the romance of antiquity—"the marvellous boy" of Bristol—has painted this tragedy with all the force of local colouring: the brave knight upon a sledge; the mayor, and aldermen, and councilmen in scarlet robes; the friars of St. Augustine and the friars of Saint James in the procession; the king looking out of the great minster window; Baldwin drawn past the cross in the high street up the steep hill.* The poet may have truly represented Edward gazing on this scene of death, for it was said of him, that he witnessed an execution with as much pleasure as others did a pageant. We have contemporary evidence that he was then in a merry mood, as was his occasional temper through life, whilst this work of revenge was going on. In a letter written on the day of Baldwin's death—"This same day sir Bauldwyn Fulford and another, called Haysaunt, were put in execution"—the writer, B. Essex, has communicated a secret message to Edward, and "the king laughed and made a

* Chatterton, "Bristol Tragedy."

great game thereat.* Yet, with his levity and his cruelty, this king had glimpses of his duty, in the season of his wondrous prosperity. He is solicited to grant a favour to one who has served him, and he answers, that "he would be your good lord therein, as he would to the poorest man in England; he would hold with you in your right, and as for favour he will not be understood that he shall show favour more to one man than to another, not to one in England." †

The parliament met on the 4th of November. It was a parliament wholly in the interests of the new dynasty. The Lancastrian peers and knights fell before its Bill of Attainder "thick as autumnal leaves." Henry VI., his queen and their son, were attainted for the death of Richard, duke of York, and for delivering up Berwick to the Scots on the 25th of April, after the flight from Towton. Dukes, earls, knights, esquires, were attainted for being at the death of the duke of York; for being against king Edward at Towton-field; for procuring foreign princes to invade the realm; and for more recent movements in arms in Durham and Wales. The statute 1st Edward IV., which declares all the Lancastrian princes as "kings in deed and not of right," confirms their various grants, "except to such persons, and every of them, whom our sovereign lord the king reputeth and holdeth for his rebels or enemies." This despotic exception enabled the king not only to bestow the property of the attainted Lancastrians upon his friends, but to seize on the possessions of those whom he only suspected to be hostile to his claims. Some abandoned Henry, and made submission to Edward; to be treated with the contempt that belonged to their inconstancy. Such was Somerset, who submitted in 1463, and again went over to the Lancastrians, in 1464, then to perish on the scaffold. Those who were faithful, as Exeter was, had to endure exile and misery. "Some of them," says Comines, "were reduced to such extremity of want before the duke of Burgundy received them, that no common beggar could have been in greater. I saw one of them, who was duke of Exeter, but who concealed his name, following the duke of Burgundy's train bare-foot and bare-legged, begging his bread from door to door. This man was next of the house of Lancaster; had married king Edward's sister; and being afterwards known had a small pension allowed him for his subsistence." ‡ How slight regard has chronicle of

* Ellis, "Original Letters," First Series vol. i. p. 15.

† Paston Letters, lette. clxxxii. ‡ Memoirs, book ii. chap. 4.

tradition bestowed upon the hundreds of other poor outcasts of this fearful time! The fate of one family is an exception, for it has been consecrated by the poet. The Clifford who slew Rutland at Wakefield was himself slain at Towton in his twenty-fifth year. His widow and her infant boy fled "to the caves and to the brooks," and the child lived a solitary life in "Blencathara's rugged coves," till grown a youth he was again forced to fly, "to lead a flock from hill to hill." "The good lord Clifford," who was restored to his title and estates in the first year of Henry VII., and entered the House of Peers without being able to read or write, learnt in his shepherd life purer and wiser lessons than his four immediate progenitors had learnt—the lessons of hatred and revenge, through which they all had perished in the field of battle;—

"Love had he found in huts where poor men lie"

It was three years before the accession of Edward to the throne had settled down into a state of tranquillity. The adherents of the house of Lancaster placed their dependence upon queen Margaret. Her unconquerable activity kept alive the spirit of the party. For her they planned; for her they staked their lives, almost against hope. But they relied upon foreign aid, and upon the power of the nobles, who would still have been formidable if the people had been with them, but who were powerless whilst Edward was regarded as a deliverer from evil government. In 1462, Margaret raised an army of adventurers in France, and landed on the northern coast in October. The energetic king was soon at the head of a great force. The queen fled to her ships, which were scattered by a tempest, and part of her foreign troops being cast upon Holy Island were pursued and destroyed. She escaped to Berwick, which had been surrendered to the Scots in the previous year. A portion of her partisans had however taken the strong fortresses of Bamborough, Alnwick, and Dunstanburgh. Warwick arrived to besiege these castles; and Bamborough and Dunstanburgh were surrendered by the duke of Somerset and Sir Richard Percy, on condition that they should recover their rank and their estates upon swearing fealty to Edward. Alnwick capitulated. The attainders of Somerset and Percy were repealed by the parliament, and their lands restored. Deserted thus by two of her chief supporters, Margaret sought safety in her father's territory of Lorraine. Monstrelet, the French historian, without giving a date, tells that ro

* Wordsworth's "Song at the Feast of Brougham Castle."

romantic story of her escape from her pursuers, which relieves the monotony of these dreary annals of bloodshed and treachery by a narrative which touches our common sympathies. In a wild forest near the coast she fell into the hands of banditti, who plundered her of her gold and jewels. They quarrelled about the division of the booty; and, seizing her opportunity the queen fled with her boy, then about eleven years old. In the depths of the wood they were again encountered by a single robber. Margaret, with the decision of her character, threw herself upon the protection of the outlaw. "This is the son of your king—to your care I commit him—I am your queen." The robber became her friend, and guarded her to a place of security.* Sir John Fortescue, the great Lancastrian lawyer, has a strange passage showing that the thieves of England are of such high courage that three or four will set upon seven or eight free men. Of the Scots, he says, "their hearts serve them not to take a man's goods while he is present, and will defend it; but the Englishman be of another courage; for if he be poor, and see another man having riches, which may be taken from him by might, he wot not spare to do so." This desperate hardihood in evil doing, in which life was pitted against life, was not incompatible with generosity. The story of Margaret and the robber is consistent with the national character—that mixture of ferocity and gentleness of which the ballad-heroes of Sherwood were the type.

In the fourth year of king Edward the constant exertions of the Lancastrians kept the government in serious alarm. In February, 1464, the parliament was prorogued in consequence of the commotions in various counties. On the 1st of March, John Paston writes to his father, "The commons in Lancashire and Cheshire were up to the number of ten thousand or more; but now they be down again; and one or two of them was headed in Chester as on Saturday last past." † In 1464 Margaret was again in Scotland; and now an attempt of extraordinary boldness to regain the lost throne was made by the Lancastrians. Percy and Somerset had gone over to their old friends, and were at the head of a large force of Scots and exiled English; and they again obtained the command of the three castles which had been yielded to Edward in 1462. Lord Montacute, the brother of Warwick, the warder of the

* Hume places this event after the battle of Hexham. Turner and Lingard think it belongs to this earlier period.

† Paston Letters, letter cccxxx.

east marches, went promptly against the force which Percy and Somerset had collected. On the 25th of April a battle was fought at Hedgeley Moor, near Wooller, where Percy, in the words of the Year Book, "comme homme fuit occise"—was killed like a man. On the 15th of May Montacute encountered the army of the queen near Hexham. In that decisive victory of Edward's commander the fortunes of the house of Lancaster sank to the lowest point of hopelessness, as if "never to rise again." The inconstant or treacherous Somerset was taken prisoner, and instantly beheaded. There was some justice in the recital of his crimes in the act for his attainder, which says, "of very gentleness and the noble honour that ought to be grounded in every gentleman, he should have been established in firm faith and truth," for "he had been bounteously and largely treated." But in these unhappy contentions "the noble honour" was too often sacrificed to the base expediency. Executions, attainders, imprisonments, followed this victory. Some of the fugitives from the battle-field threw themselves into Bamborough Castle, with Sir Ralph Gray, which fortress speedily surrendered to Warwick. Gray was beheaded at Doncaster, having been spared the degradation of having his spurs stricken off by the master cook, through the especial mercy of Edward. The estates of Percy were granted to Montacute, who became earl of Northumberland. The English government concluded at this time of success a truce for fifteen years with Scotland, in which it was stipulated that the Lancastrians should receive neither shelter nor aid from the Scots.*

The repose which Edward had now attained was not favourable to the improvement of his character. In the rush of war he was eminently brave and daring. In peace the same energy became wild licentiousness. His expenses were unbounded. He gave away the forfeited possessions of his enemies with a rash liberality, and he resorted to very dangerous devices for the supply of his own extravagance. In 1464 "king Edward changed the coin of England, by which he had great getting;" and the contemporary writer, giving the value of this new coin, adds, "to the great harm of the common people." † Another contemporary says that the gold and silver money was changed and coined anew, that the name

* The affairs of Scotland, in connection with those of England, have not been of material importance since the release of James I., in 1424. The two kingdoms were in a state of occasional border warfare, with long truces. Towards the close of the reign of Edward IV., the relations of the two countries assume a greater degree of interest.

† Warkworth's Chronicle, p. 4.

of Henry might be obliterated.* It appears from Warkworth's brief and obscure account that the old noble, which passed for six shillings and eightpence, was now called a rial and commanded to pass for ten shillings. This was not literally true, but was true in principle. Edward issued two new gold coins called angels and angelets, which were to be substituted for the noble and half noble. The noble of Henry IV. contained 108 grains of gold; the angel of Edward IV. contained only 80 grains. But Henry IV. had himself depreciated his noble from 120 grains to 108; so that the angel of Edward IV. was current for two-thirds more than its intrinsic value at the beginning of the century. Unquestionably these robberies of the public for the benefit of the royal treasury were "to the great harm of the common people." They were "to the extreme damage of the great ones of the kingdom," says another chronicler. But few in that age understood how fatal are such devices to the welfare of the whole community; and how short-lived was the advantage of the fraud to the crown itself. Edward followed the evil example of his predecessors; for to them and to him it was enough that the depreciation of the coin would supply some of the necessities of the passing hour. This "shallow and impudent artifice of lowering the standard" † perhaps produced more serious injuries to the industry of the country than the revolutions and counter-revolutions of this age, with all their waste of national resources, and all their disturbances of private property. But Edward had personal qualities which obviated the unpopularity of some of his public acts. "To gain universally the favour of all sorts, he used towards every man of high and low degree more than meet familiarity, which trade of life he never changed." ‡ The "more than meet familiarity" might be offensive to the pride of decaying feudal power, but it stood Edward in the place of many nobler qualities. The mode in which his frank and genial humour was regarded may be traced in our ballad-poetry, which has been always ready to celebrate the adventures of kings with their humble subjects, whether tanners, millers, or tinkers. "A merrie, pleasant, and delectable historie between K. Edward the Fourth and a Tanner of Tamworth," was the delight of many an ingle-nook of the sixteenth century. § It was this impulsive temperament which led

* Continuation of History of Croyland.

† Polydore Vergil, early translation, p. 116.

‡ Ballad in Percy's "Reliques," vol. ii.

† John Stuart Mill.

Edward to the rashest, but in many respects the most creditable action of his life,—his marriage. Elizabeth, the daughter of sir Richard Woodville and Jaquetta, the duchess of Bedford, had been married to sir John Grey, a Lancastrian, who was killed at the second battle of St. Alban's. Edward saw the lady at her mother's house; when she solicited him to restore her late husband's confiscated possessions. Her beauty was irresistible to the young man of twenty-three; and they were secretly married. The ceremony is thus described: "Which spousals were solemnised early in the morning at a town named Grafton, near unto Stony-Stratford; at which marriage was no person present but the spouse, the spousesse, the duchess of Bedford her mother, the priest, two gentlewomen, and a young man to help the priest sing." * There is a letter, undated, written by Richard, duke of York, to dame Elizabeth Woodville, whom his son made queen of England, recommending her marriage to his well-beloved knight, sir Hugh John; and there is another from the earl of Warwick, in which he urges the same suit for the same gallant knight, "which now late was with you unto his full great joy;" and whose love was founded upon "the great sadness and wisdom that he found and proved in you at that time, as for your great and proved virtue and womanly demeaning." † Had sir Hugh John carried off the prize, the course of England's policy might have been somewhat changed in an alliance with France, or Spain, or Scotland, such as the wise ones of that day speculated upon. The probability is that no foreign prince chose to connect the fortunes of his family with such an insecure throne as that of Edward, and that no state management opposed the freedom of his own inclinations.

The marriage of Edward was avowed at the Michaelmas of 1464. On the 26th of May of the following year, Elizabeth was solemnly crowned at Westminster. She had two sons by her marriage with sir John Grey. She had numerous relations—a father, brothers, sisters. The honours and riches which were indiscreetly showered upon this family provoked a bitter animosity, at a period when no public man looked upon the rise of another without jealousy. The marriage with the widow of a Lancastrian who had died fighting against Edward was not an impolitic step towards the extinction of the quarrel between the adherents of the two houses. It was in accordance with that just principle which had previously dictated the proclamation of a general amnesty to all who would

* Fabyan, p. 654. † "Archæologia," vol. xxix. p. 132.

submit to the new government. We must not implicitly receive the statement that "the nobility truly chafed, and cast out open speeches that the king had not done according to his dignity,"* and that "they found much fault with him in that marriage." But we may well believe that they looked with the same fear and dislike upon the influence of a queen, for the advancement of her friends, as they had done in a former reign when Margaret was surrounded with obnoxious favourites, and they pulled down Suffolk and Somerset. Polydore says "the woman was of mean calling." Her birth could not be called mean, whose mother was a duchess, and whose maternal uncle was a prince of Luxemburgh, who attended her coronation with a retinue of a hundred knights and gentlemen. The historical relations of this reign, and of that of Richard III., are to be received with the greatest caution; for they abound with exaggerations,—with assertions without evidence,—and with positive mis-statements that have been repeated by one historian after another till they have become familiar to us as unquestioned truths. The story that Warwick was deceived and insulted by Edward in being employed to negotiate a marriage with the sister-in-law of Louis XI. whilst the king's rash passion led him to marry Elizabeth Woodville during the great earl's absence, is considered a fiction of the later chroniclers unsupported by the relations of the more ancient historians.† But unquestionably Warwick became estranged from Edward soon after this period. The marriage of the three brothers of Elizabeth, and of her five sisters, into noble houses, with immense possessions, rendered the Woodvilles objects of envy and hatred. The Nevilles had placed Edward on the throne, and had since ruled the kingdom. They saw their power departing from them, in the sudden rise of the queen's relations. Edward desired to marry his sister to Charles, the heir of Burgundy. Warwick was the avowed enemy of Charles, and he intrigued with Lewis of France to prevent the match. There was then a greater coldness between the king and the proud noble, which threatened a new field of St. Alban's. They were, however, reconciled; and in 1468 the negotiations for the marriage with Charles, now the reigning duke, were completed; and the princess Margaret was conducted through the streets of London by Warwick, on her way to embark for Flanders. She was married on the 3rd of July near Bruges, and entered that city, rich with all the wealth of an industrious people,

* Polydore Vergil, p. 117.

† See note in Lingard, vol. v. p. 257, ed. 1825.

on the same day. The pageants and jousts of peace were unequalled in splendour. John Paston, who was present, was wild with the glories of that festival time: "As for the duke's court, as of lords, ladies, and gentlewomen, knights, esquires, and gentlemen, I heard of never like unto it, save king Arthur's court." Especially he rejoices in the feasting: "There were never Englishmen had so good cheer out of England that ever I heard of."* The queen's brother, lord Scales, afterwards earl Rivers, was the admired of all observers. At a great tournament in Smithfield in 1467, he had jousted with Arthur the Bastard of Burgundy, and was victor in the field. At Bruges, lord Scales worsted another champion; for he and the Bastard had made promise at London that they would never meet again in arms.†

Whilst the house of York is thus at the height of splendour and fame, the house of Lancaster has almost passed out of the world's regard. Henry is a prisoner in the Tower of London. After the battle of Hexham, he remained concealed for more than a year in Lancashire; but his place of retreat was at last betrayed. According to Warkworth, he was "carried to London on horseback, and his legs bound to the stirrups, and so brought through London to the Tower, where he was kept long time by two squires and two yeomen of the crown and their men; and every man was suffered to come and speak with him by license of the keepers."‡ Queen Margaret was in the asylum of her father's court. But at this lowest point of their fortunes, another revolution was preparing in England, more strange and complicated, more sudden and decisive, than the wildest dream of the most sanguine Lancastrian could have shaped out. Clarence, the brother of king Edward, was to become his enemy; and Warwick was to join with Clarence in restoring those whom he had cast down from their high estate. On the 11th of July, 1469, George, duke of Clarence, then in his 21st year, was married at Calais to Isabel, the daughter of the earl of Warwick. Edward had been decidedly opposed to this marriage. From the time when it was completed, England was the scene of insurrections, deadly enmities, hollow reconciliations, which ended in a second fatal period of civil war.

The attempt to unravel the tangled thread of the relations of the year which followed the marriage of Clarence is almost a hope-

* Paston Letters, letter cclviii.

† Paston Letters. The most elaborate relation of these festivities is given by Barne.

‡ Chronicles. p. 5.

less task for modern historians. To understand the general character of the events, and their influence upon the people, we must form an accurate notion of the position of the earl of Warwick. We must not regard him merely as a rich nobleman, who could carry into the field a large band of personal retainers. In some respects he was more powerful than the king upon the throne. Richard Neville was the son of the earl of Salisbury; and he became earl of Warwick in 1449, through his marriage into the great Warwick family. Richard, duke of York, the father of Edward IV., had married the daughter of the earl of Westmoreland, who was Warwick's grandfather; and thus Warwick stood in near relation to the house of York. His support of that house was therefore a natural result of his position; and his personal character, his immense wealth, and the high connections of the other branches of the Nevilles, would have placed him amongst the most powerful of the English nobles. But after the accession of Edward, he and his family held offices which rendered him still more powerful. He was captain of Calais, and of Dover, warden of the Scottish Marches, Lord Chamberlain, and Lord Steward. Comines says that, besides his inheritance, the annual profits of his offices amounted to eighty thousand crowns. His state was more than regal. "When he came to London," writes Stow, "he held such a house that six oxen were eaten at a breakfast." This man, in whose mansions, scattered through the country, thirty thousand people are affirmed to have been daily fed, could raise an army at his lightest summons. With such a subject, Edward, however, impatient under his domination, could scarcely dare to quarrel. Warwick held the king, whom he had raised up, in little personal esteem. "He looked upon him as a very weak prince."* Regarding him as a careless sensualist, he perhaps did some injustice to the character of Edward, who, when roused to action, displayed an energy which is scarcely compatible with weak intellect or deficient will. The earl, therefore, in the pursuit of his deep-laid schemes ran great risks. In the final issue of his plans, "the weak prince" signally defeated the wary politician. Within a fortnight after the marriage of Clarence there was a rising in Yorkshire, under a leader called Robin of Riddesdale. Sixty thousand men were in arms, whose rising was originally a mere resistance of the peasantry to a local impost, but which became thus formidable when it was connected with a demand that the Woodvilles should

* Comines.

be removed from power. The name of Warwick was freely used in this insurrection; and two of his relations became its leaders, in the place of Robin of Riddesdale, who had been taken and beheaded. As their movements advanced southwards they defeated the king's army under the earl of Pembroke at Edgecote near Banbury; and the earl of Rivers, the queen's father, and sir John Woodville, her brother, who were taken prisoners, were beheaded at Coventry in the following September. William Herbert, earl of Pembroke, also perished on the scaffold. This renewal of the proscriptions and executions that followed the triumph of the Lancastrians is attributed to the secret orders of Warwick. The dreaded earl now arrived in England, with Clarence and with Neville, archbishop of York. There appears little doubt, however the fact is disputed by some writers, that they obtained possession of the person of Edward at Honiley, * near Warwick, and that he was imprisoned in Middleham Castle. One of the articles of the attainder of Clarence at a later period, charges him with "jeoparding the king's royal estate, person, and life in strait ward, putting him thereby from all his liberty, after procuring great commotions." † But there was a premature rising on the Scottish borders for the restoration of king Henry. Warwick now hastened to put down that insurrection. He had destined the throne for his son-in-law Clarence, and this demonstration was inconsistent with his plans. Edward regained his liberty; and again there was reconciliation. It is evident that there was no real amity; but that these hollow compromises were only the forerunners of more violent hostility. In the spring of 1470, the people of Lincolnshire were in arms against the government. They were headed by Sir Robert Willes. There is a remarkable account of these events, which is manifestly official. ‡ The dissimulation of Warwick and Clarence in accepting the king's commission to put down the rebels; their writing of "pleasant letters" to Edward, whilst they were on the way to his enemies; are herein set forth with strong indignation. The king, by his rapidity of movement, threw himself upon the insurgents before his false brother and cousin had joined. He defeated them at Stamford, their cry being a Clarence! a Clarence! a Warwick! Willes and others were beheaded; and the "Chroni-

* Not Olney. See Camden Miscellany, vol. i. p. 3.

† Quoted in Lingard, vol. i. p. 264.

‡ "Chronicle of the Rebellion of Lincolnshire," published in the Camden Miscellany, vol. i.

cle of the Rebellion" states they confessed that the duke and the earl were the partners and the chief promoters of their treason; and that "their purpose was to destroy the king, and to have made the said duke king." The victory was followed up by Edward, who pursued the forces of Warwick into Yorkshire. They turned to the west and south; and the king moving rapidly after them, the earl and the duke got on shipboard at Dartmouth with many followers, and sailed to Calais. On the 31st of March they were proclaimed by Edward as traitors. The officer to whom Warwick had entrusted Calais refused to admit his captain; and the fugitives were compelled to sail for Normandy, and finally landed at Harfleur.

Warwick was now within the reach of the dangerous friendship of Lewis XI. of France, who of all crowned heads possessed the wisdom of the serpent without the harmlessness of the dove. Clarence and the earl proceeded to the court of Lewis at Amboise. Through the influence of the wily king, Margaret of Anjou and her great enemy Richard Neville were reconciled. Prince Edward, the son of Henry VI., was to marry the daughter of Warwick. Henry VI. was to be restored. But the immediate chance of the crown was lost to the "false, fleeting" Clarence. In this negotiation Margaret acted with the same high spirit which she had displayed in the day of her greatest power. For some time she steadily refused to pardon the earl of Warwick, or to take party with him. Then Warwick humbly promised "to be true and faithful subject in time to come." Lewis strenuously urged the union, "and so the queen, thus required by the king, as it is said, counselled also by the servants of the king of Sicile, her father, after many treaties and meetings, pardoned the earl of Warwick, and so did her son also."* In these intrigues, no one shows a face of honesty and nobleness but queen Margaret. Edward was not wholly blind to the machinations of his enemies. Through a lady who had been in the household of the duchess of Clarence, he contrived to make his brother comprehend that the part which he had taken was fatal to the interests of the house of York. Then came another course of dissimulation of Clarence towards Warwick, during which he contrived to let his brother Edward know that he would be faithful to his interest, and would desert his present friends upon the first occasion. But Edward, with an excess of confidence which was madness rather than courage, despised the warnings which he re-

* Ellis, "Original Letters," Second Series, vol. i. p. 132.

ceived from his brother-in-law, the duke of Burgundy. "He never was concerned at any thing, but still followed his hunting," says Comines. He put entire faith in the earl of Warwick's brothers. At last, on the 13th of September, 1470, Warwick and Clarence landed at Dartmouth. Henry VI. was proclaimed: and as the small army of the earl advanced into the country, it was swelled by prodigious numbers of people who gathered under the standard of the all-powerful king-maker. Edward had led his army northward to suppress a pretended rebellion in Northumberland, which was got up as a snare. His quarters were at Doncaster; where six thousand men, at the prompting of Montacute, the brother of Warwick, threw away the badge of the White Rose, and shouted "God bless king Henry." Edward was in a fortified house; but he saw resistance to the approaching army of Warwick would now be fruitless. He threw himself upon a horse, and on the third of October was on ship-board at Lynn. His queen was at that time residing in the Tower of London, where Henry VI. was detained as a state prisoner. Elizabeth, when she heard of the landing of Warwick, left the city-fortress for the greater safety of the Sanctuary at Westminster. Here, on the 4th of November, in this season of peril, was born the first son of Edward IV. The deliverance of Henry from his captivity was accomplished on the 6th of October, immediately after the entry of the Lancastrian army into London. A nearly contemporary record of this event is very curious. "The bishop of Winchester, by the assent of the duke of Clarence and the earl of Warwick, went to the Tower of London, where king Henry was in prison by king Edward's commandments, and there took him from his keepers; which was nought worshipfully arrayed as a prince, and nought so cleanly kept as should seem such a prince. They had him out, and new arrayed him, and did to him great reverence, and brought him to the palace of Westminster and so he was restored to his crown again."* The people of London again heard the once-familiar name of Henry shouted forth by the heralds, and they said "God bless him" in a trembling whisper.

The most important guide to a comprehension of public affairs, the Rolls of Parliament, are wanting for the six months of the restoration of Henry VI. They were probably destroyed at the time of the counter-revolution; for, as we learn from other sources, in the parliament held at the beginning of 1471 the attainders of the

* Warkworth, p. 2.

Lancastrians were all removed; the Yorkists were attainted; and the crown was settled on Henry and his son Edward, and in failure of issue upon the duke of Clarence. Warwick and Clarence were appointed Protectors of the realm during the minority of prince Edward. This restoration appears to have been carried through with less ferocity than disgraced the earlier proceedings of the civil war. The earl of Worcester, Constable of England, was beheaded immediately upon the establishment of the Lancastrian authority—a nobleman who has been stigmatised as “the butcher of England,” but whom the father of English printing eulogises as “the right virtuous earl which late piteously lost his life.”* But no other death on the scaffold is recorded. The country appears to have quickly settled down into tranquillity; and the knights and esquires to have changed their party with wonderful celerity. Edward had fled to Holland so ill-provided that he “was forced to give the master of the ship for his passage a gown lined with martins, and promised to do more for him whenever he had an opportunity.”† He had, however, in the train of himself and his brother Richard, followers to the number of seven or eight hundred; but says Comines, “sure so poor a company were never seen before.” His brigs were chased by the Easterlings, shipmen of the Hanse Towns, who were a piratical race; and he ran his vessels ashore on the coast of Holland. He was well-treated by the governor; and obtained a place of refuge at the Hague. Edward’s brother-in-law, the duke of Burgundy, would have been much better pleased to have heard of his death, as Comines avers. The earl of Warwick was one of the few men of whom Charles the Rash stood in fear; and he apprehended the great earl’s vengeance if he protected the outcast, and showed hostility to the house of Lancaster. His clever minister, Comines, declared that the duke’s alliance was with the king and kingdom of England, and whoever the English took for king should be so to the state of Burgundy. In this low condition of his affairs at home, and the neutrality of his great relative abroad, the chances of Edward’s return were but small indeed. It became a merit of the crafty amongst his old friends to speak slightly of him. The earl of Oxford, one of the most steadfast of the Lancastrians, had gone to Norwich in November, 1470, to ascertain the state of parties. Sir John Paston, the stout Yorkist, who had such good cheer at the marriage of Edward’s sister, now writes to

* Caxton’s Postscript to “Cicero de Amicitia,” translated by the earl of Worcester.

† Comines.

his brother, “If ye could find the means, Master Roos and ye, to cause the mayor in my lord’s ear to tell him, though he should bind my lord to conceal it, that the love of the country and city resteth on our side, and that other folks be not beloved, nor never were, this would do no harm.”* The “other folks” would soon render it more difficult than ever for Sir John Paston, and many like him, to say which was “our side.”

On the 2nd of March, 1471, there is a little fleet in the harbour of Flushing, and Edward the exile goes on board one of the ships. He has received some secret succour from the duke of Burgundy and has contrived to gather two thousand Englishmen under the White Rose banner. The wind is unfavourable; but he prefers remaining on shipboard to turning back from his enterprise. On the 11th the wind changes; and the little fleet sails to the coast of Norfolk. On the 12th, in the evening, the adventurer is before Cromer; but he learns that “it might not be for his weal to land in that country,” for that the earl of Oxford was there in force; and the duke of Norfolk and other friends were “put in ward about London.”† They again stood out to sea, and were exposed to a furious storm for two days and nights, which scattered the vessels, so that the leaders were each compelled to act upon their individual responsibility, and land where they best could. Edward, with his usual intrepidity, went ashore, with a very few followers, at Ravenspur. Richard accomplished a landing four miles from Ravenspur; and Rivers at a distance of fourteen miles. There was no force at hand to resist them; and the separated leaders at last joined; and marched on, setting forth that Edward came, not to claim the kingdom, but to ask only for the inheritance of his father, the dukedom of York. He arrived before the city of York on the 17th, when the recorder came out and declared that he should not be suffered to enter; but then came two burgesses, who conceded that in the quarrel of his father he should be received. “And so, sometime comforted and sometime discomfited, he came to the gates before the city.” He boldly entered, with only sixteen or seventeen persons and harangued “the worshipful folks which were assembled a little within the gates.” The wearied and hungered men were refreshed;

* Paston Letters; letter ccxvi.

† We here quote—and shall do so in subsequent passages without special references—from the curious “Historie of the arrival of King Edward IV.,” published by the Camden Society—a narrative which is the best authority for the details of one of the boldest enterprises on record.