

# Dickon

The mystery of Richard III – England's most controversial king

Marjorie Bowen



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# Dickon

## Marjorie Bowen

First published 1929

To Tom Heslewood  
whose knowledge of the characters and period  
of the 15th century may make him sympathetic  
towards the attempt at a portrait of the last  
Plantagenet king

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and Summary of Battles of Wars of the Roses

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Epitaph For  
Sir Richard Plantagenet, K.G.  
King Of England And France  
Lord Of Ireland, Duke Of Gloucester  
Earl Of Cambridge And  
Of Richmond

Born at Fotherinhay Castle, 2nd October, 1452

Slain on Redmoor Plain, near Leicester, 22nd August, 1485

Richard I was and nothing am,  
Plantagenet, haut Knight and King,  
Traitorly slain and buried privy,  
Third of my name to England rule  
And of my House the last.  
By strife and evil chance pursued—  
Of love and fellowship bereft—  
Crownéd, smitten, dolaurous—  
Yet Crownéd and so undismayed  
In my fair prime I fell.  
O Jesu! Mercy on my soul!  
England I was once and Gloucester—

Now, this mean earth is all I own.  
Thou, passing by, above my dust  
Give me thy prayers and charity.

\* \* \*

## PREFACE

The reign of King Richard III has been described as 'the darkest, the most complex and the worst authenticated of our English annals'; such material as is available, and such modern disquisitions on it as various historians have made, are easily accessible, and therefore it is needless for any list of them to be given here; it is sufficient to state that the author of the following romance has studied them all, has violated no known fact, nor presented any character or action in any light that is not probable, as well as possible.

No fictitious figures have been added to the press of those who once lived, though in some cases mere names have been expanded into personalities, and the extraordinary evil fortune that pursued and overtook our last Plantagenet King has been symbolised in a personage with a human semblance. It is not likely that the truth of these mysterious and terrible events will ever be known; the historian and the novelist alike must fill in the gaps with conjecture or imagination; nor is it difficult, from our knowledge of what was, to compose a theory of what might have been.

The times, the men and women, when they have been carefully studied, are clear enough for us to guess their characters from what can be realised of their deeds and destinies.

With regard to the main figure in this tale, the author has presented it according to a sincere conviction of its truth, though, of necessity, the facts and arguments which led to this conviction must be omitted in a

work of fiction.

Dickon, the name used throughout this romance for Richard Plantagenet, Duke of Gloucester, afterwards King Richard III of England, was the one familiarly used in his lifetime and is preserved in Dickon's Nook and Dickon's Well on Redmoor Plain.

MARJORIE BOWEN

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# PART I - 1460-1466

## THE THREE SUNS

Roused by a violent knocking, the little boy sat up in bed. The house was full of indistinguishable sounds. His room was dark and cold. He huddled into bed again and pulled the coverlet round his shoulders, still listening. He knew that the knocking had been on the outer gate; he could hear horses in the courtyard and the clatter of armed men dismounting.

A quickly-moving red light flickered across his narrow window and doors seemed to open and shut, heavy footsteps to run up and down the passages.

Unable to endure the excitement any longer, he sat up again and, leaning out of his pillows, prodded his brother, who slept in the next bed, undisturbed by the sudden clamour which had broken upon the winter night.

'Wake up!' he cried impatiently, 'wake up! I believe our father has come home, and Edmund!'

The elder child stirred and sighed.

'But it is our father!' protested his brother; 'our father who has come back. If we get up and go on to the stairs he may see us.' He added, on a note of wistful indignation, 'How can you sleep, George, when our father has come home?'

'I am not sleeping.' George sat up and shivered in the January air. 'How do you know it is our father? It may be Edward.'



Edward has gone to Wales,' replied the little boy, in wise, eager excitement; 'but our father only went to York, and Wales is a much greater distance away.'

The brothers listened, sitting up in their small beds and fixing straining eyes on the streak of light that now showed beneath the door.

'If it is our father, he'll come in to see us,' remarked the younger child.

'There is a great deal of noise,' responded George, 'and they seem to have forgotten all about us. Where is Dame Ramme? I want a light--I hate the dark. You get up, Dickon, and see what it all is.'

Eagerly the little boy got out of his warm bed, then fumbled across the cold dark room, and out on to the gallery, which was full of flickering light. Flushed with sleep and excitement, he stood there, hesitant, a beautiful child, eight years old, with a small compact face and bright brown hair curling on to his shoulders. Seeing no one, not even Dame Ramme, his nurse, who was usually so diligently behind him, nor Master Large, the tutor, who was not generally far distant, he pattered round the gallery and looked over the stairhead.

He knew what his father wore, his surcoat and his shield, with the arms of England containing the quarters of Castile and Leon, which, ever since he could remember anything, he had seen on the great North gate of Fotherinhay Castle, where he had been born and where he had lived in his infancy.

There were men in the great hall below, but none of them bore this device, nor the White Rose of York. His elder brother came out shivering on to the gallery.

'Why are you so long? What has happened?' he asked peevishly.

'I do not know,' whispered Dickon; 'there is a crowd of people down there, but they seem to be strangers, and I can't see our father, nor Edmund, nor Edward.'

The children huddled together--alert, eager, slightly uneasy.

A few months ago their peaceful life at Fotherinhay had been interrupted by the rebellion. They had been hurried, as prisoners, to Tonbridge; they had escaped by their mother's devotion and vigilance, to London, and been put in sanctuary in John Paston's chambers in the Temple.

Then their father had defeated the rebels and quieted the kingdom, and brought them here to Baynard's castle on the Thames and the small boys had felt happy and secure again when their mother had told them that the poor witless King had made their father Protector of the Realm, to be in his turn king. But that pleasant security had endured only a short while for the Queen, who was from France, had refused to be bound by the Act of her husband's Parliament and the wish of the people, and had raised the rebellion that the Protector and his two sons had gone out so shortly before Christmas to quell. The two little boys had wanted to go, but their father had laughed; though Edward, Earl of March, who had gone to put down a rising of the Tudor faction in Wales, had said he would like to take Dickon, who was serious and well-trained for his age, as a page.

The entire household seemed to be gathered in the great hall--the seneschal, the chaplain, the men-at-arms, even the women and scullions from the kitchen. There were several strangers, too--soldiers, priests, monks. The little boys' anxious eyes discovered their mother and nurse. Both were in their night attire beneath cloaks. The lady sat by the great hearth, on which a few embers of the day's logs still glowed; the nurse--and Dickon thought this odd--was kneeling beside her and holding her hand. Standing before the

women was the one man Dickon knew amongst all these other knights, Sir Thomas Parr. He wore his battle-coat of leather strengthened with studs of steel. He was bareheaded and his hair was matted together with blood. There was blood, too, on his right hand. Dickon saw this with horror—blood on his right hand as he moved it up and down as if to illustrate what he related as he spoke in a low, rapid voice. Dickon noticed, too, that his surcoat was torn and the White Rose on it had been ripped into tatters.

The two little boys crept down the stairs. No one looked up, no one heard their hesitant bare feet on the oak treads. As Dickon drew nearer, he observed his elder sister, Margaret, bright-eyed and silent, the other side of his mother and clinging to her shoulder. His heart beat fast at the strangeness of the scene, but he valiantly remembered many good counsels and advice from his father and his brothers as to knightly and manly behaviour, and his small earnest face was resolute and steady as he went slowly down the stairs. George had not so much self-control. He had also, being older, a clearer idea of what this all meant, and he began to half-sob, half-whimper, holding on to the stair-rail and staring at the little group round his mother.

At this sound a shudder ran through the lady by the fire. She got at once to her feet and said:

'The children—what shall I do about the children? They are marching straight on London, you say?' she added, and came to the foot of the stairs. 'We may be besieged.'

Dickon wanted to embrace her, but was too proud and shy to do so because of the strange company, neither did he dare to ask about his father and brother. His mother's face was terrible, he could hardly recognize her, yet she spoke as if she had command of herself.

Dickon and George, return and don your clothes; and you Dame Ramme, go up and assist them. Quick! No talking--not a word! Tell them nothing.'

But George, who felt he was too old to be treated like this asked:

'Mother, has some misfortune befallen? Mother, what is it?'

'I cannot speak to you now,' answered the lady, 'I must keep my senses. Jesu, keep my soul steady.'

The nurse had hurried up; she led a child in either hand and hurried them back to their room. Dickon was too proud to ask her what his mother had refused to tell them, but he could judge from her look that some disaster had befallen the House of York. By the flare of a solitary candle the two little boys were dressed--hood, gown, hose, shoes and caps. The nurse said nothing to either. When they returners to the great hall, fresh logs had been placed on the fire and the flame blown up. A grave sad-faced priest was standing by their mother. Dickon noticed that she had twisted up and hidden beneath a veil, her long, dark golden hair. Margaret, still bright-eyed, resolute, was seated in the chimney-corner warming her bare feet at the blaze. Their mother drew the little boys into the warmth.

'You are going away tonight,' she said. She spoke so calmly that Dickon's heart leapt with relief. If she could talk like that, nothing so dreadful could have occurred. 'I am going to send you abroad with Dame Ramme and Master Large, your tutor. You must do as they say and you will come back very soon.'

George protested.

'I am too old to be in the charge of a woman; if there is danger or trouble I would rather stay in London.'

'It is not safe in London, sir,' put in the priest, kindly. Not even in this fortified castle.'

'Is Margaret coming with us?' asked Dickon, suddenly.

'It were better that she went,' said the priest, 'and you with her, Madam.'

The lady shook her head.

'I must be here to meet my son,' she answered.

At this Dickon shuddered again; why did not his mother mention his father? and why 'my son'--not 'my sons'?

The great door was opened and someone said the horses were ready. Master Large was there with his packets in his hand, and torches lit in the courtyard wavered and streamed in the rising wind.

The priest blessed the boys, commending them to the charge of the Holy Trinity and of St George. Their mother embraced the elder, but could not bring herself to look at Dickon. But, with a blind movement, she took a holy image from the wall and put it in the little boy's hand, and told him to make a companion of it during the voyage, then turned away from all of them and crouched down by the fire, clutching her daughter in her arms.

Master Large put fur tippets round the boys' shoulders and hurried them out of Baynard's Castle. Two horses and two men-at-arms waited outside the great door. Master Large mounted one horse, with George behind him holding on to his belt; there was a man-at-arms on the other, with the nurse on the pillion and Dickon on her knee. The stout, heavy animals set out briskly. The wind was getting stronger and blowing up from the river; it seemed filled with tiny

splinters of ice. Dickon wondered if they were going to take up their residence in the royal palace at the Tower; or were they returning to Fotherinhay, or to one of his father's castles in York--Pontefract or Sendai?

George knew that this was not the way to York, and asked if they were going on a ship, for they were riding towards the wharf at Billingsgate. Dickon was some paces behind his brother, for his horse carried the greater weight. Despite his dismay and anxiety he began to feel sleepy. Lulled by the clang of the hoofs on the cobbles, the blowing of the sharp air in his face, and the warmth of his nurse's cloak, all the disturbing sights of the ride and dread of the night became blurred and blended into a dream. But he woke again to find himself being carried on to a ship with set sails that rose above him monstrously, the deck piled with curious objects, and foreign sailors moving about and talking; he saw, too, the men of his kinsman the Earl of Warwick, Captain of Calais and Constable of the Tower.

He saw Master Large arguing with the captain, the tutor's thin, cold, slow fingers plucking out of a little leather bag, and putting it into the sailor's hand; and George protesting with the nurse, crying out in disgust of the ship, the smells, the looks of the crew, the wind in the sails, and cordage creaking. Looking about, Dickon saw a cluster of dim lights either side of the river--London and Southwark and lower down the river lights in the dark bulk of the Tower; and over everything, a faint sprinkle of stars and loose black clouds moving swiftly, and the wind blowing the clouds over the city.

When the ship began to move Dickon thought of his mother left behind in turmoil with his little sister Margaret, and his father and his brother not returned. He did not know what terror had overtaken them, and such a fit of homesickness shook the little boy that he fell to his knees on the deck and, despite all his efforts at control, began to cry.

Dame Ramme picked him up; the tears were running down her face also. She pulled him into the cabin which the captain had told them they might occupy. It was on the deck, and furnished with a rough bed and piled round with bales of merchandise--English wool to make Flemish cloth.

Dickon refused to speak; he would not say what dread he felt. He clutched the image his mother had given him and, when the nurse was not looking, kissed it; and soon, to get rid of her, pretended to be asleep.

She left him, and, peering over the edge of the cover, he saw, by the light of the great ship's lantern which penetrated the cabin doorway, that George was really asleep.

Dickon felt contempt for George.

Quite still and wide awake, he thought over what had happened. His father had been defeated by the rebels or perhaps, he was a prisoner. His brother Edmund would be a prisoner too. Dickon's proud heart swelled with anguish; his hot bright eyes stared across the deck of the ship. The river was widening, a few scattered lights showed on either bank, then London was lost in darkness.

The nurse and the tutor crept to the cabin door and sat there huddled in their mantles, sheltering from the wind. The accommodation was rough, but what fine fortune that the ship was about to sail from Billingsgate at this fatal moment! And the gracious favour of the Earl of Warwick, Lord of the English seas, had made it all easy.

They began to talk to each other, consoling themselves, as people will, by a recital of their disaster.

Dickon, whom they supposed asleep, listened.

He heard the nurse whisper:

'They cut off their heads and stuck them on the Mickle Gate at York, with paper crowns on them.'

2

Dickon rolled over, bit the coverlet, and listened while the two figures talked by the shadowed entrance to the cabin. 'Where was the fight, did you say?' whispered the tutor--'near Sendai Magna?'

'I do not know,' answered the nurse. 'They said they fought on the river. Who can tell the truth?'

'Sir Thomas Parr,' said the tutor, 'thought it was a foraging party and the Duke came out from Sendai Castle to help them, but I could hear little of it for the confusion.'

'What does it matter,' moaned the nurse, 'since they are all dead, and their heads over the Mickle Gate?'

'Sir Thomas said he saw the Prince overtaken a little above the barns beyond the bridge, going up rising ground--that would be the street leading up to the market-place in Wakefield. He was killed within half-an-hour of leaving the castle--as right high and mighty a prince as there may be!'

'But it is young Edmund of Rutland is the worst loss,' sobbed the nurse. 'What was he but a boy? It seems but yesterday that I had him at my knee!'

'Where would the rebels be? Their headquarters are in York, as I heard it, and they are marching on London.'



The tutor and the nurse spoke disjointedly and at cross purposes, relieving their thoughts and grief by short sentences which fell with dreadful clearness on the ears of the little boy in the cabin.

'And there was no news of Edward? No news of Edward March?'

'Nay. He will still be at Shrewsbury confronting the Welsh.'

'Sir Thomas said the slaughter was hideous--everywhere blood--two thousand slain and the prisoners killed! There are heads over every gate of York! David Hall had gone and the Earl of Salisbury! The rebels at Mortimer's Cross--did you hear those poor priests and people? Fifteen miles either side of their track the country plundered. That outlandish woman's troops are sacking the churches, roaring and yelling--'

'They are the Scotsmen,' whispered the tutor, 'the Frenchwoman Margaret brought up--there is no one who does not dread these Scots.'

'Those men tonight told me they were killing the priests who were protecting the altars, and you could see books and vestments, and even the Eucharist, scattered along the roads. They are coming on London?'

'Yea, and Warwick will go out to meet them.'

'Warwick cannot bring the good Duke alive or Prince Edmund.'

Dickon lay rigid, tearing at the coverlet with his strong young teeth.

The ship, at length gaining the open sea, began to sway, and the lantern swung to and fro, casting rhythmic strands of light across the deck. The boy's blood, turned with horror, began to run feverishly.

Whose heads were they talking of--the crowned heads on the gate at York? Heads on all the gates of York--who had been killed?

Those two whispering at the door mentioned his father and his brother Edmund, and David Hall, his dear good friend, and Salisbury, his uncle--all these people killed and their heads on the gates of York! Who had been killed on Wakefield Bridge?

The little boy turned on his hard couch, knelt and began to pray, clutching the image his mother had given him.

The ship was lurching from side to side and the wind was stronger, and there was a whining and a whistling in the cordage and the sails, as the waves rose higher.

How could George sleep?

The lonely, frightened boy crept across to his brother and touched his warm forehead and his clasping hands.

Murmuring, lamenting, gossiping together, the tutor and the nurse guarded the door.

George was beginning to groan and complain of cold and sickness. 'A princely heart never cries out,' his father had told Dickon, and he remembered this and was silent. He curled up on his couch again, feeling sick and feverish. The tutor crept into the cabin holding a small lamp in his unsteady hand, and peered about from one child to the other, and sighed deeply, thinking of their rank in the State, their sudden fall, and the dark future that lay before them. For, loyal and faithful as he was to the House of York, he did not doubt that that family was ruined, and for ever.

For who was left of it now but women, these two children, and the Earl of March--young Edward, last heard of at Shrewsbury, but, for all

Piers Large knew, overtaken and killed by the victorious adherents of the House of Lancaster.

As he stood there, a weary, sick, dispirited man, he observed Dickon's bright eyes gleaming from the bed.

The child sat up, shaking.

'Master Large, are my father and my brother--are they--?'

'Gone,' whispered the tutor. 'God have mercy on their souls, good sir, for thou must think of them as taking their repose tonight in Paradise. God save thee, God keep thee, Prince Richard.'

'Their heads--' Dickon began, and could get no further. 'Their heads--and the crowns--on the Mickle Gate at York--'

'What have you heard?' asked the tutor, sharply. 'Were you not asleep just now?'

'Where is my uncle Salisbury?' demanded the little boy, 'and good Sir David Hall?'

His cheeks were shining crimson, his lips parted.

'I wanted to talk to Sir Thomas Parr. Why did you not let me stay?'

'Sweet Jesu Christ,' murmured the tutor, 'the Prince is out of his wits.'

He turned to call the nurse to assist him with the child, but the poor woman, overcome by sickness caused by the motion of the ship and the weight of sudden misfortune, was prostrate between the bales and the cordage, lying huddled in her mantle, with her head on a case of jewels which her mistress had at the last moment put into her hand.

Master Piers Large left her, returned to the cabin and sat down by Dickon. He took the feverish boy in his arms to comfort him, but Dickon, although he was usually affectionate, repulsed him, and in a high, strained, excited voice asked for his father and his brother, and demanded whose were those heads he saw stuck up, with paper crowns on them, above the gate at York?

The winter wind blew the ship, plunging and dipping across the dark waves of the North Sea; the lantern sent irregular shadows streaming across the deck; the voices of the sailors, talking in their deep, throaty foreign language, broke into the regular noise of the waves and wind. George was moaning in his sleep; Dickon was awake, hot and delirious.

He thought that the swinging lanterns were like dead heads, severed at the neck and lit from within, and the sound of the waves was the clangour of a battle in which all his friends and protectors went down in one red howling ruin.

The tutor, sick and dismayed as he was himself, tried to combat the fantasies on the part of the child, but, instead, he found himself overwhelmed by Dickon's phantoms.

He, too, thought he saw the dark decks running red and phantom warriors chasing each other over the iron-coloured waves of the North Sea, the sky raining arrows, and the clouds piled high above the turrets of Pontefract, York or Sendal.

Dickon struggled and called for his father and his brothers Edmund and Edward, until he slipped into unconsciousness; then Master Piers Large covered up his charge and laid himself groaning softly, on the mattress between the two boys; so the fugitives passed that night, a day and a night again.

As the great merchant-ship beat and plunged through the tumbling waves that broke upon the flats of Holland, Dickon woke and glanced about him in terror. He recalled the events of the night which he thought was last night. He saw Master Piers Large and George asleep. The cabin door was open, the lanterns were out, a driving rain fell. Outlined against the bleak light of the late winter dawn a figure stood at the cabin entrance, a lean man in dark clothes who smiled at him mockingly. His face was long, white and thin with slanting reddened eyes, and, surely, behind the touse of his coarse hair, horns.

Dickon searched for the image his mother had given him last night. As his hot fingers closed round the painted wood he felt a thrill of courage, and mustered the boldness to whisper:

'Who are you?'

The man replied, with a leer:

'I am thy humble servant, Jon Fogge,' and with that slipped away across the deck, which was wet and gleaming with spray.

Dickon made the sign of the cross, jumped from his bed and finding the tutor, shook him.

'Who is that?' he asked. 'Who is Jon Fogge? Why is he with us? He is the Devil.'

Master Piers Large blinked himself back into wakefulness.

'Jon Fogge?' he murmured, vaguely. 'Why, that is the man-at-arms--the one that carried you and your nurse the other night, sir.'

'Sir, send him away,' whispered the child, hiding his face. 'I thought he was the Devil; he has frightened me greatly.' Master Large

crossed himself but said:

'Nay sir, nay, my good lord, it is not the Devil, but honest Jon Fogge, who will be a good servant to your grace.'

'I thought he had horns,' sobbed Dickon; 'I thought he was bringing a head with a paper crown in his hands,' and the overwrought boy, at the end of his resistance, fainted in the tutor's arms.

The buffeted ship laboured down the Scheldt and dropped anchor in Vlissingen Harbour. The captain had serious matter for the ears of the Duke of Burgundy's man who had come aboard to collect some of his master's commissions, letters and goods.

'There is trouble again in England and, as I hear, the Lord Protector and his eldest son slain between York and Wakefield, and the French woman and the Scotsmen marching on London. There are two children and some servants I was asked to take on board--this by favour of Lord Warwick, Captain of Calais, kin to York--and their man, I take it.'

'And who are they?' asked the Duke's man, curiously surveying the sick and bedraggled forms waiting forlornly in the cabin.

'They are the Duke of York's two youngest sons--George and Richard--Plantagenet they call them. One seems lively enough, but the other like to die of his troubles.'

Blue-lipped and shuddering, with the unconscious Dickon in his arms, the tutor came forward to tell his story, which amounted to no more than a desperate appeal from the widowed Duchess of York to Philip, Duke of Burgundy, for asylum and protection for her two little children.

'A lost cause,' mused the Duke's man, stroking his chin. He knew the

temper of the French Queen Margaret, of her fierce adherents. Philip of Burgundy was kind, but politic. He would, his man knew, be anxious not to embroil himself with the triumphant faction in England but Master Large, patiently and humbly, reminded him that the young Earl of March yet survived, and was pressing on Wales with a large force, and might defeat not only the Tudors but the Lancastrians, 'whom the Earl of Warwick has gone forth to meet and will, by now, have come up with.'

'His Highness is at Utrecht,' said the Burgundian, still doubtful, but not unkindly, 'and I can do no less than take you there. I will find a wagon for the children. The boy seems stricken,' he added, with a glance at the frail, bright-haired child lying limply in the tutor's arms.

'It was his father's death, sir knight,' broke in the nurse piteously, 'the fear and the cold--being dragged from his bed in the winter and taken aboard a ship which he has never so much as seen before--'

George, standing erect and bright-eyed, struck in sharply:

'If my father and Edmund are dead, who may be the Duke of York?'

'Edward, my lord of March, is the head of your house,' replied the tutor, startled by this, 'and you, sir, will remain here under good protection, trusting your fortunes to him.'

They landed. The flat earth seemed one with the low grey clouds, a few tiled houses glistened with wet, the scanty fishing fleet had come in out of the storm and rocked at anchor with furled sails. The Burgundian found them a wagon, into which they were glad to creep, and gave them bread and meat and a bottle of wine. They all ate except Dickon, who was sick and still half-delirious. The wagon took them through rain and wind and along a straight road between hare trees. The canvas chanced to blow aside, and Dickon, lying with his

head on the nurse's knees noticed Jon Fogge riding one of the horses, and screamed out that the man was not to come with them--he was the Devil--that he had three, four heads hanging at his belt!

'Nay, my lord, nay, good Prince, that is but Master Jon Fogge, honest Jon Fogge--our faithful man-at-arms.'

Dickon hid his face and sobbed. The wagon stopped at a canal--cold, straight, grey as a steel sword. The tutor fumbled again for money. There was more food. They got on to a barge, wide and flat, which filled the greater part of the width of the canal.

Dame Ramme wept a little over Dickon, who she thought was very ill, and she had to tell Jon Fogge, the man-at-arms, to keep well out of the little Prince's sight.

Clutching his nurse's hand tightly Dickon told her, as the barge proceeded slowly down the long grey canal towards Utrecht, that he had seen Jon Fogge before.

'It was at Fotherinhay in the summer, and he was there...He asked me to go into the woods with him. It was most dark and all the leaves looked very large. He walked ahead and kept smiling at me over his shoulder. And I thought then that he had horns and long wings which trailed on the ground behind him. He said: "Come with me, little Dickon; come with me, little sir; come with me, good Prince! I am thy Devil, thy own Devil, whom Jesus Christ beat out of Heaven--"

Dame Ramme hushed him, kissed him and caressed him, sweeping his damp hair from his forehead. She carried him up on to the deck of the barge and laid him there. The rain had stopped and the faintly-coloured sky showed above the bare trees of the stark flats. On the horizon there stood an immense tower.



'Utrecht,' said the captain of the barge, nodding and pointing.

Houses began to close in on either side of the canal and the tower grew nearer. The barge moored at a quay in the quiet reaches of the old Rhine. The Burgundian hurried ashore, and the four fugitives sat shivering on the deck, while the Dutch sailors stared at them curiously.

### 3

Dickon was ill. He lay in bed and wondered what was hurting his head and his heart. He was in a strange room. During the last few months he had been in many strange rooms, but this was different from any of them--different from the room in Tonbridge Castle or Master John Paston's chamber in the Temple, or the huge grand apartment in Baynard's Castle--a foreign room. He peered with large bright eyes over the edge of the coverlet. Dame Ursula Ramme sat beside the bed. He was pleased to see her there. He dared not think of his father, his mother, or his brothers Edmund and Edward.

'May I rise?' he asked.

She said yes, he might rise.

He got out of bed, feeling weak and odd, and put on his small fur gown. He felt at once curious and indifferent. He looked away from the nurse in case she should ask him questions about his father, or himself, or his mother. He went to the window unsteadily and peered out. Everything was strange, even the smells; the sunlight was grey, the clouds loose, perpetually moving, and in the gutters of the red-tiled roofs of the houses he could see thin splinters of ice. Stretching his neck and gazing up the twisting street, he could see that high tower he had noticed--when? A long time ago.

Dame Ramme blew up the fire and fidgeted about the room, regarding the little boy anxiously. He had been very ill, and she thought he looked very delicate.

'We are in Utrecht, God keep us,' she said, foolishly, not knowing how to begin a comfortable and cheerful talk. 'The good Duke of Burgundy is looking after us. As soon as you are well enough you will be taken to see him. He has truly a great number of amusements--a dwarf and a giant and wild leopards.'

'I do not want to see them,' replied Dickon, staring at the tower.

'Oh, but you will like them, sir. The Duke--the good Duke Philip--is very kind and pleasant. Prince George goes almost every day to see him and the animals.'

The little boy stood rigid, hostile to the woman and her words. He did not wish to hear of anyone kind and pleasant--the two words tortured him. Kind! His father had been kind--he could remember that. Such kindness! His two tall fair brothers had been kind. The little boy had been content to walk behind them for hours, not speaking or wishing to be spoken to--only looking up at them as they went about their exercises or their amusements.

'When are we going home?' he asked, abruptly, turning round from the window.

'Sir, that is as may be,' replied the dame, evasively; 'we do not get much news here. There have been storms in the North Sea and the ships slow in coming in; and, maybe, all the news that's known they do not tell to us. There is war in England, and tales that cross one another.'

She paused, not knowing that the little boy realized his father and

elder brother were dead, and that he would never see them again.

But Dickon knew they were dead, killed with his uncle Salisbury and old Sir David Hall, who had let him ride on his shoulders and play with his helmet. And their heads had been cut off and stuck up on the gates of York. He remembered.

Observing his still face, so steadfast for his age the old nurse began to lament softly to herself.

'But Prince Edward is well and a brave knight,' she said by way of consolation; 'and I did hear that he beat the rebels on the Welsh marches at Mortimer's Cross, and was coming hotfoot to London.'

'When are we going home?' repeated Dickon.

Dame Ramme did not know.

The little boy left the window, came to the fire, and warmed his hands.

'I want to go home, you know that,' he said gravely.

'It is all in the good Duke's will, under the grace of God,' replied the nurse; 'thy lady-mother will send her wishes to him.'

And, to distract the little boy from his unsmiling resoluteness, she began to talk of the Duke and his court, and told Dickon that she might take him there that very afternoon, and that tomorrow, if he were well enough, he might go with his protector to Matins in the great cathedral--that church with the great tower.

He demanded, with sudden passion, where was the image that his mother had given him the night they left Baynard's Castle?

The nurse had it immediately ready, drawn out from under a pillow at the head of the bed.

'Who is this knight?' asked Dickon.

And the nurse said:

'St George.'

The figure wore armour and had a large halo behind his head.

'Sir, ye may say your prayers to him--he is a powerful saint--the patron of England.'

Dickon stared intently at the small wooden figure.

Why had not St George saved his father outside York? His father was a mighty English prince, and should have been the English king: many times he had been told of his father's right to the throne. And yet God and St George had allowed him to be defeated and killed together with Edmund, the young knight who looked, Dickon thought, like a saint himself, with his shining armour and his bright hair. Dickon did not understand.

'Dame Ramme,' he said, with a swift emphasis that startled, almost frightened, the woman, 'I saw the Devil, you know, on that big ship that brought us here.'

She remembered the child's illusion, and what he had said during his illness.

'Sir, nay; that is only poor Jon Fogge, a serving-man who came with us, and is even now helping in the kitchen.'

'Keep him away from me,' said Dickon, with a shudder; 'he is the

Devil--our Devil, the Devil of the House of York.'

The nurse smiled, but with some uneasiness, for the child tried to confute her with her own words.

'You have often said the Devil would be disguised as some poor mean creature, and follow about, perhaps as a dog or a page, and I saw his horns and his horrid red eyes, and I know he travelled up from York.'

The nurse kissed him in silence, then took him downstairs, where his brother sat reluctantly with a tutor of the Duke of Burgundy's providing. George made little advance in learning, for his teacher spoke only Latin or French, and he was an unwilling scholar. He was very proud; he knew every detail of his birth--that he came of the noblest blood of England, Plantagenet, Mortimer, Neville, Beauchamp, Mont-agute, Leon and Castile. This boy thought of himself already as a great prince, and disdained book-learning; he despised Richard for his weakness and illness, and Richard disliked him for his heartlessness.

The two brothers met without affection.

George was confident, even boastful--Edward would be King of England and they would go back to London and live as royal princes in Westminster and in the Tower. He was handsome, lively, attractive, and tall for his age, and when he spoke, everyone looked at him.

That afternoon the tutor and two Burgundian gentlemen took them to the Duke of Burgundy's palace in Utrecht, close to the cathedral.

The Duke sat in a room that was full of coloured light: the sunshine, grey and pallid, was transformed into scarlet, azure, purple and gold

as it streamed through the long oriel window behind the dais where he sat.

He was an old man, with close-shaved hair and face, in the Burgundian fashion. He wore a right-fitting purple cloth cap which, fastened by a square jewel, hung in monstrous loops and ends on to his right shoulder; his face was cut and seamed into a thousand lines, sharp, dry, hard with a yellowish tinge, with small bright twinkling eyes. The collar of his new Order of the Golden Fleece flashed round his bent shoulders.

He gave a hand to either boy and glanced pleasantly from one to the other. As a man and a knight he pitied them, and as a statesman he recognized their value. In his opinion these boys would be of great importance in Europe, for Philip of Burgundy did not believe in the cause of Henry of Lancaster, even though York had been slain at Wakefield. Margaret of Anjou was violent and imprudent. Philip had no confidence in women. His personal leanings, too, caused him to support the hereditary claim of the Yorkists against the parliamentary claim of Henry, the grandson of a usurper. These boys, besides, had sisters--two were married to English knights; but there was a third.

The Duke glanced at the dark, serious young man standing behind him--his heir, Charles, Count of Charolais.

'We await news from England,' he said, in careful French, so that the boys could understand. 'We hope it will be good news. Thy brother Edward is a good commander and a brave knight.'

'He is a Plantagenet,' replied George, tartly.

Philip gave him a dry smile, then ignored him and drew Dickon towards him. He was moved by the small valiant, silent figure, by that look of resignation on such a young face. The Duke, a man of

perception, could see that the child had been hurt to his very soul.

'Thou, too, are stout and valiant,' he said, quietly. 'Thou must be comforted; these mischances overtake princes. God has in His keeping thy father and brother. Be assured they rest in Paradise, having died fighting nobly for their cause, which was, as I take it, the rightful one.'

'Let none dispute that before me!' exclaimed George, in so startling and confident a manner that Count de Charolais laughed, and he was a man little given to mirth.

The old Duke continued to address Dickon, who stood by his knee, regarding him gravely.

'Thy brother Edward is now the head of thy House, and may be King of England. Thou, child, wilt be loyal to him?'

The little boy's answer was in his intent gaze, but George said, arrogantly:

'Edward is not so much older than I.'

The old Duke smiled thoughtfully from one child to another.

'Three young men and one crown,' he murmured--'a difficult partage, is it not, Charles?'

Dickon understood something of what this talk meant. 'I am Edward's man,' he asserted.

The Duke of Burgundy approved this:

'As a prince and a knight,' he declared, earnestly, 'thou must be loyal to the head of thy House. I will tell you a motto--*Loyalty bindeth me.*'

Dickon kissed his hand without answering.

George asked, curiously:

Will Edward be King of England?

Dickon listened eagerly for the answer. He was deeply impressed by this old, wise, quiet prince, with the flashing collar round his shoulders and the monstrous headdress, and the foreign way of speaking.

'Child,' said Philip, 'I believe thy brother has the right, and Henry of Lancaster is an imbecile, his wife a termagant and his reputed son an infant--none of these things has ever been greatly to the liking of the English people.'

'Then,' boasted George, 'when Edward is king I shall be a royal Duke and a Knight of the Garter.'

'And what hast thou to say?' smiled the old Duke, looking down at Dickon.

The little boy replied, quietly:

'Sir, I shall build a great church somewhere for my father and Edmund Rutland, my brother.'

'That showeth a knightly temper,' approved Philip. Then, as he wished to do the Plantagenets some especial honour, for he knew that the boys were old enough to relate the treatment they had received in Utrecht when they returned to London, he asked his son, the dark young Count, to take them to see his menagerie, which had already given great delight to George.



Richard shrank back, as he did not wish to go, but no heed was taken of his reluctance, and Charles de Charolais led them out of the warm enclosed hall into the wintry garden, and so into another building, where the caged animals of the Duke's menagerie were housed. Striped tigers and spotted leopards, orange, black and white, showed behind the thick bars; they growled over raw ox bones, and some of the animals wore collars like dogs. The Count de Charolais said that they were used for hunting in the great wild forests of Guelders.

George began to tease them, flapping his sleeves at the bars. Dickon turned away.

They came out into the garden again. The trees looked very tall to Dickon, much taller than those he remembered in England, for their topmost branches seemed to catch in the loose flying clouds. From the high tower of the Cathedral a bell sounded, melancholy and very far away.

Dickon caught hold of the hand of Charles de Charolais; he was afraid he would cry, he felt so lonely and so homesick--everything appeared strange, even the smell of the earth. There were many men-at-arms and knights coming and going, but none of them wore badges of cognizances familiar to Dickon. These, as they passed, stared at the two little Plantagenet princes and made remarks about them in their own languages--French or Flemish.

Charles, who saw in the child something of his own austere temperament, responded kindly, lifted Dickon up on to his broad shoulders and carried him back with him to the great hall, and offered him sweetmeats and sugared fruits which stood on the side tables.

He liked Charles, although he was so dark, austere and foreign.

Presently he confided to him a matter that troubled him--that he had seen the Devil on board the ship which brought them from London, though his nurse tried to tell him that it was no other than Jon Fogge, the serving-man.

Charles listened seriously, and crossed himself. He believed it possible that these were indeed children of a doomed House and pursued by a tangible fiend. Dickon told him in an eager whisper that the man had kept out of his sight since he had spoken of him. With his hands full of forgotten sweetmeats, resting on his lap, the little boy sat on a high stool and told him everything.

Candles and lamps were lit in the long hall, and the threads of gold sparkled into light on the tapestries of Virtues, Vices, Angels, Demons and Kings robed in blue and purple clouds, pursuing each other over monstrous flowers and green grass.

A tall Burgundian knight entered and saluted his Prince with deference. He eyed with curiosity and some respect the child seated on the stool talking earnestly of Jon Fogge--his peculiar fiend. The knight had great news--letters had come from England.

Edward Plantagenet had been recognized as King, he was with his mother in Baynard's Castle; all the citizens were shouting for him, and he had made his offerings at St Paul's great Church in London. A Council had declared his claim to the throne good and just; Sir William Neville, Lord Fauconberg had reviewed the men of London in St John's Fields, and his brother George, Bishop of Exeter, had declared the King's title to the people, these being his uncles.

'Understand', smiled Burgundy, 'you owe this Crown, under God, to the House of Neville.'

It was not yet considered safe for the two boys to return to London. The Duchess of York implored Philip of Burgundy to keep them a little longer under his safe protection. Edward had been proclaimed king but had not yet been crowned.

The news which the Duke of Burgundy eagerly received in Utrecht said that King Edward was setting out immediately from London with all his followers to meet the Lancastrians, who had fallen back on York under the leadership of Queen Margaret's favourites--the Beauforts, Duke of Somerset and Lord Clifford.

The boys were treated now with a greater respect and deference. They were housed in the ducal palace and sat at the great table with their host. The Duke preferred Richard--the grave, silent boy; but George was the greater favourite generally with his bright, arrogant ways and his vivid beauty.

More news came from England: Edward Plantagenet had demonstrated his title to the throne of England before a great Council of Lords, spiritual and temporal; then he had marched forth to meet his enemy, following his vanguard under Warwick, his cousin, who was then the most powerful earl in England.

They had pushed northwards--two great armies, one after the other, Margaret awaiting them. Her general was the young Duke of Somerset, a knight of twenty-four years, a Beaufort, descendant of John of Gaunt.

Outwardly steadfast and inwardly afraid, Dickon listened to this, listened to the embroidering of the news given him by his foreign tutor, by good Master Large, and by Dame Ursula Ramme.

How they gossiped and chattered, adding this and that to every word

that came along! How they praised the young King, extolling his beauty and his knightly virtues! Dickon's heart swelled with pride to hear what they thought of Edward--all his love was concentrated on Edward.

On the little image of St George he swore loyalty to his king.

As his strength came back he went into the exercise ground of the Duke of Burgundy's knights, and into the tilt-yard, and watched the essays of strength and skill. Wherever he went he looked out sharply and fearfully for Jon Fogge, but he did not see the man-at-arms again. He would not speak of him either to his tutors or his nurse, but he did, with shy reserve, mention him to Charles of Charolais, who was now his dearest friend, and the dark young knight answered that he had made enquiries about the serving-man, but could get no satisfaction, except that he was undoubtedly an English man-at-arms who had been, it seemed, at Wakefield and as one of known service, had been sent on that dangerous journey to the Low Countries. Where he had gone lately no one knew; he appeared to have tired of life with the Burgundians and to have wandered away across Guelders to Kleef. Count Charles gave Dickon a breviary with green lettering in it and pictures painted on flat gold; it was small enough to go in the pocket of his little gown, yet easy to read, for the letters were large and the words few.

Charles told the boy to open it and repeat the prayers whenever he thought of anything evil, whenever he thought he saw Jon Fogge.

'It may be he existed only in thy fancy and in mine,' said the dark young knight, gravely, 'that ye did not see him on the ship. There are many fearful and devilish wiles of the Fiend which one must be aware of in passing through this world, sweet Jesu Christ defend us!'

Sumptuous preparations were made for celebrating the festival of

Easter. The little boy was given a coat of blue velvet with a white rose embroidered on the breast. Four knights were set apart to attend him, and they also wore white roses. A sarcenet banner was painted with the arms of England, differenced for the younger sons. This was to be carried before the young Princes when they went abroad in formal state. The Duke gave them ponies and hounds; he kept the children with him and often asked them about their sister Margaret.

Dickon sang his sister's praises.

'She was,' he insisted, 'kind, kind.'

But George declared she was a spiteful girl, who stood between them and their mother's pardon when they were in trouble. Neither of the boys could give a clear description of her, but they both agreed she was like their mother, and this satisfied the old Duke, for he knew the fame of Cicely Neville, Duchess of York, one of the most beautiful women in England--a land of beautiful women--a creature who, in her youth, had been called the 'Rose of Raby'; and he turned over in his mind what a useful prize this Lady Margaret would be for some prince, if her brother did indeed secure himself on the English throne.

Throughout the festival of Easter Dickon prayed for his brother's success in battle--in church, in his room and in his heart, that he might take revenge on the enemy for the death of their father and brother at Wakefield.

He separated himself from George, who was busy with amusements and sport and any manner of action that came his way. Nothing held Dickon but this concentrated passion for Edward's success. He prayed to God desperately, his face stem, and his cold hands upraised, his heart beating so quickly it seemed to stifle him.

By Easter the ardent spirit had outworn the frail body, and the little boy was ill in bed again, clutching his wooden image of St George. Perhaps at this very moment, as he lay in this foreign room, the battle was being fought and his brother overwhelmed, as his father and Edmund had been. The little boy was afraid--afraid of seeing Jon Fogge, of hearing from those thin lips some word of doom, some tidings of utter disaster. He would not eat, but drank quantities of water feverishly, and to all the anxious questions of Master Large and Dame Ramme he would not reply. He always shook his head on the pillows when they asked if he needed anything.

The sombre young Count of Charolais came to see the child in his sick-room. This young knight felt a deep sympathy with Dickon. He did not torment the child with questions or suggestions; he sat by him quietly and held his hand, understanding all there was in the little boy's mind. Charles was not magnificent. He was swarthy and thickset, his hair grew low on his forehead, his eyes were dark and gloomy. Though he was sombre and quiet, he had the reckless and headstrong air of one who was indifferent to the opinions of other men. Dickon loved him; he thought there was something in him kingly and good.

All day the bells rang, echoing and rocking from the city of Utrecht. While the young knight talked, the little boy forgot, for a brief space, the battle that he was waiting to hear of, and so was soothed, and presently fell asleep, hearing in his dreams the sound of bells pealing up and down Utrecht, across the canals, through the streets, from the great tower. When he awoke, Charles was standing by his bed.

'Your brother, King Edward, scattered the Lancastrians at Towton. The Queen and King Henry have fled to Scotland, and you, little boy, can return to London.'

The child began to cry; his small face buried in the down pillow, his

knees drawn up to his chest, he sobbed, clutching at the end of the pillow with nervous fingers.

Edward was safe! Edward had won! He could go home. He would see his mother again. He would live to grow up and avenge his father. An ecstasy of loyalty and gratitude towards Edward flowed out from his overwrought heart. Charles of Burgundy watched him, smiling compassionately.

When the old Duke Philip heard this news he had begun at once to consider how to secure the alliance with the Planta-genets, firmly and without question, to prevent their friendship with his detested enemy Louis de Valois, King of France.

But Charles thought only of the child crying before him.

'You see child,' he said gravely, 'that Jon Fogge was not the foul fiend, and if he was he has gone back to hell and will not trouble you any more. I have heard there was a devil in the guise of a friar, one called Bungay, who helped Queen Margaret at Wakefield and made a great mist arise to confuse your father's forces.'

The child looked up, his face distorted by weeping.

'Sir, that was Jon Fogge,' he said. 'What is fog? Fog and mist. He is that and nothing more. But, as you say, he is departed and Edward has won; there will be great worship of him.'

Charles put him on his knee and stroked his hair.

'It was a great victory and your brother was generous. He spared all the common people, and only executed the knights and the leaders, like the Duke of Somerset; and there was a miracle, too, Dickon: three suns appeared in the high sky.'

Three suns!' The child stared in awe.

'Yes, three suns for the Trinity--Father, Son and Holy Ghost--distinctly seen over the horizon while the battle was being fought. The messenger says that thy King will take that for his badge--the sun with its streams of splendour.'

The little boy drew close to his new friend.

'Sir, wilt thou come to London?' he asked. 'Wilt thou come and stay with us?'

Charles smiled.

'We are not kinsfolk, little boy; if fortune holds no good for us, maybe we shall never meet again. But I shall think of thee and pray for thee, Dickon, and thou must do the same for me.'

The boy asked the young man to carry him to the chapel of the house, that he might give immediate thanks to God for the crowning victory of Towton and the miracle of the parhelion or three suns, and commend the House of Plantagenet to Christ.

The bells began again chiming from the high tower; this ringing melody seemed one with the red sunshine that streamed through the windows of the palace, as Charolais carried the little boy to the chapel. Dickon peered through one of these windows as he passed. The canal showed blood-colour in that last light of the day; the first flowers of the year shivered in the bleak garden in an earth from which the frosts had not yet disappeared.

Dickon bowed low before the altar. It was cold in the small narrow chapel, and Charles of Burgundy took off his own mantle and lovingly put it round the little boy who knelt beside him on the stone steps.



English knights came to fetch the two Princes from the Court of the Duke of Burgundy at Utrecht. They talked a lot of the victory of Towton, of the miracle of the three suns, and the firm establishment of the House of York on the throne of England. They praised their young King and the Earl of Warwick, whose great influence was likely to keep the young Edward on the throne.

Warwick was Captain of Calais and Admiral of the Seas; his wealth was vast, his estates enormous. Philip of Burgundy considered this princely knight as likely to be the person of the most importance in England during the reign of a young king not more than eighteen years of age.

The two little boys, with different feelings, watched the preparations for their triumphant return to England. George was all pleasure: he saw the boasts, which he had made so readily to the Burgundian and Flemish nobles, almost immediately fulfilled. But Dickon said little. He saw that the old life was over; his father was dead, Edmund was dead. Edward, as King, would be different, surely, set up beyond Dickon's reach. The worst news of all was that his widowed mother had gone to Berkhamsted to live with the nuns. Margaret was to be taken into the household of one of her sisters, Elizabeth Duchess of Suffolk or Anne of Exeter. The home was gone, the days of Castle Baynard, of Fotherinhay, were over. Childhood was over, too.

Both Duke Philip and Charles of Charolais told Dickon he must no longer expect the care of women or the indulgence of a mother, but must be trained in arms: seven years' hard exercise and learning of chivalry, the management of horses and armour, the duties of an esquire, the arts of hawk and hound. The little boy realized he must learn to be a man and a knight. No more the warm, comfortable, rich and radiant days made splendid by the smiles and approval of his father and the love and caresses of his mother...

Charles of Charolais took leave of Dickon kindly and gave him a wide ring of flat gold to put round the waist of the statue of St George, as a good omen for the future, and their possible further acquaintance with one another in days to come.

The English party journeyed to Vlissingen through light blowing April weather, and got on board one of Lord of Warwick's great ships. Dickon glanced sharply here and there for a possible sight of the terrible Jon Fogge. He genuinely believed that if this sinister apparition accompanied them misfortune would be their fellow on the ship; but he did not see the man-at-arms.

The ship brought them quickly to the port of London and Billingsgate wharf. Dickon, standing on the deck, saw again the four towers of the London citadel clear in the twilight of an early spring day and, over the pale misty reaches of the river, a few stars hanging low in a faintly-saffron sky.

The knights brought the children quickly through the streets; there were people at doors and windows, though it was twilight, shouting for the House of York and King Edward. George was pleased by this, and bowed from his saddle, smiling and lifting his hand at the kindly London faces, but Dickon was thinking of the heads over the Mickle Gate at York.

Baynard's Castle looked the same as when they had left it three months before. Dickon was lifted from the saddle and placed on the threshold. There were a great number of soldiers and knights about. Everyone seemed excited and satisfied, everyone wore the badge of the White Rose.

The two little boys entered the great hall. Dickon looked anxiously at two men standing by the fire on which a large log (for the spring days were chilly) smouldered. One was his dear Edward and the other

Lord Warwick, but both these knights seemed to have grown much larger since he saw them last. He hesitated, overawed, but Edward stepped up, raised him to his shoulder, and kissed him on both cheeks and brow. Edward, like his father, Richard, was kind.

He sat Dickon on the table and looked at him, exclaiming that he was thin and white...The little boy pulled his brother's sleeve and hid his face in it, so that no one could see he was struggling not to cry.

Edward Plantagenet caressed the shy, nervous little boy. Dickon was not wrong in thinking that he had changed. Since his brothers had last seen him he had fought two battles and been proclaimed a king. He was eighteen years of age, and not only an approved and established knight, but a conqueror. At Mortimer's Cross and at Towton, he had fought his way unmoved through bloodshed, death and terror. He had slain his enemies and avenged his kinsfolk. God had sent a miracle to approve his success. All these events had indeed changed Edward Plantagenet.

Warwick, on the hearthstone, laughed with George. He was a man of action; his manner was swift and enthusiastic. He was dark, arrogant, impetuous. His hair was twisted in black ringlets round his smooth-shaven face, his eyes were narrow and sparkling. He was continually speaking and gesticulating, yet with a certain proud reserve; everything he did or said seemed to have great significance.

They were all silent as the bell of St Paul rang out for Nones. Then, still holding Dickon on the long table in front of him, Edward told the little boy how he had taken down those heads from the Mickel Gate at York and buried them with the bodies at Pontefract, how, presently, when these disturbed times were a little settled, he would take up the corpses of his father and his brother Edmund and bring them to the chapel at Fotherinhay.

Dickon listened and shuddered: the little boy could not get out of his mind that vision of the swinging heads which had tormented him on the ship and during his illness in Utrecht. He wondered if he should tell his brother about Jon Fogge, but was ashamed to do so. Edward told them their mother was coming from Berkhamsted tomorrow to see them, and they must not expect to have much of her company, for she was a woman whose life was over, and a nun.

Dickon bit his lip: Edward lifted him off the table and stood him in front of the Earl of Warwick.

'Sir,' he said, 'take these two boys and make knights of them. George hath had some training, but this child knoweth nothing. Wilt though, Dickon, go with Lord Warwick to Middleham and learn to be a knight?'

Dickon kissed his brother's hand and thought of his motto--'Loyalty bindeth me.' He was sad, tired, and wanted to go to bed and cry for his father and his mother and the loneliness of this strange homecoming.

George did not wish to go to Middleham Castle, he wanted to stay in London. Looking curiously and rather arrogantly at Edward, he said:

'Sir, thou art a king now, art thou not--King of England, Lord of Ireland and of France?'

Edward replied, shortly, that he was a king, and thought that the boy spoke with some mockery. He had never liked George's half-contemptuous, half-arrogant manners.

'Where is King Henry?' asked George, sharp and inquisitive.

Edward laughed, and said that the Lancastrians had scattered far

and wide across the North, and as for the man they called their king, he wandered they knew not where.

'He is a lunatic, and at Towton laughed and sang and danced round the trees during the battle. I saw him on a hill beyond the smoke, his robes flying, snapping his fingers above his head.'

Edward laughed again.

'I feel sorry for him,' said Dickon. He had always liked King Henry, so mild and good, with his sad face and his trembling hands, his empty eyes, but always with words of kindness, his pattering feet hurrying to do some bidding that he did not understand.

'It is pity enough,' said Edward, suddenly grave. 'If we can take him he will be well treated; for, if nothing else, he is great Harry's son.'

The four sat down to eat. This was the first time that the little boys had been allowed at the men's table. They were joined by some other knights and a boy that Dickon had often played with--Francis, the son of Lord Lovell. The three boys sat together at the end of the table. No one took much notice of them. Dickon pulled out his little statue of St George and showed it to Francis underneath the table, pointing out the gold band round the waist which had been given him by the Duke of Burgundy's son.

Francis Lovell listened absorbed; he was a simple charming little boy. He put his hand in Dickon's as they peered down the length of the table. Sharp odours, sour and sweet, rose from the dishes; steam filled the air when the covers were taken off the great cups. Dickon gazed at Edward. It was difficult to believe that he was King, King of England and Lord of Ireland.

Edward was flashing with gold in the candlelight; he talked in a loud

voice, commanding everybody, yet smiling and amiable. The knights all deferred to him, although they were all so much older. They revered him not only as a king and a Plantagenet. but as a soldier who had won two battles. He was beautiful, he was victorious, he was lord of them all. The pages who served him went on one knee. Dickon stared and thought of poor King Henry dancing round the trees while the battle was fought, and wandering now, forlorn and hopeless, perhaps with no fire or food. The world seemed terrible to the little boy; confusion in the affairs of men, fights and miracles, three suns appearing and heads stricken off, blood like Sir Thomas Parr had had on his hands and face when he came with the news of Wakefield to this very hall; his mother, changed in a moment--old and ghastly--everywhere steel and weapons, swords and axes, daggers and spears.

The knights were talking of the new guns at Towton, how the bombards had cast out fire and hot balls of iron, how some of them had burst in flame and smoke, and the mist which had overhung the battle either from these weapons or some spell worked for the Lancastrians by the evil Friar Bungay, in the service of Margaret of Anjou. The boys became restless and tired. George filled his pouch with sweets and slipped away from the table.

Edward, who grieved over Dickon's pale, sad face, rose, lifted him and carried him up the stairs to the room he had occupied the night the alarm had sent him suddenly overseas. Little Francis Lovell ran behind like a dog, content to be there. Dame Ramme had prepared the room. Each bed had down cushions and a silk coverlet. There was a fire on the hearth, and the window was shuttered against the night air. The good woman was alarmed when she saw the young King; though she had nursed him as a child she was afraid of him now.

Edward set Dickon down on his bed.

Dickon, shy, passionately loving, murmured

'Sir, can I not stay with thee instead of going with Lord Warwick to Middleham?'

'No,' said Edward, gravely. 'Thou art too young for a Court, and I must live in a Court now, little Dickon, either here in London or at Windsor. And it may chance that the war continues; there is little doubt but that I must struggle with the Scotch.'

He spoke slowly, as one, faced with difficult affairs.

'Queen Margaret may return with forces from France--who knows? You must be clear of all this until you are a trained knight.'

Dickon did not protest: this was his lord and master speaking, the man who stood in the place of his father, who was his King.

Edward regarded him wistfully and with some uneasiness. The young man felt a deep responsibility for the child he had always loved so dearly. Dickon was, in a peculiar sense, his dead father's legacy--the youngest, the most frail, most affectionate. George--bold, beautiful and charming--would, Edward thought, require little assistance towards success; he was older and had not been so strongly attached to his father. Dickon had been cruelly stripped. Edward mused over him.

'Dickon,' he said, as if he offered toys, 'I will make thee Duke of Gloucester and Earl of Cambridge, and give thee estates and castles of thine own, and when thou are a little older thou shalt be a Knight of the Garter and have thine own stall and banner in Windsor.'

The little boy smiled. All this meant nothing, but he liked the loving tone of the words.

Edward was thoughtful; everything was strange to him, also. A few months ago he had only been Earl of March, son of the Duke of York; now he was the King of one realm with pretensions to another. Everyone submitted to him readily—even a great man like Warwick whom he had been brought up to regard with awe and some fear, Warwick, the haughty Neville, deferred to him, kissed his hand, begged his leave, asked his wish. Edward pondered. His own strength seemed to be incalculable, the future a confusion of glory, opportunity and achievement. Tomorrow he would leave Baynard's Castle and take up his residence in the royal apartments in the Tower or Westminster, lately furnished for King Henry. He would be anointed in Westminster, he would feel the crown of England on his brow. He smiled, musing, wistful, at the little boy, who looked up at him with adoration.

George came in, dragged reluctant by Master Large, his tutor, protesting excitably, saying he wished to stay down in the hall with the knights.

Edward intervened in the dispute, rebuking George. Then he remembered his kingly dignity, and left the little boys to the nurse and the tutor and went downstairs.

Warwick was standing on the hearth, his hands on his hips, his black ringlets glistening in the firelight, talking loudly. His voice was full of excitement, of enthusiasm; Edward paused on the stair to listen to him. Warwick was a much older man, yet he had been beaten at St Alban's, while Edward had won two great battles. Edward disliked to hear him talk so loudly and so vehemently, even though it was in his, Edward's, own praise and in the celebration of his own victories.

Dickon, while George fought the nurse and tutor, cried himself to sleep.



The spring was well-advanced when the children came to Middleham, one of the Earl of Warwick's biggest castles. The great fortified dwelling stretched far along the side of Wensleydale. It was even more magnificent and imposing than Fotherinhay.

Warwick himself had brought the boys from London. Princess Cicely Neville, the Duchess of York, who should, by right, have been Queen of England--now living in a nunnery attached to her castle at Berkhamsted--had confided the two little boys to his care; the throne of Edward was not so stable, nor his enemies so subdued, that the House of York could afford to neglect the training of its sons. Henry of Lancaster still lived, and his wife, Margaret, was abroad whipping up opinion against King Edward. She had with her her young son, Edward, and her hope was to make him king in the place of that other Edward. When the Duchess of York had said good-bye to her two younger sons she had impressed on them the necessity of loyalty to Edward.

'If you but stay true to one another,' she had said, wistfully, 'you will make a threefold cord that it will be hard to break.'

George, easily moved to affectionate emotion, had replied with graceful tenderness, but Dickon had repeated to himself his motto--'Loyalty bindeth me.'

They rode past the tiltyard where the knights were practising, and the boys' eyes sparkled with interest as they watched the men exercising and saw their arms and weapons, which were new and elegant. They passed the mews and saw the falconers attending to the tercel and goshawks; they glimpsed the stables with the rows of mighty horses, the big kennels where the dogs yelped and sprang; they heard the

Angelus ring out from the chapel, and saw the sun gilding the pale stone of the belfry, the purple, azure and scarlet glass of the oriel window.

Warwick, who rode a fine black horse showed his domain to the two royal boys and their companion, Francis Lovell, with a certain arrogance. Beyond the walls and moat spread the fields and woods darkening the brow of the low hills; and there were, said the Earl, fine grounds for hunting and falconry. They crossed the drawbridge and saw the moat below, reflecting the castle. They came into the inner courtyard, where there was a seneschal to meet them and a great company of Warwick's men, with the Bear and Ragged Staff on their shoulders. Warwick satisfied himself that all his household were there, then, with a short nod of approval, dismissed them and took the royal boys to the apartments of Warwick's wife, the heiress of the Beauchamps and the woman through whom Warwick had obtained his title and many of his lands.

Dickon felt antagonistic towards her because she was not his mother--nostalgia smote him again. For a year he had been moving from place to place, from stranger to stranger; now he must mourn a home lost for ever. Seeing him so small and silent, Lady Warwick caressed the child and spoke to him with great kindness, but the Earl said:

'Anne, the boy is fragile, it will be difficult to inure him to arms; but the other is very promising.'

Hearing this, Dickon's headstrong, passionate temper was roused; he resolved that he would not be outdone by George, now the Duke of Clarence. He was sure that even if he were not strong there was nothing he could not learn--how to wear armour and fight, how to manage a horse, how to obey and, in time, to lead.

The Earl showed the boys their apartments, their governor and their household, their pages, their table, and told them the hours of the day which they must observe--the times for meals, for exercise, and for prayer.

Dickon, when he could, escaped from all this formality and ran down the galleries, out on to the ramparts of the castle, feeling at once lonely and pursued.

Viewed from the high ramparts of the castle the valley appeared vast, filled with gigantic and slowly-moving shadows. Beyond the moat at the back of the castle where Dickon looked were orchards, kitchen gardens and drying-grounds. Sheets of linen lay on the grass, squares of linen hung from bushes, as yet only lightly sprinkled with green. Acres of apple-trees, rose and white, spread to the horizon. The little boy felt an extraordinary pleasure at this sight, and asked one of the Earl's men, who was mending some of the loosened stones on the bastion, whether he might not go into the orchards, and the man showed him the door and set him across the little drawbridge at the back. Once on the ground Dickon ran to the trees.

Women were spreading out the linen; their white folded head-dresses flapped with their movements, their faces were red from stooping. Dickon ran into the orchard; he had forgotten the fatigue of his journey and the strangeness of Middleham, the loneliness he had felt at the overpowering size of the castle. The short grass was under his feet and a faint drift of rose petals lay on this green carpet. The apple-trees sloped to a little wood of larch where the grey-green leaves shivered in the almost imperceptible breeze and a stream ran.

Dickon knelt down and dipped his fingers into the clear bright water; as he did so he heard laughter. Looking up, he saw two little girls on

the other side of the stream. They were pale, and fair, with fair ringlets and wearing white gowns. Dickon laughed, too, for he did not often see children younger than himself. The girls sat down on the opposite bank. Their nurse came hurrying up, complaining and chiding. Dickon thought she was like Dame Ursula Ramme, and the nurse, who knew he must be one of the little princes who had come to be in her master's charge, made herself agreeable to him.

'These, Your Grace, are the Ladies Isabel and Anne, the Earl's daughters.'

'Madam, have they any brothers?' asked Dickon, gravely. The nurse pursed up her lips and shook her head and scolded the little girls for laughing so much and rolling about in that undignified manner. Dickon thought it was undignified for him, a boy who was about to be trained in knighthood, to watch them any longer. He suddenly stood up and ran away under the apple blossom. He was curious enough, however, to look back across the stream and see that Anne, the younger child, was weeping in the nurse's lap, seemingly in sorrow at his abrupt departure.

Dickon escaped into the larch wood, where the light was silvery and soft, filtering through thick, pale leaves. After a while he came upon a well-defined track which led through a larger and darker wood, where the well-grown trees cast a deeper shade. Dickon followed this, pausing at times to listen to the calls of the birds which had been familiar to him in the woods at Fotherinhay, until he came to a wide opening with a gentle hollow.

The little boy paused with a sudden conviction that he was being watched, that some creature was near him, and after a brief scrutiny, he found this creature--another child, crouching among the bright green bracken in the hollow. She fixed Dickon with eyes large, round, bright as a woodland squirrel's.

'Sir, I am Alys, the wood-cutter's daughter,' she said. 'Who are you?'

He sat down on the edge of the fern-filled hollow and began to talk to the little girl. He asked her where her father lived, and if he worked for the Lord of Warwick, how many trees he had cut down, and if he had built his hut himself, and if there were any robbers or devils in the wood?

The child was interested in this and enthralled by the rich appearance of the little boy. She came, still cautious and suspicious, out of her greenwood lair, and sat not far away from Dickon, ready for flight. Her hair was brown, her skin dark, she was thin.

She answered readily and in an accent difficult for Dickon to understand. She said there were no robbers, since this wood belonged to the great Earl of Warwick, and he was far too mighty a prince for any evil-doers to venture on his lands. As for the devil, she did not know, but she said she would be afraid to go out at night, when the woods were dark and full of odd sounds.

She sat hunched up, with her thin, brown hands clasping her knees. She told him a story which she had heard from an old priest up at the castle. It was about dreadful creatures who dwelt in the woods who could only be combated by invocations of the saints. There was a shrine in the wood put up by this same priest and tended by her father. But the imps and witches sometimes knocked it down, and it was best to put a bowl of cream or dish of butter and wreaths of flowers on the threshold before you went to sleep, and always to make the sign of the Cross on the door before you closed it for the night.

Dickon felt drowsy with the fatigue of his many days' journey. As he listened to the strange, unfamiliar accents of the little girl he turned

himself about and made himself comfortable among the young ferns and, before long, fell asleep. Watching him suspiciously, the little girl continued her fantastic story, and when she was quite certain that he was really asleep she crept over on her hands and knees to where he lay and looked at him very closely, with curiosity, admiration and suspicion.

This little girl Alys was then about twelve-years-old, and sharp and quick as a wood mouse. She cautiously fingered a corner of Dickon's satin coat, very lightly touched his slack dropped hands, gazed into his sleeping face. After contemplating him for a while she pulled up the larger bracken and laid them over the boy as a covering, then, over the sleeping, green-covered figure she made the sign of the Cross as the priest had taught her, and hurried away to her father's hut on the outskirts of the wood.

Dickon slept. Though the light spring breeze brought the sound of the bells from the castle chapel through the trees, he did not wake, but in his dreams Jon Fogge strode before him. The terrified little boy thought that now there could be no doubt about Jon Fogge--his horns, his tail and hoofs; they were as clear as in the picture of the Devil, thrusting scarlet souls with a pitchfork down into Hell's mouth, which he always stared at with dreadful dismay when he entered the chapel at Fotherinhay, where it was painted inside the door on the wall so that no one could miss it. Jon Fogge was that very devil who had leapt from his painted place in the chapel to follow and bring down the House of York. Dickon sprang up, scattering the ferns that covered him. Jon Fogge had gone, the child had gone. The wood seemed still full of the invisible presences, and the boy ran through the trees until he arrived, panting and breathless, in the orchard.

The little girls had gone from beside the stream, but there were still women moving about the drying-ground. The company comforted Dickon. The beauty of the peaceful scene was very delightful to the

little boy. The huge embattled castle gave him a sense of protection, he felt that the homely life flowing on steadily from day to day was soothing after these last weeks of change and tumult. He lay with his face in his hands, watching the women shifting the linen, and the pale sunlight on the walls of Middleham Castle. He began to think of the horse that he would have and the knightly exercises he must perform, and vowed that he would equal, if not excel, the strong and agile George. Edward had spoken of enemies, and when he was a man--and that would not be so many years ahead now--he, too, would have to fight in the name of Plantagenet, the House of York and Edward the King, his brother.

Dickon's hands closed lightly over daisies now beginning, at noon-day, to unfold themselves.





# **PART II - 1470-1472**

## **The Bear And Ragged Staff**

Dickon watched the sumptuous procession go past, his eyes sparkled with delight at the splendour and beauty.

It was King Edward's custom to hold as many feasts as possible in the royal residence, the Tower, to please the citizens of London, to whom he owed far more money than he was ever likely to repay. But this was the first of such entertainments that Dickon had seen. For ten years he had been in Wensleydale, trained by the Earl of Warwick; now he was judged a man, and Edward had sent for him to come to London. Warwick's establishment had accustomed Dickon to magnificence, but he had never seen splendour such as this. He stood in the gallery of the great hall of King Henry III and saw the long tables below set with cups and covers of gold and silver. Down pillows embroidered with the arms of England were in every seat, a raised dais was canopied with azure velvet, banners of sarcenet painted with the Three Suns and the White Rose, the Leopard and the Lilies, hung between the pillars.

Warwick touched Dickon's arm and asked him what he thought of his brother's court.

'Sir, it is very noble,' answered Richard quietly. He observed that Warwick, whom he had come to regard as a father, was angry and uneasy. The Earl said contemptuously:

'Sir, it is fair without and rotten within. Edward is neither loved nor feared in England, and the victor of Mortimer's Cross and Towton hath become an idler and a philanderer with wanton women.'

Dickon frowned at this, and Warwick, impetuous and excitable, laughed.

'After you have been a few days in London,' he remarked 'you will understand these matters better.'

'Edward,' replied the youth stoutly, 'has been nearly ten years on the throne, and we have peace.'

'But there is another Edward growing up in France,' said Warwick, 'and a bold woman behind him. Sir, do you think that Queen Margaret has given up hope?'

Dickon frowned.

'Why should ye speak to me like that, my lord of Warwick, and in my brother's palace?'

'Fair Prince,' replied Warwick, sternly, 'for what I say I have good reasons, nor am I so lowly placed,' he added haughtily, 'that I can lightly bear what I mislike.' He pressed the youth's hand as he spoke and added, in a lower tone, with intense and bitter meaning, 'Good Prince, watch ye well this festival tonight, and observe for whom your noble and royal blood hath been set aside.'

Dickon replied impetuously:

'My Lord Warwick, I have no cause to lament my fortune; my brother hath set me above envy and spite.'

'Sir Richard,' cried Warwick, energetically, 'you are yet near the King's heart; but how long will his good grace endure? The Woodvilles work like gnawing rats to eat away every man's reputation, except those of their own faction.'

Dickon laughed, putting this aside as mere jealousy. His brother had made him Duke of Gloucester, Earl of Cambridge, Lord Admiral of the Seas and--greatest honour of all--Knight of the Garter, admitting him to that Order of chivalry so proudly and so closely kept, for many royal princes had remained without it. Yet, though Richard was grateful to his brother, and though he still kept his motto 'Loyalty bindeth me,' he had a clear brilliant brain, a firm, resolute character and, while he possessed all the characteristics of recklessness and courage of his House, an instinctive wisdom controlled his speech and actions. Though he had been brought up so far from the Court, this boy of eighteen was shrewd enough to guess the cause of Warwick's bitterness.

'This marriage sticks with you, my Lord of Warwick,' he remarked quietly.

'Marriage!' sneered Warwick. 'And do ye think it was a marriage?'

'In my brother's house!' exclaimed Dickon sternly.

'Sir in any man's house,' said Warwick. 'Watch ye the woman tonight, and all her fawning kinsfolk.'

With an excited gesture he pushed back the black curls from his brow and, with reckless indifference to danger, said to the young man whom he had trained so sedulously and over whom he believed he had a considerable influence:

The fortunes of the House of York rest with you, good Prince, and with your brother Clarence. For the Three Suns, you may take it, have set in Elizabeth Woodville's silken lap.'

Dickon did not resent this, for he knew that the Earl spoke with love as well as bitterness. He had been a faithful servant to Edward

Plantagenet and his father. He was the most powerful subject in the realm and head of the mighty family of Nevilles; all his influence, all his wealth, his efforts, had gone to place Edward on the throne and hold him there. The marriage of the King with Elizabeth Woodville, widow of a Lancastrian killed at the Battle of St Alban's, herself of a Lancastrian family, had been unpopular with all the followers of the House of York.

What more bitter slight, they had declared could have been contrived than that the young King should marry the widow of a rebel and advance all her Lancastrian relations above the heads of the loyal Yorkists?

Dickon had recently visited his mother in her castle at Berkhamsted, and he had been quick to see how she regarded the wife of Edward; Cicely of York could understand, too, the position of Warwick, who, at the very moment that Edward had been secretly married to the widow of Lord Grey, had been sent on a fool's errand to France to negotiate for the hand of Bona of Savoy, the French Queen's sister.

'Watch them tonight, fair Prince,' smiled Warwick; 'see for yourself, young sir!'

'But how shall it help me to watch?' asked Dickon, simply: 'my duty lieth in plain loyalty.'

As he said these last words he looked straight into the Earl's sneering face, and Warwick returning his searching gaze, replied scornfully:

'Sir if thy brother had needed to marry a commoner, I have two daughters.'

Dickon conceded the justice of this complaint. Warwick was their

kinsman, his father (their mother's brother) had laid down his life for them at Wakefield; Isabel or Anne Neville might better have graced the throne of England than the widow of a Lancastrian lordling.

A company of trumpeters entered the hall, and Dickon would have gone down to take his place, but Warwick detained him in the gallery.

'Sir, watch it here for a while,' he said, 'and then you may believe me; good Prince, we shall not be missed.'

Dickon looked at him sharply, drew a little apart and, leaning on the deep carving of the gallery, gazed down into the great hall.

Richard of Gloucester at eighteen years had come to his full height, which was not considerable; his build was slight but hardy. He had never faltered from his childish resolution not to be excelled by his fellows, and was as fine a knight for his age as any in the country.

His hair was thick light brown and hung shining and square-cut on to his shoulders. He wore purple and tawny satin lined with martens' fur, the collar of the Garter with a heavy gold chain beneath.

The great Neville was in his prime of life, and set off with every splendour--rich furs, handsome velvets and finely-set jewels. Dickon, who had grown up in his castle, knew him very well; an impetuous, violent and ambitious man.

The party came into the painted hall.

Edward led Elizabeth Woodville to the richly-dressed seat on the dais. Whatever might be whispered of their secret marriage, at which there had been no other present save her mother and a singing-man, Edward had acknowledged her as his queen.

She had been crowned in Westminster.

She had had two children by her first marriage, and, since her union with Edward, a child every year; and these, to the savage delight of the Yorkists, were all girls--the Woodvilles as yet waited for the Prince of Wales.

Dickon, looking eagerly at the woman under the canopy, did not find her more than comely, though her beauty was so famous and had served so completely to enthrall the King. She was blonde, plump, voluptuous. Her shoulders were naked, her hips weighed down with yards of purple velvet and blue satin, her waist laced tightly into a stiff bodice, her fingers held apart by a mass of rings. Her hair was completely hidden under a pointed head-dress studded with jewels, over which waved two wired muslin wings. Her mouth was very full and red, her grey eyes were sleepy, her air was blousy and arrogant. When she was seated on the dais all her women knelt round her, and foremost among them was her own mother, Jacquetta of Luxembourg, the wife of Richard Woodville, Lord Rivers.

In a contemptuous whisper Warwick reminded the Duke of Gloucester of all the posts at which the Woodvilles had so greedily snatched since the elevation of Elizabeth to the English throne. Her brother, Anthony Woodville, Lord Scales, considered himself the most important noble in England--how many high offices did he not hold? Another brother, Lionel, was Bishop of Salisbury. Her son, Thomas Grey, had been created Marquess of Dorset...

'And the women, too, mercy Jesu!' sneered Warwick; 'they have been married to the Duke of Buckingham, Beaufort, and the Earls of Kent, Arundel and Huntingdon and the Lord Strange...Her brother-in-law, Edward Grey had been made Viscount Lisle. Fair Prince, I think you will have cause to remember these things.'

Dickon did not answer. He was uneasy. Even if he had not been impressed by the words of Warwick he was shrewd enough to perceive that this Woodville was neither queenly, nor even sweet.

Edward sat beside her on the throne beneath the royal canopy. Plantagenet had spent the nine years of his kingship in luxurious idleness, in pleasures and sports. Kindly and good-natured to all, even to his enemies, he wished for the good of his people; yet he had allowed his business and his honour alike to slide into the hands of his wife's relations, and he appeared to be indifferent both to the wrath and to the reproach of his friends and followers. His personal amiability kept many loyal who would otherwise long ago have left him. He was agreeable to all, and his charm and beauty were difficult to resist; so he held England as well as he might, despite his own faults.

Idly smiling, he nodded with familiar grace to all the companions of his Christmas festival. Near him, and for once in his favour, was his brother George, in appearance equally handsome, clothed with equal splendour. Edward missed Gloucester and Warwick, and they had to come and take their seats at the board. As they walked up the hall the eyes of all the Woodvilles were upon them.

Richard's own friend, Francis Lovell, was not there. He felt amongst strangers, and was glad to keep close to Warwick. From Clarence he had been long estranged; even in childhood they had not been closely united. Elizabeth Woodville curled her lip at Warwick. Dickon had to kneel and kiss her hand. Her glittering brother, Sir Anthony Woodville Lord Scales, whispered something in her ear, and she laughed. Edward lolled, drank, and made jests. Clarence was gorgeously insolent. He had but lately made his peace with the King. When, three years ago, the bodies of Richard of York and Edmund of Rutland had been taken from Pontefract to Fotherinhay in a procession of regal magnificence, it had been Richard, not George,

who had accompanied the train, so deep then had been the breach between the King and his brother.

As he sat, almost un-noticed, in his place he was thinking deeply, and when the company rose from the table he pulled Edward by his sleeve and begged him that they might go to some place where they could talk. Edward, placing his arm affectionately around his brother's shoulders, led him to a small room off the great hall. The eyes of all the Court followed them.

The Queen called Warwick up to the dais and jested with him, insolent and mocking.

'Loving brother Dickon,' smiled King Edward, 'why so set and grim? Doth not my party please thee?'

Gloucester answered with candid eagerness:

'Noble brother, I have but a few words to say to thee, and they have come immediately to my mind and will not be concealed. I think of my Lord Warwick, who I know very well, having lived so long with him, and I see that he nurses a grave discontent; do you know why?'

At this the good humour fled from Edward's face, he began to pace up and down the narrow room, his hands on the hips of his long gown.

'Is Warwick to cry me down? Is Warwick my master?' he demanded. 'Is Warwick to say, "Do this, do that," and I run to do his bidding?'

'Nay, if it please thy princely grace,' said Dickon, simply, 'he is affronted.'

'And what if he is?' demanded Edward, angrily.



'It is not prudent to affront the chief of the Nevilles and the knight who, under God's grace and thine own valour, set Your Highness on the English throne.'

Edward was both surprised and vexed at hearing these words from his brother.

'And hast thou, too, Dickon, come to town to plague me?'

'Nay, sir, to serve thee,' replied Gloucester, quietly, 'but I fear Lord Warwick.'

'And I no man!' smiled the King. 'Warwick will not dare raise a hand against me.'

'And if he should it would split the realm,' said Richard, briefly. 'He hath a mighty following.'

'Sir, hath he been endeavouring to make thee one of them?' asked Edward, with sudden sternness.

'No,' replied Dickon, 'and if he did it would make no difference to my loyalty.'

'It may be,' mused Edward, 'that George is not so steadfast. I think Warwick meddles there.'

'Sir, I know nothing,' said Dickon, quickly, 'only that Lord Warwick is affronted, and it would not ill become your princely Grace somewhat to soothe and flatter him. I do perceive that tonight neither of his brothers is here--neither my Lord of Exeter nor the Marquess Montacute.'

'Sir, I can well spare their gloomy faces,' replied the King. Dickon said, abruptly:

'George wishes to marry Warwick's daughter Isabel.'

'So help me God, he shall not!' cried Edward. 'Warwick is high enough already. I will not have that marriage.' Dickon flushed and answered:

'We are kinsfolk--our blood is near the same, and if George bath love of the lady, what evil is there in his desire?'

'Sir, I will not have it,' answered Edward. 'If Lord Warwick say anything of this matter to thee, nay, or George either, tell them, Dickon, that I will not have it. Warwick shall not place his daughter among the princes of the royal blood.' He pulled the tapestry from the door.

'This is the time of festival,' he added, with an easy return to his habitual good humour. 'Put these matters out of thy head, Dickon; do not let my Lord Warwick's sour looks and sullen humours affect thee.'

But Dickon remained in the little room, and Edward returned alone to the festival in the great painted hall. Two were missing from this noisy and glittering company--the Earl of Warwick and the Duke of Clarence had retired together. Too often now the Nevilles left the King's Court early.

Dickon felt lonely, ill at ease that he had been rebuked by his brother, and remembered a sad duty which seemed well fitted to his present mood. A side door in the mural chamber admitted him to a circular stairway. He was not familiar with the royal apartments of the Tower, and made his way by chance about the rooms until he met a serving-man. Of him the young Duke demanded the way to King Henry's apartments.

These chambers were far off and lonely. As Dickon proceeded to

them he heard the noise of the party, smelt the meats and the spices, the incense and the hot sugar, he was touched with shame for his brother.

## 2

For ten years Henry of Lancaster had occupied these apartments in the Tower. When, after Towton, his wife and son had escaped overseas, the Lancastrian King had been, before many months had passed, discovered wandering forlornly in the North and brought to the royal castle in London. The rooms given him were those he liked best when he had been free to choose his residence; he had his own servants, doctors, musicians and priests, yet he was a prisoner, since he could not leave the precincts of the Tower. Edward treated him with negligent generosity; he was allowed to have visitors--the House of York had nothing to fear from a man who was alternately saint or imbecile.

Dickon came with uneasiness and humility into the presence of his unfortunate prince. He had never held him to blame for the horrors at Wakefield. During his years at Middleham young Gloucester had often thought of Henry Lancaster, and during his brief, occasional visits to London had never failed to wait upon him.

This man who, in his childhood, had been crowned King of England and of France, sat meekly, his hands folded in the lap of his worn grey cloth gown. He was, in actual years, young; but life had been very long to him, and the lank pale hair that curled almost to his waist was heavily shadowed with grey; his eyes were the colour of dead ashes, and heavy lines ran down his pallid mouth.

Face, figure and bearing expressed an infinite and terrible resignation.

Dickon hesitated in the doorway. Very faintly and intermittently came the sounds of his brother's festival.

Henry peered up at his visitor, smiled, shook his head, and did not know him.

The clerk in attendance yawned behind the book of prayers he had been reading aloud.

'Is His Princely Grace well?' asked Dickon, and came into the room, which was little and narrow, with scant furniture and pictures of saints.

Henry beckoned to him, still not knowing the young knight.

'Sir, do I hear music?' he whispered--'trumpets, and organs, and carollings? Now, for God's sake, tell me what they be?'

'Your Noble Grace,' replied Gloucester, 'they hold festival in the great painted hall: it is the Feast of Our Lord's Nativity.'

'And should this be greeted with noise and mirth?' asked Henry, vaguely, 'by men of blood with harness on their backs? Forsooth and forsooth! I would not have it so.' Dickon considered him curiously. This meek and wretched-seeming man was the son of the great Harry, and had been anointed in Rheims and Westminster.

'Sir, doth your Noble Grace fall on peace?' he asked, softly. There was a peculiar seductiveness in his voice and an allure in his manner. Even in his early youth he could persuade and convince men to open their hearts and resign their wills to his. Henry of Lancaster was conscious of this charm; he lifted up his shaking hands and, thrusting his face forwards, stared closely with dim-sighted eyes at the handsome, earnest young man.

'Sir, by suffering we are perfected,' he whispered, 'and that is God's decree. How long have we had peace in England?'

'Sir, near ten years,' said Richard, thoughtfully. 'Yet but an intake of the breath to me, for with the war I began to live,' and he frowned, remembering the horror of his father's death, the flight across the dark and wintry North Sea, and the sojourn with the Duke of Burgundy in the city with the high tower.

'Peace, then,' Henry of Lancaster smiled faintly, 'be with us all. That is God's great gift.' His voice dropped. 'Art thou also, young sir, a prisoner?'

'I am Sir Richard Plantagenet--that is, if a name hath any meaning for your Princely Grace.'

'Are we not all Plantagenets?' smiled Henry, foolishly, and shook his pale head.

'I am Gloucester, too,' said Richard, 'and Cambridge.' Henry drew himself alert.

'Gloucester! Why, that is a cursed and doomed name. My uncle Humphrey, he was Gloucester, they took him away to murder him. That other Gloucester, too, Thomas, was miserably slain. I have heard many wizards prophesy that the name of Gloucester brought a curse.'

He shuddered, fumbling with his lean, shaking fingers at his falling mouth.

'Cannot you think of another title, boy, than Gloucester?' Dickon replied uneasily:

'I came to bring some cheer and comfort to your Princely Grace, but

since you do not know me--'

'Sir, I know you very well,' said Henry, with a sad laugh. 'When last we met it was in Westminster, in the Abbey there. I was measuring out my grave before the Confessor's tomb. Do you not remember that we said we would not wrong the Queen, Eleanor, by moving her, but that I should lie a little to the left? The Abbot promised that he would take up the relics if I would pay for it. I marked the place with my staff--two flagstones, a fair length for a man, cousin--for I think you said you were Plantagenet. See that that is done for me.'

The arras suddenly lifted and two men came in. They were Warwick and Clarence.

The three, caught in a common amazement, stared at each other covertly, disregarding Henry of Lancaster. He had out his beads now and was pulling them slowly, one by one, through his emaciated fingers.

Clarence was hot with wine; his beauty and his jewels seemed to insult the bare room. Warwick appeared to control an unsteady anger; he stood with his hands on the arras, considering Richard.

'Dickon is before us,' smiled Clarence, softly. 'See he hath come to pay his duty to his discarded Grace.'

'Brother, I would pay duty where I have reverence,' replied Richard.

Clarence laughed and strode up to Henry and, stooping, peered into his pallid face. Henry glanced up at him and down again, and continued drawing the beads through his fingers, muttering and sighing to himself.

'Even as I told thee, Lord Warwick,' said Clarence, flashing his blue

eyes at him, 'this is a witless fool, and not fitted to serve thy purpose or mine. Let us go our ways and deal not with him.'

'What purpose,' demanded Richard, quickly, 'cant thou have with Henry of Lancaster?'

Warwick answered arrogantly, 'Sir, I may have with Henry of Lancaster the same purpose as I had with Edward of York.'

'But a Neville,' said Richard, 'could never be a traitor.' That word seemed to pierce to Henry of Lancaster's dark, over-clouded mind:

'Traitor?' he said, musingly. 'Why, sir, I have seen a many of them.'

He rose slowly and, it seemed with pain, reached for his staff and, leaning on it, regarded them all with a gentle, wistful and aloof glance.

'If ye be traitors,' he said, 'I beg ye to forbear my chamber. The sweet Lord Christ was Himself betrayed, and no mortal can hope to escape treachery, yet would I have other companions than traitors.'

'Sir, no betrayal of your Princely Grace is meant,' answered Richard, gently. 'Alas, poor soul, how could you be betrayed, you who have nothing left to lose!'

'Sir, it may be,' smiled Warwick, sternly, 'the Noble King has something that he may gain; though he be feeble he may be helped to height.'

'Sir, take those words down to my brother!' cried Richard, holy; 'if Clarence will listen, Jesu defend that I should!'

'Sir, what I have to say,' replied Warwick, arrogantly, 'your brother shall hear soon enough. You, good Prince, are young to judge

between men.'

Richard waved his hand as if he dismissed this rebuke.

'Sir, why,' he demanded--and his haughtiness was equal to Warwick's pride--'do ye come and bring my brother Clarence to visit Henry of Lancaster?'

'Prince, go tell thy brother I am here,' replied the dark Earl, 'and let him ask me that question. Or, rather, tell it to Elizabeth Woodville, since your brother's will lies in her hands and her kinsfolks'.'

Dickon did not reply. During his youth he had been trained in strict obedience to the great Earl of Warwick. He had lived beneath him as his page and esquire, according to the rules of knighthood; and, though he was unafraid and all his deep loyalty to his brother roused, he could not bring himself to openly quarrel with Warwick. He looked anxiously at Clarence, who stood in the window-place, and then at Henry of Lancaster, who was still leaning on his staff, the large brown beads hanging from his thin white hands, muttering to himself.

Dickon left the chamber and the tower.

The sound of the organ music, of the singing boys and men was in his ears as he called up his esquire, had his horse brought and rode away through the streets of London.

The frozen snow was stiff beside the dark river and beneath the skies, sprinkled with glittering stars crystal clear. Richard shuddered in his fur-lined gown; life seemed difficult and terrible--a perpetual conflict, and for what prize? Was the ultimate achievement an earthly crown? He had seen two kings tonight, and envied neither of them.

Dickon did not ride to Baynard's Castle, where his mother occasionally resided, but stopped his horse at a residence of equal



magnificence, that bore, deep-cut above the stone gate, the Bear and Ragged Staff of the Nevilles--the London castle of the Earl of Warwick.

The house was silent and melancholy but he found three women sitting drowsily round a fire talking; Lady Warwick and her two daughters, Isabel and Anne, the playmates of George and Dickon at Middleham.

The younger ladies sprang up when Richard entered and, running up to him, begged him to tell them something of the great festival at the Court, at which they were not allowed yet to appear, for, besides their youth, the heiresses of Neville were so frail and delicate.

Dickon evaded their eager enquiries. Troubled and uneasy, he implored them to go on with their conversation. But they had lost heart and when he joined them round the large chimney-stone, they all sat silent.

Dickon was beside Anne; he often was beside Anne at Middleham, when they watched the tourneys and exercises in the tiltyard, or when they rode together through Wensleydale, when they walked in the woods and orchards or by the river which flowed past Middleham.

Lady Warwick smiled at them as they sat now, close together on the same bench, quiet in the firelight. She stayed away from Court because she could not endure the insolence of Elizabeth Woodville and her kinsfolk, and she had encouraged the attachment between her two daughters and the Plantagenet princes.

Herself of the noblest blood in England, and nearly as ambitious as her husband, Lady Warwick saw no reason why she should not unite her children with the royal house. She, as well as her lord, had nursed the hope that Edward might marry one of the girls who would be such

great heiresses. Disappointment was not the least part of her bitterness against Queen Elizabeth. She knew that her husband's influence with the King was waning, that daily he lost face in the Councils and at the Court of Edward; that daily the indolent young King fell more deeply under the influence of the greedy, grasping Woodvilles. She knew her lord, his ambitions and his temper, and hourly feared a clash, maybe, of arms. Therefore, with deliberate intent, she rose and took her elder daughter away with her, leaving Richard and Anne together in the firelit room: candles had not been brought in, the women preferring this rosy twilight.

Dickon regarded Anne earnestly and wistfully; he asked her if she were tired.

Anne was so often tired, and there were times when she would lie for days on her bed speaking to no one; there were times, too, when she would rest for hours in a chair, her head on a cushion, yet not asleep, only drowsy. Anne was so lovely that Dickon felt afraid. She was always gentle and tender, kind and pleased with any little attention, or gift, or delight; but Dickon knew nothing of her mind. She was his secret lady, and shared his devotion with the statue of St George with the gold ring about his waist which he kept above his bed and before which he said his prayers. So he had led his life--between God, and Anne, and exercise.

Anne smiled at him now through the twilight and laid her hand on his sleeve.

Dickon shuddered, remembering what his brother had said about Clarence and Isabel; 'he would not have it--he would not have that marriage--no union with the house of Neville.' He wanted to take Anne away to an enchanted tower where no one would ever come near them.

His mood was shattered, his thoughts broken, by an abrupt entrance. Warwick had returned to his castle. He laughed to see the boy and girl in the firelight, clapped his hands and shouted for candles.

'Sir, I followed close behind your Princely Grace,' he said, with a triumph in his voice. 'I thought that it was here that ye would come, and that, where thy fortune led thee, thou wouldst be well received.'

'Sir, this house hath been as my home,' replied Dickon, quietly; he added, 'Sir, thou hast left the festival early.'

The dark Earl laughed from him to Anne, and striding to the fire, struck his hands together and warmed them, for he was cold from his swift riding through the winter night. He tossed his head and, in his excited, reckless manner, asked:

'Sir Richard, you say my castle is your home. If I should take my allegiance from your brother, which of us would you follow?'

Dickon replied instantly:

'Sir, you cannot take your allegiance from your King.'

Warwick, standing in front of the ruddy glow of the fire, his hands on his hips, blew away that assertion with a laugh. Then, noticing Anne, standing meekly in his presence, he told her gently to go to her mother.

Dickon did not look at her as she left the room.

'It is your patrimony and England's, Sir,' said Warwick, keenly, 'that Edward Plantagenet squanders on the Woodvilles. Will you, good Prince, let your self be a footstool for these rebels to mount on?'

'Sir,' answered Richard, 'I am my brother's man.'

'Ye have a meeker temper than Clarence,' said Warwick, contemptuously, 'but he hath always been the nobler spirit.' Dickon ignored the sneer and cried, impetuously:

'Sir, hast thou been meddling with my brother's loyalty? Will George turn against his King?'

Warwick was amused; he looked the slight, handsome figure up and down and then said, deliberately:

'Follow me, and I will give thee Anne; if you lose her you will have great unhappiness, I know.'

'Sir, the King's noble Grace would not permit,' said Richard, dully: 'ye have heard his mind on the matter of Isabel and George, and how much he was against it.'

'Say ye the King's Noble Grace would not permit?' sneered Warwick. 'O mercy, Jesu, know thou well what I will not permit? Come, good Dickon, wilt thou take Anne and half my fortune?'

'Sir, I thank thee for the honour you would give me,' replied Dickon, 'but, by my faith, you debase yourself in suggesting treachery to a Plantagenet.'

'Sir, take thy choice, take thy hazard!' cried Warwick, arrogantly. 'Maybe thou canst find a fairer fortune than I offer, and a nobler, better-dowered bride than Anne Neville.'

'Sir Richard Neville,' said Richard, passionately, 'thou art my elder in arms, my superior in knighthood, or I had said just now what had not easily been forgiven. Fie on thee, traitor! and alas, that so noble a man as you should act like this!'

And he left the house miserable and angry.

The snow-clouds were coming up over the Thames, bells were ringing from the crowded churches, carols sounded from the closed, lit houses.

Dickon rode mournfully, thinking of Anne. Anne, whose mind he did not know--Anne foregone...

He went to Baynard's Castle, and in the porch of the outer wall where the beggars gathered a dark figure rose out of the gloom and came to meet him,

A stranger--a beggar? Dickon's hand, ever ready for spendthrift generosity, went to his pouch.

But the stranger seemed to divine his intention, and moved away. His upturned face as he departed was visible for a second in the starlight, and Richard paused, holding in his horse, and wondering, half-trembling, where he had seen him before. Years ago, in some dream or childish vision; surely on a ship flying across the North Sea? Had they told him it was a man-at-arms?

He could recall now, in Utrecht, a fellow that they had called Jon Fogge.

'Ah, Sir fiend,' muttered Dickon, 'since ye give me such warning I shall beware of thee.'

### 3

Dickon was alert, watchful; there was much about him that he did not understand, but he was acutely conscious of danger, encompassing him on every side. He had been born and nurtured in peril, and his

training had been entirely for warfare. Since the terrible death of his father and that frantic flight to the Low Countries, Dickon's mind had been filled with images of war and death.

This young Prince had been generous and affectionate in his relations with Warwick, who had been to him both father and governor; now that was gone, and he must hold himself secretly and suspiciously, even towards Neville; for, young as he was, Dickon had a very shrewd idea of the great Earl's character—a man who would talk recklessly and impetuously, with no great meaning in much that he said. Yet he had spoken of treachery, almost openly, and offered Anne as a bribe. Dickon, hurt, uneasy, watched Warwick. With Clarence he had no intimacy. For several years they had been apart, and Dickon heard only of his brother's constant disputes with the King. He seemed in ever closer companionship with Warwick and avoided Dickon and the Court.

The young Duke of Gloucester was thus isolated. He walked like one who expects every moment to feel the grip of an enemy's hand on his shoulder, or to see the glitter of an enemy's weapon facing him round some dark corner. Eager to rush on these gathered but unnamed hostilities, and possessing a boldness even beyond the proverbial boldness of his race, the young Prince went to the Tower with Level and Radcliffe, determined to overcome the delays and slights put upon him by his brother's favourites.

'Sir, I am resolved,' he declared to Lord Scales, 'to see the King's Highness.'

Every avenue to the King was barred by the Woodvilles or their minions. Few of the King's old friends remained, except William Lord Hastings; the other Yorkist nobles and knights had retired sullenly to their great castles, breathing treason. These hard, fierce martial men, who had set Edward Plantagenet on the throne of Henry of

Lancaster, despised the young King for his effeminacy, his love of luxury, his idleness,

So Richard, in his brother's house, was among enemies, and knew Lord Scales, the Queen's brother, to be one of the sharpest of these.

This knight was accomplished, elegant, idle and greedy. He led his family in soliciting favours from his sister's infatuated husband. Sated with honours, fat with ease, insolent and unscrupulous, the Woodvilles sucked at the source of the King's bounty till it ran dry for all others.

Playing negligently with the chains about his breast, Scales made indolent excuses to Dickon.

The King was abed; the King was in the tennis courts; the King had gone to Shene for hunting--in short, he did not know where the King was, or what he did; but he advised the young Duke of Gloucester not to waste his time idling in antechambers.

Dickon scowled and disdained to answer Lord Scales. He folded his arms, leant against the tapestry, and fixed his dark eyes furiously on the door of the King's apartments.

Lord Scales was not the fool he seemed, with his long, scalloped scarlet damask sleeves and his tasselled coif, his velvet stomacher and perfumed hair.

He studied Richard Plantagenet covertly. He knew the common talk that the young Prince had been so shocked by the death of his father and his flight into the Low Countries that it was believed he would not live; or, if he lived, would be an imbecile. This, it seemed, had been a false prophecy. Scales remembered what Warwick had said of his ward--that Richard, by force of will and sheer courage, had trained

himself into as accomplished and brave a knight as his brother George, to whose superior strength all martial exercises came easily.

'Sir, you grow as high as your dignity--a proper Prince,' smiled Lord Scales.

'Sir, I am indeed full-grown now,' replied Richard. Would I had come to my man's estate some years earlier, good knight, then I had not stood waiting thy pleasure in my brother's ante-chamber.'

Anthony Woodville was not used to any manner of defiance; his eyes and lips narrowed as he thought swiftly:

'These two brothers of the King must be pinioned before they spread their wings and fly out of reach.'

But, being crafty, he turned off the Prince's fiery reply with a smooth smile; it was not his policy to drive matters to extremities.

'Sir, if your Grace will see the King's Highness I will take you to him now. My excuses were but to delay you till a better season, for his Noble Highness has had his pleasant humour galled by my Lord of Clarence.'

Richard replied, with a reckless boldness that the favourite had never heard any man address to him since his elevation:

'How these quarrels please ye, Lord Scales! How well my brother plays thy game when he crosses the King's mood! Though I am fresh to these courts,' added Richard, bitterly, 'thy purpose is not hid from me. If you could bribe my brother Clarence into a rebellion you would be well satisfied.'

Scales was astonished at the penetration and the courage of the



young Prince, but he concealed this amazement and answered, quietly:

'My Lord of Gloucester speaks with boyish spite. We who are well grounded in the affection of the King's grace have no need for subtle plots to maintain our place.'

'Sir, words,' replied Richard, 'are easily frothed up to disguise intentions.'

He moved quickly from the wall, pushed in front of Lord Scales and opened the door into the King's apartments. Scales shrugged and let him pass.

Richard strode through two chambers full of idling pages with musical instruments, dice, dogs and chess. They paid Richard little attention, since they knew he was displeasing to the Woodvilles; two pages at the King's private door tried to hinder his entry.

'As God help me,' swore Richard, 'the King and I are one man's son and I *will* go in.'

He put the men aside, one with either hand, with a force they did not dare disobey and, opening the door impetuously, found himself in the presence of Edward and George, who were quarrelling in passionate, high voices.

As Richard stepped into the room he heard the King say, in an excess of rage:

'If ye speak, thy life is upon it!'

Tore God,' answered Clarence, 'if I were sure, I would speak I'

They saw Dickon.

Edward's wrath flared out.

'What two of ye come to plague me? Are ye on the same errand, Dickon? When a man is on fair terms with all the world, must he be crossed and crossed again by his own blood?'

'Sir, it seemeth,' said Clarence, quickly, 'that it is ye, Edward the King, who forgets that we are of the same blood, and that it is left to me to teach thee that we are one man's son.'

Dickon looked quickly from one to the other of his brothers; they were both so alike, yet staring at each other rigid with hate. He wondered what had come between these two during the years that he had spent at Middleham and known nothing of their lives.

'Why do ye force in thus unmannerly?' cried the King, hotly. 'Did thy brother Clarence bid ye here to set on me?'

'Sir, I broke in thus rudely,' replied Richard, without flinching, 'because it seemeth that only by force can your brothers get into the presence of your Noble Grace.'

'Sir, I keep my friends about me,' replied Edward, red with rage.

'Aye, your Noble Grace's friends, but not ours,' said Richard. 'I have been kept waiting like a page or a varlet in outer rooms, while my Lord Scales looked me up and down. Therefore, sir, for God's love, tell me how I am to be regarded.'

Clarence laughed at this boldness, and cast a mocking glance at the angry King.

'Sir, here is another to give thee trouble; ye will not find it so easy to set Plantagenets under Woodvilles!'

'Sirs, I once did love ye both,' replied Edward, furiously, 'but ye have turned my kindness to bitter gall.'

'Sir, what have I done?' asked Dickon, striding up to him. 'I have obeyed all your Noble Grace's demands. Ye have kept me out among strangers.'

With an abatement in his anger the King turned and looked at his younger brother earnestly:

'Have ye been loyal, Dickon?' he asked.

'Before God, I have been loyal!' cried Dickon, scornfully. 'Certes, for nought speak ye, sir.'

Edward had always loved the younger man, he could not long be angry with him.

He demanded:

'Did ye ask Clarence to come here now?'

'Sir, for days I have not seen him,' replied Richard. 'I have come on matters of my own; this by the faith of my body, without any falsehood.'

Edward said:

'Favours? No one cometh to me except to ask favours.'

'Sir, that is truth indeed of thy present friends,' cried Clarence, 'false recreant knights and common lechers.' Richard said quietly:

'I wish for Anne Neville, Lord Warwick's daughter.'

'This has been planned between you!' exclaimed the King. 'Anne for you, Isabel for George, and the Neville heritage in partage between you. Have you not heard me say No, and No again to that, both of you? This is wilful folly.'

'Sir, no is not answer,' replied Clarence, 'when there is no reason behind it; and ye, Sir Edward, have lightly forgotten our high services.'

Dickon looked at the angry King wistfully.

'Hath your Grace cast over in your mind that we were the companions of these ladies in our childhood, that they are our kinsfolk, that neither in blood nor lands would these marriages fail to satisfy our honour? They would,' he added shrewdly and carefully, 'closer unite to your Grace's Highness the Earl of Warwick, who has of late been greatly discontented.'

'There,' replied Edward, impatiently, 'is one good reason why I will not give my brothers to his daughters. I am weary of Warwick, he seeketh to rule in everything; he hath, for a subject, too much arrogance.'

'Sir, he put the crown on thy head,' sneered Clarence, 'and without him you can scarcely keep it.'

'You lie!' exclaimed Edward, hotly, 'and if our mother were not living I would punish you for the boldness of you.'

'Sir, how often ye have threatened to slay me!' cried Clarence. 'Ye are quick at privy removals! It would need to be privy since, man to man, I am the better, Edward; with sword or dagger in the joust or tourney, on horse or on foot, I am the better knight, and my buffets could put you to shame.'

'But ye boast like a varlet,' put in Dickon, stepping up to the King's side, 'and are nigh out of thy wits. Edward, brother, my good Lord, will your Princely Grace forget what Clarence hath said?'

'Sir, let him go,' said Edward, sullenly 'and if ye love him and consider me, let him pass from my presence.'

He turned to Clarence and added, with stern dignity:

'Leave me now, George, lest we come to brawling like roysterers in a tavern.'

'Come with me, Dickon,' said Clarence, smiling easily, for he had the provoking habit of falling from towering rages to light mockery. 'Thy suit also will be pleaded in vain; Warwick's maidens are not for us. Tell me,' he asked, with a sneer, 'for whom do ye intend these girls, Sir Edward? Have ye found some Woodville gallants to share their dowries?'

Dickon stood between his two brothers.

He looked earnestly at the King and said:

'Will your Kingly Grace tell me if ye do refuse the hand of Anne Neville?'

'Sir, I do,' replied Edward, 'on thy loyalty, Dickon, ye shall not have her. I will wed ye abroad--a French or a Burgundian princess.'

'Oh, my Lord Sir Edward!' mocked Clarence. 'The King may take his pleasure with a commoner, may not his brothers have the same liberty?'

But Dickon said, with a dignity beyond his years:

'Sir, I have had my answer, and I accept.'

Clarence, malicious, graceful, strode to the door. Dickon was following him, but the King impetuously put out a restraining hand.

'Stay with me, Dickon. I would not have an estrangement between us; do not be embarrassed by all this noise and cry of Clarence.'

'Aye, stay with him,' smiled Clarence, 'and I will tell thee a theme for thy converse. Ask him why he hath a great dread of the Bishop of Bath and Wells!'

This gibe was uttered in a tone of spite, and was beyond Dickon's comprehension, but he saw the King's face was darkening with anger, and that Clarence hastily left the room, as if he feared his brother's violence.

'Sir, I know nothing of this,' said Dickon, simply.

Edward snatched his hand and gazed at him with an earnest, almost an imploring expression in his bright blue eyes.

'Is that truth, Richard, that ye know nothing of it?'

'Sir, George hath told me nothing of any matter,' replied Dickon, 'And why be ye so abashed?'

Edward knew that Richard always spoke the truth. 'George never loved me,' he said, uneasily; 'and now he contriveth some mischief secretly against me.'

'Sir,' said Dickon, quietly, 'I am sure that George is loyal to his father's son.'

'Yet I do not trust him,' replied Edward, in distress, 'nor my Lord

Warwick, with whom he is so close in company. I could never believe that they would rise against me; still, I think they make mischief and trouble.'

'Sir, it is true that you have affronted both,' replied Richard, heavily.

Warwick looks too high,' interrupted the King, impatiently; 'he expecteth too much--he would be all and everything.'

'Sir, I do love him,' said Richard, warmly. 'He was our father's greatest friend. Had I been the elder son, he would not have complained of ingratitude.'

'Sir, doth he so complain?' Edward took him up, scowling. 'Sir, I think he hath just cause,' replied Dickon. 'Were I Lord Warwick, or were I George, I should take offence.'

'These two,' cried Edward, angrily, 'try to seduce thee from thy allegiance, presumptuous boy!'

'Sir, I am a man,' replied Richard of Gloucester, 'and lately called upon to prove it. This refusal which your Kingly Grace hath given me is not one that any youth could stomach. I need a manly fortitude there.'

The King smiled with sudden tenderness.

'A man indeed, my sweet Dickon. And doth it hurt thee that I cannot give thee Warwick's Anne?'

'Sir, I will not talk of it,' replied Richard. 'I would not be, like your Princely Grace, over-ruled by the thought of women, through which, I dread me, God is greatly displeased with us, and therefore I call myself unhappy.'

The King laughed, but not easily.

'There is still much ye do not understand, sweet Dickon,' he replied.

'Sir, I understand when a man loseth his knighthood in the company of his lemans and his flatterers.'

'Sir, go join thy brother,' answered Edward, 'before ye excel him in my displeasure.'

Dickon left immediately, although he saw a softening, almost an appeal in the King's look. When Dickon was angry he was quick and violent, in contrast with his usual easy manner. In this disturbed interview he had learnt the one thing he had forced his way into the castle to learn--the King's mind on his marriage with Anne Neville. A faint hope that reason had not been able to quench, had now been rudely blasted by the King's harsh words. Dickon walked away heavily, scowling.

In the last ante-chamber Clarence waited for him. The Princes left the Tower together.

The courtyard was full of a company of horsemen, busy with dogs, pages, shooters, with horns and wood knives. The King was going to Shene to hunt; he kept good dogs both for the string and bait, even at the Tower.

Gloucester and Clarence returned to Baynard's Castle. Clarence kept glancing at his younger brother and thinking to himself: Shall I tell him? Can I trust him?

## 4

Princess Cicely of York came frequently to Baynard's Castle, leaving



her lonely retreat at Berkhamsted to conduct the establishment of the two young Princes. Neither of them was wealthy, and George, who was very extravagant, was frequently cramped in his needs. The honours their brother had given them did not include money, for the King himself had little of that to give away. In spite of a handsome revenue, his private fortune, and continuous loans from the city, Edward was in debt, and was often put to undignified expedients to find the money to pay for the magnificence of his Court, his pleasures and the incessant greed of the Woodvilles. His brothers, therefore, lived without much state in their father's castle by the Thames. Although their titles were as noble as their blood, neither of them had received that active employment which should have fitted their station. The best positions were in the hands of the Woodvilles. The Queen's father was Captain of Calais, the highest military post it was in the power of the Crown of England to grant, and one which Warwick had long held. The Woodville faction was secure in all the other high military commands. Gloucester and Clarence, for all their dukedoms and Garters, were restricted and idle. This would have pleased George, who had his brother Edward's love of ease and pleasure, well enough, had he not been galled by lack of money; but to Richard such a life was detestable.

A year ago his sister Margaret had left England to marry the Duke of Burgundy—once Charles of Charolais, whom Richard remembered in Utrecht. Dickon recalled the dark, melancholy young man with much affection, and he often toyed with a scheme to leave England and attach himself to his brother-in-law's Court and Margaret, warm-hearted, generous and loving. Dickon, too, had heard that the great Duke of Burgundy, who was even mightier and more feared than his father, Philip, was likely to war with his overlord, Louis de Valois, King of France. Dickon, who patiently exercised every day for hours in arms and with his horse, wished to win his spurs and prove to all the world he was, indeed, a man.

When the two returned from the Tower to Baynard's Castle Richard was silent, but Clarence talked a great deal about small matter, such as hawks, and hounds, and the hunting in Surrey, and the gossip of the city, while, behind all this light talk, he was thinking:

'Shall I tell him? Shall I trust him?'

When they had reached Baynard's Castle and entered the solar parlour which was filled with a great glow of pale yellow spring sun, Clarence took his younger brother by the shoulders and turned him about, demanding briskly:

'How didst thou consider it, Dickon? Didst thou find Edward the Edward of ten years ago--when he came to see us every day even when we were in the Temple, with sweets in his pocket? Is he fitted to be the King of England?'

Dickon replied:

'Sir, he is our King: we can do no more than stand by.'

'Sir, that is a childish saying!' cried Clarence, impatiently. 'He refused ye, did he not? Neither Anne for ye nor Isabel for me! Who, then, are they for?'

'Sir, I may not think of that,' replied Dickon, sadly. Then suddenly:

'Why did you say that about Dr Stillington, the Bishop of Bath and Wells?' he asked. 'It could mean nothing to me.'

'It meant something to Edward; replied Clarence. 'Did ye see his look? He would have struck me had I not been so near the door.'

Clarence paused, then added with deep meaning:

'Have you never thought, Dickon, how strange it is that that well-conducted prelate should have been a year in the Tower, so closely kept, though I--and I have often tried--cannot come to have five minutes' speech with him?'

'Sir, I know not enough of it,' said Dickon, 'even to make a guess. I remember Dr Stillington as a loyal servitor of the House of York. Is it possible that he has acted a traitor's part and taken up poor King Henry's cause?'

'What reason would there be in that?' replied Clarence, scornfully.

'Sir, tell me,' said Dickon, quietly, 'thy hidden meaning.'

'And I have half a mind,' smiled Clarence; 'yet, Dickon, it is dangerous, and better that we were silent.'

Clarence tried to speak lightly, with his accustomed ease and light-heartedness, but Dickon suspected this gaiety was forced. He saw that Clarence was restless, unhappy, and again Dickon had that sense of some near and ever-encroaching danger.

He had heard King Edward shout out:

'Thy life on it if thou speak'st!'

He suggested, to cheer them up, that they should join the royal hunt. Clarence refused rudely, saying he would not make one of Edward's train of fawning Woodvilles. He suggested instead that they should go and wait upon Lord Warwick and his daughters, for the great Neville also stayed apart from the pleasures of the Court.

'Sir, keep away from Warwick,' advised Richard, 'until he be better in the King's grace.'

Clarence flung away, and Dickon heard him going upstairs to the apartments of the Princess, their mother. He mistrusted the mood of Clarence, and after musing a little uneasily by the window-place, gazing out upon the Thames, and the Surrey fields beyond, misty with spring sunshine, he also went up the wide stairs to the apartments of Cicely of York.

The Duchess had, since her husband's death, lived a cloistered life, and these chambers at Baynard's Castle, where she had taken a last leave of her husband, were furnished with dark hangings. Above the mantelpiece was a huge crucifix of ebony and oak; she was seated beneath this when Dickon entered and wore the sombre habit of a Benedictine nun.

Clarence was standing near her, shouting, his hands on his hips, while she was saying in a voice of rebuke, her hands clasped tightly together on her knees:

'I can tell ye nothing; indeed, I will not tell ye anything.' And Clarence asked in a threatening tone:

'Madam, wilt thou swear to me there is nothing?' The Duchess of York murmured:

'I cannot swear.'

She raised her eyes and saw Richard: Clarence turned and saw him also, and exclaimed in anger:

'Sir, this is the second time today thou hast followed me!'

'Sir, before,' said Dickon, 'it was chance. Now I come on a purpose because I do not trust ye, in your ill bitter humour, not to disturb our lady mother.'

The Duchess of York asked anxiously:

'Hath Clarence told ye anything?'

'Madam, he hath made,' replied Dickon, 'some shrewd hints at a monstrous secret. I do not know what it is, save that he would have me notice that it is odd that my Lord of Bath and Wells hath lain so long secretly, as it were, hidden.'

'So near as that!' exclaimed Cicely of York, rising in alarm. 'Clarence, on my love and for thy very life, take, I implore thee--'

Clarence interrupted with upraised hand.

'Good Madam, I would not have ye troubled in vain. No pleas or fears can stop a man who is wronged and seeth a way to revenge himself.'

'Sir, there is no way,' she replied sadly. 'That which ye seek is but a false clue, Clarence, to entice you into danger.'

Clarence hunched his shoulders and laughed maliciously.

'Madam, something ye know and will not say. Edward is lying. The priest is hidden where I may not get at him. The singing-man would speak the truth if he were not afraid.'

'Sir, take care!' cried the Duchess in terror, 'thou and thy singing-man!'

'I will take care and heed enough, I will take my own means, too, to come at truth and justice since even ye, my father's widow, will not help me!'

Cicely of York caught her younger son's hand.

Clarence,' she demanded, 'hast thou drawn thy brother into this? If not, I do entreat ye, in the name of God, to leave him at least--I would not have you two at odds.'

'Madam, he is too meek!' cried Clarence, 'he would let the Woodville vermin bite his heels and never kick them off. He came humbly now to ask for Warwick's Anne, and took the rudest "No" with a meek and patient grace!'

Cicely of York glanced affectionately at Dickon.

'He hath his father's moderate virtues,' she said, warmly; 'prudent and gentle and slow to anger.' She repeated tenderly:

'Dickon favours his father more than any of ye.'

'Madam, I would,' said Dickon, wistfully, 'that I had ten more years on my back, then I could look more clearly into these dark matters. It seemeth that though there is peace in England, there is little in our family.'

Clarence strode away, but Dickon lingered with his mother. She put his thick bright hair back from his forehead and kissed him; he still seemed a child to her. They had been separated for many years, and her last vivid recollection of him was on that winter's night in this castle, when she had seen him standing on the stairs with his brother, listening to Sir Thomas Parr, who, covered in blood, told of the battle of Wakefield.

A pang contracted her heart when she recalled how the little boy had loved his father.

'Dickon; she whispered, 'pay no heed to Clarence; he is reckless and, I doubt, too much in the counsels of my Lord of Warwick. Be ye loyal to Edward and listen to no tales of him.'

'Madam, I understand very little of it,' replied Dickon.

'It is the marriage, dear heart,' said Cicely of York, stroking his hand. 'No one can bear the King marrying a commoner and putting her relatives, who are rebels, in high posts. It galleth George and Warwick, too. And as for me, I made my most strong and bitter protest, but Edward smiled. And now I, like thee, must be patient and obedient. This woman that he bath made his Queen I would never have had in my company, but I have had her children on my lap, and bent my knee to her. In such submission, Dickon, lieth true dignity.'

'Madam, I hate Lord Scales,' remarked Dickon, abruptly. 'I have had enough of hatred,' said Cicely of York, wearily. 'Do ye, however, Dickon, keep loyal to thy brother.'

'Madam, he standeth to me in my father's place,' said Dickon and soon afterwards he left his mother.

Fretted by his own idleness, he went into the courtyard to find Lovell and Radcliffe, and with them practised at the tilting-ring but Clarence was in the door talking to a tall, pale man who appeared a clerk or servant. At sight of Dickon he drew away into the company of the men-at-arms in the courtyard, and then to the beggars and traders at the outer gate.

'That was my singing-man,' said Clarence, 'a mean, lowly fellow, yet what a service he may do you and me, Dickon!' Clarence appeared elated, and Dickon was relieved, thinking that his trouble could not be so serious a matter if he could so easily throw it aside.

'Come riding with me,' suggested Clarence. 'We do not go to the chase, mark ye, but on an errand of mine; it is pleasant in the fields and I have been too long cooped up in the town.'

Dickon willingly accompanied his brother. The two young knights rode through the London streets, across the crowded bridge, and out on to the Surrey fields to Bermondsey.

Clarence began to sing but Dickon rode in silent unhappiness only thinking 'I have lost Anne--Anne is lost to me.'

They came to a little convent, set in an orchard of pear-trees. They left their horses at the gate and the porter admitted them, Dickon thought, with reluctance. They passed through a garden of thyme, rosemary and lavender, and rose-bushes not yet in flower. The main entrance to the small quadrangle stood open and they went down a passage into the cloisters. In the centre of this was a well with an iron cover. A nun with rolled-back sleeves was drawing up water, and sparkling drops fell from her red bare hands and over the stone mouth of the well. She looked curiously, a little alarmed, at the two young men.

'Madam,' said Clarence, pulling off his flat cap with its long green ostrich feather, 'ye know for whom I come.'

'The nun who knew Lady Eleanor Butler,' said the nun, 'awaiteth your Noble Highness in the sun parlour. She would only have this meeting after much debate; but your Noble Highness will find her much changed.'

'You have been here before?' asked Dickon of his brother, who seemed familiar with the convent and the nun.

'Sir, I have been here several times,' replied Clarence, 'but never yet found what I sought. Perhaps today, Dickon, with thy presence, we shall stumble upon a better fortune.'

Dickon had not been prepared for this kind of errand. As they



crossed the garden he asked who the Lady Eleanor Butler was.

Clarence replied that she was a daughter of the Earl of Shrewsbury and the widow of Lord Butler, who, some years since, had joined the Carmelites at Norwich, where she had died some months ago.

Dickon imagined this poor woman to be some left or lost love of his brother's, for he knew that George lived as lightly and as luxuriously as Edward. He wondered why George should have brought him on this sad errand, and with some distaste entered the sun parlour.

The woman who had been the companion of Lady Eleanor lay on a bed under a grey coverlet. Her nun's veil was turned back from a white narrow brow on which the sweat hung in unwholesome drops; her tedious breathing could be heard all over the small room.

She nodded her head to greet the two young men--she had not the strength to lift it from the hard, straw-stuffed pillow.

'Sirs, I did not think ye would come,' she whispered. 'Who is this ye have brought with ye, my Lord Clarence?'

'Madam, this is Richard of Gloucester, my young brother,' replied Clarence, 'and he as well as myself, bath great interest in what ye are about to disclose.'

The woman shook her head feebly. 'Sir, I can say nothing today,' she said, 'I have not the strength. Ye do not know how very ill and feeble I lie now, Jesu, mercy!'

'What can she have to say,' demanded Dickon, 'that you should force her to speak?'

Clarence ignored him but bent over the woman threateningly.

'Madam, I have seen again the singing-man,' he said, 'and he is resolute and close in all his details.'

The sick woman answered, speaking with painful effort:

'Sir, if I am called into Paradise I must be in charity with all. And what will my secret bring? Woe, disgrace, and bloodshed!'

'Then, in God's name, be silent!' cried Dickon: 'we have enough of trouble, Madam!'

Clarence turned fiercely on his brother.

'She shall speak! Ye know not what ye forego!'

From her hard couch the grey woman sighed in a rattling whisper:

'Sir, thy noble brother is right. Let the poor gentlewoman's secret die with me.'

The fierce protest of Clarence was checked before it was uttered; the nun, making a rigid gesture towards the crucifix, had stiffened into the last anguish: as Dickon called up the other nun, she died. And Clarence, even in this holy place, was bitterly angry.

## 5

Warwick and Clarence drank together, sprawling their great limbs in front of the fire, for though it was a warm spring evening, Warwick swore that it was a poor room that had no fire in the hearth.

Dickon was of their company, but not of their conversation.

They spoke of matters that he did not understand, like men talking

carelessly before a boy, not realizing that Gloucester was as shrewd as either, patient in listening, quick to deduce.

Clarence spoke of his visit to the little nunnery at Bermondsey and of the death of the nun who had been a friend of Lady Eleanor Butler, whom Dickon still thought to have been an old love of his brother; yet the urgent voice of Clarence seemed to make more of it than this. Striking his hand on the table, he shouted his disappointment at the death of the nun.

'Jesu, mercy, why must she die in a nunnery? She could have said what meant all England to me!'

'Sir, ye would have me poke and pry for thy meaning?' grunted Warwick, 'I will not do it, certes.'

'Oh, Sir Richard Neville! thou wilt get at my meaning some day!' answered Clarence. 'And how would it please ye to see Earl Scales' head on London Bridge?'

'Sirs, it is the Queen's brother!' exclaimed Dickon.

The two knights turned in their places to look at him where he sat the other side of the long table.

'Sir, have I trained ye so meanly in chivalry,' demanded Warwick, grimly, 'that ye should take the part of a man like Scales, with his down pillows, his baths and his perfume, and his dice-playing?'

Clarence, ignoring this, continued to describe the death of the nun.

'When we went into the sun parlour she seemed but an image of wax. She was lying out stiffly, with her hands folded. I believed she would have spoken. Dickon was there, as I would have him hear what she might say. Alas! why did I delay so long? She lay there

stiffly, I say like a thing cut out of wax. Still I would not have taken her for a dying woman, yet, just as she would have spoken, she withered under my eyes and, in a moment, was gone. Jesu, mercy on her soul,' he added.

Warwick sneered.

'Sir, what do ye make of that?' he demanded.

'Magic,' replied Clarence, fearfully. 'An enchantment.' Dickon set his elbows on the table, his face in his hands, and regarded the two knights keenly.

When the dreadful word 'magic' was spoken, a restraint seemed loosed from their tongues, and they spoke excitedly.

'Sir, Edward is bewitched,' declared Clarence. 'No sober man could deny that. And these rogues and varlets, which surround him he would not tolerate were he not out of his wits.'

'Sir, Elizabeth Woodville,' nodded Warwick, 'and her crafts.'

Clarence broke into a great gusty laugh.

'They knew that I was going to Bermondsey today--they knew when I went before; she would never speak, but I could see by her eyes that she had the will to. There was a charm upon her tongue. And today, when at last I should have had it, they struck her dead.'

'Brother,' demanded Dickon, anxiously, 'what is this secret?'

'Sir, I can guess,' grinned Warwick, 'but I will not speak.'

'Sir, nor I; said Clarence, with sudden uneasiness. 'It is a thing not to be put in plain words, and with this accursed magic abroad.'

'Sir George, denounce Elizabeth Woodville as a witch,' said Warwick. 'Why not?'

Clarence leant towards him.

'There is more in it than that--if she lost her head for witchcraft, are we helped?'

Their faces were close together. Dickon stretched forward past a stand of candles, listening eagerly.

'Edward,' whispered Clarence, 'have ye ever thought of that?'

Warwick crossed himself impetuously.

'Sir, consider deeply,' said Clarence, in a hoarse whisper. 'What were those two great victories coming so suddenly on defeat, and who set three Suns in the sky?'

He leaned back and thrust his hands into his belt. 'Sir, I tell you he bath a devil,' he added.

Dickon cried and got to his feet.

Clarence looked at him in excitement yet with a certain love and compassion.

'I warn ye, Dickon, take good heed to thy prayers and to thy guardian saint, for, as I sit here, I believe that Edward bath called up a devil, who hath given him the crown and all his pleasures.'

Warwick interrupted:

'Sir, if he hath indeed done that he hath doomed the House of York. But we have no proof, good Clarence,' he added, startled by the look

of alarm and horror on Richard's face.

'Sir, prudence will not save ye,' sneered Clarence. 'If Edward is a magician, he knoweth all we say and do every hour.' He gulped another beaker of wine; his blue eyes were bloodshot, he pulled at Dickon's stiff reluctant hand and demanded:

'Boy, hast thou ever seen the Devil?'

A shiver ran through the young Prince, a thousand ugly images crowded into his mind; foremost of them Edward's success--those two great victories--the Crown so easily won, and the long years of idleness and pleasure...The miracle, too, of the three Suns above the fight at Towton--who could say that God had sent that,

'Sir, see, he dare not answer,' mocked Clarence. 'He, too, knoweth that Edward bath sold all our heritage to hell for the Crown of England and his own enjoyment.'

'You wrong him. Jesu, mercy,' answered Dickon miserably; 'Indeed you wrong him.'

But he was troubled, for he was thinking of Jon Fogge. He rose to leave the room but Warwick caught at his coat, and said to him, craftily:

'Sir, do not keep in mind what thy brother bath said, for he is foolish with wine; and thou, as I, know the affront and disappointment Edward hath put on him.'

Dickon did not answer. He went upstairs to the bedroom--from which he had crept on the night that the news of Wakefield came to Baynard's Castle. Above the bed was the image of St George, with the gold band round the waist, which had been his childhood's consolation.

He sat on his bed trying to piece together the little fragments of truth there might be in the wild talk and disloyal accusations of Clarence.

That the bitterness of Warwick and Clarence had been due to the Woodville marriage was clear but he could make nothing of the mystery of the imprisonment of Dr Stillington, the death of Lady Eleanor Butler, and Clarence's protestation that he had a secret, and one dangerous to Edward and the Woodvilles.

Again Dickon was conscious of danger on every side. The figures of the men of his blood who had died violently seemed to pass before him...Edward the Second, Duke of York, who had died at Agincourt; Cambridge, his grandfather, beheaded; his father and his brother slain at Wakefield;—a history of violence, of murder, of wrong, of warfare. He feared, too, a definite danger to Edward through Warwick and his two brothers, brave and as ambitious as himself. John Neville, Lord Montacute, now the Earl of Northumberland, and George Neville, Lord High Chancellor and Archbishop of York. How much power did they not have between them, and how deadly a use might they not make of it against the House of Plantagenet?

Dickon went out uneasily to the gallery and listened to the two talking so boldly below. Warwick now seemed all submission to the King, counselling caution to Clarence. Now and then their voices fell so low that Dickon could not overhear what they said, except his own name, when Warwick said:

'Sir, leave young Gloucester in his reserve; he will be of no use to us.'

Dickon, leaning on the balustrade of the gallery, thought of Anne. Anne seemed entirely lost, and he doubted if he would ever see her again, and that thought brought with it an extra-ordinary loneliness. To escape this he went to the chapel, but he did not enter it, for on

the step was seated a young girl embroidering a glove.

Dickon knew her, and she loved him. She was not in any way a substitute for Anne in his affections, but she could, on occasion, cause him to forget Anne. She was a few years older than he. She was shy and quiet. Beneath the thin muslin of her headdress her hair showed in flat reddish bands; she wore a green cloth dress.

'When she saw Dickon she went on her knees and remained by the entrance to the chapel looking down at the glove which she was working--a deerskin glove with stars of gold braid on the back.

'Alys,' asked Dickon, grave and troubled, 'hast thou ever seen the Devil?'

The girl crossed herself and sighed; she did not care what he said as long as he spoke to her.

He sat down beside her on the chapel step. She remained kneeling, her hand clasped over the glove. He reminded her of the wood in Middleham where they had first met, how she had told him of the devils that inhabited that forest.

Alys began to weep, to his amazement. She rested her head on the upper step of the chapel, praying to God, and all the saints and angels to protect them all. Dickon bent over her, noting curiously how slender she was, how tiny the waist drawn tight with the green cord, how white the neck beneath the brushed-up red hair under the stiff muslin coif.

A sharp commotion below broke in upon them. There were shouts, and blows, and commands, the clanging of harness, and Clarence's infuriated voice above it all.

The two ran to look down from the gallery. The great door was open.



and there were men clustered about in the darkness, holding torches and snatched-up lanterns, and in the middle of them Clarence, dragging in a dead man by the shoulders, covered with blood.

The girl hid her eyes, but Richard ran down into the hall pushing the servants aside so that he could see the corpse which Clarence was dragging into the light of the great stand of candles on the table.

'Sirs, who is it?' demanded Dickon.

The dead man, who had been savagely slashed with a dagger was a stranger to him; he could not understand the rage of his brother.

Clarence dropped the body on to the floor.

'It is my singing-man,' he said, and added, white with fury, 'Lord Scales did this--murdered this fellow and set him at my door out of pure spite; and I take God to record,' shouted Clarence, 'that I will revenge this!'

## 6

Richard of Gloucester was hunting with his brother in the woods at Shene when news was brought to the King which caused him to break up the day's sport and return, in a, fury that rarely broke his good humour, to the palace.

Richard was beside him when he turned his horse for home, and Edward flung out the news that he had received, namely that Warwick had enticed Clarence to Calais, of which great town he still held the command, though Edward had long been mindful to take it from him and give it to the Queen's father, and there he had married the young Prince to his daughter Isabel, and granted to him half of his immense possessions.

'Clarence is false, Clarence is treacherous!' cried Edward.

'And yet, sir,' said Richard, 'you still love him--your Highness's Grace still loveth him.'

'And if I did not, should I be in pain?' exclaimed Edward. 'Is it not justifiable to be weary of Warwick who has lured from me my own blood?'

Gloucester knew as well as the King how important this news was. Warwick, the most powerful subject, bold, daring and dissatisfied, had seduced the first Prince of the blood royal and united him to himself by the bonds of marriage and obligation, and divided the reigning family of England. Nor had he been imprudent in what at first seemed a rash deed, for he had obtained a special Bull of Dispensation from Pope Paul III, because the two cousins were related in the forbidden degree.

Edward, when his first quick rage had gone, tried to excuse Clarence, whom he had always, behind their disputes and quarrellings, loved. His blame and reproaches fell upon Warwick.

'What more did he want of me? Did I not honour him? When Margaret last rode through London, did she not sit on his saddle?'

Dickon remembered that. He had come to the capital to see his sister leave on her progress to the Low Countries--the bride of Charles of Burgundy--and it had indeed been behind Warwick the bride had ridden on the white charger, trapped to the ground with gold. But Dickon, shrewder than his brother, knew that this honour had only gilded a humiliation, for Warwick detested Charles of Burgundy and all his faction, and would rather have bestowed the lady on King Louis of France, for his son.

The Queen and the Woodvilles, clustering about the King at table and at his gaming afterwards, cried:

'Shame and dishonour on Warwick and Clarence!'

Richard noticed how subtly they contrived to turn the King against his brother, declaring that the Prince's behaviour verged on treachery, treason and rebellion. Towards evening, Edward, who seemed more uneasy and troubled by the news than it warranted, declared his intention of returning to London, and bade Gloucester ride by his side.

The young Prince flushed with pleasure at this honour. He came out of his sad reserve with such warm thanks that the King embraced him publicly before they mounted their horses. He remembered that Richard had asked for Anne Neville, and that he might have won her by disloyal stealth, even as George had won Isabel.

That night, when they were all lodged in the great rooms of the Tower, Edward granted to his brother the castle and manor which had belonged to Lord Hungerford, and all the possessions of the Beauforts, Edmund Duke of Somerset and Sir John his brother, rebels and brothers of the Beaufort executed after Towton, now abroad with Queen Margaret in France.

'Sir Richard, thou are a man now,' smiled the golden King, 'and I may give thee work to do.'

In his generous and extravagant fashion he nominated the boy Chief Justice of South Wales, Lord High Admiral and Chief Constable of England for life. George Neville, the Archbishop of York, who was present when these grants were made, protested against so much power being given to so young a man. But Edward replied, hotly:

'You have between you somehow estranged me from Clarence, but so ye shall not from Gloucester.'

King Edward could not be distracted that night. He inspected the fortifications of the Tower, taking his young brother with him, and pointed out the new Flemish bombards on the walls, questioned the captains as to the provision of arms, of powder, and said Scales should be Constable in place of Warwick.

Toward morning, while they were still on the ramparts, horsemen came hurrying in with news of a rising in the North. A man of the people, one Robin of Redesdale, was leading the insurgents. They had got as far as Northampton, the messenger said, and Lord Rivers with Sir John Woodville, the father and brother of the Queen had set out to meet them.

Richard sat on a bombard and listened to the messenger. He looked at his brother's tall figure, wide in the shoulders, narrow at the hips, in the furred robe, standing erect in the warm summer night, his handsome face lit by the light of the summer dawn, his hair golden as the beaten metal on his gown, with face craning forward, questioning the tired messenger eagerly.

Richard then looked at the wide dark river flowing out in the night and he thought of that voyage to Utrecht.

Again it was war, movement, hurry and flight.

The messenger repeated the words which were going all over the North, which were said to have been uttered to his troops by Robin of Redesdale:

'Easily sat up, easily pulled down. Come again into the field, Edward, Duke of York, and again set three Suns in the sky to help thee to

victory.'

As they went on their march to London the rebels gave away papers among the people, talking of the profuseness of the King's bounty to the Woodville family, how they had estranged him from the great nobles of the realm, and how, to satisfy their greed and avarice, he had unlawfully expended vast sums belonging to the Church, diminished the royal household and imposed heavy burdens upon the people.

They were coming to London, they said, to punish the Queen's kinsmen and dismiss them from his counsels. The messenger had some such paper on his person, and he gave it to the King, waiting humbly on one knee, and Edward read it in the strengthening light of the dawn, standing on the ramparts of the Tower of London with Dickon.

'Sir, are we not armed to meet them?' demanded Dickon. They returned to the great hall and sent for the Captains and Knights again, Edward making fresh inquiries as to their means of defence, then calling upon the Archbishop of York to put together a proclamation for the citizens,

Yet the news spread more quickly than this.

The first messenger had been delayed on his way, and was closely followed by others, and, with the last, the news was proclaimed at the gates on the Barbican. The Queen came into the room where the King and Dickon sat; she was all unlaced and shrieking, with her frightened children and weeping nurses, the little girls clinging to her skirts. She in a state which even the infatuated Edward thought too hysterical and, with some sternness, strove to check.

But the lady had good reason, for her father. Earl Rivers, and her

brother, Sir John Woodville, had been seized by the Lancastrian rebels and beheaded at Northampton. In every place where the rebels had encountered them the royal troops had been defeated.

'Warwick's hand is in this!' declared Edward, furiously. 'Had he not encouraged them they had not dared!'

Elizabeth Woodville began to rail against the weakness she had herself induced.

'Sir, I thought I was wedded to a great king.' she cried, 'not to a prince who cannot defend his own. What support had my father and brother? To what treachery have they not fallen a victim? Your Noble Highness speaks of the Earl of Warwick's treachery--but I could name to thee a viler rogue, and one who meddles deeper in treason, and that is thy brother, Clarence!'

Without waiting for his brother to reply, Dickon fiercely took up this challenge.

'Madam, better men than thy kinsfolk,' he said, 'have lost their lives in these affrays. Well ye know what hath provoked my Lord Warwick and the people.'

Edward added, though frowning:

'Dame, I will not believe the worst of Clarence; he is but a boy.'

Dickon stared at Elizabeth Woodville, whose face was swollen by tears, and whose yellow hair was dishevelled on her shoulders.

'Madam, who killed the singing-man of Clarence? That was what he will not forgive.'

'Sir, who should it be?' demanded Elizabeth Woodville, falling back

towards her husband as if she were threatened. 'What do I know of these bloody brawls?'

'Madam, Clarence thought it was thy brother's work,' replied Dickon, shortly.

The Queen began to laugh, wildly and foolishly.

'Sir, here is rebellion in the land and my father and my brother slain, and young Gloucester makes a to-do about a murdered singing-man!'

'Madam, he knew too much and not enough; said Dickon, 'and may not Clarence have a high ambition and a quick temper as justly as any Woodville?'

'Dame, to your chamber and your prayers,' said Edward, sternly, with a certain admiration for the bold, yet controlled fury which showed in Richard's looks. However he had been led and influenced by the Woodvilles, Edward had never lost his loving affection for his own family, and half the sting of the wound which Clarence had inflicted was healed by the fidelity of Gloucester.

The fully-risen sun saw London roused; soldiers filled the streets and the citizens stood to arms.

But the King, uncertain of the accuracy of the news he had received, could decide on no immediate plan of action beyond the instant fortification of the city. The latest report said that the rebels marching on London were sixty thousand strong, and Edward, so suddenly aroused from his sloth, had not men sufficient to meet such a force. Warwick and Clarence, too, had landed from Calais and Edward did not know if Warwick came as a rebel or loyal subject.

Dickon returned to Baynard's Castle, where the hell of the little

church of St Benet was ringing for mass. He told his mother what the alarm in the city meant.

Cicely Neville had great moral courage and self-command; ambitious and aspiring as she had been, she had left all worldly hopes and desires in her husband's grave. Now, faced with this dangerous situation, she brought her ability and energy into play. Though she no longer had any ambitions for herself, she wished to preserve the Crown (which her husband should rightly have worn) on her son's head, and she passionately desired to avoid the dissension, which seemed of late to have broken out between her two elder sons.

Placing her hands on Dickon's shoulders, she gazed with sad love into his face.

'Edward is weak,' she said, 'and Clarence may be false, but thou art strong and true--a Plantagenet.'

As Cicely of York spoke she remembered her own ambition, dead now, but once so fiery. She recalled her hot and passionate partisanship for her husband's claim, her burning hope that he would be crowned King of England, her desires for brilliant destinies for her sons, her own almost regal pomp at Fotherinhay. She felt almost faint with remorse and self-reproach when she considered how much of her own fiery spirit these same sons must have inherited. Their blood, was almost too high and noble. Plantagenet--Neville--Montacute--they quartered all the finest arms of England; one kingdom was too small to satisfy their ambitions.

Of her three sons, she trusted Richard most. Edward had forfeited much of her affection and her esteem by his disastrous marriage and by a certain secret of his which she kept concealed for shame and fear. Clarence had always been headstrong and reckless, but in



Dickon she saw his father's prudence, moderation and solid judgment.

'Where hath Warwick landed?' she demanded.

'At Winchelsea,' replied Dickon.

'Go, then, to Winchelsea, my son; stop them on the march and bring Clarence to me. Conjure him to come with thee in the name of his dead father and in mine. Bring also,' added the resolute woman, 'my nephew Warwick, and remind him how his father was slain with thine at Wakefield, and what close ties should knit us all together.'

'Madam, dost thou think that thou canst reconcile them even now?' asked Dickon, joyfully.

Cicely of York, who had hidden so much courage, so much ambition and so many gifts in a nunnery, replied:

'I am a more foolish woman than I think myself to be if I cannot bring together my own sons.'

'I go at once,' replied Dickon. 'Who shall I take with me?'

'Thy nearest friends, whom I take to be Lovell and Radcliffe; have no more with thee than one esquire each; thou must travel light and swift, and not excite attention on the way.' Dickon armed immediately. Lovell and Radcliffe were soon ready, eager to be in some definite action. None of these knights was twenty years of age. Dickon was eighteen. They knew no more of the world than they had learnt in the tilt-yard, the exercise ground, and the great hall at Middleham. With great pride Dickon put on his surcoat with the arms of England and his own peculiar cognizance of the White Boar; he held his arms stiffly, because of the great fan-shaped pieces of steel at his elbow.

They rode out swiftly through the city gates into the August afternoon. the hot fields and shady orchards of Kent. along the white winding road set with roses and green hawthorn, between the large homesteads and the close-set villages.

Dickon did not know which way the Earl would take. He thought it possible that Warwick might avoid the capital and go by some devious route to join the malcontents in the North.

Therefore as the dusk descended he commanded Lovell and Radcliffe to separate from him--one to the left and one to the right, and, keeping on the high ground, look out for any trace of the Earl's advance.

Dickon set off for Tonbridge, not reaching it till the dawn. The town was full of commotion and rumour. Dickon urged his exhausted horse on to the castle of the Clares, where he had been a prisoner for a brief space in his childhood, and summoned the governor and demanded his news. But nothing was known in Tonbridge Castle, except that Warwick had landed a day or so previously at Winchelsea in one of the King's great ships and was marching inland--some said with hundreds, some said with thousands of knights.

Dickon took off his armour and slept for an hour in a great chair, then mounted a fresh horse and rode towards the coast in the early light of an English summer day. At the inn where they stopped for food his esquire, who was only a boy, declared he had fallen sick from hard riding and could not continue. Dickon scorned him for a weakling and went on alone.

Dickon rode by himself.

The beauty of the landscape made him light-hearted. The sun shone brightly on the woods and sloping valleys, across which the hares and squirrels ran, and in those hedgerows, studded with a hundred flowers.

He took off his casquet which, heavy with coif and plume, pressed on his forehead, and hung it at his saddle-bow and rode bareheaded with the light wind stirring his hair.

Now he was clear of walls, of ramparts, fortified castles, and great dark houses guarded by men-at-arms, he felt his vague alarms and sorrows lift from his shoulders.

He rode higher over the bare shoulder of the downs and saw the sea in the distance, dissolving into the sky in a haze of silver.

In all that open landscape there was only one figure, that of a shepherd, standing among his sheep. Dickon shouted out to him.

The shepherd came slowly, leaning on his crook; he was followed by a ragged dog. The two of them looked with small bright eyes of suspicion at the splendid young bare-headed knight.

Dickon asked him if he had seen a company--warriors, or men-at-arms--marching from the coast?

'Sir, does Your Nobility mean Earl Warwick's men?' asked the shepherd.

'I mean no other.'

'Sir, ye are far out of your road,' replied the shepherd. 'The Earl halts beyond Winchelsea--two rode past here just now to join his power,

and yesterday four men came and took away meat, straw and flour from the farm.'

'What was their badge?' asked Dickon.

'Sir. Bear and Ragged Staff,' replied the shepherd.

Dickon pondered, erect in his saddle: All the weight of care and responsibility was back upon him. Why should Warwick linger? Why halt and make a camp? Did he intend to rouse the south as Robin of Redesdale had roused the north?

'Put me upon the road,' he said, 'for this lord's halt or camp.'

'Sir. Your Nobility must know that I cannot tell just where the Earl of Warwick lieth,' replied the shepherd, 'save that it is towards Winchelsea and across the marsh.'

'Put me on the road to Winchelsea,' commanded Dickon, impatiently. 'I shall meet those who can show me the way.' The shepherd raised his knotted staff and pointed out a track across the downs which led, he said, to the main road to Winchelsea, which was a town on a hill above the marsh and the sea flats, and could not be mistaken, Beyond was Rye, also on a hill, and as he, the shepherd, had heard, the great Earl was encamped between the two. The shepherd then gave him complicated directions about how to skirt the marsh and keep on the high ground.

Impatient, Dickon rode off, and for hours followed the track across the downs. At last, as the sun was setting, he came to a waste wood.

He was lost, and he felt he had broken his promise to his mother. His horse went slowly, and he felt tired himself with the weight of his armour. He changed his course several times in the wood, but could not get out of it. There was a thick undergrowth of brambles, ferns

and tall leaves, and amid this tangle grew the purple spikes of foxgloves, yellow daisies, and rosy blossoms of sorrel. Squirrels darted up into the trees as the horseman approached; robins and thrushes in their summer coats hopped along the leaf-strewn way, for here the brown leaves of last autumn still lay undisturbed.

Dickon halted in a little opening in the wood, which reminded him of that other wood at Middleham, where he had met Alys, the wood-cutter's daughter. Alys had been in and out of his thoughts all day; so had Anne and sometimes they seemed the same woman, though they were so different.

He dismounted and fastened his horse to the low bough of an oak tree. The animal began to crop the soft, sheltered grass.

Dickon sat down, stretched his limbs and sighed with fatigue. He could not resist the desire to rid himself of his armour. With relief he unlaced piece by piece, and laid it on the grass beside him, cuirass, pauldrons, casquet. He stretched himself on the grass, and watched the squirrels and the birds, which, encouraged by his silence, flitted from bough to bough and hopped about in the undergrowth.

He tried to concentrate on his errand and nothing else, to turn over in his mind what course he should take to find the Earl of Warwick when he had got out of the wood and to doubt whether reliance could be placed on the shepherd. Yet, despite himself, his mind was filled by nothing but Anne--Anne, who sometimes had the eyes and throat of Alys, who moved and tuned, who seemed to sit on the grass beside him in the shadows of the oak tree, to take his head on her lap and tell him to sleep.

Dickon, against his will, slept in the wood. Through his dreams came the feel of fingers on his forehead. He turned with a cry and sat up,

alert and reaching for his sword and dagger.

It was dusky in the wood, streaks of the setting sun fell through the branches of the trees.

Dickon sprang to his feet, angry and alarmed.

But it was a woman who knelt on the grass and laughed up at him.

'Oh, my goodly young knight!' she said, 'do ye not know that it is foolish to sleep unarmed in a wood?'

'Madam, foolish indeed,' replied Dickon, bitterly; 'and I am disloyal to my trust.'

Stiff from his sleep, confused by the sudden awakening, he looked for his harness.

'Sir, take no heed for that,' said the lady, still seated on the grass near where his body had pressed it; 'whoever you be, you are safe.'

'Madam, I must find the Earl of Warwick,' answered Dickon.

The lady rose.

'Sir, come with me,' she said, quietly. 'You are whether or not you know it, but a few yards from my father's castle--he hath Bone with the Earl of Warwick.'

'Gone! Did not the Earl then halt between Rye and Winchelsea?'

The lady laughed. 'Sir, nay, he hath gone, and with my brother, and nearly all the men-at-arms, so that I am almost defenceless, and so lonely that I am glad of the pleasant adventure of meeting a fair young knight in my wood, and I would, if I may, have thy good will.'

'Where hath Warwick marched?' cried Dickon, thinking of nothing but his useless errand, which he believed his own stupidity had ruined. Possibly Lovell or Radcliffe had met Warwick. though that seemed a faint hope.

'Sir, ye must have been a laggard on the way,' smiled the lady. 'Lord Warwick left Winchelsea four days ago.'

The news, then, had come to London late; in any case, he could scarcely have overtaken the Earl. A deep frustration settled over Dickon.

'Madam, then I must get back to London,' he said. 'But not tonight,' smiled the lady.

For the first time since their meeting the young Prince looked at her, but it was too dusky in the wood for him to see her clearly.

'I have been misled.' he murmured. 'Fie on me!'

Then, with a pang, he recalled the sharp eyes of the shepherd and the shepherds's dog that he had met on the downs--something in the man's lean face had an ugly familiarity. Had he been betrayed by the familiar of their house, that fiend that he had known by the name of Jon Fogge?

Dickon shuddered; he felt the lady's hand on his.

'Sir, bring thy horse and leave thy armour,' she said. 'I will send out an esquire to fetch it before dew falls.'

'Madam, I must go to London,' he repeated. 'Jesu, mercy, I must away!'

And again the lady said:

'Sir, not tonight.'

She led him through the twilight to the castle, he following with his bridle in his hand and the tired horse behind. Had he walked a little farther for but a few moments more he would have found himself on the moat. The castle was on a little height from which the woods fell away, and overlooked the sea. A flag was on the keep and in the windless evening hung slackly to the pole, so that Dickon could not make out the cognizance.

The lady smiled back at him over her shoulder.

'Sir, you are a long way from Winchelsea; you must have been misled. Who are you, sir?'

'Madam. I am a mere messenger from London, sent by the King's Highness to recall the Earl of Warwick to his allegiance.'

'Sir, you will not tell me thy name?'

'Madam, call me Sir Richard,' he said, 'and let me get upon my way back to London.'

The lady not answering this, murmured:

'York?'

And he said:

'Madam, thou art for Lancaster?'

At that she seemed amused.



'Sir, what is any of it to me?' she laughed. 'Men will fight up and down and in and out; it doth not greatly concern women what they fight for.'

Dickon's lip moved in dissent as he thought of his mother and the Countess of Warwick--women so passionately devoted to the causes of their husbands.

When he heard the portcullis of the castle drop behind him and saw his horse led away, Dickon reflected that he might have walked into a trap. The castle appeared deserted, except for a few pages and old serving-women, and some men-at-arms on the ramparts.

Dickon asked anxiously after his armour. The lady assured him it should be fetched immediately.

One of the pages led him into a pleasant room looking over the sea, and lit by a great stand of wax candles. Dickon was vexed, thinking of his mother waiting in vain for news of his success with Clarence, and of the great Earl marching on London--who could tell for what purpose? Dickon recalled with alarm the imbecile Henry of Lancaster enclosed in the Tower. What if Warwick were to take the poor King out and set him on the throne again?

He washed the dust of the long day's riding from his hands and face, and combed his hair; a lassitude, both of fatigue and disappointment, possessed him. He came slowly down the stairs to the great hall. The lady sat by the table, on which were meat and wine and two covered silver cups.

Dickon, speaking with hesitation in his soft voice, entreated of her the favour of a fresh horse.

'Sir, that ye shall have,' she replied, 'the best in the stables. But, first, eat a little.'

Dickon, with courteous gratitude, sat at the board beside her. The strangeness of it all began to affect him with a sense of not having fully woken from his dream. His life had been rigid and carefully ordered. There had been nothing strange in any of his days since he went to Middleham, and even in London, among half-guessed and unexpressed excitements and dangers, his hours had passed with pleasant monotony. The same duties, the same prayers, the same company, the same comings and goings in familiar streets.

But here it was different--the landscape, the castle, and the woman.

He regarded her with a peculiar interest. She seemed to take the shape of the creature who had been in his mind all day--the woman who was both Anne and Alys. She was more robust than Anne, and her hair, of a reddish gold, reminded him of Alys's hair. Her eyes were grey and set far apart. She had the long white neck of Alys and the little rounded chin of Anne. She spoke and conducted herself like a gentle-woman, with Anne's precision and sweetness. The sparkling fire in her eyes and the soft lustre on her red lips were qualities he had noticed in Alys. She would not tell him her name, nor did he know the quarterings cut into the stone chimney-mantel.

'Sir, since thou art only Sir Richard to me, to thee I will be only Rosamond.'

## 8

It was a moonless night.

'Folly,' the lady said, 'to ride out on an unknown road, nor have I any who could guide.'

The young Prince, tired and dispirited, did not resist. When the

board was cleared he sat with the lady and played at dice.

Dickon was uneasy about his family, and yet enclosed in some subtle inner peace which forbade these fears to disturb him. He felt at ease, as if he had come home after long travelling. There was an enticing calm about this lady; she was not under tutelage like Anne, who must always obey her father, nor in servitude like Alys, who must always obey her mistress; not out of reach like both of them through the odd twists of fortune, but free and intimate.

She put aside the dice and began to tell Dickon tales of chivalry. Her mind was full of stories of Lancelot and Charlemagne and the Siege of Troy. She declared that manners had decayed since those days and that chivalry was pining away in England, and not the wonderful thing it had been; that men thought too much of money and trade, and women of clothes and amusements; and for this she blamed the King.

She said he was effeminate, ruled by the Woodvilles and lived in lechery, and that it was no wonder that the knights like Warwick could not abide such a womanish rule.

Dickon silenced her, though a certain languor was falling on him. He leant his elbows on the table and his face in his hands and said that Edward was his master, that he could hear nothing against the House of Plantagenet.

'Sir, thou art loyal!' cried the lady, smiling at the same time, and moving the stand of candles so that she might better see the young man's face. 'I suppose it is easy for a man to be loyal, and for a woman very difficult.' She regarded him earnestly and asked if he had a lover? Wife or paramour?

Dickon flushed, reserved and haughty.

'Sir, ye are so young,' remarked the lady. 'I am full ten years older than ye, yet not past my prime.'

The narrow deep-set windows were open wide on the summer night. Dickon could smell hay and harvest; the sweet air blew up from the distant sea over the wood and downs. He took up the dice and cup and tossed it idly in his hand. So fortune came--now this, now that--the fortune of the House of York.

The lady regarded him closely. She was attracted to the young knight, the soft fascination of his peculiar voice, his air of fire and courtesy; she was sure that he came from a great house.

'Sir, how difficult is life!' she said; 'tangle and confusion and disaster, and nobody understandeth!'

She shrugged her shoulders, catching the dice that Dickon dropped from the cup.

'Sir, will ye sleep?' she asked, shyly, 'since ye must be early on your way.'

Dickon had lost his fatigue; he felt uneasy, excited melancholy. This woman affected him as neither Anne nor Alys had done.

She appeared to offer not some distant hope of felicity, but a present ecstasy, yet he did not believe her one of those wanton women he had always scorned. He wondered, thinking about the shepherd on the downs.

Then he said, putting down the cup and dice:

'Madam, have ye ever seen a devil?'

The lady crossed herself.

'Sir, do not ask me,' she murmured, troubled. 'I do not know. I have always left alone these matters of magic and enchantments. Oh, we must walk warily if we would keep away from the edges of hell.'

'I can half-believe,' mused Dickon, 'that our house hath such a familiar. I bear a name famed for misfortune and a title that hath been one of doom. I am oppressed by this--of stalking danger ever at my heels, a false guide ever in front.'

They stared at each other.

'Sir, did thy false guide bring thee here tonight?' asked the lady.

An old serving-man entered the hall. He brought Dickon's armour, which had been carefully cleaned and polished. He laid it on the stone seat in the window-place and over it the surcoat the servant had found in the grass and brought in with the harness. The lady glanced at this and saw in the yellow light of the candles the Leopard and the Lilies quarterly with the label of three points ermine, charged with canton gules, and the blazon of the White Boar above:

'Sir. thou art a royal prince?' she exclaimed.

She rose from her place and sank so low on her knees before Dickon that he flushed with embarrassment and raised her up with a protest.

'Sir Richard of Gloucester,' she said,

'Madam, the King's youngest brother,' said Dickon.

He had raised her, and they stood, holding one another by the elbows. She was no more than his height, and he was not very tall.

'Madam, now ye know my errand,' said Dickon, faltering in his words, for he had never held a strange woman so close before. 'It was for my brother--to detach the Duke of Clarence from Warwick and return him to his allegiance to the King.'

'Your Noble Grace,' said the lady.

She turned aside her head that he might not observe her wistful pleasure in him, her wistful pity for his youth and earnestness.

Her husband had been killed at the first battle of St Albans, her only child had died at the breast. If he had lived he would have been now half-way to this youth's age. She scorned herself and laughed at herself for that thought, which was an odd one for her to have when she had intended to make this young and beautiful knight her lover.

Dickon looked at her long white neck straining away from him. He thought of the white neck of Alys which he had often wished to kiss, but had forborne, as she was his mother's threadwoman, and then of the white neck of Anne, who was Warwick's daughter and not to be approached except with reverence. But this woman was surely the creation of his dreams.

The lady moved away, fearful of offending him.

Beneath his softness and his sadness she knew he was austere and innocent--a virgin knight. She did not deceive herself that, however she enchanted him, her magic would have anything but a brief hold. She could not long delay him. He would go early in the morning and return where loyalty called him. She would be alone again in the half-empty castle, in the monotony of downs and woods--a woman with her life half-unlived, and her heart wholly unsatisfied, her husband but a distant memory, the child but a distant regret. She looked at him tenderly and earnestly.

'No devil led Your Noble Highness here,' she said. 'I shall not harm ye.'

'Madam, how could a woman harm me?' asked the young knight in his innocence.

Tenderly she considered him. Gloucester this was, Richard of Gloucester, and the magnificent King's favourite brother, who had asked, the gossips said, for Warwick's Anne--a frail, sickly, ailing girl, a child still, who could have taught him nothing. She sighed, musing, and Dickon, thoughtful, watched her.

The breeze flowed in from the open window, with the perfume of the downs and the woods, and the pasture-lands in the hollow by the castle.

'Sir, come upstairs,' said the lady.

The stairs were lit by a small lantern; above this stood an image of a saint--St George fighting the Dragon.

Dickon leant to whisper a prayer, remembering his own familiar image at home placed above his bed, wearing the gold band, given him by the Count of Charolais.

The lady looked wistfully over her shoulder at the bright head bent beneath the lamplight, the fine hands clasped beneath the chin.

They entered the bedroom together. Rushes fresh cut from the marsh lay on the floor and gave out a sweet yet pungent perfume; the two windows stood open. Dickon did not feel as if he were enclosed by walls with the green rushes underfoot and the soft night air blowing in from sea and downs.

The room was simple: there were no hangings on the walls. A chest stood at the end of the bed; the curtains and coverlet were of cotton. Everything had the smell of cleanliness. The lady put the candle on the table by the bed, and the flame cast wavering shadows over the room.

Dickon, pensive at the window, thought:

'If I were to close my eyes and kiss her might I think that she was Warwick's Anne, or even Alys?'

The lady knew his mind, his hope and doubt. She sat on the chest at the foot of the bed, had untied her girdle and taken off her outer robe of green cloth, showing a tight gown of white silk, and a thin gold chain with an amulet. Dickon sat by her side, half-exalted, half-trembling; a lift of wind blew out the candle.

Dickon slowly kissed the lady--the throat of Alys, the eyes of Anne. He felt comfort and consolation in these caresses. Warm and soft she pressed close to him and held him with whispered endearments. He rested his head on her shoulder, feeling a desire to weep. This was not the love of his longing, nor the love who had longed for him, but it was love--kind, generous and enchanting.

For a few hours of the summer night she held his ambitions, his terrors, his loyalties, and his duty in suspension.

In the morning she armed him herself in the noble harness of which he was so proud, and said goodbye to him without any words of regret; gave him, as she had promised, the best horse in her father's depleted stables and set him on his way with a guide on to the London road. In the daylight she was not Anne nor Alys, but a strange woman whom, in his heart, he despised for wanton easiness; yet, he would have made her many promises, half-ashamed and half-



triumphant, for the sake of that night.

She put by the half-faltering speeches which she had heard so often before.

'Sir, we shall scarcely meet again, Your Noble Highness,' she smiled. 'You leave me without grudging, I dare say.'

Dickon, armed, rigid on his horse in the early morning, erect with his hand on his hip, looked down at her, half-frowning, although sweet words were on his lips.

He might never see her again, but he could scarcely forget her. She had interrupted his dreams. The landscape looked hard and bright in the early sunshine, the grey walls of the castle and the hills rose blank into a pallid sky.

He rode slowly and thoughtfully, and once on the main London road, briefly dismissed the guide; and then he turned in his saddle to look back at this fellow, and saw the man was glancing over his shoulder at him and smiling.

The young knight flushed and went his way, depressed.

An early harvest was being gathered in, and he had to make way for wagons piled with corn, cherries in baskets, and the first apples. As the sun rose, a haze of heat lay over the valley and the distant hills.

Dickon did not think so much of the lady of last night as of the shepherd who had sent him to her and the shepherd's dog with the elongated face and the flat eyes, surely lit with an unearthly flame. He struck his breast with a little gesture of anguish. How he had been deceived by the gentle night and the bright morning, and the elation which had come with his loyal errand! He had, in his fatigue and disappointment, been false to Anne and almost false to Edward.

He rode to Tonbridge, where he heard that Clarence and Warwick had reached London, and captured Edward, who had been at Shene, and sent him under strong guard to Middle-ham, in charge of George Neville, Archbishop of York, Warwick's brother.

There was fighting in the city wards between the Red Rose and the White when Dickon returned to London.

Cicely of York sat mute in Baynard's Castle. She did not reproach Dickon; but he wept as he told her of his fruitless errand--how he had foolishly separated from Radcliffe and and Lovell and lost his way, how he had been misdirected by a shepherd on the downs.

He said nothing of the woman called Rosamond, but of that part of the tale Cicely of York could guess.

She praised him for what he had attempted, and gently suggested he should go to Middleham.

## 9

Dickon, with Lovell and Radcliffe and a considerable following of Yorkist knights, rode to Middleham, and demanded to see the King. Dickon thought that they might be received defiantly, but the portcullis was raised, the bridge lowered, and Dickon and all his followers were allowed into the great courtyard of the castle.

'And here, maybe, sir, we shall stay,' said Lovell, seeing the gates closing behind them.

Warwick received Dickon in the great familiar hall where he had so often read and played with Anne. The August sun glittered in the oriel window of vermilion, azure and gold behind Warwick's head.

He stood erect by the table, and beside him sat his brother George, Archbishop of York. The Earl was armed, back and breast, over a leather coat with studs of steel.

Dickon, walking ahead of his followers, strode up to the table, and, without hesitation, faced the great Earl who had been so long in the position of his master and tutor.

Warwick spoke first, smiling grimly.

'Sir, have ye returned to thy ancient lodgings in Middle-ham?' he asked.

'Sir Richard Neville, I have come,' replied Gloucester, 'to take the King's Noble Highness back to his city of London. You, Earl Warwick, have gone too far; by God's Head, you have gone too far in keeping His Grace in restraint here.'

'Sir,' replied Warwick, scowling, 'Edward of York is not the first King upon whom I have laid my hands. This crown of England goes to and fro like a tennis-ball, and one that my hand casts, Henry in the Tower of London,' he added, insolently and arrogantly, 'and Edward of York in the castle of Middleham! And who shall say, Gloucester, which I may choose to set up again on Edward the Confessor's throne?'

'Sir, ye press a deep injury heavily,' replied Dickon, hot with anger. 'Do ye think this outrage to my brother's person will ever be forgotten?'

'Sir, perhaps,' retorted the Earl, folding his arms on his broad chest, 'I have had injuries which also linger in my mind. I set up a Plantagenet, a warrior and a prince--'

'...You set up!' interrupted Dickon, outraged. 'It was my brother's own

pro prowess that gained the crown.'

Warwick smiled down at the Archbishop, who remained in heavy silence, observing all.

'Seest thou, brother,' grinned Warwick, 'how the boy I trained honours his teaching? He is a bold and loyal youth.'

'Thou art not loyal,' said Dickon, 'though thou art of our blood and have enjoyed many of my brother's favours. What cruel return was this marriage of Isabel with Clarence, this landing with an armed force, this incitement to rebellion, this seizing of my brother's person!'

'Thy brother, Gloucester,' exclaimed Warwick, 'is indolent and gross. Who hath seen such ease and luxury as now ruin the chivalry of England? What doth your brother consider but his clothes, his games, and his women? Had he spent his revenue on armed men instead of costly robes to display his beauty he had not so easily fallen to my power.'

'Sir, flaunt as ye will,' replied Dickon, 'England is Yorkist yet.'

'Prove ye that, my good lord,' said the Archbishop. 'Why, at the first raising of our standard we had more men than we could count!'

Dickon turned on the dark, formidable prelate.

'Ye should take shame to lead the Church against her lawful lord!' he cried. 'Could not ye, a priest, have considered the closeness of blood between us, or the love we once had, that ye must provoke this sedition?'

'Sir, if ye yet know anything, Richard of Gloucester,' replied the Archbishop, 'ye know that a Neville will never stand lower than a Woodville. Had ye thy brother Clarence's spirit, ye also would not

forgive this setting up of a widow woman and all her family.'

'Sirs, I did not come here to argue,' replied Dickon. 'I see that we three shall get no further with angry words. Let me at least see my brother.'

The Earl, whose whole bearing showed indifference and grandeur, gave consent.

He intended no violence during the imprisonment of Edward; his purpose only was to intimidate and humiliate what he considered the false and effeminate monarch, and to force him to relinquish his designs of giving the archbishopric of York away from his brother to the brother of Elizabeth Woodville, and the command of Calais away from himself to the Queen's father. In short, Warwick hoped by this display of defiance and force to overawe Edward.

'Sir, tell thy noble brother,' he said, as Dickon passed him, 'that on his promise for a good demeaning he is free.'

'Sir, such promises are for subjects, not for Kings,' flashed Dickon.

Warwick smiled at the proud young knight with a sudden tenderness.

'And yet I could declare that once ye loved me, Dickon.'

'Sir, I could love thee still,' replied the youth instantly, 'were I not brother to the King.'

He followed the knight, armed, as every man in the household was armed, with the Bear and Ragged Staff upon his coat, to the lofty apartments assigned to Edward, where he was lodged with respect and comfort; but with none of the luxury and extravagances to which he was accustomed, and which had given such offence to English chivalry.

Dickon knew that all Warwick's charges against the King were true--Edward was not the man who had fought at Mortimer's Cross and Towton. No monarch of any in Europe was so wrapped in idleness and pleasure, so greatly in debt, so deeply surrounded by the foolish and the vicious. There stuck in Dickon's mind, too, the wild charge of Clarence--that Edward was a magician; and this he could neither disprove or disbelieve, though he tried to thrust it from his mind. Yet, despite this, his loyalty was not shaken.

He ran to his brother's side and greeted him with tenderness and reverence.

'Ah!' exclaimed Edward, 'have they made ye prisoner, too?'

'Sir, no,' replied Dickon. 'I have come from London with a small following to demand the release of Your Noble Highness. I have our lady mother's solemn charge to George, and to Warwick, that you on the instant are set free, and that all come to Baynard's Castle to talk in her presence over these disputes!'

'Never, sweet Jesu, mercy,' swore Edward, 'could I live in amity with Warwick again, nor with Clarence, until they have acquitted themselves of this treachery!'

'Sir, what will Warwick do?' Dickon demanded. 'Henry of Lancaster remaineth in the Tower unregarded, untouched; will Warwick set up again this witless innocent?'

'Warwick,' replied Edward, scornfully, 'must offer England a fairer king than Henry of Lancaster. But there are other pretenders, Dickon; a French Queen trains her boy to wear my honours. He will be of thy age now, Dickon, and, I have heard, likely enough.'

'Warwick doth not think of that?' asked Dickon.

'That or Clarence,' replied Edward, impatiently. 'Clarence is a traitor too. I should not have overlooked that marriage that was falsely done behind my back in defiance of my commands.'

Hot and furious, King Edward raged, pacing up and down, striking his clenched hand into the other, shouting, throwing back his head, calling down all manner of injuries on the heads of the Nevilles and of Clarence.

Dickon was as moved as his brother at the misfortunes of the House of York, but he had more control, and though he loved Edward, could not acquit him of all blame. For he also loved Warwick and Clarence, and could see the cause they had for grief and affront.

When Edward's rage had spent itself a little, Dickon tried to persuade him to a quieter and more crafty frame of mind. Speaking earnestly, he represented the power the Yorkists still had in England, the disadvantages of the two nearest pretenders to the Crown—the insane King, captive in the Tower, forgotten by all, and the young boy growing up far away in France, a foreigner. He touched, too, on the wrongs Warwick had suffered in being overlooked for the Woodvilles, nor did he spare his brother's marriage, of which, he declared, none approved. He implored Edward to consider his love for Clarence and the tenderness which had always united them as a family, and to weigh up all these matters, and try to come to an agreement with the rebellious Earl.

Edward listened, held by the intelligence and shrewdness of the young man, who spoke so eloquently, with that seductiveness of voice and manner peculiar to himself, which was not without its effect, even on Edward.

Yet the angry King disliked the counsel; he detested any manner of

politics or statecraft. He was willing to fight for the crown, but not to intrigue for it, and he was deeply inflamed against Warwick, so much so that he could not imagine how that Earl could ever bring himself within the circle of his forgiveness again. With Clarence it was different, for Edward had always had a deep affection for all the members of his family.

When Dickon stopped, Edward did not immediately reply, then asked suddenly what his Queen did in London?

Dickon replied:

'Sir, she remains in the Tower with her children and kinsfolk.'

Despite this answer Edward fell into sullen brooding, and Dickon left him.

He returned to Warwick and the Neville Archbishop, who were discoursing vehemently with the Yorkist knights in the great hall. They were disputing the Earl's action, though many gave him the right in his resentment against the Woodvilles, for it had not been the Nevilles alone who had been outraged by the promotion of this family.

Clarence now sat by Warwick, his extravagant ebullience had increased with success. He greeted Dickon with a great burst of laughter, and, pulling him aside, asked him if he would like to see Anne, 'and that I could contrive for thee, Dickon, for she is closeted with Isabel, my wife.'

He said these last words maliciously, and added:

'Sir, my brother, thou seest I have obtained my bride, but how wilt thou get thine, Dickon?'



Richard turned away, and replied heavily:

'I will not see Anne in secret.'

'Sir, fickle and perjured already,' mocked Clarence.

Warwick, the Archbishop, the two Princes, and the Yorkist knights, all started speaking at once. Warwick said nothing about setting up Henry of Lancaster again, nor mentioned the young boy being carefully educated by his anxious and ambitious mother in France, but he did speak of Louis de Valois, the King of France--said he had that Prince's might behind him, and he criticized the Burgundian marriage of Margaret Plantagenet, swearing this had been against his advice and his policy, claiming that England's credit and honour lay in an alliance with the King of France.

'Sir, these matters I will have put right,' he declared to Dickon, 'while thy brother is in my power.'

Dickon scowled at this threat. He had pleasant memories of the Count of Charolais.

'Sir Charles of Burgundy is my sister's husband,' he said, defiantly, 'and though ye were to hold us all in prison we would make no alliance with the King of France, his enemy.'

Warwick laughed, and eyed with approval the young knight whom he had so carefully and loyally trained.

'Sir, I would rather have thee for King, Richard of Gloucester,' he declared, 'than thy brother or Dame Woodville's brat, if she hath mettle enough to breed a son.'

Dickon moved away from all of them and answered hotly:

'Sirs, I am my brother's man.'

The violent shifting arguments ended in a dubious decision. Warwick flung himself and all his power on horseback and set out for London, the three Plantagenet Princes, the Archbishop and a great train riding by his side.

As Dickon, keeping near to his brother, left Middleham, something made him glance back at the sunlit ramparts, and at a high window he saw a little figure: Anne--Anne!

He knew it was her though she was so far away; the fine muslin of her winged headdress blew out against the grey stone. Dickon did not know if she saw him, or even if she were looking for him. His heart contracted and he turned away from Middleham.

Warwick thundered across England. He kept Clarence near him to steady the unstable Prince. Dickon rode beside his brother, who came as a prisoner among a company of Warwick's knights and archers.

'This I will never forgive,' swore Edward. 'God record that oath!'

The gates of London opened readily at their approach--whether to Warwick or the King no one asked. Warwick clattered up to Baynard's Castle with the three Plantagenet Princes. He strode into his aunt's presence, and demanded:

'Dame, what would ye that I do with thy three sons?'

Cicely of York, dressed in her nun's habit answered instantly:

'Thy blood, answereth thee, Richard Neville: one is thy King, one is thy son-in-law, the third thou hast trained in arms. What closer bonds of loyalty need ye?'

At this, Edward, storming amid his guard, was breaking out, but his mother stayed him with an upraised hand; she still had great power over him.

'I thank ye all,' she said, with tranquil dignity, 'that ye have obeyed my summons to meet me here.'

The, quiet woman gathered all the turbulent, angry knights round her table. She talked them, with her wisdom and gravity, into some semblance of conciliation. Warwick, either overcome by her persuasions, impressed by the danger of the/situation, doubtful of the pretenders ready to his hand, or remembering the long love and service between him and the House of York, with sudden passion renewed his allegiance to Edward, but not without a certain haughtiness that the King noted well. Impressed by his mother's calm prudence, Edward accepted the submission of his mighty subject, and took Clarence again into his affections, and this with genuine love and kindness.

A few hours later the doubtful and disturbed populace were again able to shout for King Edward as His Highness rode to the Tower as a free monarch, with Lord Warwick in his train, and the pennants of the Bear and Ragged Staff mingled with those that bore the royal arms and the cognizance of the White Rose of Castle Clifford.

Dickon remained with his mother in Baynard's Castle; nor were there many days of peace following this brittle reconciliation. Alarms so easily raised were not so easily laid down, and faction fights continued, even when the leaders of these factions were in professed unity.

Dickon was appointed Commissioner of Array in the county of Gloucester, and sent with royal forces to quell the rising in that

county, but while he was down there he received the news that Clarence and Warwick had fled overseas, taking with them Isabel, Clarence's wife, and Anne her sister. Dickon was immediately summoned to London, appointed Warden of the Northern Marches, and, with hardly a day to rest, set out with his brother to put down the insurrection in that area,

'Surely I have done what I can,' said Cicely of York. 'But if the matter hath gone beyond a woman's healing, ye, my sons, must fight it out as men.'

## 10

Ambition and revenge had hurried Warwick to a bold and successful action. He had taken Clarence to Louis de Valois, whose whole power would lie behind the rebellious Earl in any attempt on Edward Plantagenet,

Swift, decisive and unwearied, Warwick recklessly pushed events.

He waited on Margaret of Anjou in her exile and, great reason though she had to hate him, he brought her, by his arts and her necessities, to an agreement by which he undertook to set her husband and her son up again, as easily and as decisively as he had set them down. As both gauge and recompense of this bargain he pledged to the young Edward, Prince of Wales, the son of Henry VI, the hand of his younger daughter, Anne Neville.

'That,' said Edward, when he heard this piece of news, brought by confused messengers from France, 'that, sirs, is Warwick's aim—to set his daughter on a throne! His intrigue means only that, Jesu, mercy I—to make his Anne a queen.'

'Sir, had ye given this gentlewoman to me,' replied Dickon, 'he had

not had this bait to dangle before our enemies.'

'Dickon, I will give you everything else you can desire,' said Edward, 'and still,' he added, with a loving look, 'not fill the measure of thy loyalty.'

Richard of Gloucester had, indeed, many honours: the castles, manors and lands forfeited by Edmund Beaufort, the Duke of Somerset, Stanhope Park and Weardale Forests; and the manors of Robert, Lord Hungerford. He was Chief Justice of South Wales, Admiral of England and Constable of England for life, besides being Commissioner of the Counties of Gloucester, Devon and Cornwall. Also, since the open revolt of Warwick, Edward had conferred on Richard letters patent of the castle, manors, lordships and forfeited estates, not only of that Earl, but also of Sir Thomas Dimmock, Sir Thomas de Laund, and other knights who had fled with the Nevilles to France. But with the country ravaged by war, tramped by lawless companies of armed men, these grants and honours meant but little beyond the parchment on which they were inscribed.

Up and down the country the royal brothers had marched striking at the rebellion. King Edward was not by nature suspicious, so put a deep trust in a Neville, the Marquis Montacute, Warwick's brother, who commanded the greater part of his army at Doncaster. While the Plantagenets at Doncaster sent out proclamations to all the Yorkists of the North to come there at once with all their fighting men, they heard that Warwick and Clarence had landed on the south coast with all the resources of Louis XI behind them--great ships, many knights and bowmen, French and English--while the Lancastrians, led by the Beauforts, were riding to greet the invaders, who had sworn to restore Henry VI.

'Sir, this Warwick,' declared Edward, 'is a greater man than I took him to be, and Clarence a greater traitor.'

He did not speak angrily, but with regret, for he had once loved both these men.

'Sir, it grieves me,' mourned Dickon, 'that George should play this part.'

'George lusteth for the crown,' said Edward, smiling. 'There should have been three kingdoms to content us all. Warwick hath promised that George will be king after the imbecile and the child, and Warwick's Anne will be queen.'

'But sir, what shall we do?' said Dickon.

Dickon, we shall meet them in battle,' replied Edward, 'where they will and with what array they have.'

'Sir, I would,' muttered Dickon, 'we had another besides a Neville with us here; Jesu, mercy, I trust none of that family!'

The Marquis Montacute,' interrupted Edward, 'abhors his brother's treachery and is certainly as loyal to me as a man may be.'

The King and his brother were housed in a small fortified house, the troops were quartered in the villages around and in tents spread in the autumn fields. With the King were Lord Hastings, his father's friend; Sir Anthony Woodville (since his father's death Earl Rivers), and the King's other brother-in-law Lord Grey, and a few Yorkist knights. Bewildered by constant tales of treachery and by the news of Warwick's invasion with such a huge force, Edward, for a while, was irresolute. He, who had been considered a hero after Towton, was now despised throughout the country, and those who had liked neither the Yorkists nor the Lancastrians shouted for Warwick as the better man. Warwick was marching on the capital, and it was hopeless for the Plantagenets in the North to try to stop him, though it

was always Edward's desire to hurl himself straight on any foe in any circumstances.

Edward and Richard were in earnest conversation, unarmed, and sitting at their table. The swiftness of their overthrow had not dismayed either of them. They had recently heard that Warwick had declared Edward a usurper, and, together with Gloucester, traitors to King Henry VI, whom it was the impetuous Earl's intention to take from the Tower and bring robed and crowned to Westminster.

Edward laughed bitterly; Dickon pointed out a flaw in the Earl's designs, which must have been in his mind since the day when he had taken Clarence to look at the imbecile monarch, namely that a warlike people such as the English would not put up with a King like the poor captive of the Tower. Edward began to reproach himself that he had ever left London.

'Sir, Warwick's entry into the gates would not have been so easy had I been in the Tower,' he sighed.

Always alert, Dickon suddenly rushed to the window and leant out. He had heard shouting among the troops beyond the moat; he saw, as he craned into the autumn sunshine, a knight whom he knew by his colours and coat to be the Marquis Montacute riding among the men, and calling out at the top of his voice for 'King Henry! Henry of Lancaster.'

'Oh, by my faith, betrayed!' exclaimed Dickon. 'Why would ye trust a Neville, brother?'

Edward leapt up, shouting for his armour.

Red, breathless, and struggling into his harness, Lord Hastings entered the room, saying they were betrayed, and that Montacute

was rousing the troops for King Henry.

'Now, God tell me!' exclaimed Edward, 'how did we ever trust a Neville?'

The feeling of danger leaping at them from what they had believed to be serenity encompassed them all; each felt the dagger at his heart, the axe above his neck, as they ran through the mansion shouting for their harness. The alarmed esquires buckled the Princes into their mail. Hastings clattered down the narrow stairs to hold the bridgehead. Montacute, shouting for Henry of Lancaster, was rousing the troops; from the tents and streets the men were leaping to their arms, crying for the Neville.

King Edward sickened at the thought of flight in the face of danger; he was for standing and making a fight for it, even against these odds, and dressed his shield and sword, but Dickon, in a grim whisper, reminded him what it would be to fall into the hands of the traitor, Neville, whose brother had called him a usurper. Would he be dragged in Warwick's triumph to London and made to figure a captive in the exaltation of Henry of Lancaster? The brothers struggled together on the stairway.

Lord Hastings was fighting at the bridgehead, Montacute's own men were engaging him, the clash of steel and the shouts came clearly into the room.

'Sirs, what of the treasure, money, arms--shall we leave everything behind?' asked Lord Rivers, running down to the Princes.

'Sir, leave everything,' commanded Dickon, 'it is for our lives.'

Edward had not paused to completely arm; he had pulled a rich robe lined with marten fur over his steel-studded doublet, but he longed to



get at his enemies. Montacute's men were thundering into the house, shouting, 'A Neville! A Neville!'

The Prince escaped by a back door, Edward having to be dragged by Richard, and Rivers ran to the stables, mounted and galloped across the bridge which Hastings still held, charging through the rebel men-at-arms and through the town.

Grim, red-faced Hosting left his post, clambered over those he had killed, found his horse and followed his Prince.

Only a few moments since the first alarm given by Dickon, when he had heard the shouts—'A Henry! A Lancaster!' found the King of England was flying from his own soldiers. As they cleared the startled town, Edward, bewildered by his own fury, demanded where they should go? and pulled up his great horse.

'Sir to the coast,' said Dickon, grim.

'Which is the nearest port?' asked Edward, pale with anger. 'Sir, it is Kings' Lynn,' replied Hastings; and added that he knew the road, while he twisted a scarf end round a bloody hand.

The King, holding in his impatient horse, stared round to see how many had shared his flight; a small company, breathless, disarranged, was about him on the dusty road. 'Sirs, have I no more friends than this?' he asked bitterly. There were Hastings, Rivers, Saye, Richard Gloucester, and three other knights who, seeing their king escape, had cast in their lot with him. The crown of England had been lost in no longer than it takes to throw a dice.

Edward, riding fast, raged to think how he had been betrayed and trapped. He believed that he was riding for his life. Warwick had called him a usurper and declared him a rebel and a traitor; no doubt

if Warwick got him, his head would wither on the Mickle Gate at York, or hang above London Bridge. Thinking of Clarence, Edward groaned with rage.

'Sir, ride quicker,' said Dickon, at his side; 'they will have us if they may.'

The marsh was autumn-gold and warm all round them. As they went, Hastings and Rivers argued about the route, and Saye declared it would be wiser to make for York--Edward's own ducal town would be sure to give him protection; but the Plantagenet princes plumped for the coast.

The whole country was in arms against them, and defenceless and betrayed, they could not face the overwhelming might of Warwick.

They were not followed; in the quickness of their flight and the confusion of the troops, Montacute had not noticed the direction they had taken.

At mid-day they begged milk and bread from a frightened woman in a lonely farm, which Dickon paid for with a little ring he wore. With the dark, they fastened the horses to a wayside tree, and slept beneath the hedgerow, watching the cold road in turns. With the dawn they were on horseback again, heading for the coast.

When they reached King's Lynn, an unfortified town of traders, which looked peaceful and remote, their spirits rose a little. The people in the streets stared at them, for the news had not yet reached the Norfolk port, and it was an odd sight to see these weary knights, half-armed, with their hands on their swords, guiding their stumbling horses over the cobbles, asking if there was a ship in the port.

They were told there was a vessel--a Dutch galleon which, defying

the Easterlings, traded in wool and skins with Holland; that afternoon she was making the port of Amsterdam. If they had their fare the captain would probably take them. The King and his companions rode down to the quay-side and went into an inn full of sailors and the smell of salt, cheese, smoke and new greasy wool. Edward hoped to sell the horses here to pay their passage to the Netherlands, but the people were too cunning to buy; they could see that these were plainly fugitives in full flight--they would, in any case, have to leave the horses.

But the landlord offered them ale and bread and meat, which they ate and drank, standing at the window and watching through the horn pane the heavy ship at anchor in the port, with the Dutchmen setting the dark sails, the last bale of wool and packets of calf skins being stowed in the hold.

Even in this moment of distress, humiliation and danger Edward showed his pleasant good nature. Pulling off his blue velvet cap, he thanked them all with a pleasant salute, and left the inn with his arm round Dickon's shoulders, saying:

'Jesus, mercy! had I time to spare I could make all these men shout for me.'

In the warm, hazy autumn afternoon they boarded the Dutchman.

The Lowlander captain was a brave, poor man, who daily risked his life in this trade with England, for he carried goods which the Hansa League considered their monopoly. Standing on his laden deck, he stared at the knights, and asked them if they could pay their passage.

Edward held out empty hands.

We have nothing,' he said, candidly, 'and our harness we cannot leave; but I am Edward Plantagenet and, God record it! some day I shall again be King of England.'

'Sir, kings and wars, thrones and knights are nothing to me,' replied the captain.

Edward flung off his coat lined with marten fur, and stood on the deck in his waistcoat studded with steel points.

'I pray thee, will ye take us for this mantle?' he asked, smiling. 'It is of good worth.'

The Dutchman fingered the smooth fur and drew his palm down over the brocade, stiff with gold thread, and seeing it was of value, said gravely:

'Sirs, I'll take ye; but the passage may be rough—I am often chased by the Easterlings.'

'Let me wear the coat until we reach Holland,' said Edward, for the wind was sharp.

The Dutchman agreed, and went about his business directing the departure of the ship.

Dickon and his brother sat among the bales of English wool, almost broken with fatigue, rage and grief, and watched the English coast fade into the mellow autumn distance.

## 11

As Dickon, seated at his brother's feet, watched Lord Rivers, leaning over the vessel's rail and laughing, he remembered how much he

had always disliked him, and this dislike was heightened now by the volatile knight's amusement.

Laughing immoderately, Rivers seemed to think that the precipitate flight from Doncaster had been a huge joke, and teased the scowling Hastings about the figure he had made tumbling into the room, red in the face and struggling with his harness.

'Sir, who would have given credit to this tale had it been written in a book?' he laughed. 'A crown lost so easily! These two good Princes have not now a golden noble between them!'

Dickon, listening from amid the bales of wool, shuddered with rage and shame. He longed to leap up and take the man by the throat, and shout at him that it was because of his sister and his relations that Edward Plantagenet had lost his crown, but for his brother's sake Dickon was silent. He could do nothing for Edward--there was no further service possible to him--so he sat beside him, as close as might be, in silent fidelity.

Edward had been roused from his idleness and indifference to events; the softness had left his handsome face; he was pale and menacing. Absently he caressed Dickon's hair as the young man sat at his feet, his head level with the King's knee.

At the rail Rivers laughed and Hastings was sullen, and the rising wind blew their hair about their faces.

The captain and the sailors took no notice of their strange passengers; silent and wary, the sturdy Dutchmen went about their work of sending the ship cleaving through the cold blue waters towards the coast of Holland.

Edward brooded over what he had left at Doncaster--his clothes, his

treasure, his documents, his clerks and musicians. Knights and esquires and pages whom he had sworn would have been faithful to him had hung behind. He raged when he thought that all Montacute had to do was to gather up the abandoned forces and march southwards, and then all England would be in Warwick's hands.

As evening began to fall, the captain of the ship, wary at the wheel, sighted two Easterlings. These two great ships, gold and flame colour in the sun, bore down on the little Dutch vessel with her load of contraband. Lord Rivers, the first to understand the hurrying sailors' flung-out shouts, laughed again with that maddening immoderation which exasperated Dickon.

'Sir, Jesu, mercy! two Princes of England captured by Easterlings! For what prize will they sell that merchandise to Lord Warwick?'

Dutch commands rang through the sound of the wind and straining sails; the ship plunged out of her course, turned and fled, leaping through the big waves. The spray fell where Edward and Richard sat amid the wool bales, cursing and crying at their helplessness.

The Easterlings were in pursuit, keen as hounds after a hare, but the little Dutchman held grimly to his advantage. The tawny colour of the sky and waves faded to a dusky purple, then to the deep blue of late evening. Lanterns flared orange on the prow of the pursuing boats and hung like ruddy stars from their high masts.

Dickon felt sick from the plunging of the vessel. Full of regrets, he laid his head on one of the bales of English wool--regret for pride and power lost; regret for Warwick's Anne betrothed to someone else; regret for little Alys with the long white neck and the red hair beneath the muslin cap; regrets for Rosamond in that Kentish castle; regret, most of all, for this fresh disaster to the House of York.

Through the September night, a day, another night, the Dutchman, crowding on every inch of patched canvas, evaded the Easterlings and, plunging from his proper course in the early morning, drove his ship ashore in Alkmaar, on the West Friesland coast.

Chilled, hungry and exhausted, the Englishmen stepped ashore, Edward leaving in the hands of the taciturn captain, his coat lined with marten. The latter had no concern for his passengers, but his eyes gleamed with satisfaction when he considered that he had saved his ship and cargo from the Easterlings. Edward, standing in his waistcoat in the cold North air, questioned the Dutchman about the knights who lived in this neighbourhood. It was his intention to go to the Duke of Burgundy's Court, which was then being held at St Pol, but he could not achieve this without some assistance. The captain replied that the most important man in the area was the Sieur de Bruges, Lord of Gruthuus, whose chateau was at Ooscamp, and who also had a great mansion at Bruges.

Edward's spirits rose at this piece of news, for he remembered this Flemish lord was a fellow-knight with himself of the Order of the Golden Fleece, and therefore, by all the rules of chivalry, bound to assist him.

In the clear light of the autumn morning the Englishmen sat on Alkmaar's quay and ate the food and drink which the captain gave them. The dark gables of the town, the arched stone bridges and the gleaming canal, were behind them, and from a high tower a bell rang out.

Edward sent Rivers, who was the most accomplished of them all and familiar with several languages, into the town to make enquiries as to the whereabouts of Louis de Bruges, and Rivers strolled off, laughing, with his hands on his hips, his head held high, and all the people craning out of windows and doorways to watch him.

Dickon watched him go, detesting him, and he was pleased when Hastings grumbled suddenly:

'Sir, it is well the chamberer bath his uses, for in the tilt and the fight he is no better than a whining child.' Edward allowed them to talk; he also despised Rivers, and was often impatient with him. But when this decried man returned he had good news. Louis de Bruges was in Alkmaar, having come to see the unloading of some of his ships, for, like many of the thrifty Flemish landowners, he dealt largely in merchandise. Lord Rivers had found him in a fine house near the great church, and he had received him with astonishment, and come hurrying up after the Englishman to offer his complete obedience to the King of England, as a fellow Knight of the Golden Fleece.

With lordly chivalry the Sieur de Bulges put his entire possessions at the disposal of King Edward. He first lodged the Englishmen comfortably in Alkmaar, then brought them to his magnificent mansion in Bruges, and made them free of this, his servants, his clothes and his horses.

Yorkist fugitives followed the Princes into the Low Countries; each ship that put into a Dutch port had English men and women on board. Many knights and gentlemen, a few weeks ago potent and rich, were now reduced to plain beggary, for they had fled, empty-handed like their King. No welcoming message had come from the Duke of Burgundy's Court, where Beaufort, the rebel Duke of Somerset, and Queen Margaret's man, had the ear of the sombre Charles.

In England, it appeared that Warwick, with Clarence always by his side, had taken possession of the Tower and released the prisoner, Henry Lancaster, whom he declared to be the lawful King of England, and his son Edward the heir, and after him the Duke of Clarence.



'Sirs, God record that!' said Edward. 'This Warwick would, at any cost, set one of his own daughters on the throne.'

Sir Robert Chamberlain, who had been in hiding in London, and had escaped in disguise on a ship sailing from Billingsgate, told how he had seen the poor King brought out.

Warwick had complained that Henry of Lancaster had not been kept as befitted a great prince, and he had taken the grandest robes from Edward's extravagant wardrobe and hung them on the shrunken shoulders of the prince, who protested, and called out for a monk's garb.

Warwick had shouted at him that he was king again, that his wife and son, as soon as possible, would be in England, that his enemies were defeated, and he, Warwick, would uphold him against them all; that behind him was the King of France, and with Warwick were the Duke of Exeter, Edward's brother-in-law, who had left his wife for love of Lancaster, and the Earl of Oxford.

But Henry of Lancaster--apparently--appeared to have understood little of this, and had wept sadly at having his peace, as he said, destroyed. Then, what with the loud exhortations of Warwick and the half-mocking encouragements of the Duke of Clarence, he had suffered one of his old paralytic fits, and had been unable to move or speak. Upon this, Warwick, fiercely impatient, had declared a regency, and swore that he would govern the realm until the arrival of the Prince of Wales.

The citizens of London had murmured against this; they were inclined towards Edward because of the great sums he owed them, which they thought they would never see again unless he were restored. Warwick then, to quieten them, had ridden angrily to the Tower and snatched out King Henry, attired him in a robe of azure

velvet, and placed on his head the royal circlet.

In this regal guise he had set him on a mule and, he taking one reign and Clarence the other, they had led the King up and down the city, through Bishopsgate, the Chepe, by the Cross of St Paul, and along Thames Street, Henry holding on to the saddle, hardly able to keep his feet in the stirrups, muttering and lamenting to himself, and appearing to think he was on a penance, rather than a triumphal progress.

This was to the great rage and humiliation of Warwick, who, nevertheless, kept his hat in his hand out of respect for the poor creature whom he led, and called out to the people, gaping at the windows and crowding at the doors, to shout for Henry of Lancaster, which some did but they were amazed and disgusted at the sight of the weak, bent man, with the long grey hair, the bleached face and mumbling lips, thin white hands clinging piteously to the saddle.

The Earl of Oxford declared that this parade had been a great error on the part of Warwick and Clarence, for it had revealed to the citizens of London that here was no king, but a poor imbecile who looked as though he was about to die, and they had thought with regret of the beautiful Edward. A lot of them thought it was a poor sight to see Clarence in rebellion against his brother, and setting up a wretched imbecile in opposition.

Other news seemed like an omen of success for the Plantagenets.

Queen Elizabeth Woodville, in sanctuary at Westminster, with her children and many of her relatives, had given birth to a son. After ten years of kingship Edward had an heir. He was elated, and Rivers insolently satisfied at this intelligence; but Dickon thought, with secret resentment, 'Who will endure to be reigned over by one who is half a Woodville?'

Yet were their actual circumstances desperate enough.

The Duke of Burgundy, whatever his secret sympathies with the Plantagenets, would take no hand in the troubles of England, nor provoke his great neighbour, Louis de Valois, who had backed Warwick and Margaret of Anjou.

This Queen was preparing a great force to return with her son to England, where Warwick was now her delegate, and waiting for the reward which she had promised him when he should restore her husband--the hand of her son Edward, Prince of Wales, for his daughter Anne.

Against these activities Edward had no redress. He was living on the courtesy of the Flemish knight and his supporters were starving, scattered over the Low Countries.

Burgundy proffered only an indefinite refuge at his Court, a life of dull inactivity. Indolent as he was in times of peace, Edward spurned such an offer, and applied himself passionately to the good offices of his one dear and loyal friend in the Low Countries, his sister, the Duchess Margaret. This lady, beautiful, brave, of considerable intelligence and winning manners, was the counterpart of her brothers, to whom she was most loyally attached. Even while Edmund Beaufort, Duke of Somerset, was posting back to England to bring Warwick the good news that Charles of Burgundy would not interfere in these quarrels, Margaret was heartening her brothers with promises of instant help.

Edward's wish was no less than to collect as many men as might be and return immediately to England and strike a blow for the crown. He wanted, if possible, to do this before Margaret of Anjou could gather her forces and land with the Prince of Wales. Burgundy considered this course almost hopeless in its utter recklessness,

and advised the Plantagenets to delay and be patient, which suited neither Edward, Richard nor Margaret.

Burgundy was engaged in a fierce war with the free city of Liege, which, instigated by his enemy, Louis de Valois, had revolted. He was absorbed in the passions that had been roused by the sacking of this great city, which Louis had devastated with furious cruelty. Ambitious dreams devoured the soul of the man. He wished to conquer Lorraine, to raise Burgundy to a kingdom, to obtain from the Emperor Frederick III the title of Vicar-General of the Empire; he wished to defeat and humiliate that perfidious fox Louis, his neighbour. His wife, therefore, seeing him absorbed in these affairs had the wit not to harass him openly with the distresses of her brothers, their privations and miseries, their humiliations and losses. But she wrote furiously to her brother Clarence in England, telling him to return to his allegiance, and, using her full influence with her husband, she obtained secret permission for a grant of fifteen thousand florins, four Flanders ships and thirteen Easterlings for the English expedition.

## 12

Charles of Burgundy, riding home from some expedition against his enemies, found young Richard Gloucester talking with his sister in the castle at St Pol.

The Duke took off his black helmet with the great Flanders lion upon it, and with a stern smile asked the young Plantagenet what made him so busy with his talk?

'Sir, we must consult together,' replied Margaret; 'there is so much to be done, and we consider what port we should choose so as not to compromise Your Noble Highness. Haste, too, is our great need,

since Margaret of Anjou and her son fit out their expedition.'

'Madam, not theirs, but that ugly, lean, sly devil, Louis de Valois,' scowled Charles. He gazed thoughtfully at Dickon and smiled in his melancholy way, thinking how he had carried him on his shoulder as a child at Utrecht, and taken him to see the old Duke's beasts.

Charles Burgundy, encompassed by his own enemies and surrounded by hydra-headed troubles, rebellious cities, menacing Swiss, threatening Lorrainers, cared little who reigned in England. He had married Margaret of York reluctantly and as a matter of policy. Yet from the moment that he had first seen his bride the heart of the gloomy Duke had been captured by Margaret's golden English beauty, her gaiety, her high spirits. Charles glanced now at the eager, earnest young man, at the lovely, smiling woman in her white fur and yellow velvet with his lion embroidered on her kirtle, and he said:

'Madam, do what ye will and plague King Louis the best ye may. And, for a port, is not Louis de Bruges married to a sister of Henry van Borselen, Lord of Veere? There you may fit out thy ships and set sail for England.'

'Sir, it is well spoken,' said Dickon, eagerly; 'and good Prince, I will do it.'

In February the ships, which the Lord of Gruthuus had secured from his brother-in-law, were ready in Veere, nor did Henry van Borselen begrudge this use of his town, for he had an ancient grievance with the House of Lancaster. Besides the four great ships that Margaret had secretly procured from her husband, there were thirteen Easterlings, hired, and to be at Edward's service till he should land in England, and for fifteen days afterwards. For men Dickon had got together nine hundred, as well as the crews of the ships. Among this

number were three hundred Flemish gunners armed with hand guns--an invention almost new to England.

It was, in face of their complete overthrow and miserable circumstances, a wonder that they had been able to get together even such a force, yet, compared with that waiting on the coast of Normandy and urged on by the prayers of Margaret and the wishes of Louis XI, this was a miserable handful of men and ships.

Storms tore up and down the North Sea and the English Channel, and beat alike on the coasts of the Lowlands and on the English cliffs; neither Margaret nor Edward could sail. Such news as came from England revealed Warwick firmly enthroned there as Regent, nor had Clarence responded to his sister's letter urging him to return his allegiance to Edward. All the adherents of the House of York were imprisoned, beheaded or outlawed. Great knights like John Mowbray, Duke of Norfolk, were sullenly retired to their estates and castles, keenly watched and firmly guarded by Warwick.

'This Earl will be difficult to dislodge.' said Edward grimly. Every day they inspected the anchored ships and the waiting men, the stacked arms and the packed provisions, and paced the long, wet quay in the savage storm, gazing out at the tossing spray of the North Sea which thundered round the Isle of Walcheren.

Dickon, in the short intervals between his work and his watching, had the company of a woman.

On a windy day of autumn in Bruges, when the leaves fell thickly from the high trees into the still, green waters of the canal, he had met Alys. Alys had had a parcel of sewing in her hand, and at sight of Dickon, in his distress and loneliness and exile, all her love and service had shown in her face.

They had walked apart under the autumn trees, exiled, solitary.

She told him she could have stayed safely with his mother in Berkhamsted, but she had managed to remain in London and attach herself to Sir Thomas Parr's lady, and so had come to the Low Countries.

In the evening they had gone to her little attic, and sat over the peats together, and talked of the old days in Baynard's Castle and at Middleham, and how they had met in the wood, when she had covered him with fern leaves while he slept. And then, unfolding her work upon her knee as if that wholly occupied her, she told the Prince that she knew he loved Warwick's Anne.

He was amazed, and Alys began to weep. He noticed that same urgency in her as there had been about Rosamond in the Kentish castle, that dread of passing time, that terror of losing the irreplaceable.

She was in his arms entreating for a little kindness, and Dickon gratified some gnawing, unappeasable dream in that embrace. It seemed to him as if she had been tossed to him in the confusion of the times--a treasure lost and gained again in these dark months, and during those days of winter, of stress and excitement, the lovers snatched some pleasure in each other.

With some of the Burgundian grant Richard had bought silk and velvet in Bruges, and Alys had made this into a sur-coat to wear over his polished armour.

In the fitful March light Alys was drawing the last threads of silk through the badge of the White Boar. With loving care she had shaped the Leopards three by three, the Lilies three by three.

Alys,' said Dickon, leaning by the little window and watching the wind-swept quay, 'I believe that we shall sail tomorrow, be the storm ever so fierce. My brother's impatience runneth faster than the wind.'

Tears gathered in the wide eyes of Alys. He was not looking at her, and she kissed the Leopard and the Lilies and the White Boar, folded the surcoat, laying it on the settle by the fire, where the peals smouldered on the open hearth.

'Alys,' said Dickon, 'you have never asked anything of me. But you will come to England when Edward hath the crown again?'

'Sir, what should I ask of thee?' replied Alys, 'save a little of thy kindness. How do I know if I may come to England or no?'

That night Dickon stayed with Alys, gentle and loving, and listened, wide awake, to the wind, the ships' masts creaking in the harbour as they strained in their sockets, and the chimes blowing out thin and melancholy into the night. In the early morning Edward, in harness that reflected the hard grey light of the March day, came to summon him, smiting violently on the little door with his mailed fist. 'I will sail today,' he called.

Alys clung for no more than a second to Richard. She helped to lace his points, to buckle his harness, to set over it the surcoat she had embroidered. She put on her hood and hurried out on to the wet quay, the wind almost blowing her over on the wet cobbles.

The Dutch, the Flemish, the men-at-arms, the gunners and the archers embarked. Edward directed the crews. They were to make for the Norfolk coast, where he believed the Duke, John Mowbray, would rise in his favour.

Alys, the wind whipping her cloak around her, watched the knights



embark, their steel gleaming in the greyness, the crests blown above the steel coifs. She saw the sarcenet banners and pennants, some of which she had helped to embroider, mounting the gangways to the great ship's poop. She saw the English flag high up in the stormy grey sky, with the seagulls sweeping and circling round it. The fleet was divided into two--one 'division was led by a ship which carried the King and Lord Hastings, while Gloucester commanded the other division.

The rain struggled with the wind as the ships struggled with both wind and water. The gale tossed the waves up in sheets, drenching the canvas and the archers on the decks. The wet sails rattled in the dark air, and Alys, rain-stung, wind-blown, forlorn, watched them sail.

The ships fought out as far as Vlissingen roads, and there the gale held them back, rising with a sudden velocity which made Dickon think with an inner shudder of the malignant devil that dodged the fortunes of the House of York.

For nine days the ships tossed in Vlissingen roads; then the wind turned, and the King's vessel, with the English flag torn to strips by the wind, but still fluttering above the crows'-nest, turned for the Norfolk coast.

Off Cromer Edward anchored and sent two knights--Sir Robert Chamberlain and Sir Gilbert Debenham--ashore to see if they might get at the Duke of Norfolk. But they returned with the bad news that the whole country was in the hands of Warwick's men.

King Edward steered for Yorkshire, his own country. The storm rose again with greater strength. In the dark, the wind and the rain, the squadron was broken. When pale dawn broke across the sky, filled with blowing black clouds, the King looked for his companion ships.

He was alone, near the dark line of coast.

He commanded the captain to drive the ship ashore. They were near Holderness. The battered vessel turned into the Humber and anchored at a place named Ravenspur.

Edward Plantagenet, his knights and the Flemish men-at-arms landed on a bleak waste of sand. There were in all, counting the crew of the vessel, five hundred of them with which to face the entire might of England armed for Warwick, and, perhaps, much of the might of France, armed for Margaret of Anjou.

Edward stood among his men. They had been fourteen days on the North Sea and were stiff and tired, but all clean-armed, with weapons of iron. Edward sighed with the relief at being in England. He commanded the captain to burn his ship.

'Sir, if I am to become King, I will give you five times the value of this vessel. If I perish, you may ask thy price from Warwick for bringing me on so fatal an attempt.'

Sticks were kindled, torches and cressets were lit, the gunpowder and straw scattered on the deck of the storm-beaten boat. The English flags were brought off and set on the knights' lances and against the grey waters of the Humber the large ship smoked slowly, the canvas flaring in the dull March day.

Scouts were sent to a near-by village, but no one wanted to join that little force watching the burning ship on the banks of the Humber.

While Edward, frowning at the flaming vessel, wondered what he should do next, two bands of horsemen galloped up to him--Richard Gloucester with three hundred men, who had landed at a point about four miles away, and Rivers, who had reached the shore at Goole.

Edward embraced his brother with tears of gratitude to God. The little force of nearly a thousand men united and marched inland towards the city of York.

## 13

At York the Mayor, though in dread of Warwick, fed and rested the troops, but Edward was accepted as Duke of York, not as King, and he pushed on to Tadcaster, where he celebrated Palm Sunday. He still commanded nothing more than a small band of adventurous mercenaries, and against him was opposed all the resources of England. But beneath his ease and affability Edward possessed the hot, passionate Plantagenet temperament, and this had been fanned to a steady flame by the treachery which had pushed him from the throne. Since the afternoon when he had escaped on board the Dutch boat at King's Lynn he had never hesitated in his firm determination to recover his crown or die as his father had died at Wakefield. In this passionate resolve Dickon was one with him.

Warwick, when he heard of the burnt ship and the desperate march inland, laughed; but Warwick had forgotten what he had to deal with in Edward Plantagenet, and did not yet know the quality of Richard Plantagenet. Edward was a very great general, supreme in strategy and tactics.

The people held back along his line of march, believing that his cause was hopeless, but Edward pushed on steadily for London. He was reassured by one piece of good news; the storms that he had dared had kept back the French fleet on the coast of Normandy; Queen Margaret and the young Prince of Wales had not sailed.

Warwick, still mocking the invaders and hoping daily to hear an account of the landing of the French, gathered up seven thousand

men and posted himself behind the high walls of Coventry, while his brother, the Marquis Montacute, marched to Pontefract to throw himself across the way of the invaders on their southward march. Other Lancastrian forces under the Earl of Oxford and the Duke of Exeter were advancing from the Eastern counties, while from London came Clarence to oppose his brothers.

Dickon had sent messenger after messenger to Clarence, with the most urgent and appealing letters. But as the army advanced through the mud and storm of the early spring weather he received no answer to these. Dickon had strained every sinew and every nerve to do his brother's service; his limbs were stiff and his body aching from the tedious hours in the saddle and the weight of a complete war equipment. The unpausing speed of the King's movements shaped in Dickon's mind to a half-crazy monotony like the motion of the ship across the wild North Sea--the wind blowing with them, the trees bending in the direction in which they marched, the mud of fallows, torn hedgerows where the icy wind blasted the first green, shivering dank weeds straggling in water-logged ditches, grey churches and villages, and half-frightened, half-admiring faces at the roadside to watch them pass; ahead and behind, the mud-splashed horses, the mud-splashed men-at-arms, the wind howling and great gusts of rain and sleet; bells ringing in alarmed churches; labourers in fields and farms flying before their approach, and always at the head of the army the golden, mighty Edward, staring grimly ahead, peering across his saddle-bow through mist and wind and rain, as if he saw the invisible goal before him--London, his wife, and the crown.

Scouts told of Montacute awaiting at Pontefract, and Edward, who had never been outmanoeuvred by an enemy, outwitted the expectant Neville, executed a flank march and reached Nottingham, marching through the night, leaving Montacute baffled.

At Nottingham the two weary brothers smiled at each other, for men

began to gather round their wind-rent, rain-stained standard. People began to remember Mortimer's Cross and Towton.

'Better to serve a brave knight and a soldier than an imbecile and a boy, led by a bold subject.'

Tales of the crowds joining the Yorkists reached Warwick's eastern contingents, and these, uncertain, paused at Newark.

Edward, through weather which every hour seemed to get worse flung himself on Leicester and, without pausing, from that city to Coventry, where Warwick was entrenched with his seven thousand men.

Taken by surprise by the force which appeared suddenly outside the city walls, Warwick declined the battle which Edward defiantly proffered. He remained sullen and silent, enclosed behind the high gates, moats and ramparts. It was fourteen days since Edward had landed with nine hundred men on the bleak and barren coast of Holderness. Warwick thought bitterly of the charges of Clarence, which he had only half-believed .. Edward's valour and presence of mind seemed superhuman, and Neville, musing sourly, wondered if he were indeed a magician and had the aid of some powerful demon.

Edward, with heartened and satisfied men, marched towards London.

There was now no opponent between him and the capital except Clarence. As he considered this, Edward showed the first uneasiness since his landing.

'Dick, I do not wish to fight Clarence,' he said, moodily. Dickon replied:

'Sir, I do not believe Your Noble Highness will need to fight Clarence.'

He reckoned not only on the family affection of his brother, but also on his well-known fickleness and desire to attach himself to the winning cause.

When the outriders announced that the Duke of Clarence and his army were in sight, Edward and Dickon were encamped in a field three miles on the road to Banbury. On the news that Clarence had halted, as if hesitant or uncertain as to his future course, Dickon called up Radcliffe and Lovell, and, a few paces behind his announcing herald, rode into the army of Clarence. He passed through the ranks of knights and archers standing to their arms, and by the light of torch and lantern saw that they eyed him doubtfully, as men uncertain of their cause, and some shouted as the ensign of the White Boar went past, and called out after the young Prince, riding fast, resolute in his battle steel.

Clarence waited among his men. He had halted but not encamped. His helmet hung at his saddle-how, his bright hair was tossed over his face. With his hand on his hip he shouted to Dickon across the wind as his young brother drew his sweating horse up within a yard or so.

'Why art thou here, Dickon?' he cried, on his old note of half-mocking, half-affectionate irony.

'Sir, I wish an answer to my letters,' replied Richard Gloucester. 'Art thou with us or against us?'

'Jesu, mercy! I have proved on which side I am,' replied Clarence. 'Have I not helped parade Henry of Lancaster up and down the London streets? Am I not Lord Warwick's man? Thou, good Dickon, hast heard this news.'

'Sir, thou mayst hear some other,' replied the Duke of Gloucester. 'Edward hath nine thousand men behind him. He hath outwitted both Montacute and Warwick and only you stand between him and London. How many of your men will fight against their lawful king? Return to thy allegiance, Clarence. Edward loveth thee yet.'

Clarence laughed, pushing back his wind-swept hair.

'Edward knoweth some evil arts,' he said, 'to wrest that success from disaster; and I am sworn to Warwick.'

'Sir, Warwick is a traitor,' flung back Dickon, 'and you have an older allegiance than any you have sworn to him!'

George Clarence, erect, magnificent in his ornamented armour and splendid trappings, pondered in the dark and windy night, looking up and down his waiting ranks of sullen men. The fierce light of cressets flickered in his hauberk, his pauldrons and his casquetal.

He loved Edward and Dickon, he felt his faith due to Warwick, and he was inconstant and by nature false, taking oaths and honour lightly; he was ambitious, and not one to stay by a fallen friend. And there was that meanness in him which made him consider that if he joined Edward, and Warwick lost, he was husband to Isabel, and those great possessions of the proclaimed rebel would fall into his lap. Money, ease and power seemed to lie with Edward; the fickle Prince also felt some uneasy stirrings of loyalty to the House of York, the line of Plantagenet, and his elder brother.

Suddenly he set his black horse plunging through the mud, flung out his hand and seized Dickon's, so ready for his clasp.

With one impulse the brothers shouted, 'For King Edward! For Plantagenet! For the White Rose of York!'

The knights and men awaiting this signal responded with a great roar. The whole force moved off through the dark and joined the encampment on the Banbury road.

Dickon took Clarence to Edward's humble pavilion and placed the hands of the two brothers together, clasping his own over them.

He said nothing.

Clarence, always easy and graceful, dropped on one knee and made a humble submission. The King raised him with affection and kissed him on either cheek, restraining his anger.

'Oh, Jesu, you are easily forgiven,' he said, and raised his right hand as if he took an oath in church. And Clarence smiled a little, with his face kept down.

That night the united army marched towards London, and four days later the three Plantagenet Princes presented themselves at the gates of London, which were instantly flung wide to admit them. Both from policy and choice the citizens received them gladly, for the absence of Warwick and Montacute and the defection of Clarence had left Lancastrian sympathizers defenceless.

Dickon and Clarence went to Baynard's Castle on St Paul's Wharf. Dickon felt a pang as he saw the image of St George with the gold band given him by Charles of Burgundy still above his bed, and as he passed the empty apartments of his mother, where he had seen Alys, the little sewing girl. This was the first time he had thought of Alys since he had left the Low Countries, but she came suddenly vividly to his mind, standing on the quay at Veere in the wind and the rain, with her cloak blown about her, and her little face sharp and white in her drenched hood. And the thought of Alys brought the thought of Warwick's Anne. Clarence had news of her--she was with



her mother and Clarence's wife in sanctuary at Beaulieu Abbey.

Edward, triumphant, but not yet gay or easy, fetched out his wife and daughters from Westminster, looked at the little son he had not yet seen, conducted them to the royal lodgings in the Tower, re-organized his army, gave his thanks to those who had marched with him from Ravenspur and turned about to meet Warwick, who, according to the latest information, was marching on London.

There was nothing else that Warwick, who had allowed Edward to slip through his fingers, could do. Stung by the defection of Clarence, and tired of waiting for the landing of the French forces, the outraged and baffled Earl gathered up all his resources for a final throw.

Galloping messengers called up his brother from Pontefract, Oxford and Exeter from Newark, and Beaufort from the west. When he had been in London a bare twenty-four hours Edward heard that Warwick had reached Gladmoor Heath and was encamped there to the north of Barnet, about ten miles from London.

'Oh, Jesu! no rest for us yet, Dickon,' sighed Edward. There had indeed hardly been time to clean the armour, find fresh horses, organize the different commands, issue the appropriate orders, or take the necessary supply of ammunition from the arsenal in the Tower.

On the afternoon of Easter Eve Edward and Dickon, in command of nearly ten thousand men, marched out of London to confront Warwick at Barnet.

The little town was occupied by Warwick's scouts, but these were quickly driven out by the advance riders of the Yorkists, who chased them for half a mile.

In the dark of the night Dickon and Edward marched their troops through Barnet and out on to Gladmoor Heath, where they encamped, not knowing how near they might be to the enemy.

Edward Plantagenet had that unconscious confidence in himself which prevented him from doubting any action which he undertook; he was, therefore, certain of success. But in his pavilion that night with Dickon he mourned that he must face Warwick and Montacute--his father's friends, his own childhood's friends, knights who had helped set him on his throne.

'If they are not slain tomorrow,' he mused, troubled, 'I cannot pardon them, since they have attainted me and called me a usurper.'

'Sir, even now,' suggested Dickon, 'they might return to their loyalty.'

He was more eager than his brother for this, for Warwick had been very close to him during those years at Middleham and with Warwick's submission he might again hope for Anne.

The guns were firing all night, but Warwick's artillery was harmless to the Yorkists, for their line was not posted directly in front, but rather to the eastward, and so the great balls fell harmless into the dank fields.

Through this fire rode two Yorkist knights with cressets, esquires and a herald. They made their way through scouts and sentries and the medley of the camp, and were conducted to Warwick's tent.

They brought a last appeal to the Earl to abandon a losing fight and return to his allegiance to Edward Plantagenet; they pointed out that the poor Henry of Lancaster had been brought from the Tower and was now with King Edward, whose cause he affected to support, thus showing upon what an imbecile Warwick had staked his hopes.

'Richard Gloucester sent his entreaty with this,' added one of the

knights, 'bidding ye, Earl Warwick, to remember the kindness of the days at Middleham.'

Warwick answered them rudely:

'What devil is upon ye to bring this message? What I have done I have done--Warwick is not a Clarence. Though that perjured prince hath ruined me, I will not lift a finger to avert my doom. Sirs, tell thy Plantagenet Princes that whatever from earth or hell they have leagued against him, Neville will fight until the breath is struck out of his body.'

When the knights brought this message back to Edward and Dickon they were unhappy and a little ashamed for their brother.

Clarence laughed. Edward silenced him with a frown, and Dickon thought that his love for Clarence was spoilt, for, however, it might be glossed over, Clarence was now twice a traitor and he murmured to himself:

'I would that Warwick had been of my blood, not Clarence.'

## 14

Easter morning dawned with a fog so thick that the two armies could not see each other through the waves of cold mist.

The Yorkists were early arranged in battle order, King Edward in the centre, beside him Henry of Lancaster, sick, lamenting, whispering prayers and half-supported on his horse by two esquires. Clarence was with the King. Despite the love and affection exchanged yesterday between the two, Edward wished to keep his brother near him. Who could again wholly trust Clarence?

Richard Gloucester had charge of the right wing. In his nineteenth year he was in his first engagement and had his first command. Edward knew that Warwick's forces were far more numerous than his own, but he did not know to what extent.

For hours the two armies remained in battle array, opposite each other, silent, peering through the thick, cold mist. Cannons sent balls aimlessly through the obscurity: now and then a shower of arrows rose and fell at random. The smoke of the guns thickened the fog. With the afternoon the mist lifted a little, and Edward could see the line of his enemies far nearer than he had thought, and close enough for him to be able vaguely to distinguish Warwick's banner. On a quick signal Edward's standard advanced--the Leopard and the Lilies and the White Rose with tuck of kettledrum. The trumpets sounded for the attack, the flights of arrows thickened, the artillery boomed aimlessly--great iron balls fell wide of their unseen mark.

Hastings, commanding Edward's left wing, was irresolute, hearing the trumpets, but not being able to see the signals. Oxford fell on him, looming with his followers unexpectedly out of the mist, giving buffets with spear and sword. Hastings' men broke. Oxford chased them as far as Barnet. The battle became immediate confusion: the leaders did not know what their colleagues were doing. Edward threw himself on Warwick's line and in the thickness the men fought each other, hand to hand, axe and short sword, avoiding the plunging horses. Oxford's knights, returning from having routed Edward's followers as far as Barnet, joined in the *melée*. Somerset's soldiers saw the star on their banner, and mistook it for the sun in splendour carried by Edward, and fell upon their friends. Somerset raised the cry of treason, and thought he was being attacked in the rear, and drew off as many men as he could. The confused and hesitant ranks broke and fled; Vere and Somerset both galloped from the field.

Dickon prayed:

'Oh, God, favour thy new-made knight!' and stuck his spurs into his horse's flanks. With him were two esquires, besides Sir Thomas Parr and John Millwater. He plunged into the thickness of the enemy's ranks, where steel and banners and weapons showed through the fog. The enemy knights pressed round him. He saw both his companions fall, knocked from their steeds. Thomas Parr dropped, cut through his helm to the skull. Dickon, even in all the excited confusion, recalled how he had peered over the stairs at Baynard's Castle and seen that faithful knight hold out a bloody hand and tell of the Battle of Wakefield; now where his face had been was bloody, gushing, terrible.

Dickon gave a cry of rage at seeing his friend fall, and hurled himself and his rearing horse frantically on the hostile ranks. Close by him, and desperately pressed, was his standard-bearer, with the White Boar held high above the battle.

Dickon could see the device gleaming with the silver stitches, wrought by Alys, above the cold mist. He fought with sword and axe, sweating, shouting. Hardly knowing what he did, he wrestled hand to hand. Lovell and Radcliffe closed up behind him. Warwick's line, broken by the dead, began to fall back. Yorkist knights, fighting through the *melée*, found Edward in the centre of his array, and told him his young brother was having a desperate struggle in the thick of the fighting. The King shouted up the billmen and gunmen and sent them hurtling to Richard's rescue. Dickon leaped through the battle wheeling and turning among the dead and dying. Among the dead he saw Lord Saye, lying with his head battered in by the hoofs of flying horses. This gentleman had shared the exile in the Low Countries.

Dickon snarled with rage. He had ridden across the trampled heath, his followers shouting behind him, his enemies yelling in front.

Sometimes he was in a patch of mist where he could scarcely see his bloody sword in front of him, at other times the mist lifted and he saw the hideous pattern of the fighting, cursing men, dented armour and gashed heads and limbs, trembling horses and torn banners.

Shouting for his brother, he pressed onwards. His horse stumbled over a knight's body that lay huddled across the gorse. Reining up the animal, Richard glanced down, and saw Montacute beneath the charger's hoofs--dead, a broken weapon in his helpless hand, the Bear and Ragged Staff torn from his surcoat.

Dickon yelled with battle lust--with rage that it should have come to this, with sorrow for the friend against whom he fought. Spurring his horse forward in the mist, he still shouted his brother's name. The mist swirled about in fantastic shapes before his eyes. He saw Warwick on foot, bareheaded, his helmet dashed from his brow by the blow of an axe, his forehead bleeding, his black hair harsh and dripping red.

Warwick was shouting, fighting and shouting, his head held high.

Richard called to him to give in.

The dark Earl did not hear the young Prince's anguished voice. The mist dropped again like a curtain between him and Neville. When Dickon plunged through it he found he was trampling Warwick's body: the dismounted Earl had had his mortal wound; he writhed and cried out, blinded by blood.

The mist suddenly lifted, blown away by a sudden breeze, and with his gathered standard Dickon found himself on the centre of Gladmoor Heath, and his enemies in complete yelling rout before him. Those who had not been killed or disabled had fled, stumbling over the gorse.

Henry of Lancaster, cold and stiff on his little, patient horse, in the midst of his guard of archers, was stricken to see so much blood--fifteen hundred Englishmen had been struck to their native earth.

A pale evening sun shone upon the battlefield.

Edward and Richard searched for Warwick and Montacute. Each had paid for his treachery, and the Plantagenets could now mourn old companions-in-arms and brave friends. Edward, crossing himself as he looked upon the defaced corpses of the Nevilles, commanded that the bodies should be washed, dressed, and taken to London, and to St Paul's Church, to lie, with all honour, before the high altar.

He then rode back to the capital with his brothers in the last grey light of that Easter Day, leaving his army to reassemble and camp near the battlefield.

Hastings, who had now joined his King, embittered by his individual repulse and flight, could not forbear remarking:

'Sir, you chose the winning side, Lord Clarence.'

Clarence smiled easily. He had stared curiously at the corpses of Warwick and Montacute, in a way that Dickon did not like. Edward, on that homeward ride, took little notice of Clarence, and kept Dickon affectionately by his side and praised his prowess in the fight.

Edward was now King without dispute, but he still had enemies abroad. Edmund Beaufort, the Duke of Somerset, and his brother John; Lord Wenlock, the Earl of Devonshire, and Jasper Tudor (calling himself Earl of Pembroke) had escaped from Barnet and fled south, and after Edward had been a day in London he heard of the

arrival of the French ships in Weymouth.

Three times Queen Margaret had put to sea from Harfleur, and three times had been forced to return. But they had at length battled through the storm, and on the day that Warwick had fallen at Barnet, Margaret and the Prince of Wales had landed with the French troops. Edward heard that she had passed through Dorchester and was lodged at the Abbey of Cerne, with Abbot Rogers, Dr Morton, the young Prince of Wales' tutor.

Edward and Dickon went to Windsor to gather their forces and to celebrate the Feast of St George.

The King's shrewd generalship saw that the enemy had only two alternatives--to advance at once on London and challenge him in his capital, or go to Wales and unite with the rebels who were being inflamed by the Tudors. Despite Barnet and the triumphant entry into London, Edward knew that he would not receive the support of the entire country until he had disposed of his most dangerous adversary, the young Prince of Wales, the son of Henry VI.

He decided to go out and meet Queen Margaret's army before it was able to join with Jasper Tudor's levies.

Immediately after the Feast of St George the King intended to march, but first this ancient ceremonial must be held with dignity and honour.

Richard of Gloucester sat installed in the great chapel of St George, among the knights in their robes and coifs, their collars and plumes, their arms and their standards hanging above their stalls. During the singing of the chants, his young face became grave, thinking of Warwick's Anne, little Anne. orphaned, a fugitive, almost a prisoner...Thinking, too, of those two knights lying before the altar in



St Paul's Church on the black biers hung with badges of the Bear and Ragged Staff, the great candles burning round them, and the monks chanting in the aisles.

Edward's scouts brought reports that Margaret's generals were sending detachments in many directions, with the obvious intention of confusing Edward as to the definite direction of their march. But the shrewd Plantagenet was not deceived. He was certain that they intended to march north, cross the Severn and join Jasper Tudor's men in Wales.

On the twenty-fourth of April Edward said goodbye to his queen, kissing her absently.

The light, foolish, extravagant woman was overawed: in this hard-faced knight she seemed to see a stranger, not the companion of her follies and pleasures. Even though she had now given him a son he seemed to make little of her, so that Clarence mocked lightly and Dickon was secretly pleased.

Edward took both his brothers with him on this final struggle for the crown--Gloucester because he was his right hand to him, and Clarence because he could not trust him except he was directly under his eye. Lord Hastings and young Dorset, and the boy's old tutor, Richard Croft, accompanied them. Because of the artillery, they proceeded slowly by easy marches to Abingdon, Cirencester--always towards the south, so as to fall on the flank of the enemy if the Lancastrians made a sudden push for London.

Hearing that Queen Margaret was moving from Wells to Bath, Edward marched to meet her at Malmesbury. But scouts brought the news that she had pressed to Bristol and decided to try to fight at Chipping Sodbury, her advance guard occupying Sodbury Hill.

The King, marching there on the second of May, found no enemy--it was a trick, and the Lancastrians had gained twenty-four hours.

Flying scouts now brought the news that the Lancastrians were in full march on Gloucester, thus confirming what Edward had always believed to be their intention--to join up with Jasper Tudor in Wales.

'Sirs, we will race them to the Severn,' cried Edward, and gave orders for an immediate march, while urgent messengers were sent to Gloucester Castle, held by a Beauchamp for the King, urging him on no account to surrender to the Lancastrians, for Edward Plantagenet was on his way.

During the cold May night Queen Margaret's men marched steadily from Bristol over the flats between the Cotswold Hills and the Severn. Sweeping up to the gates of Gloucester, they summoned the garrison, but Sir Richard Beauchamp, fortified by the message from Edward, placed his men about the walls and refused to admit the invaders.

Margaret and her generals were desperate; they knew by now that Edward was on their track, and none of them was too confident of the issue of a pitched battle.

Edmund Beaufort decided to abandon the intention of an assault on Gloucester. He pressed on to Tewkesbury, and the men began to drop from fatigue.

They had marched almost solidly for thirty-six miles, and Beaufort saw they could do no more. Margaret urged that they should pass the Severn, putting the great river between them and the Yorkists. Beaufort thought, however, that this could not be done, and decided that a position should be taken up outside the town of Tewkesbury.

Here there was a bridge over the Avon, but none across the Severn.

Cornered, and knowing that they must fight without their reinforcements, the Lancastrians made the best of the position, and encamped themselves on the west side of Tewkesbury, beneath the castle of Home Hill, in a field called the Gastons. Here there was an Abbey called Gupshill, where the Queen and such ladies as had accompanied her took refuge. This was in the rear of the encampment, and the houses of Tewkesbury were close behind.

The Beauforts directed strong entrenchments to be thrown up, in order to surround the encampment completely, which was rendered further inaccessible by deep, muddy, waterlogged ditches, hedges, and stretching acres of apple orchards, now rosy-white with blossom.

In the little Abbey at Gupshill Margaret of Anjou took leave of her son--her light, her joy, her pleasure, and all that was left to her in her barren, violence-filled life. Her beauty was burnt away with passion and suffering, she was haggard, dark, and lean. Her movements were reckless and nervous. She dared not stop to think on what the past had been or what the future might bring. During her exile, her degradation and humiliation, she had never lost sight of her son. She had nursed him, loved him, and educated him; she had watched over him while Dr Morton taught him the laws of England and the duties of a sovereign of that country.

Grave and valiant, the young boy stood before her now--not yet eighteen and encased in a man's mail, with the cognizance of England on his circlet, and on his helmet the silver swan she had chosen for his badge, his blue eyes resolute and strained, lips firmly set; his cheeks, that still had tender softness of childhood, were pale with the thought of the approaching struggle. This was the first time through eighteen years of trouble she had ever parted from him: all

misfortune, vicissitude, bitterness and despairs had they shared.

Now she kissed him goodbye before he went into battle for his father's crown. When the Queen heard the news of the Battle of Barnet and the death of Warwick, much as she detested that traitor she had been forced to use, she wanted to turn back to the French ship and sail once more to the protection of King Louis. But the Beauforts and the Tudors had urged her on, declaring that Edward was not yet firmly established.

Now she saw they were all confused, quarrelling among themselves, outmanoeuvred by Edward—she mistrusted them all. The boy must go, perhaps to his triumph, perhaps to his death. She, his mother, she had brought him to this moment. She had trained him to be a king and to die sooner than relinquish that high honour.

The boy went away from her with all the noisy, shouting men-at-arms and the knights, and Margaret crouched before the altar in Gupshill Abbey chapel with her fingers in her ears so that she would not hear the cannonballs, or the bells of Tewkesbury, or any sound.

## 15

The young boy, Edward Lancaster. Prince of Wales, enclosed in polished armour and wearing the arms of England on his back and breast, commanded the main body of the Lancastrians. By his side, to assist and support him, were the Prior of St John and Lord Wenlock; the Beauforts, Edmund Duke of Somerset and Sir John Beaufort, commanded the van.

In the thin mist of dawn the clear, square towers of Tewkesbury Abbey rose behind them above the crooked roofs of the town.

The blossom on the apple orchards showed pale in the translucent

light. Young Edward, taut and straight upon his large white horse, which was trapped to the ground with the Leopards and the Lilies, was also pale.

He prayed continuously that he might seem both prince and man before his people. He had no doubt of the justice of his cause, nor could he believe that God would betray him to defeat. Already he pictured the scene when, having acquitted himself as a true knight in the battle, he would kneel before his mother with tidings of victory over the rebels, and march with her to London to release his father, whom he hardly remembered, from the Tower prison.

The Yorkist army approached the hasty but stoutly-entrenched position of the Lancastrians. Richard Gloucester, only a year older than the Prince of Wales, commanded the vanguard and the artillery. Edward Plantagenet led the centre. Hastings and Dorset had the rear.

There was a silence broken only by the early song of the birds and the sound of the water running through the wheels of the Abbey mills on the Avon, while the two armies waited for battle. Edward Plantagenet, at the head of all his forces, observed, to the right of the Lancastrian entrenchments, the dark shape of a wood. He immediately sent three hundred spearmen to hide themselves there and to await his orders, and then, rising in his stirrups and turning round to his assembled men, he gave the command for an instant assault.

The Plantagenet trumpets sounded, their drums beat, and all Edward's forces flung themselves on the entrenchments behind which the Lancastrians waited.

Richard Gloucester, shouting encouragement to his followers, found his progress instantly checked by the deep water-filled ditches,

thorny hedges and tangled undergrowth, which prevented him directly breaking into the enemy's lines.

Reining in his rearing horse, he shouted up the artillery and the bowmen; cannonballs and arrows poured into Beau-fort's division. Seeing his men falling around him with the fury of this assault, Somerset plunged from his entrenchments and hurled himself upon the King's centre. As they swayed backwards before the shock Somerset charged Gloucester, and the Yorkist line reeled, almost broke.

Young Edward of Wales, borne in the forefront of the Lancastrian onslaught, had a brief moment of victory. He waved his bright maiden sword in the morning air and shouted for Lancaster, but King Edward, holding firm among his disordered forces, called up the spearsmen from the wood, who attacked the rear of the Beauforts.

While they struggled in angry confusion, King Edward, riding up and down the lines, re-formed his ranks. Meanwhile Richard Gloucester and his knights had fought through the hedge, leapt the ditches, and, with redoubtable fury, thrown themselves on the Lancastrian centre.

For one moment in the shouting melée the two youths found themselves face to face, and each glared at the English arms upon the other's coat.

Richard Gloucester struck at Edward's white plumes. He avoided the blow, swerved sidelong and was borne back with his own breaking line, his horse rearing high.

Seeing the Yorkists plunging over their entrenchments, the Lancastrians wavered into disorder; their leaders, in that moment of emergency, disagreed as to their action.

Edmund Beaufort, the Duke of Somerset, galloped up to Lord Wenlock, whose men were dropping out of the action in confusion, and, furiously upbraiding him for cowardice before his soldiers, raised his bloody battleaxe and struck him, horse and all, to the ground. The horror of this deed further disheartened the Lancastrians. The battle became a flight, a pursuit.

Stumbling in their haste, many of Queen Margaret's soldiers fell into the waters of the Abbey mills and were drowned in the pool.

Edward of Wales was carried backwards in the crashing flight of his own followers, and closely pursued by the shouting Yorkists. In the meadows towards the Gastons he was overtaken; his wounded horse sank to its knees. Prince Edward, feeling his helmet razed off, cried out in anguish. A pursuing knight aimed a blow at the bright yellow hair. The young rider, writhing in agony, was down in the trampled mud; the impatient hoofs of the horses of the shouting pursuers rode over the Prince and his horse. No fall could have been more complete, no disaster more terrible--the light of his mother's heart and the hope of his side had died in his first battle, his death-cry unheard amid the triumphant shouts of his enemies.

The fleeing Lancastrians staggered to a ford over the Severn called Lower Lode, but were overtaken and savagely dealt with, so that the meadow which, an hour before, had been sweet with early flowers, now heaved and writhed with the anguish of slaughtered men.

Gloucester was carried onward, upwards, on the tide of conquest, struggling in the dense fury of the fight, his arm aching from swinging the battleaxe, his own standard always at his side, feeling to the full the thrill of victory. The strengthening sun glittered strongly on spears, on armour, and dimmed the red flares of the Flemish bombards. The shrieks of horses, the shouts of men appealing for mercy, broken prayers, and sobbing death-cries, rushed by Richard in his forward

gallop. At the millstream, choked with drowning men, he drew up and stopped the oncoming horsemen.

'Sirs, there is no need for more,' he said to his breathless standard-bearers, who had kept, throughout the fight, close to the flying heels of his charger.

Gloucester pushed up his vizor, grateful to breathe the fresh air. His face was pale and covered with sweat, eyes bloodshot, his lips dry. As he gave orders to help some of the drowning men out of the millstream, a messenger came up at a gallop from the King, saying that the fugitives were to be spared.

Edward was forgiving, generous and had never been known to refuse a supplication for pardon: even in the fury and excitement of battle, so swift, so victorious for him, he issued commands that no common soldiers were to be killed. Only his vengeance for those great nobles who had betrayed him, some of them twice, remained hot. There were many fighting that day under Lancastrian banners who had been forgiven once and had again forsaken him.

Edward, calling up his brothers, rode round the bloody field searching for these men--looking for the Beauforts among the dead.

Many high-born knights lay in their lifeblood, next to billmen, spearmen, and gunmen. The valiant Courtney, Earl of Devonshire, commander of Queen Margaret's rearguard, had been killed, and with him the second Beaufort, Sir John; and Hampton, Vaux, Whittingham and Booth--these faithful sharers of the Queen's long exile.

But Edward and Richard did not find the Duke of Somerset, and news was presently brought them that he and many other knights, together with some soldiers who had not been able to escape



across the Severn or the Avon, had fled into the Abbey church, and taken refuge. Tewkesbury Abbey was not a sanctuary, and King Edward and his brothers at once rode up to the great door, which was closed in their faces.

The Yorkist knights struck on this with their mailed fists, and King Edward shouted out that he would have his enemies given up to his justice. The door opened, and the Abbot, accompanied by two monks, confronted the King on his white charger splashed with red, erect, and appearing gigantic in his polished blue steel armour, over which the royal arms hung in tatters of silk and broderie. With his left hand he held in the snorting, excited animal, with his right he gripped his battleaxe, smeared with blood and hair. Richard and Clarence were beside him, armed, bloody, fierce; their crests, their plumes and their banners crowded out the daylight.

The Abbot peered and blinked, for he was an old man, and his eyesight was weak.

'Good Abbot,' cried Edward, 'ye hold no right of sanctuary; surrender to me those traitor knights!'

'Sirs, who are ye?' asked the Abbot meekly.

'Sir, I am Sir Edward Plantagenet' replied the King, and the victor of this fight. Many of those who contended against me, false traitors though they be, I will spare; but there are those who I will see brought to justice. They must be tried by the Earl Marshal and the Lord High Constable my brother, Richard. Gloucester, here. Stand aside, old man, nor make me force into thy church. Again, I say thou hast no right of sanctuary.'

'Sir, God's House,' replied the old priest, meekly, yet fearlessly, 'is always sanctuary for the defeated and the dying. And Christ defend

that, when any come to me for succour, I should betray them.'

Edward leant forward from the battered arse of his saddle and asked, impatiently:

'Sir, have ye Edmund Beaufort here, calling himself Somerset?'

'Sir, how can I answer Your Grace that question?' cried the Abbot. 'I have here many broken and desperate men, and I have not asked who they are, seeing that they come to God's House as Christians in distress.'

Edward turned in his saddle and spoke briefly to the impatient knights pressing round him:

'Sirs, move the old man and his priests and enter the Abbey, bring out whoever ye may find fugitive there.'

But the Abbot had seen something which had escaped the Plantagenet Princes. He raised a cross from beneath his girdle and held it in a shaking hand high before the angry King's face.

'Make way, Your Noble Grace; he said, in a stern voice; 'here cometh one who hath a better right than you, Prince, to enter Tewkesbury Abbey.'

Monks were crossing the convent garden, bright with the blossom of early spring. Walking heavily, the four hooded men carried a corpse on a gate of willow-withe.

From beneath a cloak of azure satin the mailed feet showed sharp gleaming points and the spurs sparkled gold. The conquerors backed their restive homes and waited. The Abbot went out to meet the procession.

The monks, indifferent to this angry display of force, carried the body to the wide door of the Abbey.

'Sir, who is it?' asked Edward, frowning down.

They placed the body in the shadowed porch, and the Abbot lifted the blue mantle from the hair, dark with blood.

'Sirs, it is Sir Edward Plantagenet,' he said. 'Prince of Wales.'

'Sirs, he was seventeen-years-old,' said Richard, crossing his brow, 'and died like an English knight. Sweet Jesu, mercy for his soul!'

The Yorkists crossed themselves sullenly.

The young boy lay crushed in his steel armour.

Except for the English arms upon his surcoat he was unrecognizable. But his hands, hanging either side of the willow-withe gate, showed smooth and delicate, the hands of a child.

'Sirs, who sent ye to find him?' demanded Edward. 'Who knew where he fell?'

'Sir, a knight within the Abbey,' answered the Abbot, calmly.

'Sir, that is Edmund Beaufort,' said Edward to his brother. 'None of that name shall escape.'

'Oh, knight, leave these fugitives in peace to mourn their losses and consider their great defeat,' said the Abbot. 'In this child their last hope is extinguished. Take him in; he added, to the monks, 'and lay him before the High Altar. Noble Princes,' he said, turning to the King, 'ye can afford to be merciful, for Queen Margaret will fight no more.'

'Where is that most wretched woman?' demanded Edward.

One of the monks said that she had escaped across the Avon and was fleeing with her ladies and a few knights towards Worcester.

'Sirs, she must be taken,' said Edward, but he looked away from the Abbey door.

'This gentlewoman will suffer,' said Dickon.

'Dick, no more than our mother suffered after the news of Wakefield,' replied Edward. He addressed the Abbot in stern calm:

'Abbot, I give thee thy fugitives until tomorrow--this one night to acquaint themselves with God. Tomorrow, if they come not forth, I shall take them, nor is there much more of life for Edmund Beaufort.'

He turned and rode away with his brothers to his encampment. He was now King again indeed; there were no enemies left. Edward, Prince of Wales, was dead. Margaret would be a broken-hearted woman and a prisoner. All the Lancastrian chiefs had died in the Tewkesbury meadows, or would be captured. There remained only the imbecile in London, Henry of Lancaster.

'Dick, did I not tell thee that Edward was a magician?' whispered Clarence to Gloucester.

Dickon's exultant excitement sank to bitter dullness.

He thought of Anne at Beaulieu. He stared at the blood all over his trappings, his hands. He thought of death busy about him, of the lust of slaughter--dagger and axe, sword and cannon, spear and arrow--the lovely English May day defiled by terrible carnage. As his esquires unarmed him in his tent, as he washed his hands, bathed

his forehead, Dickon brooded. He was a great prince, the King's brother, Lord High Constable of England; on two well-contested fields he had proved himself a valiant commander and a magnificent knight; yet in his heart he felt discontent and disgust.

In Tewkesbury Abbey the Lancastrian leaders huddled throughout that night, in despair, round the body of their young Prince. Blood defiled the Abbey—it lay in pools on the holy floor, it stained the pillars where the wounded men leant, smeared the traceries of the chantries of the De Spencers. Edmund Beaufort, in the Chapel of Our Lady, behind the High Altar, knelt all night in prayer, for he knew that he was a doomed man, and must die as others of his name had died, rapidly, one after the other, in bloody violence.

With the morning the Yorkists entered the Abbey and threw out all the fugitives. Most of these Edward pardoned, but thirteen of them, with Edmund Beaufort in the forefront, were executed at Tewkesbury market-cross, after having been tried by the Lord High Constable, Richard Gloucester, and John Mowbray, Duke of Norfolk, Earl Marshal of England.

They fell justly after a legal sentence, but a pang of horror was stirred in Richard as he saw those fierce, noble heads severed from their bodies.

Edmund Beaufort, before he died, smiled in defiance of them all. 'Sir,' said he to Gloucester, 'deep draughts of death draw to my heart, but my soul is not in peril, for I have kept my promise as a gentleman to my Lord. And believe not, Gloucester, that thou hast achieved a victory over my house—however high ye are now, there are Beauforts yet, and some of them may see thee perish, as bloodily as I now am destroyed.'

'Jesu, mercy on thy soul, Beaufort,' returned Richard, and watched

him mount beneath the market-cross and kneel before the headsman.

## 16

The Plantagenet Princes marched back to London. To Dickon life seemed one perpetual movement--day and night riding with banners and bowmen and spearmen, up and down the roads of England.

The Queen Margaret had been captured, huddled with her ladies and a few priests in a small religious house outside Worcester. She came to London with the victorious Yorkists, and many of the pardoned Lancastrians in their train. Having satisfied his vengeance on men whom he judged as twice traitors, Edward was recklessly generous towards his other enemies. Even great knights like the Earl of Ormonde were pardoned, and Sir John Fortescue, the tutor, and lawyer, who had trained Prince Edward for the throne he was never to mount, was forgiven and allowed to go on his estates in Gloucester.

Two priests, Dr Morton and Dr Mackerell, who were with the Queen, were also assured of the King's clemency. But Margaret did not care who was forgiven and who was not. Gone now were her pride and defiance, her passion and her spirit. Sir William Stanley had brought her, a prisoner, before King Edward at Coventry.

This haggard woman of forty years was blasted by grief into old age. Bent and dumb she mumbled and muttered, and not even the remembrance of her captains' work at Wakefield could inflame the Plantagenet brothers against this spectre of pride and greatness. Tewkesbury had atoned, even for those heads on the Mickle Gate at York.

'Sirs, take her,' said Edward, turning aside, 'to her husband, Henry of Lancaster, in the Tower.'

The sight of this Queen chilled Dickon. It reminded him of Alys on the wet quay at Veere, and Rosamond in the lonely castle in Kent; it showed him what these violent days of war could make of women, and he thought, with a regret and pity that were almost savage, of Anne.

Riding up to his brother during the march back to London, he asked him again for the hand of Anne Neville. King Edward could refuse his brother nothing. Impulsively he replied:

'Dick, ye shall have Warwick's Anne and half his estates.'

'Sir, may I ride to Beaulieu to fetch her?' asked Dickon, eagerly--'she is there with her mother and the wife of Clarence, and they must be in great terror.'

'As soon as we have reached London, ye may go and fetch her,' said Edward, easy and gracious.

He was not sorry that Warwick's heiresses should be wedded to his brothers; it seemed some tribute to the memory of his dead rebellious friend.

Richard had also interceded for the Marquis Montacute's heirs, and Edward had them in his care.

The army, marching easily, was nearly a fortnight on the road, and there was time for Clarence also to come to King Edward with his petitions.

With only the merest show of loyalty and affection Clarence demanded the whole of Warwick's estates.

'And out of so large a prize,' demanded Edward, looking at him keenly, 'will ye provide for Warwick's wife and unwed daughter Anne?'

'No,' smiled Clarence, 'I leave that to Your Grace's clemency.'

'Sir, Warwick was thy friend and ally,' said Edward, drily.

'And I betrayed him,' finished Clarence without shame, 'to Your Grace's advantage. Nor is the reward I ask higher than my services.'

Edward turned away his face. He loved his brother, but detested his greed, treachery and heartlessness.

'Sir, Dickon is to have Warwick's Anne,' he answered shortly; 'you will divide the possessions of the Nevilles, which should be, Jesu, mercy, sufficient to satisfy both of you.'

Clarence appeared to laugh away his brother's anger.

'Sir, so Dickon waiteth and getteth his reward,' he smiled, and rode ahead to his own troop of knights.

When King Edward reached the walls of London he found that Clarence was not among his train. Lord Hastings reported that the young Duke had ridden to Beaulieu to fetch his wife.

'And I will go there too,' said Dickon, and would have turned round and ridden into Hampshire, without resting even one night in London, had not Edward been met by news which caused him to keep his young brother beside him.

Warwick had given the fleet into the command of Sir John Neville, the bastard of Fauconbridge, son of the man who had, with Edward,



won the Battle of Towton.

This man, bold and reckless as all the Nevilles, had under his command forty ships and seven thousand men, and when he heard of the Battle of Tewkesbury, afraid of losing his position and power under the rule of York, had defied the victor, and was sailing up the Thames, setting fire to the suburbs and even threatening London.

Then, having intimidated the defenceless city and, alarmed by the news of the approach of King Edward, he had sailed away and threatened, rumour had it, a descent upon the coast of Kent.

Gloucester, therefore, went into London beside his brother to discuss this news. The older man listened keenly to the advice of his brother, for he knew that Richard was the abler in judgment.

They rode swiftly through the streets full of shouting people, past windows through which faces peered, to the Tower where Lord Rivers, the Constable, welcomed them, with his sister, the Queen, by his side.

The sight of the two Woodvilles, with all they brought to mind of dissension in the past and all they foreboded of dissensions to come, took the gloss off the last two great victories, both for Dickon and for many of the Yorkist knights, but that night King Edward took little notice of his Queen or any of the Woodvilles, but sat up with his brother in his room, discussing how best to deal with Fauconbridge and the rebellious fleet.

Dickon suggested that this Neville, who had so many ships and men behind him, should be conciliated and offered pardon, and even the continuation of his command if he would submit to King Edward, and he offered to ride to Sandwich, where they had heard the rebel had landed with most of his forces, and treat with him, as he had treated

with Clarence before London.

Richard offered this out of love and loyalty to his brother and duty to the post he held as Lord High Constable of England.

But all his heart was on another journey,

'Sir, will Your Grace's Highness,' he asked Edward, 'send someone worthy to Beaulieu to bring Anne Neville and her mother to Baynard's Castle?'

And while he spoke he decided to send a messenger to Berkhamsted telling Cicely of York that the worst violence of these times was for the moment over, that she might in safety return to London, for he wanted all these beloved women to be together to comfort one another in their affliction.

The day that Dickon, after those few hours in the Tower, rode with his company to Sandwich. Margaret of Anjou was admitted to the apartments of her husband, Henry of Lancaster, who lay motionless on the bed that he had not left since he had been brought back from the Battle of Barnet. Lord Rivers, Constable of the Tower, and still Lancastrian at heart, had been urged to this by his sister, Elizabeth Woodville, who had glimpsed Queen Margaret entering the Tower, and felt a sharp, pang of pain, almost remorse, in her heart, and had arranged this meeting as an act of clemency from the careless indifference of King Edward.

So these two, man and wife, King and Queen, met again after ten years.

It was not her fault that she had despised him--she had been married so young to one weak of mind and body, subject to long fits of imbecility; not his fault that he had loved her in a vague and timid

sorrow. He always spoke of her and the child affectionately when his mind was clear. A certain lucidity had come to him a few days ago, after he had prayed all night in the chapel of his apartments. In the morning, hearing him bless God for the restoration of his wits, they had thought fit to tell him of the Battle of Tewkesbury, of the disaster of his entire cause, the death of his son and the capture of his wife.

Henry had dropped prone among them, and a wound that he had received in a scuffle when Warwick first took him from the Tower started bleeding again. They carried him to bed, and there he yet lay, unshaven, dirty, when Margaret was brought into the room. His eyes were open but he did not recognize his wife; Margaret did not care.

Since she had had the boy to garland with her hopes and ambitions, her love and pride, Henry had been dead to her: not that he was ever anything but the puppet who had made her a queen.

The blighted woman leant against the bedpost and with an idle finger traversed the design in the damask coverlet. She had her secret that he would never know.

There had been a man lost for whom she had had to weep in private, bold, violent, passionate Beaufort, so like herself.

Warwick had not hesitated to call them lovers, and, while she had fiercely defended her honour and the birthright of her child, she had in her heart mocked at them for thinking that this imbecile was the father of her valiant, beautiful boy. The dead Beaufort was nearer to Margaret even now than the man stretched before her. Nothing mattered to her any more. Her spirit was in Tewkesbury Abbey, beside a grave in the choir. The face that she had held at her breast, that she had caressed so often, that was familiar to her in every line and hue, that had looked to her for love, encouragement, guidance and praise, had been battered to a bloody pulp; the fine young body

that she had watched grow with such a tender and passionate pride had been crushed and broken in every limb; but more dreadful than the memory of this was the thought, like a sword in her heart, of what her son's anguish must have been in that fearful second when he knew himself doomed and struck down.

In the candlelight King Henry lay insensible, sallow as the wax.

Margaret stared at him.

His small hands and feet, his narrow shoulders, his sunken face--this was Great Harry's son...

He moved and whispered in his dream-prayers.

Margaret went slowly to the window and looked out into the darkness of river and sky--a little scatter of light for London, a large scatter of stars.

The servants peeped in at the open door, and the leech timidly entered and asked her how her husband did? 'Sir, what matter for that?' replied Queen Margaret.

They led her away. As she went she could hear the sound of music from King Edward's apartments.

'What matter for that?' she said in the same tone.

In the morning the news went through London that King Henry had been found dead in his bed in the Tower. With fitting state, equal to that with which he had been maintained in the Tower, his body was taken barefaced to St Paul's Cathedral, with his three readers, his ten servants, and his leeches with him, and many monks and knights to escort him, and afterwards taken to Chertsey, openly and with respect.

When Dickon, at Sandwich, heard this news he was moved to an uneasy pity, for with every new death he felt more keenly the instability of fortune.

His gentle pleasantness had won Fauconbridge, who had promised to place his ships and men at the disposal of Edward if he were allowed to retain the command; and Dickon rode back again to London with this news for Edward.

The King heaped on him praise and rewards, but had bad news for him.

Clarence, jealous that his brother should share in the Neville estates, had taken Anne, with his wife, from Beaulieu and hidden her, vowing to hold her concealed until the King and Gloucester had promised to forego all share in her fortune.

Edward related this in a manner half-vexed, half-amused.

But Gloucester found nothing diverting in the insolence of Clarence. Exhausted though he was by his quick, forced marches from Sandwich, he hurried to Coldharbour Castle, the mansion of John Holland, the Duke of Exeter, where Clarence lodged with his wife.

Dickon chanced upon his brother in the great hall, and the two met like a clash of swords.

'Sir, always sly, always false,' exclaimed Richard. 'Can ye play fair with no one, not even women or thine own kin?' Clarence, usually so easy, flared up at this and shouted violently:

'This maiden is not for thee! In Isabel's name I hold all that Warwick possessed, and no man can take from me an acre!'

'Have we not enough trouble,' replied Dickon, 'that we must nourish them upon our own hearth?'

'Ye think,' sneered Clarence, 'because ye seduced me from Warwick, that I should be easy to thy hand in every other matter. Go to Edward for thy reward, but for my wife's lands, ye shall not have them!'

'Sir, thy wife's lands I do not ask,' replied Richard, 'but Anne's part which the King hath given me, that I will take and hold.'

'Find Anne first, my good Dickon,' mocked Clarence, 'and tell Edward,' he added, with a sudden rising menace in his tones, 'that I daily come nearer and nearer to a certain secret...Aye, Dr Stillington will not talk, he knoweth too well what follows a loose tongue. But I shall find others to tell me what Eleanor Butler's nun would not, because of Edward's witchcraft.'

'Is this thy temper?' cried Richard, furious. 'After ye have betrayed Edward and been forgiven--aye, and rewarded!--do ye still talk of secrets, witchcraft and plots.'

The brothers stood glaring at each other. The hands of each went to their daggers, when Isabel Neville, Clarence's wife, entered the hall, running, her child in her arms, and put herself between the two men.

Clarence shrugged his shoulders and laughed dismissing the quarrel: but Dickon was ashamed, uneasy and exhausted.

Isabel, who had not spoken, sat down, sighing. Dickon was startled to see how ill she looked: all her bloom had gone. Her face was colourless, bluish round her lips and eyes, and she was breathing deeply.

Again Richard Gloucester thought what these times meant to

women; he had seen Queen Margaret being taken to Windsor that morning, and young Isabel had already something of her look. She fidgeted with the swaddling bands of her child--Edward Plantagenet, who should inherit his grandfather's honours and the Earl of Warwick's. There was no joy in Isabel's gaze at her baby, whose puny shape, vacant eyes, and sad wizened little face, revealed the feebleness of this heir to the Nevilles and Plantagenets.

Isabel glanced up at Dickon; the tears ran down her face, and his anger flared away like straw fire.

Clarence always avoided the presence of his sick wife and wretched child; he liked gaiety, splendour, and the laughter of easy, radiant people. With facile good nature he spoke lightly to Isabel and left her with his brother.

Richard could scarcely believe that George, Isabel, himself, were the same creatures as the children who had played at Middleham--life caught him up, hurried him on, breathless, panting, incredulous...

'Dickon,' whispered Isabel, 'I am dying--and I am so glad. God putteth too much on women. Never heed, Anne sent a messenger today. Hush!'

'George hath gone,' said Dickon, trembling, close to her. 'Anne, yes, said, dear Isabel--?'

'--is escaped from where George had her, and hath gone to a servant of ours who hath a cookshop in the Chepe--the sign of the "Crown".

Overwhelmed Dickon kissed his poor cousin.

'Dick, I commend to thee my mother,' she whispered. 'She is at

Beaulieu, nursing a broken heart. Dickon, when I am dead, beg Anne to take my children.'

'Why should ye die, Isabel?' Richard Gloucester spoke violently, defying the truth; 'the worst is past.'

'And how many have there been slain?' she asked with desperation. 'I should not dare to make that reckoning. Go to Anne, Dickon.'

The young Prince kissed her again and rode alone out of Coldharbour Castle as the Angelus rang from the Cathedral where King Henry had lately lain in his coffin.

The narrow streets were noisy with the cries of hucksters and children. In small upper windows were bunches of May flowers, brought from the fields outside the walls; the evening air was rich with the scent of sunny orchards coming across the river.

Dickon halted by the Cross and asked a fellow to take him to the 'Crown' in the Chepe.

With his guide at his horse's head Richard Gloucester came to the cookshop.

## 17

The man led the young knight through the West Chepe, between the stalls of the hucksters, into the market where cast goods were sold, and then into an alley so narrow that Dickon's horse had to tread through the filth of the gutters.

A board, with a roughly-painted crown, hung above a low dark shop, kept, said the man, by one Kitte Alcock, who once had been a servant to the House of Neville.



Dickon dismounted and asked the fellow to hold his horse for him; then he entered the shop.

A long counter was piled with eel and pork pies, the faint, rich smell of cooking pervaded the air.

A young boy stood behind the counter, gaping at the knight.

'Fellow, have ye,' asked Dickon, 'a young gentlewoman here?'

The boy, in stammering fright, denied this, and Dickon guessed that he thought Anne Neville was pursued by the Duke of Clarence and his men.

'Fellow, tell her,' he added, 'that no enemy hath come to seek her.'

But the boy still averred that there was no gentlewoman concealed in the shop.

'I will see for myself,' replied Richard, and, putting the boy aside gently, he mounted the dark, narrow stairs to the upper solar or sun parlour.

As he opened the door he saw her--small, frightened, trembling like a captured bird, standing in the farthest corner of the small room; for she had heard voices below and, looking out, had seen the horse in the narrow alley, and thought that Clarence had found her retreat.

Richard could not speak for pity, nor did his appearance seem to reassure Anne Neville.

She remained pressed against the wall, her hands clasped lightly together. She was dressed as a citizen's maid, in common cloth and linen, with black ribbon in her headdress and a leather pouch at her

waist.

She looked as ill and even more desolate than Isabel. Dickon shuddered to think that this was Anne Neville, the carefully-guarded, proudly-shielded child of Middleham, the girl who had received homage as a princess.

'It is Dickon,' he said not moving, for fear of alarming her. 'I do not come from Clarence or the King--Isabel hath sent me, and I will take thee wherever thou wilt go.'

Anne began to weep.

He noticed the pitiful smallness of her hands, the slender waist, narrow shoulders. Anne Neville was sixteen, and for the last year had known nothing but trouble, and fear.

Dickon could have wept also to see her brought so low; a great heaviness, caused by a revulsion against life itself, possessed him.

His early glory, his high offices, his triumphant loyalties, seemed then like nothing. He was sickened by these figures of stricken women--all cast down, cruelly trampled on by the harsh feet of those violent times. The figure of Anne Neville, as she wept in the solar parlour above the pastrycook's was the figure of Alys, as she had went in the little room at Veere, on the grey and windy day that he had sailed. There was a terrible likeness between the hopeless, undeserved, and unassuageable grief of all these women--the sewing girl, Margaret of Anjou, Anne Neville, Eleanor Butler dying in the convent in Norwich, the woman in the Kentish castle...

'Oh, Anne!' cried Dickon, 'what can I do for thee? May I come near thee and hold thy hand?'

The deep compassion in his voice seemed to reassure her a little:

she looked up, but with frightened eyes.

'Oh, Dick, my father is dead!' she sobbed.

'Aye, dead,' replied Dickon, heavily, and frowned to think of that scene on Gladmoor Heath. when he had seen Warwick cut down, fighting fiercely for his life between the swathes of cold mist and the glint of spears.

'And Edward of Lancaster,' whispered Anne.

'He, too, is dead,' said Gloucester--'as a knight in Tewkesbury meadow.'

Dickon ventured to cross the uneven floor of the sun-parlour.

'Did ye care for him, Anne? Did ye love him?'

The maiden gazed at him as if she did not understand what he meant.

'The Queen Margaret; she answered, 'was angry with me. She called me often "traitor's daughter" and "rebel child." She put my mother behind her. I was very unhappy.'

'Queen Margaret, too, hath answered to her account.' said Richard. 'She looked like a dead woman, Jesu, mercy; they say that when she sleeps she laughs continuously. She hath gone to Windsor.'

'King Henry is dead,' said Anne, dully.

'Aye, dead and buried.'

'And Montacute, my uncle?'

She recited the names of the men who had died as if this subject had for her a terrible fascination.

'And Edmund Beaufort, whom I knew in France, and Sir John, his brother?'

'Pass over these matters,' cried Dickon, in distress. 'We two live, Anne.'

'Dick, I dream of blood and battle every night,' she whispered.

'Lancaster bath lost,' replied Richard, 'and the wars are over.'

But he did not speak as one who felt certain of a better future. He had drawn close to Anne, but the old familiarity that had once been between them was lost; he dared not touch her, and she still seemed to regard him with fear and suspicion. With her hands joined together Anne put up a petition.

'Let me return to my mother at Beaulieu, let us go into a nunnery together, and Clarence may have my fortune.' Dickon thought in sore anguish:

'Can I tell her how I want her, now, when she is so frightened?'

He could see that Anne's heart was closed to all thoughts of love; for she had known recently nothing but ambition, greed and hate. Her gentle mind and heart were stunned by the fury of recent events.

'Thou didst not slay my father, Dickon?' she asked, quickly.

'God record I did not!' said Richard of Gloucester. 'I saw him in the fight—no more. His body was treated with all honour: the King mourned him, and thy uncle, as old friends.'

Anne went into the window-place where there was a little faint May sunshine.

'Where would ye go, Anne?' asked Richard. 'What shall I do?'

But he spoke to a girl who could not formulate a wish, whose only instinct was to hide, and die out of the sight of men.

She gazed at him with such indifference that Richard could not resist probing this sad apathy.

'Do ye not trust me, Anne? Forget what hath happened since Middleham, and think we are together there again.' Anne Neville shook her head.

'It is Middleham I have forgotten,' she replied. 'What would Clarence do with me? He was so loud and fierce. He is not gentle to Isabel. Tell him, Dickon, he may have my father's lands if he will let me go and be more gentle with Isabel.'

'He shall do as much without a bribe,' said Dickon, grimly. 'Come, Anne, thy natural guardian yet lives, and that is George Neville, my Lord of York. He hath made his peace with the King. I will take thee to his charge.'

Dickon knew that the poor frightened girl whom he had desired so long and so hopelessly was his now, he could have taken her, pursued and penniless, but she was not free to choose, and for this reason he could not take her--she was frightened, even by his honourable wishes. He knew the long and bitter battle Clarence would make for her estates, but Dickon resolved that he would combat his brother's greed, and see that the right of Anne, half of Warwick's possessions, were, by King and Parliament settled upon her. Then, when she was again a great heiress, he could ask her and

she might choose him, or maybe another man.

He considered this, looking earnestly and thoughtfully at her. Melancholy had settled on his fine features, and of late, except when roused, his face was sad.

This musing look of inner grief encouraged Anne. She felt him to be a partner in some spiritual disaster that had overtaken them both. If he had come to her joyous or triumphant she would have shrunk from him, but seeing him so disturbed she ventured from her place and laid her hand upon his sleeve.

'I do trust thee, Dickon: I will go with thee to my uncle.'

Then her gentle heart remembered her obligations.

'Give something, Dickon, to these poor people here, for this man's mother was in the household of Clarence, and brought me here at great risk to himself, to lie hidden.'

'Anne, I will look to that,' replied Dickon, tenderly.

They stood together holding hands in the pale sunlight. Dickon believed that he could yet, with time and most laborious pains, win Anne Neville--to love him and share his mounting fortunes which would set her higher than she had been in the days of her father's splendour.

She folded her hands across his heart and smiled faintly, like a child, confident, almost gay. Her look moved Dickon and he turned his head away sharply, and found himself gazing into the alley, on the upturned face of the fellow who held his horse.

Dickon stared, and his sadness turned to horror. The man appeared to be of supernatural height, so that his face was almost on a level

with the window; he seemed to pry into the room with malevolent eyes. His doublet was open on his breast, which appeared to be covered with ragged hide; his head looked as though it was crowned by sharp horns. Dickon, giddy with this awful delusion, put his hand to his head. When he looked again there was nothing but an ordinary common man patiently holding the horse's head.

'Jon Foggel!' muttered Dickon.

He took hold of the girl with an urgency she did not resist, and drew her from the parlour, down the dark stairs, past the shop into the street. There he peered anxiously at the fellow holding his horse.

'Werst thou ever a serving-man in the House of York?' he asked.

The man replied with a grin:

'If it please Your Noble Grace, I have been many things in my time.'

Dickon gave him a ducat, dropping it from his pouch on to the cobbles, so that he did not have to touch the dirty hand, mounted and lifted Anne on to the saddle behind him. 'Hold my belt, Anne, and I will get thee quickly into safety.' At the entrance to the alley, he looked back, and saw that the man had not troubled to pick up the ducat, but stood, staring after them, with a smile, while he pulled at the ragged ends of his hair.

## 18

Edward Plantagenet, easy and cheerful now he was again King of England, good-humouredly asked his youngest brother why he was so quiet, so melancholy? Gloucester had been thanked by Parliament for his gallant leadership in two great battles. He had come with loyalty untainted through the dangers and hardships of

exile and flight, by sea and land. Great offices and estates and rewards were crowded on to him, and again Edward promised:

'You shall have your Anne.'

The King had laughed a little at Richard's delicacy, because he had not taken the girl when he had found her in her retreat, but carried her instead to the Archbishop of York, her guardian, who had placed her in sanctuary at St Martin's-le-Grand.

Parliament, the King and Clarence wrangled over her estates. Her penniless mother mourned, lonely, in Beaulieu Abbey, and Richard of Gloucester waited.

'What darkens thy rising day for thee?' challenged Edward, laughingly.

In reply to this Dickon looked so long and keenly at Edward that the King became serious in his turn.

'Hast thou indeed something on thy mind?' he demanded. 'We are secure.'

'But I,' said Dickon, 'believe that we--'

He broke off, and added:

'Is there anything that Clarence knows or guesses that might be to thy danger or disadvantage? He is much with Dr Stillington.'

With a meaningless smile Edward replied:

'Dr Stillington is a prudent man. He will not talk treason with Clarence.'



'Sir, I did not say,' put in Gloucester, quickly, 'that Clarence talked treason with any; but he is restless and discontented.'

'Clarence,' replied Edward, 'bath no cause for discontent; I have set him very high, considering that he betrayed me once.'

'And you still remember it,' said Dickon,

'It is a deed that no man could forget. He betrayed me and he betrayed Warwick. He is the weakness of our House, Dickon. By him we may all come to the ground. Yet you love him,' smiled Edward. 'Had it not been for thee, Dickon, he and I had parted long ago.'

Dickon looked out on the wide, dark river flowing past the Tower walls.

'Clarence thinketh,' he said, uneasily, 'that we are encompassed by magic and spells.'

Edward crossed himself hastily.

'That may be, that may be,' he muttered, 'but who works them?'

Dickon knew, and he was aware that Edward must know, that a lot of people accused the Woodvilles of enchantment, and that these accusations had revived with greater energy since Edward's return to the throne, for he had fallen more than ever under the influence of the Woodvilles. It was this that galled Clarence and many of the great Yorkist lords, and caused them to say, almost openly, that Elizabeth Woodville was a witch, and her kinsmen wizards, keeping the King in a labyrinth of charms and spells. But Clarence, in his drinking bouts, and among his flatterers, had said more than this: he had said publicly what he had before only said privately, that Edward himself was a magician. Only by selling himself to some devil had he contrived, declared Clarence, the two extraordinary victories which

had regained him the crown.

Dickon did not believe this, but he wondered. The fortunes of his House were, in every way, dark and terrible, though for the moment they shone with success.

He had not yet forgotten those heads on the Mickle Gate at York, those two flights to the Low Countries, those fierce battles, the blood of Barnet and Tewkesbury. Dickon loved Edward deeply and looked at him with tender loyalty, and here again he wondered. Why was Edward so alert, so valiant and untiring in warfare, so soft and indolent in times of peace? He had returned to a life soft and vain and costly so that men said true chivalry had died in England, and that the greatest knights of the land thought of nothing but games and diversions, women and play.

'Sir, give me Anne Neville and the estates; give me at least Middleham, where we were once happy together. You let this matter hang and wait.'

'I would displease no one.'

'Sir, with these tedious delays ye displease all,' replied Dickon.

'I would not anger Clarence,' replied Edward, whose good nature hated any quarrels to mar the splendour of his Court.

The claims of Clarence are in every way unjust,' replied Dickon; 'though I would willingly take the girl without a dowry, having enough, by God's grace, to keep a wife. Yet why should she be stripped to pay the debts of Clarence, whose money goes in foolishness and lechery?'

Edward laughed, having sympathy with such weakness, being

always in debt himself and spending incredible sums on clothes and the feasting of favourites.

Richard also loved magnificence, but despised careless, idle expenditure. He was exact in his accounts, prudent in his management and, though lavish in display, never in debt. He longed to be away from London, and as Warden of the Northern Marches his duty was in the north; but the long negotiations over his marriage and the partition of Warwick's estates kept him fretting and idle in the capital. He knew that the Woodvilles worked against him and Clarence, and strove to separate the King from his brothers by every art and device. He was sure of his own position with Edward, of his own place in Edward's heart, but he believed that a complete estrangement might be brought about between the King and the reckless, false Clarence.

'Thou hast my consent to marry Warwick's Anne,' said Edward, kindly. 'Take her, Dickon, and argue about her estates afterwards.'

'Sir, I do not know her mind.' replied Dickon:

'I will not have her if she likes me not or prefers another.'

'Thou art too subtle.' declared Edward. 'The maiden knoweth nothing. She falleth to the first who is kind to her. Take her before she dies of loneliness. Warwick's girls are frail, Dickon.'

At this Dickon shuddered.

'Isabel is dying,' he said, briefly, 'and that is the fault of Clarence.'

'Let it not be thy fault that Anne dies,' said Edward, lightly.

He took his young brother by the shoulder and turned him about.

'Tell me, Dickon, hast thou any other troubles besides this delay about Anne?'

Richard Gloucester considered a moment, then replied, candidly:

'I have felt, since I was a child, since the news of Wakefield came to Baynard's Castle, and we were hurried overseas, that there is some fiend pursuing us--thou and I, and George and all our House.'

'An ugly fancy,' murmured Edward, frowning.

'Sir, I have thought,' continued Dickon, frowning earnestly in an effort to put these vague and dreadful thoughts into lucid words, 'that a recurrent doom followed me, and I have heard tales--'

'So have we all, Dick,' replied Edward, though not with his usual gaiety; 'and it is known that fiends walk the earth, Jesu mercy! but angels, too, Dickon, and by our present fortune it would seem rather that we have. been companioned by these.'

'There was one Jon Fogge,' continued Dickon, speaking the hated name with reluctance; 'I think a man-at-arms in our father's house.'

'I remember such a name,' said Edward. 'He was lost in the Low Countries.'

'But I have seen him since, and I have thought--' He paused.

'--if we should be accursed!' he added sharply.

'Why should ye consider that?' demanded Edward.

'Because I have felt thus haunted by some invisible power which, on occasion, hath been made manifest in the form of this Jon Fogge. Because even now, when there seems no foe in sight, nor any

misfortune possible, I am as a man for ever drawing back from disaster.'

Edward regarded him curiously.

'Why should we be singled out for such a doom?' he asked.

'If one of us,' replied Dickon, 'hath sold his immortal welfare for victory--'

Edward broke in:

'Ye have got this from Clarence--I know what he saith of me! Before God, I have not meddled with the fiends!'

'I believe that,' cried Dickon, warmly; 'and yet, and yet, there is something...What is it that Clarence knoweth?'

'Sir, nothing!' swore the King, suddenly violent. 'Clarence knoweth nothing! If he continueth with these scandals I will place him where he will say nothing either.'

Dickon crossed himself.

'The three Suns, brother, was a mighty miracle!'

'Why not one from God?' demanded Edward.

'Why,' counter-questioned Dickon, 'why do I feel a confused and haunted man, since my childhood pointed at and pursued by some supernatural evil?'

'To each man his own devil and his own angel,' replied Edward, sombrely. 'Ye are an unstained knight, Dickon, loyal and loving, and should have no fiend dogging thy steps--'

'I will go to Anne,' interrupted Dickon, 'I can wait no longer. I believe that with Anne are love and peace. Surely that little maiden will stand between me and whatever devils be about us!'

A storm was swirling up from the sea and darkening the river; dun-coloured clouds were piled high behind the turrets of the Tower.

As Dickon left the dark gateway of the fort he saw Clarence coming from the stables, with a great bay horse led at his heels. The brothers did not speak, but frowned at each other in the strange tawny light.

Clarence was bare-headed, radiant and magnificent in his azure satin and purple velvet, but his blue eyes were restless, his face was hard.

Dickon called up his esquires, mounted, and rode rapidly through the city. The crooked lines of the houses were sharp against the dark sky as Dickon came to the sanctuary of St Martin's-le-Grand, which, with its streets of houses, providing lodging for those who came to claim the protection of the church, was like a town in itself, enclosed and guarded by all the powers of God against all the powers of man.

The porter at once admitted Richard.

He went on foot through narrow alleys, with stalls and shops, and houses let in lodgings; between the curious, prying faces of cut-throats and cut-purses, who had taken refuge there, and came out at night to ply their trade. Holding his fine mantle round him in disgust, Richard passed these and came to the great church itself, with the tower looming high into the stormy sky.

A flash of lightning darted across the grey walls, as Dickon reached the house where Anne Neville lodged. He was admitted as the bell of St Martin began to clang against the rising mutter of the storm.

In the murky light Warwick's daughter looked like a lily--erect, and pale, and smoothly fair. She had bloomed since Dickon had taken her from her refuge in the Chepe, and the great beauty which was her heritage shone again. She was sewing, drawing the needle and silk in and out of satin and buckram, shaping the device of the Bear and Ragged Staff.

Dickon thought of his mother's sewing girl. He had lost sight of Alys. She had disappeared from Veere when he had sent for news of her...gone, little Alys, lost.

Anne glanced up, and folded her work upon her knee. She was free from immediate fear, but the odd world of the sanctuary was unfamiliar and she was lonely.

Sea-birds, pursued by the storm, flew screaming past the window.

'Anne,' said Dickon, 'the King and Parliament will, as I think, give thee thy great estates again.'

'And what shall I do with them?' she asked.

Dickon's words sounded cold and tasteless in his own ears, his heart and throat seemed choked with long-suppressed pain and longing.

'Could thou take me for thy lord, Anne, with open heart and open hand?'

As she did not answer, he added, wistfully:

'I could take thee back to Middleham.'

The mutter of the thunder grew around them as they stood in the

falling dark.

'Thy choice is free,' said Dickon. 'Do not take me if it falls elsewhere.'

Anne Neville did not know if she loved this young man; she had been too frightened by recent events, too violently cast from one disaster to another.

But he was kind and strong—a prince and powerful. He offered her her ancient home in Wensleydale.

She smiled at him and with timid fingers caressed his hand. The storm rushed on London, beating against the walls and towers like the furious assault of a battering army.

The lovers embraced desperately, snatching at each other in the half-dark of the high upper room. Dickon stared fiercely and defiantly at Anne's fair head, fallen in tired surrender across his chest, in the storm which rattled the windows he thought he heard the laughter of Jon Fogge, and, sharing in the storm-clouds above the steeple of the church, thought he saw that lean malicious face.





# PART III - 1482-1485

## THE WHITE BOAR

1

The Duke of Gloucester stood in the valley of Wensleydale and watched the great stones of the new collegiate church of Middleham being set in place by the busy masons; every day the church rose higher towards God.

Richard Gloucester felt at ease.

In the eight years of his happy marriage, as Chief Seneschal of the Duchy of Lancaster, Richard was now seldom in London, though he had purchased Crosbie Place in Bishops-gate, and he and Anne Neville, his wife, and their little son Edward, lived mostly at Pontefract Castle, or in the old home of the Duchess, at Middleham. In his magnificent household were his earliest friends, Sir Thomas Radcliffe and Sir Francis Lovell, and here in her old home lived the widowed Countess of Warwick, who had left her retreat at Beaulieu Abbey to share the splendour of her happy daughter.

Dickon, bred and trained in blood and violence, had become a man experienced in life, capable in government, generous to his friends, and warmly affectionate to his family. His loyalty to his brother was undiminished, but he kept away from the Court where Edward was still entirely ruled by the Woodvilles. The King's reputation had sunk among his subjects, he was not so highly regarded as knight or man as he had been either after Towton or Tewkesbury. Enmeshed in the intrigues of women and courtiers, he lived on a pension from the King of France--the gold of Louis de Valois rendered him

independent of his Parliament and people.

The gaining of that pension was Richard's ugliest recollection since Tewkesbury.

As allies of Charles of Burgundy, their brother-in-law, the Plantagenet Princes with a powerful army had landed in France, equipped by the English money Edward had raised in a progress throughout the kingdom. Burgundy had met them, with only a scanty following of knights, and Edward had made this meagre assistance an excuse to listen to the negotiations at once opened by Louis. Richard could recall now, with rage and shame, the cartloads of foods and the barrels of wine which had poured through the open gates of Amiens to intoxicate the English soldiers. French gold dropped into the hats and sleeves of the English nobles, and finally came the disgraceful scene on the bridge at Picquigny, when the two knights had met, a barrier prudently dividing them, and Edward had agreed to the dishonourable terms whereby he abandoned his ally and returned to England in exchange for a pension from the French king.

Richard alone had remained loyal to Charles of Burgundy; he had refused the bribes of Louis, and had declared passionately for continuing to aid the man whom he could remember as the dark youth who carried him on his shoulder as a child in Utrecht.

But the Woodvilles were greedy for the money, the reckless, extravagant Edward was deep in debt. There were many people about the King now whom Richard mistrusted, like Dr Morton, the pardoned rebel who had been with Queen Margaret at Tewkesbury, and William Stanley's wife, who by her former marriage with Jasper Tudor was the mother of that Henry Tudor lurking at the court of Brittany, and Henry Stafford, the Duke of Buckingham, the descendant of Beauforts and Bohuns, an extravagant, dissipated and unstable young man, who was high in the favour of the

capricious King. He stopped his musing and walked slowly up the wintry slope of the valley towards the castle which rose above the village and the river.

As he ascended towards the battlements, his keen eyes discerned a small group of horsemen approaching the drawbridge.

When he entered the castle the leader of these knights was waiting for him in the great hall, warming his half-frozen fingers before the enormous fire.

Richard knew this knight for Lord Lumley, one of his brother Clarence's friends, and he was surprised to see him at Middleham, thinking it strange that he should have come in the winter-time on this journey to the North, when he himself was due in London in a few weeks, to attend the opening of Parliament.

Lord Lumley, full of haste and urgency, said directly:

'Sir. God keep thee, I come from Your Grace's brother, George of Clarence, and he entreateth thee, if thou hast ever valued his brotherly love, to return immediately with me to London.'

'Sir, why should I go to London with greater haste than I intended?' demanded Gloucester uneasily; for the mention of Clarence always brought a certain fear of trouble and even disaster to his mind.

'Sir, the Prince requireth thy instant help,' said Lord Lumley, earnestly. 'He relieth upon thy constancy and loyalty. I have heard him say that he hath no true friend in the world save Your Noble Grace.'

Richard was always moved by any appeal to his affections, and he knew in what a difficult and even dangerous a position Clarence was--hated, feared, intrigued against by the Woodvilles, and himself, unstable, reckless and extravagant.

'Sir, what is at the bottom of this business?' he demanded. 'Standeth Clarence in some peril or disorder?'

'Sir, what he hath to say,' said Lord Lumley, 'he will impart clearly to no one but Your Grace's self, and I do not properly know it; but he bid me, should ye question me, say it relates to a certain secret which is known to the Bishop of Bath and Wells and was also to Lady Eleanor Butler and to the nun at whose death thou wert present some years ago.'

These words increased Richard's uneasiness. Whatever it was that Clarence knew, or affected to know, Richard believed that his surest interest was to remain silent.

A melancholy shaded his fine face as he reflected on Lord Lumley's message, and Clarence's knight considered him with an admiration and respect which few felt for either of his brothers.

'Sir, I will come with thee,' he said, 'at once to London. Not, I think, to hear my brother's secret, for I might guess that to be of a nature better left untold, but to advise him to be patient and prudent.'

He gave orders for the entertainment of his guest and for the preparations for his own immediate departure, and went upstairs to a room most familiar to him in his childhood, where his wife sat, reading to her little son out of a book covered with green satin.

The grateful love with which Richard regarded this beautiful woman and their child was clouded with a certain secret anguish.

Anne Neville's only surviving child had inherited her delicacy as well as her beauty, and lay languid against his mother's lap. Isabel, Anne's sister, the Duchess of Clarence, was dead and though Anne

had bloomed again in the happiness of Middleham and Richard's love, it was a forced hectic blooming.

She was alarmed at the news of his earlier departure for London, but Richard soothed her, saying nothing of the reason of his departure, nor of the message from Clarence, but merely that he had been summoned earlier to attend the opening of Parliament.

He took the boy on his knee and held the woman's hand in his. They both implored to be taken with him on his journey. Delicate, loving creatures, they lived only in the warmth of this strong man's love and protection.

'I cannot take thee, Anne,' said Dickon tenderly, 'the journey is too hard in this winter weather. And I shall return here immediately, in two months at most. Thou knowest I am never long away, willingly, from Middleham.'

'Dick, I am so lonely when thou art not here,' pleaded Anne, tears in her eyes.

He reminded her, smilingly, that she had a large household about her, and her own mother, and good knights like Lovell and Radcliffe, a company of men-at-arms, the jester, the clerks and priest, the tutor, and the hounds, and above all the child close to her day and night.

'But, Jesu, if he should be ill again; said Anne, 'and ye so far away!'

Richard put that aside with a ready assurance which he did not feel: he was, indeed, deeply troubled by the delicacy of the child, by what seemed a curse on the House of York. In eight years of marriage Anne had borne and lost other children.

King Edward had two sons--the Prince of Wales and one called Richard, Duke of York, both ailing, peevish boys, who seemed too

puny to survive. Isabel had left Clarence two children, the son was feeble in his mind, the daughter slow-growing and frail.

It was bitter fortune that such delicate buds should blossom on such fierce and war-like stock, that Neville and Plantagenet between them produced no more than these four sickly boys. This situation held for Richard even deeper irony for in his household, being trained among his knights, was a child robust and handsome, his son by Alys, his mother's sewing girl, who had died at his birth in a Dutch convent.

Anne Neville had accepted this child with simple kindness, and, secretly, Richard loved him dearly; yet, because of the contrast between him and his true heir, he kept him away from his wife's chambers, but he could not forbear visiting him before he set out on his journey, and promising him a bow and arrows to be brought from the bowyers' quarters in London. Richard tried to keep his heart from the passionate wish that this boy, John, stood by his wife's knee, instead of the beloved but feeble Edward.

Preceded by banners, bearing the arms of England and his own cognizance of the White Boar, Richard came quickly to London, and to his own residence of the Erper or Crosbie Hall, built by a city knight, and adorned with lavish magnificence. Immediately on his arrival the Duke of Clarence attended him with an air of impatience, and brought with him a man whom he introduced as Thomas Mandike, a Fellow of Cambridge. Richard knew the man, and that he was reputed to be a necromancer, and he frowned to see him in his brother's company.

Clarence straddled in front of the hearth--excited, confident, full of words and gestures. At twenty-eight his looks were still resplendent, though a faint dimming of his radiance was beginning to be perceptible--a blur of the finer lines, a coarsening of the colouring, the stamp of wild living and recklessly indulged passions.

'Dickon,' cried Clarence, excitedly, 'you remember my secret?'

'I hoped to forget, and that ye would do so also,' replied Richard. guardedly, with a cold glance at the Cambridge necromancer, who was crouching, a lean, dark figure, over the fire, with an air at once of respect and sly insolence.

'Sir,' cried Clarence, 'I have made Dr Stillington speak. I have come upon other witnesses. This fellow here is one of them. I have carefully pieced together the entire evidence and if thou, Dickon, wilt stand by me, we may send the Woodville widow and all her vile and greedy relations into the dust. I have been patient, Dickon,' he said, on a rising note of enthusiasm and excitement, 'I have waited; you remember how the singing-man was killed? He knew. And Rivers found out that he knew; so murdered him. But this fellow here'--he touched the necromancer on the shoulder--'I have had him safe hidden away. I want him to tell thee now what he knowth.'

'But, I sir,' said Richard. with darkening eyes, 'believe that it is something I would rather not hear, and certainly not from such lips as his. Remember. George. that Edward is bound by the deepest love to Elizabeth Woodville, and by much affection to her family.'

'Sir, they intrigue against us,' said Clarence, the blood rushing to his face; 'they will not rest till they have us down, and I--I must act quickly and act first!'

'Rather do as I do; replied Richard--'get some employment far from the Court. and occupy thyself with a man's affairs, and leave Edward to his women and his knaves.'

Clarence pulled the other man forward, and told him to disclose to Richard what he knew.



The man began to raise a faltering voice, but Richard impetuously stopped him.

'Fellow, I will not be involved in this, and do ye, Clarence, consider what ye do. However shrewd thy plot, the Woodvilles will be shrewder--'

He would have said more to Clarence. but the door was broken violently open. It was Lord Lumley, fear in his face. He addressed himself to Clarence:

'Sir, the King's Highness summoneth thee immediately to his presence.'

'Sir, it is I will answer that,' said Richard Gloucester, sternly.

He turned to his brother.

'Go, for the love of God lie quiet at Baynard's Castle, and avoid evil companions.'

## 2

Edward confronted Gloucester.

'Do ye intrigue against me with Clarence?' he demanded, hotly. 'Do ye work underhand betwixt me and mine?'

These two had never before quarrelled, and Richard's long and untarnished loyalty could not endure these unjust words. 'Thou knowest me, Edward, and what I am like to do.'

'Why art thou here two weeks before thy time?' demanded the King.

'Sir, because Clarence summoned me,' replied Richard, 'and I believed he might be in danger. Can Your Noble Grace assure me that he is not?'

Edward turned away and answered heavily:

'Sir, he slandereth me--up and down the city Clarence slandereth me. He is a traitor, too.'

'Sir, ye should not remember that,' said Richard. 'It is the Queen and her kin,' he added, boldly, without regard to Edward's displeasure; 'they hate Clarence and work for his ruin. Though in many ways ye are pleased to be their mouthpiece, in this, at least, where our brother is concerned I--if my service has any value with you--entreat thee to stay thy action.'

'What dost thou think Clarence knoweth, or believeth he knoweth? What dost thou consider he hath discovered?' asked Edward, curiously.

'Sir, I have not allowed myself to guess. And as for knowledge, I have none. When Clarence was about to tell me, we were rudely interrupted in this summons to him, which I have obeyed.'

'Sir, to what purpose?' asked the King, frowning.

'Sir, to see if we three brothers,' replied Richard, simply, 'might not make some concord between us. These divisions in the House of York pull it down more surely than any defeat in open fight.'

Edward lounged in the window-place. Idleness and dissipation had robbed him of much of his grace and dignity and Richard, regarding him, thought, with infinite sadness, that this was no longer the knight who had led the charge at Tewkesbury.

Edward mused, looking out on the river, while his brother waited his pleasure. He said at length, turning abruptly:

'Sir, Clarence shall have justice.'

'Sir, promise me that,' said Richard, earnestly.

'I pledge you,' Edward smiled.

He repeated:

'Clarence shall have justice.'

As Richard left the King's apartments, not satisfied, but less uneasy, he met the Queen, leaning on her brother's arm, flushed, laughing and insolent.

Richard stood in the path of the Woodvilles, and the woman's silly laughter rose higher as she noticed his stern face.

'Sir, I wonder that Your Grace cometh where ye get so little pleasure,' she exclaimed. 'Whenever ye appear at Court thy grim looks spoil the brightness of the day.'

Rivers spoke, suavely and with outward courtesy, yet, as Richard well knew, in mockery.

'Sir, if Your Grace hath found the King uneasy and stinted in his welcome, ye must accuse my Lord Clarence for this lowness in his spirits.'

'Sir, instead,' said Richard, 'I accuse thee, Lord Rivers, and thy sister here, The King is yours--a puppet on a string--but I, I have my eyes, my ears, my senses and my speech.'

'Sir, speak more gently here!' cried Rivers, and was drawing his sister on.

But Richard snatched the Queen's hand, and looked earnestly at her.

'Dame,' he said, sternly, 'if ye are not past all warning, beware how ye meddle with George Plantagenet--the King's blood, at least, should be safe from thy designs.'

'Sir, what have I to do with this?' she exclaimed, foolish, frightened, and defiant.

'Thou knowest, thou silly piece,' replied Richard, contemptuously; 'thou knowest what thou hast made of one who was a noble prince and a valiant knight, with thy costliness and feasts! Keep to thy play and besot the King out of all manliness, but leave his family alone.'

'Sir, an unmannerly threatening!' exclaimed the Queen.

And Rivers sneered:

'Sir, Your Princely Grace might have kept these menaces from a woman!'

'Sir, I speak to her,' replied the Duke of Gloucester, vehemently, 'because it is she who is at the bottom of all our evil. Before God, Dame!' he added, scornfully flinging aside the Queen's hand which he had grasped tightly, 'I know not what Edward sees in such a shallow, malicious woman, that he must give up all glory, affection, honour at her bidding!'

The Queen no longer laughed; she stared with terrified eyes at the angry young Prince. Rivers laughed and looked away. 'Madam, into thy chamber!' cried Richard. 'Set Edward on to his brothers, and parcel out the spoils!'

Angry, he left the Tower and rode back to Crosbie Place; and there Lord Lumley, impatiently awaiting his return, informed him that Clarence had been arrested, together with the necromancer, and taken with a great show of force to the Tower.

He must have been entering its precincts while Richard was having his angry interview with Edward.

Before the watchful and anxious Parliament Clarence was arraigned. Only one man spoke against him. That was the King. Only one man spoke for him, and that was himself.

Leaning from his throne and speaking violently, the King accused his brother of a lot of vague and frivolous offences, declaring that he was a pardoned traitor who had lapsed again into treason, that he had worked against the King's welfare and the welfare of the realm. He had declared the King to be a magician, and kept company himself with known necromancers.

Clarence, isolated, undefended, answered with boldness, standing erect before all those anxious, watching eyes. Charge by charge, sentence by sentence he answered the King's accusations. Many knights stirred uneasily in their places, and looked away, embarrassed by the spectacle of the two Princes confronting each other, employing in this deadly quarrel abilities which, joined together, should have set their House above all enemies.

Gloucester, with his hands clasped about his knee, sat by the King's side.

He knew that Edward did not bring out the real accusation against Clarence, that these general charges covered something deeper. Gloucester knew also that behind the King's passion and

vehemence lay the long, laboured spite of the Woodvilles: that behind Clarence's able and excited defence lay long hatred of the Woodvilles.

Clarence had flown high of late. He wanted to marry Mary, daughter of Charles of Burgundy (recently killed in the battle of Nancy), and heiress to all the Low Countries. Her stepmother, Clarence's sister, had encouraged this, and the restless ambition of the Plantagenet Prince had at last seen the prospect of an independent throne. There had been other candidates for young Mary of Burgundy's hand, among them Anthony Woodville, the Queen's brother. Clarence's hopes had been cast down so that Lord Rivers' pretensions might be set up, and all the might of England was put behind the claim of a commoner to wed the greatest heiress in Europe.

All this Richard knew and turned over in his mind during that awful afternoon in the Parliament House, as, sullen and half-ashamed, he listened to his two brothers.

When Clarence had spoken the last word in his defence he was led away a prisoner, smiling proudly.

King Edward, flushed, angry, struggling with some fierce and half-repressed emotion, hoarsely demanded sentence from his assembled Lords.

Gloucester put his hands over his face.

With troubled looks, in uneasy obedience to the King's demands, sentence of death was passed on George, Duke of Clarence, as a proved traitor.

Gloucester rode beside the King from Westminster to the Tower. There were now no acclamations for Edward in his progress through

the city. Women might stare at his magnificence, but the men had no more than a shrug or a sneer.

As they neared Tower Hill, Gloucester, speaking for the first time since they had entered Westminster Hall, said, abruptly:

'Sir, shall I go to Clarence with a pardon?'

'Ye heard me,' retorted Edward, fiercely, 'what I said and how I answered.'

'Sir, they were the most horrible sentences that ever I did hear,' replied Gloucester, pale in the grey light of the winter afternoon, 'and I would Your Grace could unsay them. Nor was the true matter of thy wrath in them--'

'That,' muttered Edward, 'may not be disclosed in public!'

'But, sir,' urged Richard, as their horses went more slowly up the hill, 'ye are both one man's sons. He is the first Prince of the blood, nor brothers turn against each other.'

'Dick, let it be,' said Edward, sullenly. 'I am weary.'

At the portcullis of the Tower Richard reined in his horse. 'Sir, God record, I will not enter here,' he shouted to his brother, 'to sit at the same board with the Woodvilles.'

For a second Edward seemed to hesitate, as if shame struggled with his anger, and Richard dared to hope that he might yet say some word in favour of Clarence.

But in the end he only shrugged his shoulders, touched his hat in dry greeting to his brother, and rode through the Tower gateway, with Rivers smiling behind him, and all the Woodvilles and their favourites

closely following.

Richard, alone, rode back to Crosbie Hall.

He did not believe that Edward intended to carry out the sentence on Clarence, and for himself he meant to oppose even the imprisonment of his brother to the utmost. But he knew that he would be the only man to do so. He wrote urgently to his mother, in her retreat at Berkhamsted, begging her to come at once to London and use her powerful influence to adjust things between the King and Clarence.

The grey clouds had settled low over London, the river was dark and sluggish between the marshy banks. The cold had entered even the great warm chambers of Crosbie Hall. Richard longed for his wife and child, the company of Radcliffe and Lovell, and all his faithful Yorkshire knights. He sat at the long table, from which his untouched food had been taken away, with his head in his hands, struggling with many old terrors and alarms, which crept upon him down the years from his sad childhood.

He watched the snow drift against the panes, and thought of Clarence in the Tower dungeon.

While he had sat before his untasted meat he learned that Dr Stillington, Bishop of Bath and Wells, had also been imprisoned after a sudden arrest. There was nothing Richard could do to save Clarence, except use his personal influence with the King, and that, once so considerable, was now little. Body and soul Edward seemed to be possessed by the Woodvilles and their allies, such as Dr Morton and Thomas Stanley's wife--people Richard did not trust.

He intended to go and again confront the King, even in the midst of his hostile minions. But his spirit shrank from such a task, and he



turned over in his mind whether he would not first try to obtain admission to Clarence's dungeon and concoct with him some plan for his release. It might be possible, Richard thought, to extract from him the precise nature of his secret, and to receive his pledge to forget it for ever.

But before Richard left Crosbie Hall for the Tower a certain knight waited upon him in all haste.

Richard accepted this message as being from the King. He left his warm, richly lit hall immediately, and rode beside the strange knight, too absorbed in his own thoughts to ask this man's name. The icy clouds packed round the moon; an icy wind blew up from the sea and rattled the signs hanging above the shops.

Before Richard Gloucester's mind's eye as he rode, was the face of Clarence as he had been led away--a sentenced man--a face flushed from passionate talking, a head held high, condemned by his own brother, the House of York tearing itself to pieces.

When the two horsemen reached the Barbican, Richard turned in his saddle and, peering through the dark, broken here by the fluttering torchlight of a crowd of archers round, the gates, asked his companion who he was.

'Sir, ye come from the King,' he said, 'but I do not know your face.'

'Sir, I am Sir Jon Fogge,' replied the knight.

Richard could not see him clearly.

'Why,' he exclaimed, 'there was a serving-man of my father's--'

'Sir, my name is not uncommon,' replied the knight, 'but I have never been in the service of Your Noble Grace's father, Richard of York.'

They rode across the moat and through two deeply-shadowed gates to the White Tower. A stream of light fell through a high oriel window of the great hall, and Richard could hear shouts of laughter coming from within, the sweet voices of singing-men and boys in a catch, and then, in a lull, Edward's loud commands--more dancing, more melody; and Elizabeth Woodville's shrill answering tones.

Richard turned to his companion.

'Jesu. mercy, have I been bidden here to a festival?' he demanded, angrily.

The knight replied:

'Sir, it is to another place I take Your Noble Grace.'

He led the young Prince across the dark courtyard, away from the great hall, and admitted him to the Beauchamp Tower--called after an Earl of Warwick who had, in the old days, died a prisoner there, and used since as a dungeon.

Richard knew then that he was to see Clarence.

'Sir, who bid you fetch me?' he demanded of the man. The knight preceded him down the gloomy passage and replied:

'It is the wish of the Queen and Lord Rivers that ye should tonight, Your Noble Grace, see thy brother, the Duke of Clarence.'

Richard had never entered these dungeons before, and, brave as he was, terror made him shudder as he advanced into shadow after shadow, deep archways, cold stone passages, and twisting stairways lit only by high-placed, dim lamps.

He thought:

'How can Edward feast when Clarence lodgeth here?'

Sir Jon Fogge paused at a door, guarded by two tall soldiers.

He took keys from his belt and unlocked this, passing in, the Prince behind him, the sentinels taking no notice of either man.

They entered a tall room, supported by an immense pillar in the centre, from which sprung the span of the arch. There was no furniture in the room, nor window.

A lamp, in an iron stanchion high on the pillar, was the only light, low and flickering.

'Sir, is Clarence here?' demanded Richard, recoiling. 'Sir, Clarence is here,' repeated Sir Jon Fogge.

Richard went round the pillar.

Beyond lay Clarence--the young, strong man, his splendid clothes stripped from him in a useless struggle, his teeth clenched in his torn lip, the blood drying on his gashed throat and oozing from his clotted hair. His blue eyes had turned in his head with a last glare of pride and defiance; he sprawled on the stone, darkened by the monstrous shadows.

Gloucester drew back, not even a prayer would come to his lips.

Across the murdered body of his brother he saw the long, thin, slightly smiling face of Jon Fogge.

Richard Gloucester, with his men in the marches of Scotland, called up Francis Lovell, and pointed out to that dear friend a curious star in the cold northern sky. The keen evening air blew over the encamped army, fires flared among the heather.

The Duke of Gloucester, at his tent entrance, stared at the star which, large and red, trailing a tail of fire, hung above the distant hills.

'Sir, a portent,' said Francis Lovell, cheerfully, 'and why not, like the three Suns at Towton, of fortunate significance?' Richard turned his endearing smile on his friend, but answered, sadly:

'Sir, I am apt to mistrust portents.'

Lovell could not understand his master's constant unhappiness, which seemed only assuaged by the hurry and excitement of constant and violent action. To Lovell, and indeed to all the friends of Richard, the last years had been full of solid and glittering success. Since the death of Clarence, Gloucester had avoided the Court where the Woodvilles ruled the King, but Edward had given great honours to his remaining brother.

He was Great Chamberlain, Admiral of England, Lord Warden of the Cinque Ports, Lieutenant-General of the North and Warden of the Marches. With energy and decision he had fallen upon the western border of Scotland, bringing a sweep of more than thirty miles under obedience to the King of England.

Able administrator and successful general, he had been given the command of an army for the invasion of the northern kingdom, then distracted by the quarrels of King James and his brother Albany. The English Prince had entered Edinburgh as a conqueror, but a conqueror loudly acclaimed and warmly received. With graceful courtesy, he had obtained all that the English demanded from the

Scots, reconciled the King and his brother, and after a prolonged and fierce siege captured the town and castle of Berwick. Yet on his triumphant homeward march, with a satisfied and enthusiastic following, assured of the cordial gratitude and warm praise of King, Parliament and people, Richard Gloucester stood mournfully gazing at the star over the dark horizon, as if he saw in it a prophecy of disaster.

Lovell believed that the root of Gloucester's sadness was the ever-deepening breach between himself and the King, which, although there was on one side loyal service and on the other great rewards, had widened steadily if imperceptibly since the death of Clarence.

Not even to Radcliffe and Lovell did Richard say a word of complaint against his brother; but they knew the deep discontent he must feel that England should be governed by the Woodville faction, and the secret shame he felt for his brother.

Ten years after Tewkesbury the King was a slothful idler, his beauty overblown, his superb body coarsened, the fantasy and expense of his clothes a mockery to other men.

That night Richard could not sleep.

He sat up in his tent with Lovell and Radcliffe for company, who lay in their cloaks on their camp-beds. He had a little lamp and a sheet of paper, and wrote carefully and thoughtfully, bending so low over the table that his hair nearly touched the heavy rings on his quick-moving, accurate hands.

Lovell, towards the dawn, waking up and yawning, asked him with a laugh on what he had been so busily engaged throughout the night?

Richard looked over his shoulder, smiling.

'Sir, I want to build some more churches, I should like to have some more organs, lutes and rebecs from Italy and France, and fetch more musicians to make choirs.'

'But Your Grace hath surely done enough,' exclaimed Lovell; 'the whole of Yorkshire praised God through Your Grace's munificence.'

'I have that passion,' mused Richard, 'to erect noble buildings and hear noble music. I do not know of any other way in which a man may acknowledge his sense of the existence of God Almighty.'

'We may do that by our lives; replied Lovell, sitting up on his mattress. 'We can live as if God were daily in our company.'

'That is for monks and holy men,' replied Richard, sadly. 'To live as I must live, Francis, is to lose touch with God. Canst thou see Him in the battlefield, in the midst of slaughter? Canst thou catch sight of His countenance amid the flying arrows and shooting flames? I cannot, Frank. But, when I see a splendid church, and hear boys singing in the choir, see the lights upon the altar--then I feel that perhaps God hath turned to look at me.'

Francis Lovell crossed himself.

'But sir, thou wouldst not be a monk or a singing-man, my good Lord.'

Richard took his face in his hands, with his elbows on the table, and looked down at the paper, covered with concise plans for the creation of beauty to honour God.

'Sir, we are as we are made,' he replied, simply. 'It is not so easy to be a prince, to fight, to administer, to deal out justice, to hold the land quiet and in peace, always ready for alarm and defence--'

He broke off, and Lovell finished the sentence for him. 'That work should satisfy a man, even such a man as Your Noble Grace.'

Richard rose and moved back the tent flap.

The dawn was rising over the camp in a light of colourless grey. Above the distant hills the comet still faintly flared in the brightening sky.

Folding his arms, he looked out towards the horizon, troubled by he knew not what. Though his night had been sleepless, he would be glad when the march began again, and brought him so much nearer to Anne, waiting for him at Middleham.

Sounds of challenge, sentries' voices, came from the outskirts of the camp, together with the clatter of arms. Richard, always alert, heard these and feared some alarm of treachery. Even as he turned back into his tent to call up his esquires he heard loud voices, and the words 'The King! Buckingham I'

A body of horsemen came in between the tents, the foremost led by two of his own soldiers. In the growing light, Richard, standing watchful, could discern the arms of Stafford, the cognizance of Buckingham on the tabard of his riders, who immediately dismounted and threw himself on his knees before the Prince.

'Sirs, news from London?' demanded Richard, disturbed. The kneeling knight handed him a rolled letter.

'Sirs, from Edward?' frowned Richard, 'from the King?' He was immediately aware of a deep silence among the party of knights.

Richard glanced at the letter which he held, drawing it from its silken cover. The seal told him it was from William Hastings, his father's old

friend, one of the staunchest Yorkists remaining at the Court of Edward.

Gloucester raised the kneeling knight.

'Come into my tent,' he said, and, with his usual courtesy, told Lovell see to the refreshment of the others, who looked dusty and spent from long and eager riding.

'Sir, why doth Lord Hastings write to me?' asked Richard as they entered the tent together, and images of plot and treason, violence and rebellion crowded into his mind.

'Sir, may Your Noble Grace,' replied the knight, sadly. 'Forgive me for bringing evil news, but His Grace the King, on whom God have mercy, is dead.'

'Jesu! Slain!' exclaimed Richard, impetuously.

Nay, Your Highness, dead, with no manner of violence, as was proved to the populace. The King's Grace was laid naked upon a board that all men might see his flesh was untouched.'

'Edward dead!' whispered Richard.

He sat down at the table, without the strength to break the seal of Lord Hastings' letter. Edward Plantagenet dead in the full prime of his manhood. Dead! The young, strong, bold King!

'Oh. Frank, shall I ever see him again?'

'Alas, sir,' said the knight, 'His Grace is already buried.'

'Dead, and so suddenly.' mused Richard, and horrible suspicions turned in his mind. 'What is said of him? What name is given to his



disease?'

'I, sir, have heard many,' replied the knight, uneasily, 'and much disputing among the surgeons. His Grace had a light fever and some corruption of the blood, but it appeared little for he was up and jesting with the Queen; then, on a sudden, dead.'

'Sir, this Prince leaveth two sickly peevish boys of Woodville stock for England's heirs,' remarked Lovell, grimly. Of that, Richard, in his grief, had not thought; but now his mind went from Edward to Edward's realm.

'Sir, who is regent and protector for these children?' he demanded.

'Sir, it is Your Grace's self,' replied the English knight. 'Lord Hastings there sent thee a fair copy of King Edward's will.'

'Edward left this charge to me, not to the Woodvilles!' exclaimed Gloucester.

'To a Plantagenet,' said Lovell, 'and he always loved thee.'

'This is a weighty charge,' said Richard, frowning. 'But one that Your Grace is well fitted to bear,' added Lovell.

'I should have been nearer London when this news came,' exclaimed Richard, shaking off the numbness of his anguish. 'Break that seal, Frank, and read me what Lord Hastings saith.'

Lovell obeyed, broke open the letter, and, to read it, bent down to the lamp, which still glowed above the plans, that Richard had made, for churches.

First came the formal titles--Sir Richard Plantagenet, K.G., Duke of Gloucester, Earl of Cambridge, and half a page of noble office.

'Haste to London, good my Lord, haste, haste! The Woodvilles hold the little King; he is at Ludlow with his brother, Sir Richard Grey, and his uncle Lord Rivers. The Queen's other son, Lord Dorset, holdeth the Tower. Yet they are undecided and in confusion. But it is for Your Grace, now Protector of this realm, with all speed to take up your duties, which the late King, on whom God have mercy, did entrust to Your Princely Highness.'

The child is at Ludlow with Rivers!' exclaimed Richard. 'Dorset hath the Tower, arsenal, arms and ships, men and treasure! That is London, Frank--he hath the capital.' The knight who had brought the message from Hastings, said:

'Sir, we have no reason to suppose that these will be disloyal to Your Highness, nor to the terms of His late Grace's will.'

'Sir, they are Woodvilles,' said Richard, bitterly. 'And this child whom I must crown is half a Woodville, too, and wholly under his mother's influence.'

'England doth not love a childish King,' remarked Lovell. Richard did not reply. He knew his brother's boy, peevish, fretful and effeminate, and he believed the Woodville faction would use them as pawns in the game they would play for supreme power.

He quickly called up his esquires and pages, and while they laced and buckled him into his armour, his shocked grief at the news of his brother's death turned into the stem resolve to affront at last the power of the Woodvilles.

Between him and them no longer stood his brother's figure--they were face to face, he representing York and Plantagenet. His quick, shrewd mind darted to other possible enemies--Buckingham, the unstable and brilliant Prince with Beaufort blood, married to the

Queen's sister; Bishop Morton, the pardoned rebel, who had always hated him. There were few great families in England to whom the Woodvilles had not married sons or daughters, brothers or sisters. Like a fine net their influence spread over all the nobility.

When he was armed, Richard peered over the terms of his brother's will, reading anxiously in the cold morning light. He had been left the care of the young King and all the government of the kingdom, without any colleague; there were no reservations in Edward's trust in Richard. By this will he honoured him as administrator, as general, soldier and counsellor.

Richard passionately mourned his brother, he passionately valued the tribute of the dead man to his own long loyalty, but he saw ahead of him a difficult and terrible responsibility, the thought of which called up all his courage and reckless energy. He did not intend to yield an inch of his authority; he was not of the temperament to allow anyone to stand between him and his authority.

By rapid marches he came to his beloved and loving York, and there put worldly matters, however deep and pressing, aside, and with six hundred Yorkshire gentlemen dressed in mourning, attended masses for his brother's soul in the great Minster. The pealing notes of the pure voices in the choir, the low, melodious murmur of the organ, soothed him.

Low on his knees he prayed for his brother's soul, with pain, with passion, with misgiving, for the sweet wilful man struck down in the midst of his lust and leisure, and while he prayed he tried not to see floating in the sacred dimness of the church the bloody, reckless, murdered face of Clarence.

On horse for London as soon as he left the church, Richard heard other news brought by hurrying feet to the Minster's porch. With open

contempt for the Duke of Gloucester, the Woodvilles had seized the supreme authority; they who had so long ruled England through the Queen would now rule her young son. Dorset had seized the arsenal and treasure in the Tower and sent a large naval force to command the Channel. Rivers, with the young King, was marching from Ludlow with over two thousand men and a great train of artillery. Richard and Dorset, uncle and brother of the King, were signing the Council orders; none of them mentioned the name of the Duke of Gloucester.

The chief counsellors of the late King. Bishop Morton, Archbishop Rotherham, the Duke of Buckingham, Lord Hastings, Stanley and Howard, had given no sign yet as to which way their allegiance would lie. The absence of Gloucester in Scotland at the time of his brother's death had given the Woodvilles their opportunity, which they had boldly seized.

'Sir, men will risk much for power,' said Richard drily. 'This looketh to me like treason.'

With his banners spread he pressed on to Northampton. This was the place appointed for the meeting with his nephew the young King, but instead there came Buckingham, hotfoot from London, with three hundred horses and with his standard displayed.

From his character, and because his wife was a Woodville, Richard had suspected that his loyalty would be to the Queen dowager and Rivers; but Buckingham dismounted and went on his knees before the Duke of Gloucester's stirrup, acknowledged him as protector of the country and of the young King.

Gloucester, like all the Plantagenets, unsuspecting and generous, welcomed him as a friend. Buckingham, alarmed but resolute, told him of the far-reaching roots of the Woodville conspiracy. Rivers that very morning had pushed through Northampton and had taken the

King to Stony Stratford, fourteen miles march nearer London, in order to avoid meeting his uncle and guardian, With the reinforcements brought up by Buckingham, Richard had only nine hundred men, and nearly three thousand marched with Rivers. The warlike Prince was only spurred on by these difficulties.

After a brief council, Richard decided to press on to Stony Stratford, overtake Rivers, who would not be able to ride much farther without a halt, and demand the person of the King, whom he had already proclaimed throughout his army and in his native city of York as His Highness King Edward V.

The Yorkists galloped out of Northampton, Buckingham and Gloucester in the vanguard.

Rivers, with Sir Richard Grey, his nephew, and a large escort, rode up to meet them.

Anthony Woodville, always subtle, wished to avoid an open conflict with the Duke of Gloucester, and had prepared some easy excuses for his conduct; he maintained a smiling and negligent air.

## 4

This Earl Rivers was not in his harness, but furred heavily against the cold, his slight figure made magnificent by the heavy robe of scarlet brocade and minever. Beneath the smooth folds of his purple velvet coif his neat, clever face looked shrewdly at Gloucester. Behind him was a young man, Sir Richard Grey, his nephew, Elizabeth Woodville's son; and behind them and the knights, men-at-arms were crowded into the narrow market square of Northampton.

Behind Gloucester, glittering in the blue grey of polished steel, were Buckingham and the men who had marched with him from Berwick.

'Sir, Lord Rivers,' said Gloucester, grimly, 'ye know the terms of the will of my late brother, whose soul may God keep!'

'Sir, I have heard,' Rivers evaded smoothly, 'there was some will--'

'Which giveth, sir,' interrupted Gloucester, 'the guardianship of the present King to me.'

The two men looked at each other across their horses' heads, while their followers either side waited, taut and alert.

Gloucester did not trust Rivers nor any of the Woodvilles. He believed that this graceful, elegant man, regarding him with a smile partly of amusement and partly of defiance, was capable of any extreme to retain the power in which he had so long flourished by his sister's extraordinary marriage.

'Where is the young King?' demanded Gloucester.

'Sir, Stony Stratford--fourteen miles away,' replied Rivers, smoothly. 'there awaiting the orders of Your Grace.'

'Sir, do ye intend to resign him into my custody?' asked Richard.

'Sir, what else should I intend?' replied Rivers.

Buckingham touched Gloucester's mailed arm and cried out:

'Let not Your Grace listen to him; when I was in London I heard too much! The young King will be hurried to the capital. Lord Rivers bath but come here to distract you while this is being done.'

Rivers, with no loss of self-command, replied lightly:

Sir, hath Your Grace already mischief-makers, even traitors, at your ears? My brother-in-law, Stafford, wit ye on whose side ye be?'

Gloucester glanced from one man to another.

He had no high opinion of Buckingham's abilities or prudence, but he trusted him and believed him entirely faithful to the House of York. A Prince of the blood himself, it was hardly possible that Buckingham would be a party to any intrigue with the upstart and adventuring Woodvilles.

'Let Your Grace; said Rivers, coolly, 'ride ahead with me to Stony Stratford. The young King is there with Vaughan and Haute, and his tutor, the Bishop of Worcester, as I have said, awaiting the pleasure of Your Grace.'

Buckingham impetuously put his hand on Gloucester's bridle.

'Sir, do not ride with Rivers!' he exclaimed; 'this conspiracy goeth deep enough to encompass thy death!'

At this, Rivers, who had so coolly confronted that row of hostile faces beneath the caps of mail did lose his countenance a little, and looked down at his gloved hand which negligently held his rein.

'Sir, I do believe it possible,' mused Richard.

He knew Rivers, his ambition, his greed and his opportunism.

Richard swung round in his saddle, beckoning up his nobles with his mailed hand.

They crowded round him eagerly, glancing at Rivers, in his rich civilian dress sitting erect easily, regarding them with his narrow, clever eyes, his thin, slightly smiling lips.

'Sirs, what think ye of this man's demeanour?' demanded Richard of his knights. 'Find ye his tale plausible? Believe ye what Buckingham hath said?'

Lovell replied instantly:

'Sir, I do not trust Lord Rivers. His object is to hurry the King to London and close the gates in our faces, should we get so far upon the road.'

Rivers interrupted, coolly:

'Sir, nothing standeth between His Grace the Lord Protector and the capital and the person of the King. Let him march out of Northampton and prove it.'

'Jesu mercy, this is no moment for hesitation!' cried Buckingham, vehemently. 'If Your Grace would break this rebellion--'

'Rebellion!' exclaimed Rivers, haughtily. 'Who useth that word to me? I am the King's uncle--'

'Sir, and so am I; said Gloucester, 'and by the father's side.'

He was silent. It seemed like an eternity to those who waited.

Then he beckoned up a file of men-at-arms from behind the crowding knights, and said to the leader of them:

'Arrest Lord Rivers and Sir Richard Grey.'

Rivers touched his horse and backed among his own followers.

The boy Grey, pale and alarmed, turned about and tried to press



through his own ranks.

Rivers cried out to his men, troops he had brought from Ludlow:

'Who here is for the King? Who is for Edward Plantagenet? Let any such stand by me against these acts of violence!'

The men moved, pressed together, peered to see and hear what was taking place, but none of them responded to Rivers' desperate summons.

He was, to all of them, the upstart adventurer, and they would not follow him if they could find a better man; Richard Gloucester was a Plantagenet and a Prince.

Seeing the situation, Rivers shrugged his shoulders, caught the reins of his nephew's horse which could not pass through the immovable ranks of the silent men-at-arms, and turned the pale boy about.

'Sirs, I submit,' he said, coolly, 'today the fortune is not ours.'

'Take him,' said Gloucester, 'to my castle at Sheriff Hutton, and Sir Richard Grey to Pontefract.'

As he saw Rivers stripped of his sword and dagger, he thought of the days of their common exile in the Low Countries. Rivers saw his softened look.

'Your Grace is harsh with an old companion-in-arms,' he said.

'When thy faith is proved,' replied Gloucester, 'ye shall not find mine lacking.'

He glanced after the two prisoners as they were led away with no further pity, for he was thinking of Clarence, whom the Woodvilles

had hounded to his death, and whose estates they had divided.

He rode up to the expectant ranks of Rivers' men pressing round the market cross.

'Do ye follow me?' he asked, 'who am Protector of the realm and the person of the King?'

As if this were a signal for which they had been waiting, the men shouted acquiescence and approval. Gloucester and Buckingham rode through them, and at the head of this augmented force Richard pressed on at once to Stony Stratford.

'Sir, did I not warn Your Grace?' exclaimed Buckingham, triumphantly, when fourteen miles' forced march had brought them to that town.

The inn where the little King had lodged was vacant, and Gloucester and Buckingham had to gallop a mile on the London road before they overtook the royal cavalcade—the King, his tutor, Dr Alcock, Bishop of Worcester, and Rivers' two knights, Haute and Vaughan. These were escorted by a considerable force as well as the remainder of the army gathered together by Rivers.

The soldiers, left without any leader, easily submitted to the authority of the Protector. The little King, his tutor, and the two knights, Vaughan and Haute, were left alone on the white dusty road, while the men-at-arms obeyed Gloucester's commands and returned to the town.

The Bishop of Worcester, sitting forlorn on a mule, welcomed Richard with relief and gratitude.

'Sir, I have been no better than a prisoner,' he said, 'hurried against my will here and there, surrounded by plots and treason, and fearing

a bitter end, which had surely been mine but for the intervention of Your Grace.'

'Sir, hath there been a plot?' asked Richard, keen-eyed. Dr Alcock confirmed what Buckingham had said:

'A plot that went so far as to mean the death of Your Grace.'

Richard frowned. He ordered the arrest of the two traitor knights, Vaughan and Haute.

He rode about looking for the young King, who, amidst this alarm and confusion, he feared might be captured or hidden by some follower of the Woodvilles.

But Dr Alcock soon found his pupil. Prone on his stomach he was idly throwing stones at a small frog which leapt through the spring grass.

Gloucester dismounted and tried to raise the boy, but Edward, looking up and recognizing him, began to whimper, he had been taught by his mother and the Woodvilles to hate his uncle.

'Sir, I stand in thy father's place; Your Grace must trust me,' said Gloucester. 'I have taken thee from thine enemies and from mine.'

'Your Grace,' said Dr Alcock, earnestly, 'may safely put your person in the hands of my Lord Protector.'

Edward gave them both a hostile and indignant glance. 'Sirs, I will not come,' he replied, sullenly, and went back to his stone-throwing.

Sadly Richard Gloucester regarded the boy who was now King of England. He had only a slight acquaintance with his nephew, having lived away from the Court, but he had suspected, and now closer

scrutiny confirmed that suspicion, that the boy was not what he should have been.

Richard thought of himself at thirteen years of age, trained at Middleham, used to arms, to exercises, to obedience and control, inured to fatigue and hardship.

This boy, lying sullenly on the grass, had been too long in the company of women. He had pale curls to his waist, and a small, fair, fretful face; his soft velvet and satin clothes with gold tags and points and laces were an imitation of his father's extravagance.

Richard went on one knee by the roadside and gently lifted the youth, who was half-resisting, half-weeping.

Turning him about, Richard regarded him gravely.

The boy was a weakling—he should long since have forgotten tears; Richard had felt the puny shoulders, the thin arms beneath the disguising velvet.

This Edward was too much like his own son, Anne Neville's child.

Twisting away from Richard, the boy passionately demanded his Uncle Rivers, his brother Richard Grey, the friends who had been round him at Ludlow. He wished to go, he declared, to London, to his mother and brother. He was King now, and might do as he would.

'Sir, I have come to take Your Grace to London,' said Gloucester, 'you shall see your mother. But let Your Grace consider,' he added, earnestly, and tenderly, 'that, being now a King, ye must act the man.'

The boy drew his velvet-clad arm over his face, and began to sob bitterly.

'Sir, ye have been taught to mistrust me,' said Gloucester, 'but I am the only Prince of thy father's house--'

'And sir, the only man,' added Dr Alcock, 'who can make Your Grace a King indeed.'

The boy sobbed for his Uncle Rivers and brothers Grey, and his brother Richard York.

In desperation. Gloucester dropped on his knees in front of the boy, and implored him to believe and trust him. 'Sir, let Your Grace act like a man; do not allow the soldiers to see thy doubt and trouble.'

Edward shrank away and appeared to be afraid of the very sight of Gloucester.

Then Dr Alcock, with the authority that his position as tutor gave him, sternly ordered the young King to stop crying and submit to his uncle, this great and famous knight who had gone on his knees in the dust to do him homage. Obedient, but reluctant, the boy remounted and rode back to the town, where the troops rested that night. At the inn, where Richard and many of the nobles lodged, the Lord Protector heard from Dr Alcock the confirmation of Buckingham's report.

Helpless in the hands of the Rivers party, the tutor had been made to acquiesce to the forcible removal of the King from Ludlow to London, knowing that it was an attempt to evade the authority of the Protector. He also knew that the intention had been to seize, overpower, and probably assassinate Gloucester on his march from Scotland.

'Rivers hath made a bold throw,' commented Richard, grimly. 'How many are in this, think you, my lord bishop?'

'Sir, who knoweth? The Woodvilles are so numerous. Stanleys' wife is the link with the Tudors.'

'Thou thinkest it goeth as deep as that?' demanded Richard, startled. Edward, his brother, had always dreaded the Tudors.

'Henry Tudor is a discontented exile, and his mother is very active in his behalf,' replied Dr Alcock. 'I have lived long and closely at the Court. The late King's Grace--may God protect his soul!--allowed everything in the hands of this woman, Elizabeth Woodville.'

'Edward hath left me a difficult task,' mused Richard. 'How am I to keep that boy upon England's throne? Tell me what ye know of him, what qualities ye have found in him?'

'Sir, he is, when not crossed,' replied Dr Alcock, 'good-humoured and docile, and shows much sweetness of disposition, but he hath been indulged, his understanding is limited, his tastes are effeminate, he is more a Woodville than a Plantagenet.'

'Sir, I did look at him today,' replied Richard, uneasily, 'his temper and his tears, wild and weak like a maiden--how shall I impose him as a leader on violent and ambitious men? How is his brother, Richard York?'

'Sir, that Prince,' replied the tutor, 'bath not yet left his mother's side, and is so ailing that one marvelleth that he yet liveth.'

'Sir,' said Richard, 'I will do what a man can for my brother's sons and their heritage.'

He remembered his motto: 'Loyalty bindeth me.'

A great rush of sorrow and regret for Edward, valiant and beautiful, and beloved, overwhelmed him. And, mingled with that regret, a wild and hopeless yearning for the might-have-been, for the great King that Edward was not, for the glorious reign he had not had, for the

complete triumph which the House of York had not enjoyed; scorn and shame for the disastrous marriage, for the foolish, greedy woman, so recklessly set up, who had borne only girls and weaklings. And in Brittany lurked Henry Tudor, heir to Lancaster and Beaufort hopes.

With the dawn Richard Gloucester pushed on to London. He proclaimed his nephew King at the head of all the troops. On the march news reached the Lord Protector which confirmed both Buckingham's and Worcester's assertion of a Woodville plot. Dorset, Governor of the Tower, had disclosed his guilt by flying into sanctuary at Westminster. When she heard that Gloucester was marching on London, Elizabeth Woodville had gathered up her five daughters and her son Richard Duke of York, and also fled into sanctuary, with such haste that she took hardly anything with her.

'If she bath been acting in good faith,' asked Buckingham of Gloucester, 'why this?'

The city, which had been watchful and uneasy since the death of the late King, welcomed with loud enthusiasm the arrival of the Lord Protector escorting his young sovereign. The acclamations of his subjects revived the spirits of the boy; the splendour and applause of his progress appeared to efface from his mind the disappointment at not meeting his mother.

He was lodged with his tutor and retinue at the Bishop's palace in St Paul's Churchyard, while Gloucester went to Baynard's Castle, where his mother had recently returned from Berkhamsted to welcome him.

As Richard rode into the familiar courtyard on the Thames-side, he glanced up, and saw the comet again, hovering over Southwark.

Cicely of York met him on the threshold, and held him to her tenderly

as if he had been a child. 'Ah, Dickon!' she said, again and again, 'Dickon, what turn is this?'

He thought her anxiety was for Edward's son, and led her into the great hall, where fresh rushes were fragrant, the lamps lit.

'Parliament will be summoned, Edward proclaimed, Edward crowned.'

Richard of York's widow still appeared sad and dissatisfied. She listened abstractedly to the eager and affectionate explanations of Dickon.

'Have ye seen the comet, Dickon?' she asked; 'and Both it presage misfortune?'

Gloucester was surprised at this; it seemed that she had not heard what he had been saying--his eager plans for Anne and his son to come to London, his schemes for setting Crosbie Hall in order, his design for the summons of Parliament and the Coronation, his belief that he had put the Woodvilles underfoot.

He said:

'No, Madam, that is nothing--a natural thing.' She then asked what was to Gloucester another, more curious question:

'Have ye seen Dr Stillington, Dickon, the Bishop of Bath and Wells?'

'Madam, how should I have seen him?' demanded Richard. 'No, I have not seen him. Jesu, mercy, what is this matter with Dr Stillington?'



Richard passed through the gates leading into Tothill Street, and went to the Palace of Westminster and the great Council Chamber. Affairs had gone, of late, smoothly enough, and the warm June day coloured his mood to a pleasant sense of ease and security.

He took his seat at the head of the Council and looked round on the earnest faces of his friends, men who, he believed, would do their utmost for the House of York and for England. Kinship, as well as loyalty, bound together the Protector and many of the great nobles. Cardinal Bouchier of St Cyric, the Archbishop of Canterbury, was his cousin: of the three Dukes, Buckingham and Norfolk were also cousins, while the third, Suffolk, was his brother-in-law. Richard Gloucester, though still alert and anxious, like a man with his hand on his sword, nevertheless assured himself that the kingdom was at peace, and that his administration had been smooth and successful. Orders, to the last detail, had gone out for the Coronation of Edward V on the 22nd of June, and letters of summons had been issued for the attendance of forty gentlemen, who were to receive the honour of the Knighthood of the Bath.

The matter before this Council now was the final arrangements for the Coronation, the measures which might be taken to induce the Queen, Elizabeth Woodville, to come from the sanctuary where she was sulking with her children, to give her presence and her authority to this great occasion.

Buckingham argued that the Queen would not leave her retreat while her brother was in prison, and Richard said:

'Though the treason of the Woodvilles and of Lord Rivers in particular has been overt, yet they might be pardoned if they will forbear further disturbances of the tranquillity of the country, and as for the safety of the Queen and her children, Cardinal Bouchier had gone surety

before God for it.

When the Lord Protector had finished speaking, an usher entered the great chamber: Dr Stillington, the Bishop of Bath and Wells, begged leave to wait upon His Highness and the Council.

Richard, though startled, gave instant permission, and thoughtfully turned about the heavy rings on his slender fingers.

The name of this prelate brought many thoughts crowding to his mind: Dr Stillington's two imprisonments in the Tower, the hints of Clarence that he knew some secret detrimental to the Woodvilles, his withdrawal from Court since his last confinement, from which time Richard had seen nothing of him, for he had been occupied with the affairs of his diocese.

But what Richard remembered as most curious with regard to Dr Stillington were the words that his mother had spoken the other day, when she had asked him if he had seen the Bishop of Bath and Wells.

Other members of the Council murmured among themselves at this sudden appearance of a man who had for so long been absent from London, and was known only as a studious, learned and saintly priest. He had been at some time a personal friend of late King Edward, had been Chancellor for six years, Keeper of the Privy Seal, and Ambassador to Brittany; this was all in the past, and for many years men of action had forgotten Dr Stillington.

Everyone turned in their places and looked with curiosity at the old priest as he entered.

He crossed the threshold rapidly, and then paused before he bent his knee to Gloucester.

Robert Stillington was lean and worn in appearance, with a mild and dignified face. He was a Doctor of Law, a Fellow of All Souls, and in the days when he took part in active affairs, had been famous for his learning and his eloquence.

He now rested his hands on the table and looked earnestly, first at the Lord Protector, and then round the expectant faces of the Councillors.

'Sir, my Lord Prince,' he said, inclining to Richard, 'I am come to London on the quick and urgent summons of thy lady mother, the Princess Cicely.'

Richard, on guard, replied quietly:

'Your Grace, I did not know of this.'

'Sir, I am aware of that,' replied the Bishop, 'nor do ye know, Your Highness, what I am about to reveal, nor can any here present guess.'

'Sirs, a revelation!' murmured Buckingham, under his breath.

'Sirs, I am one,' said the Bishop, 'who hath been silent too long--that may be imputed to me as a black fault, my lords will judge that, but my defence before men is that I kept a secret which, disclosed, would have meant death, not only to my poor self, but to many innocent and humble persons.'

'A secret!' cried Richard, hotly. 'Then Clarence--' his voice faded away.

'Sir, yea,' sighed the Bishop, sadly, 'my Lord Clarence knew.' There was a silence, and many of them looked uneasily down at their hands on the table.

'My Lord Clarence died--' added Dr Stillington.

'Because he knew?' demanded Richard.

'Sir, because he knew,' repeated the Bishop, 'and may be,' he added, with some bitterness, 'because he was a rich man. We know who had his estates, my lords.'

'The Woodvilles I said Buckingham, impetuously, though his wife was one.

Richard brought his open hand palm downwards on the pile of papers in front of him.

'If, my Lord,' he said to the Bishop, 'ye have been silent so long, have ye well reflected whether it is good to speak now?'

'Sir, it is not only good but most necessary,' replied Dr Stillington, with equal firmness; 'and I have your mother, Her Grace of York's commands to do so, my Lord Protector.'

'My mother knew this secret also?' asked Richard.

'Yea, she knew it. She, as I, was silent--perhaps she, even as I, was wrong. Jesu, mercy! we did not know, we were not guided. There were many others who knew, and they also have been silent.'

'Through fear?' asked Richard.

'Through fear, my Lord.'

'Sir, are we all to know this secret?' demanded Lord Hastings, leaning forward in his place. 'I was King Edward's friend, his father's friend!'

'You are all to know, my Lords in Council,' said the Bishop, turning to them, 'and not only you, but all the Commons of England. This matter must be put forth before them, and they must decide the course we are all, under God, to take!'

'Doth this affect my brother's honour, the honour of the House of York?' asked Richard.

'Sir, of that you must be the judge,' evaded the Bishop, 'sweet Jesus,' he added, 'but it cannot affect the honour of the House of York as deeply as the death of my Lord Clarence!'

'Sirs, murder!' cried Buckingham, sticking his thumbs in his embroidered belt and looking to his companions on right and left. 'There must have been some good reason for that, I insist.'

'There was good reason, my Lord Duke,' said the Bishop. 'Elizabeth Woodville was not King Edward's wife.'

There was a stunned silence.

Richard kept his composure, though he was very pale.

'Was not the marriage valid?' he demanded, his voice harsh.

'Sir, for aught I know the marriage was a good marriage itself,' replied Bishop Stillington, 'but the King was already wedded.'

'Jesu, mercy!' exclaimed Gloucester.

'Sir, already wedded,' repeated the Bishop, 'as I can prove by the depositions of many who have been too terrified to speak. I myself can bring sixty-three witnesses to the marriage contract of thy brother, my Lord Protector, with the Lady Eleanor Butler. There are

witnesses and signatures, and thy mother, the Duchess of York, knew.'

'This is what Clarence knew!' exclaimed Richard.

'This was what Clarence guessed, my good Lord. Some singing-man told him something, and he tried to engage me to speak; but I, God help me! would not.'

'Sirs, the singing-man was murdered,' said Richard, 'at our door at Baynard's Castle--I believe, by one of Riven' men. I remember that, years ago--Jesu!'

'Sir, Clarence could discover nothing. The secret was well kept,' continued Dr Stillington. 'Although thy mother did entreat the King not to commit bigamy, yet he put the widow of Sir John Grey forward as Queen--'

'Why did not the Lady Eleanor speak?' asked Buckingham. 'Sir, she was a woman perplexed, humiliated and betrayed; replied the Bishop. 'She went into a convent in Norwich, and there died, silent, in the year 1466.'

'How many people have been silent here!' exclaimed Richard, bitterly. 'I remember a nun who knew this gentlewoman, she died in Bermondsey.'

'This Eleanor was,' said Dr Stillington, 'Queen of England, and I can prove it. Now has come the moment when I must speak--by thy mother's command and that of my own conscience.'

'The children; said Buckingham, 'the King, and York--'

'Sir, they are illegitimate,' said Dr Stillington, 'and you, the lords spiritual and temporal and the Commons of England, must decide if

they can succeed.'

'Bishop, you should have spoken sooner,' said Richard, desperately. 'What pass doth this put us in? Here I have under my hand the plans for the Coronation this very month!'

'Sir, it was too dangerous to speak sooner,' said Dr Stillington. 'Clarence spoke to some of his servants. What became of them? There was a necromancer, Nandike as they called him, of Cambridge. How did he die? And he knew something. And the miserable singing-man...And thy mother charged me to be silent?'

'If the two boys of Edward are bastards, who rules?' exclaimed Buckingham, rising violently to his feet. He was concerned in this, for Lady Eleanor Butler had been a relation of his.

'Sir, thou art a Prince of the blood thyself,' said Dr Stilling-ton, 'and should know.'

'The son of Clarence is next in the succession,' said Hastings. 'Do we change one boy for another, for a feebler child, who is simple-minded?'

'Sir, Lord Warwick, Clarence's heir, cannot succeed, his blood is corrupt,' said Buckingham, impetuously; 'he still lieth under his father's attainter. Where doth thy revelation put us?'

'Sirs, there is another besides these children,' said Dr Stillington. 'Your King sitteth before ye--Richard of Gloucester is the heir, and hath been by right, since his brother's death, head of the House of York, and sovereign of this realm.'

The nobles stirred and glanced at each other, and at the splendid figure at the head of the table.

Richard had sat silently brooding. Everything had been changed for him by this revelation; all his plans must be altered, all his organizations re-made.

He could now understand many things--the incredible lightness of Edward's behaviour had created absolute chaos in which, it seemed, they might all be frustrated by the passions of wanton men and women...the children bastards and he King!

'Doth Elizabeth Woodville know of this?' he demanded. 'Sir, she always knew of it,' said Dr Stillington. 'All the Woodvilles knew--that is why Clarence and those others died.'

'Sir, it is why she will not leave sanctuary now,' cried Buckingham. 'I can believe it of her,' he added:

'I never took her for more than a paramour, like Jane Shore or Elizabeth Lucey.' Richard sprang up, and with a violent movement, scattered the papers beneath his hand.

'Sirs, away, away,' he cried, 'all of ye! This cannot be decided by us here! Dr Stillington must bring his depositions and his witnesses, and take his oaths and tell his tale before the lords spiritual and temporal and the esquires of the Commons--it is not you or I to decide who holdeth the title to the crown!'

The lords rose with a flash of jewels and embroideries, startled and bewildered.

'Good-Bishop,' said Richard, violently and bitterly, 'fear is a terrible thing. Had ye dared to speak before, ye might have saved the bloodiest confusion ever like to fall upon England.'



The Duke of Gloucester's singing-men and boys filled the Crosbie Hall's great hall. They stood in obedient ranks before the Prince, accompanied by organs, harps, shawms, trumpets, psalteries, triangles and chime bells.

Richard Gloucester listened to the music; his eyes closed. Music was a shield for hire between his soul and the outside world.

Bishop Stillington and his witnesses, his notaries, lawyers, his copies of depositions, his learned exponents of legal points had attended the Council of the Lords spiritual and temporal. The nobles and the bishops had declared that the Butler marriage was a proved fact, and that the children of the Woodville marriage could not succeed to the throne of England; the case had been prepared to set before Parliament.

As Richard Gloucester had watched the councillors leave the great chamber in Westminster he thought:

'Most of these men would make me King--most, but not all.'

He had observed the sullen look of William Hastings, his father's old friend; and Morton, the sly priest, the forgiven rebel; there were others--a minority, but a powerful one. Gloucester knew their minds.

They wanted a long regency--the rule of a sickly child--and they had kept away from further Council meetings and met, as Richard knew, apart. They intrigued with Stanley's interfering wife, and with Mistress Shore, who had passed from the possession of King Edward to Dorset, who was a go-between for the Woodvilles and these new dissenters.

Richard Gloucester knew all this, and pondered on it as he listened to the singing.

When the song paused, he opened his eyes and looked down at his hands, flashing square cold jewels, and then up at the window behind him. The master of the music stood, uncertain whether to continue. Richard struck his hand lightly on the table, and commanded them to sing again; there was no surer cover for his thoughts than this.

Anne Neville entered the great hall, her son beside her; she had been happier in Middleham.

Despite the singing, the music, and his closed eyes, Richard knew at once her light step. He glanced up and saw her, not as she was, but with the great crown of England on her head, the royal embroidered mantle falling from her shoulders, white samite, ermine, Venice gold...

He pictured Warwick as he had last seen him--struck down in the mist on Barnet Heath, shouting, blind with blood. 'Perhaps, after all, he will have his wish, and Warwick's Anne will be Queen of England,' he thought.

This made him smile as she approached, the child staring at the round-mouthed choristers, at the musicians blowing trumpets, or plucking strings.

Richard had always been near the throne, yet never thought of mounting it; but now the only people in his way were a few sickly children of dubious title, and some discontented noblemen.

He took his wife's hand, drew her to the seat beside him, and said, under cover of the music:

'Anne, I think they will make me King.'

She shook her head, full of doubts and fears.

'Such as these never yet delayed a man in his designs, sweet Anne.'

'We were so happy at Middleham, Dickon, and thou so beloved in the North; but here I see many unfriendly faces.'

'Do they not sing sweetly, Anne? Such music giveth my heart wings to mount above thy cares and fears.'

'Dickon, I am not so well in London; the air is not so clear.'

He regarded her with the anxiety of a love. She was pale and there was a weariness in her bright eyes and a tremble in her lips which he had not seen in Middleham. Little Edward, too, was more than usually languid; too docile, resting at his mother's side.

'Madam and my love,' said Richard, 'a little while and ye may go where ye will; only have patience with me for a small space, for there are affairs in London which must be considered.'

Anne Neville sighed, then said:

'There is a knight outside whom I met as I crossed the gallery who wished to speak with thee, Dickon. It is Sir William Catesby, and I told him that I thought ye listened to music and would be no more disturbed today.'

'If it is Sir William Catesby, sweet, I will see him.'

Richard clapped his hands: the singing abruptly ceased and the choristers filed away two by two, but Richard, with the courtesy which made him so much beloved, thanked the singing-master for his music.

'Wilt thou see him now?' asked Anne. 'I thought thou wouldst perhaps

have played a game with us.'

She timidly put forward the child.

Richard kissed them both.

'But I must see Catesby-, he is Hastings' man, and I wish he had not been delayed.'

Anne Neville felt rebuked, though this was most gently spoken. She took hold of the child, who carried his little chessmen and board in the hope of a game with his father, and quietly went out of the great hall.

Gloucester looked after her with the regret of one who defers a joy to a duty.

'Another time, sweet Anne; another time, little son!' How often lately he had said that! How little he saw of them throughout these crowded days?

He sent his page to bring in Catesby, and sat waiting at the little table on the dais, on which stood a jar of white roses which Anne had picked that morning in the garden of Crosbie Hall.

Sir William Catesby entered.

He was a diligent and faithful public servant, employed at the Tower, of whom Richard knew nothing but good; yet he had never been intimate with Catesby, who was a close friend of Hastings.

The Prince told him to speak but looked at the white roses.

Catesby looked serious.

'Sir, what I have to tell Your Highness' Grace ye may not believe. It concerneth my Lord Hastings, my Lord Bishop Morton and a threatened rebellion.'

'Sir, so much I can well credit,' declared the Lord Protector. 'I have been the last few days alarmed by the behaviour of these men. Twice they have issued orders without my name, and ye must know, Catesby, as I believe half London knoweth, that I have sent to York, to my cousin Neville, for instant supplies of men-at-arms.'

'Sir, ye will need nearer aid than that,' replied Catesby, 'Hastings moveth quickly.'

'Sir, so much I knew,' said Richard, impatiently.

'Sir, he moveth to some purpose,' continued Catesby. 'Ignoring Your Highness and your Council, Hastings hath caused to be prepared a Supersedeas, which I with mine own eyes have seen, and he bath already sent this to the towns and counties ordering the Parliament not to assemble.'

'Never have I thought that Hastings would be false!'

'Sir, he would delay the meeting of Parliament--'

'--that Dr Stillington's evidence may not be enquired into?'

'Sir, that is his purpose,' replied Catesby. 'He bath, for what price I know not, sold himself to the Woodvilles, and become involved with Stanley's wife--'

'Sir! My father's friend,' exclaimed Richard, 'of whom I had much joy, the pawn of these fractious women and priests!'

'Your Grace hath no keener enemies. This churchman, Morton,

should not have been spared after Tewkesbury fight.'

'Would they see young Edward King?' said Richard, leaning forward.

'Yes, the child Edward King, and Hastings Protector.'

'And what do they propose to do with me?' asked Richard, 'Since ye know so much, Catesby, know ye that?'

'Sir, Your Grace is to be arrested without ado as ye arrested Lord Rivers—I heard those words on Hastings' lips, fie upon him!'

'And afterwards--silenced, as Clarence was silenced?' added Richard, grimly.

And Anne to die in a convent, and her son perhaps in captivity, while the Woodvilles and the traitor Hastings rose on his headless shoulders to power!

The Prince got to his feet and loosened his high collar, white with rage.

'Why do ye tell me this. Are ye not the friend of Hastings, Catesby?'

'Sir, I have sworn no oath,' replied Catesby, sullenly. 'Being at the Tower I have heard them talk, and they have believed me safe. But I have ever been a Yorkist and a detester of these Woodvilles. Your Grace is of royal blood; I do not want to be ruled by women, children and priests.'

'Sir, where is Hastings now?' demanded Richard.

'Sir, I left him in the Council Chamber of the Tower. He and Morton consider how Your Grace may be trapped and seized.'

'Then not one second must I lose,' exclaimed Richard, 'Come with me, good Catesby, to the Tower.'

'Would Your Grace venture to the Tower?—those gates may open for thy entry more easily than for thy departure.'

'Sir, this danger must be met,' replied Richard.

'Your Grace at least will arm?'

'Harness will not avail me in this encounter.'

He shouted up his men.

In half-an-hour a company, behind the banner of England and the cognizance of the White Boar, rode through the streets from Crosbie Hall to the Tower. Without opposition the Lord Protector crossed the Barbican, passed under the gateway, and leaving his following below, dismounted, and accompanied only by Radcliffe, Lovell, and a few friends, ascended the stairs which led to the great Council Chamber.

Hastings, Morton and their fellow-conspirators leapt up at the impetuous entry of Richard Gloucester.

He strode up to the table, Lovell and Radcliffe pausing at the door. The Prince wore no armour and he was greatly outnumbered; he knew that these men were planning his death, that any one of them could at this moment have delivered a fatal stroke. He did not falter before the anticipation of such a deed, nor did they attempt it. Overawed by his presence, they remained sullen and silent, while Hastings seemed ashamed as he looked at the son of his friend and master.

'Sirs, what are the deliberations of this secret meeting?' demanded

the Lord Protector, coming up to the table and striking his hand upon the cloth. Why do ye sit silent, my lords, and eye me so?'

Receiving no answer from any, he added:

'Sirs, I have lately missed ye from my own Council board. Why do ye meet here behind my back?'

'Have I not loved thee well, Lord Hastings? Hast thou not been my companion in arms?'

Morton was the first to recover his composure. He asked, coolly:

'Sir, what wrong do we do Your Grace?'

Richard turned on him fiercely.

'Why have ye sent orders in your own name? Why have ye issued a *Supersedeas* to the towns and counties?'

Morton was startled and dismayed to hear that Richard had so much knowledge.

'Ye do not deny it?' added Gloucester, instantly.

'Sir, if I did,' said the cowering priest, 'ye would not believe me. I see I am already condemned.'

'Before God, ye are!' shouted Richard. 'What hath been the peculiar crime of the House of York that it must always be encompassed by traitors?'

He turned to his friends, standing watchful at the door.

'Sir Richard Radcliffe, arrest this man on a charge of high treason,



and let him wit well that the love between him and me is done for ever.'

'Sir, on whose name and on what authority?' cried Hastings, starting up.

'In my name and on my authority--Richard Plantagenet, Protector of this realm of England!'

'Sir, I do submit,' said Hastings quickly, giving up his sword to Sir Richard Radcliffe, 'and allow that Your Grace hath been something quicker than I looked for. Someone hath been false to me.'

Richard turned from him in grief and anger.

'Certainly I am loth to lose ye, Lord Hastings; yet what ye have done can only be atoned for in one way. Put the others into custody. Later I will decide about them!' he spoke to Radcliffe, and left the hall with Lovell and his other knights.

As he descended the stairs to the courtyard he cried out:

'We will have a proclamation giving the circumstances of these traitorous schemes. I will have those Woodvilles in the North brought to trial! They only despise us for sparing them, Lovell!'

'Sir, those we arrested at Northampton should have been put to death. I would not trust Bishop Morton again.'

'But how can I punish a priest?' asked Richard, contemptuously. 'I have no pleasure in such an enemy.'

'Sir, put him also to death. He deserveth it more than Hastings, for he tempted him. Beware, too, of Stanley and his wife, of Jane Shore and the Woodville widow, who practises crafts of sorcery and have

said you are a fiend and no man.'

'Ah, the women!' exclaimed Richard, with deep contemptuous bitterness. 'What account do I make of them?'

'Yet it might be the women would bring ye down,' thought Lovell, sadly, as they mounted their horses.

Richard, angry, in violent mood, returned to Crosbie Hall, and at once issued orders for the trial of Hastings in the Tower.

He sent Richard Radcliffe to the North with commands for a tribunal to meet at Pontefract to try the Woodvilles, Rivers and his friends, with the Lord of Northumberland to be the president. Stanley and his wife were contemptuously ignored. Bishop Morton Richard decided to place in the charge of the Duke of Buckingham. Archbishop Rotherham, my Lord of York, also implicated in the plot, Richard commanded to return to his diocese.

Without pausing to see Anne and his son, the Lord Protector, when he had issued these orders, galloped back to the Tower, to overlook the appointments and fortifications of that key to the city, to inspect the arsenal and the treasure, and to place his own friends in command there.

As he rode across the courtyard with his small retinue he saw a woman being brought in a prisoner--Jane, Shore's wife, once his brother's mistress.

'Hold up the torches and let me look at her,' said Richard, leaning from the saddle.

The red glare fell through the warm night and on the plump silly woman, who stood smiling meekly, with her yellow hair and her grey eyes, her careless foot tapping the cobbles--a slight creature, not

even faithful to a false love, for within a few months of King Edward's death she was the lover of young Dorset, his stepson.

'Woman,' said Richard. contemptuously, 'ye cannot injure me, but God pardon ye the harm ye have done Lord Hastings. I am sorry a noble knight should be brought to ruin for a light lady.'

'Sir. God pardon me,' she answered, slyly, 'for the harm I have done myself. The Church hath condemned me to a penance, my good Lord, which I wot well I deserve:

Then she bowed her head and was silent.

Looking at her, Richard thought:

'She is a fool and a dastard, but Edward loved her dearly.' Aloud he said:

'Let her go, put her to no more rebuke.'

And he rode on, swiftly and violently through the summer night.

## 7

A glare of light round his bed awoke Richard Gloucester, he sat up and looked round the room.

The lamp was burning steadily, there was no wind in the room; he heard the waits pipe the hour below in the quiet street.

'Certes, a dream,' whispered Richard.

One of those dreams that cannot be remembered on waking, but leave behind them an impression of awful horror.

Richard glanced down at Anne sleeping beside him, her head sunk in the down pillows, her fair hair scattered across them. She stirred and sighed in her sleep. Richard shivered and rose gently from his bed and put on his gown of blue satin lined with fur.

It was the night after the execution of Lord Hastings. His father's, his brother's friend had been by his decree beheaded. He mourned the man and the deed. In a few days more blood must be shed. Rivers and his companions must die also; they had been condemned by the tribunal sitting at Pontefract.

Richard picked up the lamp and crossed the room, He had broken his enemies: the Woodvilles at last had resigned themselves to his rule and wish. The Bishop of Salisbury and Lord Lisle, the Queen's brother and brother-in-law had come humbly to him for protection, Elizabeth Woodville had resigned her younger son Richard from the sanctuary; he was with his brother in the royal apartments in the Tower. Richard thought of these two children as he left his room, and of his brother's will making him their guardian, and of his motto, *'Loyalty bindeth me.'*

He paused in the long gallery, and thoughtfully regarded this familiar place. He and his wife had returned to Baynard's Castle to keep his mother company, but Richard would rather have remained at Crosbie Place, which had only happy memories for him.

Baynard's Castle was crowded with phantoms. Where Richard stood now, was near to where he had stood as a child, and, staring down, had seen Sir Thomas Parr below with blood on his hand, telling the tale of Wakefield, the first battle-shed blood the child had seen. Since then all the years had been flushed with this violent red. He bit his lip and stared across the darkness, only dispersed by the faint rays of his own lantern. He thought of the headless corpse of Hastings, of Anthony Woodville preparing for death. He would spare

those he could--the priests and the women. Hastings' children should be restored in blood, his widow should have his estates.

Rivers--and this was a poignant stab in Gloucester's heart--had appointed him executor of his will, the man who had planned his death and whom he must put to death had trusted him in this vital matter. He mourned Hastings, and would have spared him if he could, but further clemency would be the sentimentality of a man not fit to rule. As it was, Lovell and Radcliffe and some other friends had told him he was too lenient. 'Stanley and Morton are false; Stanley's wife intrigues for her son, Henry Tudor...and Buckingham is fickle. Put these where they can do no ill.'

Richard walked round the empty gallery and gazed down the stairway into the hollowness of the hall beneath; it was full of shadows. He thought of the dead men who had stood there: Warwick trampled down at Barnet, Clarence slashed and bloody, young Edward beaten from his horse at Tewkesbury, Henry of Lancaster, the imbecile saint, dying in anguish in his prison; his father and his uncle headless after Wakefield; Edward, naked on a board, so that people could see at least he had not died by violence; Charles of Burgundy, the dark, sombre man who had been gentle to him at Utrecht, dying in the black frozen marshes.

He turned away and went on round the gallery to the room of his little son.

Three children stood between him and the crown of England--Elizabeth Woodville's two boys, now declared by the lords spiritual and temporal and Commons to be illegitimate, and Edward, Earl of Warwick, the eight-year-old feeble-minded heir of Clarence.

Edward had appointed him guardian of his children, but Edward had deceived him, fooled him with a secret marriage, been involved in

the murder of Clarence; Edward had been a front for the rapacity and treachery of the Woodvilles.

Richard quietly entered the room of his son. In the anteroom the tutor and page were asleep, and Richard guarded his lantern beams from falling across their faces, and went to his son's bedside.

The child slept peacefully, with his hands outside the coverlet and his fair head thrown back. Richard knew that he would be asked to assume the Crown: it was the will of Parliament and of the people.

The Butler marriage had been proved, and no one wished for a long minority, nor had they seen any promise in the effeminate young boy who was Edward's heir.

Richard knelt by his son's bed. His mother, Cicely of York, had passionately urged him to take the crown—it was she who had inculcated ambition in all her sons, and Richard was her favourite child.

'I believe thou wilt be King,' she had said, 'not Elizabeth Woodville's heirs.'

Richard passed his hand very delicately over the child's smooth cheek and soft lips.

He thought, in pain:

'I owe some loyalty to my own blood. Edward had no right to bind me; he deceived me, while I was guided and ruled by him; he lied to me for the sake of his mistress.'

All the anguish and violence left his face as he looked at the sleeping child; he vowed that this Edward should be the happiest prince yet born of the House of York.

'Sweet Jesu, if I can make him so,' he murmured, crossing himself and glancing upwards.

He saw above the bed the little image he had placed there long ago--St George, with the band of gold, given him by Charles of Burgundy, around his waist.

'God, mercy and pity! If we were doomed, if Edward was a necromancer and sold us to the devil, if the three suns were fiendish signs, surely we have expiated now!'

Richard folded his hands and prayed. He knew that he could rule England justly, generously, well. He could forgive his enemies and reward his friends. He would not live as Henry, a poor weakling, nor as Edward, a man of wanton lusts and idle extravagance. He would make England great and happy, he would leave to his son a noble heritage.

He looked at his son again and pictured him as Prince of Wales--his heir, his hope. Richard smiled tenderly above the sleeping head as he pictured this boy ruling over an England at peace with herself.

He rose and picked up his lantern which he had put beside the bed.

He thought 'When they offer me the crown I will take it; aye, and hold it.' He did not assure himself that he would deal generously with Edward's children and their mother, with all his opponents; for a reckless magnanimity towards all who offended him was one of his most marked qualities.

He returned to his room and sat beside his bed until dawn, looking now and then at his sleeping wife, his elbows on his knees, his face in his hands, thoughtfully considering the future and trying to disentangle it from the bloody phantoms of the past.

The next day he heard that Rivers and his companions had been executed.

The graceful Earl had died with philosophy and calm, trusting in the generosity of the Lord Protector towards his children, and so had gone lightly into silence.

The day after that, the Lords and Commons waited on Gloucester at Baynard's Castle, and begged him to accept the crown, submitting their resolution that he, and he alone, was by law King of England. At St Paul's Cross an eloquent preacher had explained Richard's title to the people. Buckingham, voluble and ardent in this cause, had done as much at the Guildhall. Letters were sent to Lord Mountjoy, Captain of Calais, announcing the new monarch's accession. No nobleman in England disputed Richard's title.

Accepting gravely, Richard spoke of Edward's children, declaring that they would be treated with all respect--'And God record that I dare make that good.'

Richard took his wife and son to the royal apartments in the Tower.

Edward, who had been King so briefly, retained nothing but the titles of Pembroke and March, conferred on him personally by his father. But Richard treated him with tenderness, and kept him in his household with his own son and Clarence's boy, the Earl of Warwick.

Richard stood in the Abbey of Westminster with the crown on his head, acclaimed and anointed king. Never had a coronation been more magnificent nor the attendance of the nobility more numerous and brilliant. Among all that magnificence the Duke of Buckingham was the most brilliant.



But Richard was not at ease.

'Dick, I cannot wear these robes, they are too heavy: I cannot hold my head up with that crown,' Anne Neville had said, appalled at what lay before her.

Richard had urged her passionately to bear her splendour valiantly, at least for this occasion, and the delicate woman had done her best, but he had seen her tears, though she had tried to conceal them. She was shaken by a cough and very tired, longing for Middleham and the old days.

Yet she moved through the gorgeous ceremony with pale composure.

This great pomp of the coronation was greeted with great enthusiastic joy by the populace. The King had always been beloved, and he had marked his accession by generous acts. His grants had been lavish. Buckingham had received the great Bohun estate, which had been merged in the Crown by the marriage of Henry IV and always refused by Edward IV to the extravagant Duke; everyone who had helped him was glutted with rewards.

As Richard sat at his coronation feast on the dais under a rich canopy, a man had thrust through the thickest crowd and said:

'Your Highness's Grace deigns to say ye will be reconciled with all. Will Your Grace push this so far as to take my hand?'

Richard stared at the man, whom he did not recognize--a tall man, with a smiling, gaunt face.

'Alas; he said, 'let me know who ye are?'

'Sir, I am Sir Jon Fogge.'

'Sir, I know ye not,' replied Richard, gripping the arms of the throne and breathing quickly. 'Fellow, what are thou?' That gay prince, Buckingham, leaning at the King's elbow, said:

'Sir, it is a man below the notice of Your Grace--one of the Woodville men.'

Richard smiled in disdain of his own shoot of terror at the sight of the man and turned away grimly to caress a little bracet on the throne steps.

'I bear thee no ill-will, Sir Jon Fogge, though it may be thou hast troubled me.'

He held out his hand; Sir Jon Fogge kissed his fingers, and was gone. Under a canopy supported by peers the King and Queen drank out of gold cups.

'Ye are too easy; said Lovell, sighing in his ear. 'There are faces here today that I do not love to see. How can ye trust those who have once betrayed thee, or meddle with declared enemies?'

Richard Plantagenet silenced this loving friend. He defied such fears, such warnings. He was King, anointed with the Chrism, his nobility gathered round him; his Queen and his son were on either side: music acclaimed him. With his horse trapped to the ground in gold, the Duke of Norfolk had cleared the way for him, the chivalry of England knelt before him; the citizens shouted for him, and he was used to governance. For ten years the North had lain contented and prosperous under his hand. Yet what upheld him more than all these things was the man's confidence in himself.

'I know well I can rule England; this is not a worship I may not attain. As a knight by usage and exercise knoweth his arms and his horses.

so, Jesu mercy, do I know governance and the English people.' He was ashamed that he had been disturbed by Sir Jon Fogge, who was only the poor coward the Woodvilles had sent to fetch him to see the body of Clarence.

So King Richard took up his gold cup and, crowned, drank among his friends and knights, the bishops, judges and officers of his household.

And, at his side, Buckingham, over-magnificent, thought how near he was now in succession to the throne.

'Sir.' he asked the King, 'who is thine heir after thy son?'

'What need for that?' demanded Richard, startled. 'What interest have we with that matter?'

But he thought that beside the son of Clarence was Lincoln, his sister Suffolk's heir, the young noble who had carried the orb in the Abbey.

And Buckingham thought there was a third prince, and that was himself. It was Bishop Morton, who had been put into his charge as prisoner, who had stirred these ambitions in him. 'Art thou not Beaufort and Plantagenet?'

While he ate the King's meat and Richard regarded him in friendship, Buckingham mulled over what the sly priest had said. Why should he, Henry Stafford, hold Richard's train? And when he left the great hall he was followed by Sir Jon Fogge, who was a servant of the Woodvilles.

King Richard saw this, but said nothing; instead he watched his champion, Sir Robert Dymoke in white harness, with a horse trapped to the ground in red and white silk, throw down the gauntlet

on his behalf.

'Sir, have heed of Buckingham, for he is a fair speaker and false underneath,' said Lovell, while all the people cried, 'God Save King Richard!'

The King replied, looking at the gorgeous show:

'Sir, if I am to beware of all, how shall I better hold my day? Since death cometh at the last, and maybe suddenly.' So Buckingham was allowed to take Bishop Morton with him to his lands in Wales, and the first news that came of these two was that Buckingham was under arms with a great following of rebels.

This news came to Richard in Lincoln during the month of October, and he was overcome in the midst of all his splendour by this blast of treachery.

## 8

'This was not needed, Buckingham,' said King Richard; 'it was a most futile mischief, and hath caused shame and villainy.' Buckingham, a prisoner, stood sullenly before his King at Salisbury.

He had asked for this meeting, yet in the presence of Richard he stood silent and hostile, with his face aside. 'Sir, ye served me well,' added the King, curiously, 'and I well rewarded ye--Lord High Constable of England, the Bohun estates. Could ye not have remembered this when the sly priest tempted ye? How much higher would ye climb? Worse than a fool, fie upon thee!'

Buckingham looked up at that. His neat handsome face was flushed; with his arms folded across his chest he shifted from foot to foot.

He was in disguise. When his troops, unable to cross the flooded Severn--Buckingham's great water, men called it--had disbanded, hungry, disheartened Buckingham had put on labourer's clothes and fled into Shropshire, but the Sheriff had discovered him and handed him to Richard, who had been marching west against this sudden revolt.

'Sir Richard, I took my chance as you took yours,' replied Buckingham, hotly. 'I have been as loyal to you as you to King Edward's son, and you do wrong to rebuke me, since I also am of a King's lineage.'

'Sir, my title is not to be disputed with one who hath forfeited his knighthood,' replied the King, violently. 'For what purpose is this speech that you would have with me? Not so bold thou traitor! Thou art to be immediately tried for this treason.'

'By whom?' demanded Buckingham.

'By Sir Ralph Ashton, who now holdeth thy post of Lord High Constable, and shall hold thy title and estates.' Jesu, mercy, I am then doomed before I am judged?' demanded Buckingham, fiercely. 'I were able enough for thee, Plantagenet, had we met sword to sword.'

King Richard laughed. The beauty of his face was lost in savage anger and bitter sorrow.

'Ah, fool, have ye not been caught in the very act of rebellion, like Lord Hastings, and shall ye escape where he paid? I am called too merciful and easy, but, God record, princes of the blood who raise their banners in revolt I shall not spare.'

'Plantagenet, nor do I come to ask for pity,' snarled Buckingham. 'It is

true that the priest worked on me to pull ye down. The crown of England goeth to and fro like a tennis ball, so that any man who stands near enough may make a clutch at it, and are ye so likely a man ye may be above danger?'

'Sir, by my blood and the people's will am I King,' cried Richard, rising, 'and nothing shall part me from that honour--'

'Save perchance, this!' exclaimed Buckingham, and leapt at the King. He was a well-made man, heavy and lithe, and he took Richard unawares.

He had a long woodman's knife up his sleeve, the handle of which had lain in his hand when his arms were crossed on his chest. With this he now slashed out at Richard.

Richard was unprepared, but instantly alert. He avoided the knife, which caught in the gold cords which laced his doublet across his shirt. The two men grappled together, then the King caught Buckingham in a twisting grip and he dropped the knife, though he was the taller and heavier.

'Sir, what followers will ye get if ye slay me?' cried Richard. He flung off Buckingham with fury and pulled his own dagger out, to defend himself. The other grovelled against the wall, gasping.

'So help me God! I had not thought thee so strong, Plantagenet!'

'Was this the purpose of thy requested speech with me?' demanded Richard fiercely. 'Shame and pity is it, seeing of what blood ye come, Henry Stafford!'

'My body have ye beaten, but not my heart,' replied Buckingham, furiously. 'Certes, I had no other purpose but to slay thee. Could ye not guess when ye admitted me that ye stood in peril of your life?'

In the angry eyes of his enemy Richard read hatred and jealousy; he recoiled from the violence that surrounded him, and he was amazed at this hopeless act of treason.

'Had ye been true to me, J had made ye high and happy, but since ye are weak and false, Stafford, it was not my interest to spare thee.'

The King shouted for Sir Richard Radcliffe, waiting in the adjoining room.

'Sir, take ye this Henry Stafford who was Buckingham and set him on his trial.'

'Farewell, Plantagenet,' said the prisoner, smiling bitterly.

'The priests say that ambitious men of bloody designs have no hope of heaven; so, may he, thou and I shall meet in some place less fair than Salisbury, and sooner than ye think, and with us the priest who was true to neither thee nor me.'

He went out, walking erect. He was a man, however fickle and weak, who could face complete loss with dignity.

'Here, loved be God, all is well and all determined,' said Radcliffe.

King Richard sat alone, staring at the knife and marvelling at this treachery. He thought of the eager friendship with which Buckingham had come to meet him at Northampton, to warn him of the Woodville plot, and the loyalty and affection with which he had served him at his coronation, and the great offices he had had--bearing the King's train, Lord High Constable of England, granted the Bohun estates...

'Sir,' cried Richard to Lovell, who had come in with his hands full of papers, 'what more could I have done for this Prince?'

Francis Lovell replied sadly:

'Your Grace hath done too much, Buckingham took favours ill; and, sir, what pact can ye make with Lancastrian blood?'

'I have been too easy,' mused the King. 'I thought Buckingham had forgotten his descent!' He smiled bitterly, turning over his papers with an absent air. 'These Beauforts--'

'There will be but one of them left, sir, when Buckingham hath suffered.' remarked Lovell, significantly.

'But one? Why none!' cried Richard. 'Here, at last, with Henry Stafford is an end of the bastard blood of John of Lancaster and the deep trouble it hath caused.'

'What of Margaret Beaufort,' cried Lovell, 'Stanley's wife and Henry Tudor's mother?'

'A woman!' exclaimed the King, scornfully. 'We cannot touch the women. Would her kin were women too!'

'A Beaufort and mother of a Tudor,' insisted Lovell. 'Think ye she was in this to set Henry Stafford on the throne? Nay, she thinketh of Henry her son, who waits at the Court of Brittany and who hath been as sharp as a thorn to Edward thy brother, who did endeavour to obtain his person so often,'

'Let be,' interrupted the King, wearily; the clear-minded resolution that he so eminently possessed, the cool hard courage with which he faced every kind of danger, were joined with a hatred of subtlety, intrigue, or the secret evil of a designing woman. He did not want the blood of Buckingham. in some part his own blood; yet he knew this rebel must have his head and right arm severed from his body, and



be thrust, like a dog, into unhallowed ground.

'He did much to bring me this crown,' mused Richard, turning over the knife on the floor with his foot. 'Perhaps had I taken his little maiden for my son--'

'And his wife a Woodville?' asked Lovell.

Richard did not answer; he took up the papers brought from London and turned his mind to more homely things--the accounts for the rebuilding of his mews at Charing Cross and for the care of his goshawks, tercel and laberets brought from Wales; the reports of his collection of apes and bears at the Tower, and of his buildings at Killingworth, Sudeley, Summerhall and Cambridge; the design of the stone cross in Brecon and the bridge in Somerset.

'Jesu, mercy, when may a man have peace for these pleasant matters?' mourned the King.

John Mowbray, Duke of Norfolk and Maréchal de France, the veteran knight, brought in the list of those to be attainted for complicity in this lately crushed rebellion.

A hundred names.

The Duke of Norfolk pointed out that of a woman. 'And, sir, wit ye well she is the most dangerous of all.'

'Margaret Beaufort,' frowned the King. 'So Lovell said--'

'A Beaufort of the elder branch. Will ye, sir, cut off the younger and leave this?' urged Norfolk. 'Morton, the priest, hath escaped abroad, and the Woodville widow's brother, Salisbury, her son Dorset, Wells, the uncle of Henry Tudor, who calls himself "Richmond"--'

'Why rehearse this to me?' asked Richard, frowning at The Earl Marshal. 'I cannot touch this Beaufort woman, nor need I, since with Buckingham this turbulent house of Somerset is extinguished at last.'

'This woman,' said Norfolk, stoutly, 'is the centre of the mischief. She sent Sir William Chaney to Brittany to beg her son to come to England and take advantage of this confusion. Do ye think that she would have set up Buckingham? Aye, it was her son she thought of!'

Richard shook his head wearily; the design seemed to him too incredible and he had no patience to unravel intrigue.

'Sir, this Henry Tudor did not land,' he remarked, negligently.

'Because he did not dare,' replied Norfolk. 'He is cautious and timid. But he sailed from Brittany and his ship hovered near the coast.'

'Sir, give this Margaret Beaufort into the custody of her husband,' said the King, wearily; 'let him be answerable for her. For pity's sake, plague me not with this!'

Norfolk pursed up his lips. In common with most of Richard's nobles, he thought the King's clemency was reckless. He pointed out fiercely that though the rebellion was nosy crushed, many of the most insidious traitors had escaped, overseas, to join Henry Tudor, who had been for years lurking in Brittany, glancing covertly and greedily at the English Crown.

Richard ignored the claim of the Welshman, which he deemed too untenable to put forward.

He was sure of the loyalty of all the nobility to the Plantagenet blood, and he disdained the machinations of Henry's mother, Margaret Beaufort, Stanley's wife. He also firmly believed in the loyalty of this mischief-maker's husband, and said so now, impetuously, to the Earl

Marshal, as one weary of the business, his fingers busy with his papers.

Old Norfolk loved his master, but thought him very misled; had the Earl Marshal been King, Margaret Beaufort would have gone to the Tower a prisoner, and every Lancastrian, Woodville and Beaufort in the kingdom been rooted out and killed.

But while contemptuously indifferent in the matter of Henry Tudor, there was one insignificant name in this list on which King Richard dwelt. It was Sir Jon Fogge.

The fellow had been caught inciting men to rise for Dorset. He was now a prisoner in Salisbury, a condemned traitor. 'Many I will pardon,' said Richard, 'but not Sir Jon Fogge; let that man die.'

'Sir, they should all die,' replied the Earl Marshal. 'That fellow is no worse than the others, saving Your Grace.'

'Sir, I know him for one utterly evil,' replied the King, stubbornly. 'Let him die. See, Norfolk, that he does not escape. I have some concern in this now.'

The next day, Henry Stafford, Duke of Buckingham, was executed in Salisbury with many other rebel knights.

It was the second of November, and the snow was falling. The last yellow leaves were falling from the trees in the cathedral close.

King Richard said his prayers inside the great church while the traitors died.

He knelt before an altar that sparkled in the gloom, then he looked down at his own hands and the jewels on them, as though he saw the smear and taint of blood on them. Images of his whole life burned

before his mind: always alert, armed, living always violently and dangerously, hastening--always hastening, in broken images his life tumbled before him as he knelt in Salisbury Cathedral.

In all the darkness and movement there was nothing of peace or gentleness except the image of Anne Neville and her little son, like two timid white birds, blown in out of the tempest.

He prayed passionately, and the tears forced themselves from his closed eyes, as he implored the distant Majesty of God for peace in which to rule England, for some respite from the chase which drove him forward, but when he left the church and mounted among his retinue he was again the stern young King. dark, swift and eager against his enemies.

Buckingham was dead. The man who yesterday had spoken words of defiance, was now cold, and being shovelled into the hard ground.

King Richard did not return directly to his lodgings, but rode through the grey market-place. The executions were over, and the headsman held up the head of the last victim. As the awed crowd made way for the King, he looked straight at the grinning face of Sir Jon Fogge, which the executioner grasped by the thin black hair.

Lips and eyelids twitched, the dead visage seemed to wink and grin at Richard, the lank body sprawled across the bloody straw on the scaffold. Richard crossed himself.

This, then, was no fiend, but a mortal man. Never again would he see that malicious countenance announcing bad news.

The snow fell more rapidly on the houses in the streets, on the curious crowd, on the scaffold with the dead men and the executioner holding up the head of Sir Jon Fogge, traitor and rebel.

The splash of blood spread slowly, thickening in the cold.

Those who rode near Richard saw that his face was ghastly and pale in the livid light of the snow clouds, and they wondered at his deep unhappiness, for now he seemed secure as King.

He turned his black horse and rode away, but he kept looking back over his shoulder and between the riders behind him at the place of execution, the bloody scaffold in the marketplace.

## 9

The Queen, Anne Neville, was holding a bunch of cowslips, violets and primroses. She was happier now than she had been since she had left Middleham: there was colour in her cheeks, a brightness in her eyes. Her husband regarded her with all the passion of love which has been alarmed and is now reassured.

Anne had outgrown her weakness, and was no longer too weak to wear her royal robes or the crown.

Richard was happy, also, and was very conscious of it as he looked at the lovely woman and her flowers in a pretty painted room of Nottingham Castle. Richard knew his land was prosperous and at peace, himself beloved. With wisdom and justice he had regulated laws so that Parliament was blessed by the common people for the protection and security it gave them. Richard had put down injustice, amended some of the laws, promoted economy, and built up the few ships that had been his care during his brother's reign into a navy of seven great vessels, which boldly flew the British flag on the English seas. In the royal apartments in the Tower, Elizabeth Woodville lived the life she had lived during her husband's reign, with her two ailing sons who had at last come out of sanctuary.

Richard, standing beside his wife in Nottingham Castle, smiled at her.

'Anne; he said with that seductive tenderness which was so attractive, 'I have no business today, we will go riding far away from the city.'

Anne Neville stood up. The open window behind her showed her a view of the city like a miniature painting. The Queen was as slender as when Richard had fetched her from the sanctuary of St Martin's-le-Grand in London. Her blue dress fitted her tightly and flowed in heavy folds about her tiny feet. Her hair was drawn back under a thin muslin veil; every detail of her clear-cut face was light and delicate as the design and colouring of a flower.

She smiled at Richard, on whom her whole being depended for its very existence.

They were silent, exchanging looks of love, too content with each other for the moment to move or speak. The warm spring sunlight from the open window touched them, delicate perfume rose from the April flowers set on the long table. In some nearby room a singing-man was chanting a song written by Dunstable of Norwich to the spring.

Anne touched the smooth hair which fell to Richard's high jewelled collar.

'Shall we not go and spend Easter at Middleham?' she asked. 'Edward is never so pleased anywhere else.'

'Edward must always stay at Middleham,' replied Richard. 'But then I see him so seldom,' she smiled.

Richard said that the child did best in the ordered peace of the great castle where he had been born.

'But, madam and my love, we will keep the Easter feast at Middleham. Why not?'

She thought she heard an absent note in his voice, for he was always occupied now he was King and they were seldom together.

She sighed for the days that would never be, to be in each other's company, with nothing to distract them. Her life was too often a monotonous idleness of waiting for the moments when Richard could have the snatched leisure to offer her the solace of his love; for the King worked, diligently, daily.

A page came in, the singing stopped and a light cloud blew across the sun, so that the room was suddenly cold.

Master Berners from Middleham wanted to see Their Graces. This was the tutor of the Prince of Wales, and the Queen's face whitened in alarm.

Richard noticed this look and smiled.'

'Madam, why should ye instantly think evil?'

Anne Neville did not reply that it was because she was too used to evil, but that was the thought in her mind.

The Prince's tutor did not enter the hall alone.

Leaning on a stick, the old man advanced in front of John Mowbray, Duke of Norfolk, Radcliffe and Lovell, the King's friend and his chaplain and his confessor.

Seeing this procession the Queen put her hand to her lips and gave a little cry. Richard went up to the knights and priests, who had paused in the middle of the hall.

'What is this?' said the King. 'What have ye to tell?'

Sir Francis Lovell whispered to the tutor to speak; Richard caught the words! 'Sir, indeed I cannot.' Master Berners was shaking his head.

'Sirs, ye keep me in torment,' said the King, quietly. 'The child--my son?'

'Your Noble Grace,' whispered the old tutor, and he fell on his knees and caught the edge of Richard's coat.

The King held out his hand to Lovell, who grasped it instantly. The others waited. 'Tell me,' said Richard, and looked straight into his friend's eyes.

'Sir, the Prince of Wales is dead,' said Lovell, 'and I would I had died before I had to tell ye.'

Richard heard a woman's cry, so dreadful that it seemed inhuman, the cry of complete disaster.

He started forward, blindly, and all that held him to reality was the clasp of Lovell's hand.

Master Berners' old voice came thinly through the darkness that surrounded Richard.

'Sir, the boy was playing with the jester; he seemed as well as usual, and then a pain in his head and some heaviness, that he would sleep...And we thought nothing of it, for in the evening he was again



lively, but called out in the night, and in the morning was dead suddenly, with no more than a sigh.'

Richard felt someone holding him up.

'Was I like to fall?' he asked, stupidly, and stared into the distracted face of Norfolk. 'So the boy is dead, ye say? But we will ride to Middleham.'

He heard someone cry: 'Let your Grace look to the woman, the Queen,' but he could not see her. 'Sirs, I must go to Middleham,' he repeated.

He stretched out his hand for Anne, but she was gone—with the happiness and the sunshine. Turning, he trod on the flowers she had dropped when she had fainted. He repeated that he must ride to Middleham; he heard his friends' voices saying that he must stay with his wife because her suffering was greater than his.

Richard knew that this was not true—that no woman's anguish could match his, who had lost his son, his heir, his prince.

He stood now stripped before destiny—a childless man, with a barren wife; his pride as well as his love had gone down in the blasting of this one hope.

He found himself at the door, holding on to the lintel, almost fainting with Anne beside him.

She had found him, though he could not find her. She had pity for his grief, if he could find none for hers. She held him by the shoulder and he heard her speaking, close to his ear.

'Richard, husband, do not look so wild. He bath gone to God, and we may follow very soon.'

'Anne, how can ye speak so coldly? My son, my little son. Oh, sirs, too much sorrow have ye brought me!'

'We must go to him. Dickon, do ye not know me? It is his mother speaking. Ye will disturb his soul with so much passion; if our joy and play be over, this is the time for courage.'

'Madam, anything but this I could have endured,' Richard whispered, almost not knowing to whom he spoke. 'Let us go to him.' insisted the voice of Anne.

They were on the road, riding, hastening.

It seemed to Richard that he had been riding, hastening all his life--pursued, flying, but this was the most terrible of all his terrible journeys.

Once he shrieked out and flung out his hand to Lovell, who rode beside him, their straining horses neck to neck. 'Someone is at my bridle!' he cried--'someone is dragging me on!'

Lovell peered forward across his horse's ears: 'No one runs at Your Grace's bridle; nor, sir, were it possible, given the speed we make.'

But Richard had seen a figure there--one with the long fiend's face of Jon Fogge, dragging at his horse's bridle, pulling him onwards, beckoning, shouting...so that Richard shouted again to him, and the knights galloping with him crossed themselves, thinking he was bewitched.

They were at Middleham and the torches were lit, sending a flaring light across the high grey wall--then the child's room and the candles lit, two by two, steady spheres of flame, above the thick white of the wax; the Leopards and Lilies of England and the White Boar

glittering in sharp embroideries on the quilt of green samite; cowed monks on their knees chanting the penitential psalms.

Richard's very soul was struggling violently and desperately to escape from this scene. His courage went.

'It is a dream, and I must awake, so help me God!'

The child wore a long white robe. He was as stiff as a monumental effigy; he looked different. Even the monks, peering from beneath their hoods, dropped their chanting to a muttering as they saw Richard Plantagenet, that regal figure, worn with misery, standing at the foot of the bed.

The mother was on the threshold. With the ending of the journey her strength had gone: she was on her knees with her hands clasped, her head resting against the side of the door.

The bells of Middleham began to toll. This sad sound seemed to Richard to form a thousand sharp points of nostalgia that pierced the very flesh of his heart.

He was down on his knees at the end of the bed, he fumbled for the feet of his little son, and felt them bare, dead, icy cold. He heard someone say in a voice of great pity:

'His mind is overthrown.'

And another voice:

'Look up, my Lord, and take thy grief to God.'

Then he was aware of timid hurrying footsteps and singing. They had brought in the choristers from the chapel to give him the unsurpassable comfort of melody.

Someone unlocked his hands tenderly from the tiny dead feet of his son; he rose; they put Anne into his arms. She said:

'He smileth, it is as if he were asleep. Dickon, in such a little while we shall be asleep also.'

He held Anne tightly. He felt as though he was being swept away on a great tide of violence and noise and fear. He cried out, frantic:

'What is this roaring in my ears, and where do I tread? What is rushing by my cheeks? Can ye not stay any of them and question them, Warwick--Edward--Clarence--Hastings and Buckingham--all dead, and now my son with them!'

'Sirs, the King is frantic, lead him away; his mind is overwhelmed, entreat him gently...his might is nothing to his pain.'

Richard felt Anne stir in his arms which clasped her so desperately close; he heard her say:

'Sir, fetch the other child.'

And someone answered:

'He is here, crying in the doorway.'

Anne said: 'Bring him in!'

Richard released Anne and peered about, curious, searching among the ghosts for living faces.

She touched him--even amidst this he knew her touch--and spoke.

'My husband, Dickon, ye have another son. Take him thus, see!'

She placed his hands on the shoulders now not so much lower than his own, and Richard stared into the tear-stained face that was in every line Plantagenet--the son of Alys, his mother's sewing girl.

In that fair innocent face shining now out of so much darkness, were all the love and loyalty of Alys and all the love and loyalty of Anne.

'Sir, I would have died for him,' sobbed the boy, and tried to fall on his knees, but the King held him up.

'Are ye weeping for him, John?' whispered Richard curiously.

'Sir, for that and to see Your Grace so overmatched.' John, ye loved him?'

'As deeply as I love Your Grace! Oh, Sir, the fair young Prince!'

'Stay by me, John, stay by me tonight.'

Richard went on his knees again, the boy beside him. He drew the fair head down to his face and wept.

Anne Neville, watching, supported by Radcliffe and Lovell, could smile.

'He hath overcome the temptation of that fiend Despair,' she said, and crossed herself: 'the boy hath saved him.'

'And you, madam, Your Grace is most wonderfully up-borne.'

'Sir, it is because I shall see him so soon, and sleep beside my son,' whispered the Queen. I, too, shall be slain by the invisible rider. But of what account am I? Look ye to the King, sir.'

Thomas Bouchier, Cardinal of St Cyrac, Archbishop of Canterbury, placed his thin hands on the dark, bent head of the King, his cousin.

'Do thy good deeds avail thee nothing? Thou hast many worthy actions to bring to the footstool of God, Richard Plantagenet.'

The King knelt at the edge of the Cardinal's robe. The royal apartments in the Tower were noisy with the Christmas festivities. Jousts and singing, bells and organ music; the excited laughter of children at play; the high voices of the women, loud among them Elizabeth Woodville with her daughters, more ostentatious than Queen Anne, as wanton, as confident as if she had not been a widow and a woman whose children had been set aside.

The host of this feast remained apart in his closet with Cardinal Bouchier, the priest who had crowned him, a man whose eyes were tired with looking upon the blood and folly of the world, and who clung to the Church as an island of rest and refuge.

'Why have I been so stricken?' demanded Richard in a low tone. 'Will Your Grace tell me that? Why did I lose my son? My kingship is made a mock of, and I, for heir, must have the idiot son of Clarence, or Lincoln, Suffolk's child. Is there indeed a curse on the House of York?'

'Sir, Richard, Cousin, I must believe,' replied the old Cardinal, slowly, 'that God meaneth to help us all...His Hands are for ever outstretched, but there are about us so many mists of lust and passion that it is difficult to discern those Helping Hands. And I have seen so much violence--the young, the brave, the fair, slaying each other, and for what?'

'So much blood,' murmured Richard, shuddering. Too much blood,

Lord Cardinal, and how avoided?'

'Sir, ye are but a young knight,' returned the old man. 'Your Grace hath reigned only a while, and with magnanimous justice, with open-handed liberality; you have been generous to your foes and kept your knightly word, a valiant soldier, an able governor. Let your Grace take some solace from these virtues, upheld in difficult times.'

King Richard shook his head mournfully, and looked aside. 'I have lost my son,' he whispered.

'Your Grace,' replied the Archbishop, uneasily, 'hath built many churches and colleges, chapels and chantrys. This must be remembered to thee.'

'That I did for my own comfort,' replied Richard, frowning; 'to put some shield between me and dark fiends which I do believe have ever pursued me, even as a child--'

He paused, biting his lip; his young face was worn and grim.

'The land is at peace, Your Grace,' urged the old man; 'ye have no enemies abroad, no traitor at home--all is tranquil.'

'Thou speakest as one,' smiled Richard, 'who ever favoured me. The kindness of Your Grace hath made thee ever warmly my champion, but in my heart I am not at ease.'

'Who is at ease, sir?' sighed the old man.

'That is what I would know,' said Richard, earnestly. 'These secret fears, this sense that something pursueth me and I have some invisible enemy coiling round my feet that will bring me down, and with me all I love--down to death.'

Rise, Cousin,' said the old priest 'do not kneel to me. I am full of many errors and weariness. We get no consolation that we do right in State or Church, but walk blindly as poor children in a mist. Ah, God, pity us, and keep not so far away!'

Richard rose, and stood beside the old man. The King was attired in lavish magnificence of sparkling gems and gleaming satins and heavy furs. But the splendour of his youth had gone from his face, which was lined and unhappy.

'The pattern of these times is wearing thin; he mused:

'I see great changes in the minds and spirit of men. The ancient chivalry is dying, and old graces have a lesser value than they wore yesterday.'

'This is but a matter of unhappy custom,' said the Archbishop; 'these alter the soul of man as little as the newfangled manner of clothes alters his body.'

'I would have no more of war,' said Richard: 'trade and commerce should build up this country, justice and peace consolidate it. The merchant, maybe, replace the knight. Cardinal,' he added abruptly, 'how little I thought in the days of Middleham that I should be the last of my House. There seemed so many of us, and all young, brave and strong.'

'It may be,' suggested the Archbishop, 'that Your Grace will have another son.'

Richard answered simply:

'Anne Neville will have no more children, nor I another wife...nor have I any desire to take my pleasure with mistresses.'



Neither spoke for a little: the pause was filled with gusts of distant singing, the merriment from the hall, and music from chapel.

'How heavy hang these festivals,' said Richard, 'upon a mournful heart. Business I may do and find a solace in labour, but I come to pleasure now, Cardinal, in a most ungainly manner.'

'God cleanse thee of thy sins and troubles as I do, Cousin, and bless thee,' said Thomas Bouchier, tenderly, 'and give thee in this coming year fairer hopes.'

'Yes,' replied Richard, 'I do behold nothing but darkness. Interpret that, Your Grace. And ever ringeth in my mind these words, "that blast is blown for me, I am the prize they seek, and yet I am not dead."'

"Tis but the shadow cast by a wounded mind,' replied the old Cardinal. 'Time will heal even thy deep scar.'

'It may be,' replied Richard, in a brooding tone; 'hut that is what I do behold--a darkness swallowing me and mine, not only now, but for all eternity. My very name gone in foul oblivion.'

'Your Highness was ever a man of fancies,' replied the Archbishop. 'I remember that as a child ye had gloomy thoughts.'

'Oh, I have been haunted and pursued!' said Richard, with a deep sigh, 'and always groping in a mist! I know not what I should do--I move here and there, and always the way blocked and blackness at the end--'

He checked himself; there are some depths of spiritual anguish which may not be expressed in words.

Richard knelt again, pressing his jewelled hands together, and the

Archbishop Cardinal blessed him. He then rose. 'I must show myself at this festival board,' he smiled; but he did not go directly to the great gilded hall, but to his own room. Here he stayed for some time to compose himself before going down to the great hall.

Queen Elizabeth Woodville frolicked there with her daughters.

The eldest, Elizabeth, had her mother's fair beauty and was of marriageable age, she was dressed in a fine robe given her by Queen Anne Neville. She laughed excitedly, in no way downcast by the deposition of her brother, the execution of her uncle, or the shame that attached to her mother through the bigamous marriage.

Richard was pledged in honour to treat these women with respect and dignity, but he liked none of them, and their noisy merry-making had in it no gaiety; they quarrelled together, half-jesting, half-spiteful. This boy who had been so briefly King, nosy called Earl of March and Pembroke, was careless in his dress and peevish in his manner, his brother, Richard of Shrewsbury, who had been the Duke of York, was still unwell, and sat passive with the languor of ill-health. Clarencé's boy, Warwick, though considered a half-wit, had some gleam of spirit and enthusiasm which reminded King Richard of his brother, and in appearance was more handsome than either of Elizabeth Woodville's sons. The eldest of all these boys was King Richard's son, John, in every way a Plantagenet--golden, eager, beautiful, as King Richard himself.

Richard's lip twisted as he observed this child, for ever excluded from the throne, and in every way worthy to succeed to it...a subtle turn of fate, that.

He took his seat beside the Queen. She sat quietly, amid her cushions. She smiled and made herself courteous to all but she shrank from the company of Elizabeth Woodville and her daughters,

and all her sweet civilities could not disguise the fact that the festival was a burden to her.

The Duke of Norfolk, Earl Marshal, stood beside King Richard on the dais, and pointed out to him Stanley's wife. This woman moved among the merrymakers, keeping close to Elizabeth Woodville.

Norfolk, that veteran knight, had good judgment and long experience, and he whispered now to the King:

'Will Your Grace well observe Margaret, Stanley's wife, and remember she is Henry Tudor's mother?'

'Sir, ye are always on that theme,' smiled Richard indulgently. 'I have given her into her husband's charge, and he is answerable, and Jesu, mercy, what is she but a woman?'

'See her with the Woodville widow,' urged Norfolk, 'they are often closeted together.'

'Close in women's gossip, and maybe in women's spite,' replied the King, indifferently; 'but neither of them can harm me.'

'Sir, a rat gnawing at the root,' said Norfolk, 'may wither a noble tree. Elizabeth, thy brother Edward's daughter, is marriageable.'

'And what do ye make of that?' demanded Richard, troubled.

'Sir, I think of those two women,' said Norfolk, quickly. 'Is it not possible that Stanley's wife suggests her son, Henry Tudor, for Elizabeth Woodville's daughter? There would be a match--Red and White Rose combined, they would call it, and so unite Woodville and Lancastrian.'

'Sir, both are defeated and discredited,' replied King Richard,

impatiently. 'Good Norfolk, ye are over-anxious in my service. I cannot fear these women, nor that Welsh adventuring exile whose claims are laughable, whose abilities, as I think, negligible; nor can I think that his mother would dare. Besides, I do utterly trust Stanley.'

'Your Grace does utterly trust too many people,' replied Norfolk; 'and by this trust ye may bring down not only yourself, but also all your friends.'

Richard turned and lovingly pressed his old knight's hand and consoled him with words of warm affection, but he was interrupted by a sudden movement from the Queen.

She rose with her hands to her throat and said quietly she could not endure the noise, clamour, lights and heat of the great hall any longer...Richard was instantly on his feet.

'Ah, Dickon I' murmured the Queen, 'do not spoil the feast for my sake!'

Richard led her to her room. She was silent as they unlaced her and laid her in her bed, among the pillows of wool, under the quilt of samite.

King Richard held the truth away from him. He declared that he could not, would not lose her, but the truth rent him even though kept at arm's length.

Anne Neville had been dying since that day at Nottingham when Master Berners had brought his news from Middleham.

Then she had been braver than he, calmer, and able to offer comfort; then she had turned his thoughts to God and put into his arms his other son, in kindness and gentleness, thinking of him, striving to alleviate his anguish, with such solace as she could command. She

had not burdened him with her own grief. Courageously she had gone about her duties, always at his side, but all the while she was dying from a broken heart.

Through the cold bleak spring she lingered, coming first for a few hours every day from her room, then for an hour, then for no time at all, but staying seated by the great hearth in her bedroom.

Then not rising even as far as the hearth, but remaining tranquil among the pillows, with her crucifix on her breast. In a casket by the bed were the child's little toys and garments, neatly folded away.

The King had that manner of courage that cannot shirk duty, but he gave up his building, his hunting, his hawking, all his amusements and diversions, even his secret prayers, to spend all the time he could away from State matters with Anne Neville--Warwick's Anne. Anne of Middleham, Anne of St Martin's sanctuary, his true and only love, dying now in the painted chamber in the Tower.

One windy night in March, as he hurried through the corridors to her chamber, having been kept from her by pressure of affairs all day, he saw a dark figure ahead of him, who moved steadily, as if guiding him to some appointed place. This figure turned to stare at him, and Richard exclaimed in tones of bitter horror:

'Were ye not executed at Salisbury?'

For answer, the figure grinned, and tapped at the Queen's chamber.

Richard strode up, and the apparition he had believed to be Sir Jon Fogge vanished. His mother, Cicely of York, the grey, worn, bent woman, stood in the darkness by the curtained bed. Lamps were lit against the encroachment of the cold twilight. Monks and nuns were in the room, praying silently.

'It bath come,' moaned Richard, and crossed himself. 'One more leaveth us,' said the Duchess of York. 'I wonder, Dickon, how many more farewells I must say!'

She lifted the hand of Anne Neville from the coverlet and put it in that of the kneeling husband.

'Dickon,' breathed the Queen, turning on him a last look of love, 'Dickon.'

Then she was dead--lost to him as his son, Edward, was lost.

Dead, with his brothers, Edmund, George, Edward and Richard his father.

Far away on the instant in that great company of the dead. Such fierce loneliness smote him that he cried out in anguish. The seagulls screamed, rushing over the wintry Thames, bells clanged, and the wind lifted and howled at the windowpanes and in the wide chimney--all these sounds mingled in his mind as on that day in the sanctuary of St Martin's when he had embraced Anne, and stood with her defying a fate which had merely grinned, waiting its time, and had now overtaken them.

His mother touched his bowed shoulder.

'Anne is dead,' he whispered, his hands shielding his distorted face, 'and the child is dead--'

'But you live,' said the Duchess of York, 'and you are a Plantagenet, and though you are so afflicted you must be brave and strong.'

And she took Anne's hand from his and laid a clean linen towel over Anne Neville's face, once so lovely.

In Nottingham Castle King Richard issued letters of array. 'This hath been a weary spring,' he said to Norfolk, 'and it is an ill chance that findeth me again in my castle of care; which is what he called the castle at Nottingham since here he had heard of his son's death.

'Sir, had Your Grace been warned earlier!' said the stout Mowbray, regretfully.

Richard interrupted:

'Sir, I never could have been warned, but must go on a way shaped for me. But for thee, Norfolk, I admit thy wisdom,' He smiled. 'It is this Morton who hath put forward Henry Tudor as claimant, as base as it is absurd.'

'But one that holdeth with many people,' replied Norfolk, shrewdly. 'But now Your Grace hath discerned one viper, will ye not turn and strangle another? Margaret Beaufort, Stanley's wife?'

'Sir, Stanley hath answered to me for her, on his loyalty as a knight,' replied Richard.

He rose as if to end the matter, for he had for Lord Stanley and Sir William Stanley, his brother, affection and a deep faith; he believed that Stanley could control the ambitious and intriguing woman to whom he was married.

'Sir, I did not think,' commented the King, 'that France would have given me this traitorous thrust. What use, Norfolk, are these fine webs of diplomacy which hold us in peace with Europe when we are like to be struck deep in the back by one who pretends to be a friend?'

'The French,' replied Norfolk, 'are our natural enemies. Your Grace has ever been too trustful.'

'Ye harp still on that string,' smiled Richard, mournfully. 'I tell ye, good Norfolk, it is a deep mistrust of all my fate which maketh me negligent and careless.'

'Let Your Grace confront this affair with a good heart,' urged Norfolk, with tender respect, full of love for his master, 'For this Henry Tudor, who is but a common adventurer, will have with him not one of the nobility or knighthood of the country, but a few Lancastrian exiles and discredited rebels.'

'Sir, I have heard,' replied Richard, 'that at Harfleur he fits out a great fleet.'

'Manned, however,' interrupted Norfolk, scornfully, 'by all the diseased and ragged mercenaries gotten out of the plague-stricken cities of France and Flanders. He hath with him not more than two thousand men on a sure count; while Your Grace's Highness has all England.'

'Norfolk, dost thou think that I can hold it?'

'Sir, save treachery, I do think Your Grace is safe, and this without flattery or pride.'

'The Welsh will join Tudor,' mused the King, 'and all those who were in Buckingham's treason, and who either escaped or were pardoned.'

'Sir, I do implore Your Grace to beware of treachery, for in a great battle there is no dread, but great valiance is useless when struck at in secret.'



The King looked at him, thought for a moment, and then said:

'Sir, call Lord Stanley.'

When that knight was brought before the King, Norfolk, standing behind his master's chair, eyed him keenly and coldly. The King spoke with simplicity.

'Lord Stanley, I have been urged to mistrust ye by reason of thy wife, a Beaufort and mother of this invader. She hath once been discovered in treason, and by me pardoned, as ye well wit.'

'Sir, for that I am ever beholden to Your Grace,' replied Stanley, standing boldly, and folding his arms across his chest, 'and so is my lady wife, who interferes no more with great affairs.'

'Sir, women are subtle, and a mother will do much for her son,' remarked Richard. 'It is not possible, Lord Stanley, for her to persuade you to leave me for Henry Tudor?'

'Sir, it is not possible, so God help me!' said Lord Stanley, frankly. 'My loyalty is always to Your Grace, who hath been both generous and forgiving...'

'Sir, beyond what I have ever heard of in a King before,' added Norfolk, sternly.

'Sirs, enough,' said Richard. 'I will have no more words. I hold thy plighted promise, Lord Stanley, and I will send thee and thy brother, Sir William, to Lancashire, there to raise forces, and to hold thyself in readiness to meet the invader, for it is believed that he will land at Milford Haven.'

Stanley looked straight at the King and straight into the stern eyes of

Norfolk.

'Sir, I shall speak no more on this matter,' said Richard. 'Remember only, Stanley, that I trust ye and that thou hast named God in this matter.'

'Sir, my loyalty,' replied the knight, 'requireth neither spur nor reward.'

He bent his knee to his sovereign and left the chamber.

'God; said the Duke of Norfolk, gravely, 'grant that Your Grace hath not misplaced thy trust, and that we be not ashamed through this easiness.'

'What wouldst thou do in my place?' demanded the King, with a sudden smile, and he put his hand on the old knight's shoulder, 'for I see thou thinkest I act with great folly and blindness.'

'Jesu, mercy, I would have both the Stanleys and their wives safe locked in the Tower dungeons; yea, sir, and every Woodville and Beaufort.'

King Richard smiled mournfully.

He could not long converse on any subject without indifference falling on him. The eight months that had passed since the day when he had shed open tears of misery beside Anne Neville's grave in the Abbey at Westminster had been like eight years for adding a weight to his spirit. He was as a man who did his duty diligently but absently, his mind always turning to other matters.

To confront this threatened invasion he had gathered together all his forces, raised a loan which had been willingly paid by a grateful people, placed in safety the children entrusted to his care--Edward's two sons in the Tower and the Earl of Warwick, now his heir, and

Elizabeth, his niece, at Sheriff Hutton.

With more contempt than anger he turned to face this insidious thrust by the wily Welsh adventurer--a man whose claim to the English throne was so presumptuous as to be, in the eyes of the Plantagenets, laughable.

King Richard did not fear failure: he had never yet met it in the field. He was confident in his own generalship, which he had displayed so brilliantly at Barnet and Tewkesbury, before Berwick, and when he had to meet the Buckingham revolt.

Henry Tudor was marching from Milford Haven with eight thousand men; the Stanleys, in Lancashire, fell back before the invader, sending messages to Richard that he was too powerful for them, that it were better to draw him on until he could be faced by the full force of the royal army.

When the King received this news he was without the advice of the old Duke of Norfolk; that stout warrior, who had fought with the great Talbot at Chatillon, had been sent to raise men in the Eastern counties.

This delay, this retreat, angered Richard: his reckless and impetuous spirit could not bear the thought of waiting for an enemy; he thought the Stanleys too cautious.

'We ourselves will go to meet this Henry Tudor,' he declared to Lovell, 'and surely we can manage to slay him.'

It was a day of flaming August blue, and the King and his friends were hunting under the trees of Beskwood Park, outside Nottingham.

A messenger from the Stanleys had followed the King to the chase. When he had read the letter Richard stopped the sport, and rode his

horse slowly down a wide glade, Lovell and Sir Robert Percy by his side. Behind him, conspicuous among his sumptuous and resplendent retinue, was Sir Robert Brackenbury, the ancient Constable of the Tower, who had come by forced marches from London to help his Sovereign.

Richard pushed the letter in his belt and repeated, frowning:

I will myself go and meet them.'

Lovell enquired anxiously:

'Will not Your Grace wait a little while? Many men are on their way to support Your Grace--the gentry of the North, your cousin, the Earl of Northumberland...sir, these be many thousands strong.'

Sir Robert Brackenbury, cantering up, put in his word. 'Sir, those who advise Your Grace to engage with only your present troops do so with evil intent'

'Sirs, no one adviseth me,' said Richard, smiling; 'it is my own wish. Dost thou not think I can repulse these rebels--even if they do slightly outnumber me?'

Every knight who gathered round the King in that glade was of this opinion: that if Richard waited for all the reinforcements which were hurrying to his assistance there could be no question as to his victory over the rebels; but that if he hurried from Nottingham with only the present forces at his disposal he was leaving much to fortune.

But the King was impatient of all counsel, of all prudence. 'Sirs, I am weary of delay,' he said, 'and would not tarry.' He added, passionately:

'I am not worthy to wear this crown if I hesitate to defend it.'

Even the knights who most strongly urged Richard to prudence knew secretly that he could not be restrained from instantly confronting his foes. But while he would not stay for earthly considerations, he waited a day longer in Nottingham to celebrate the Feast of the Assumption.

This was on Monday.

Two days afterwards Richard left Nottingham, riding a great white horse sumptuously trapped with gold and crimson, with the arms of England and the cognizance of the White Boar.

He himself was in the gleaming blue steel that he had worn at Tewkesbury, a golden circlet on his helmet, leading an army which marched steadily through the valleys and gentle hills of Leicestershire, straight towards the enemy who, from the latest news, was known to have reached Atherstone.

Richard lodged in the inn named after his own cognizance, The White Boar, in Leicester, and his troops camped in a field near Stapleton, called the Bradshaws, on a slight hill which had been already prepared for them.

At this rendezvous were the Duke of Norfolk and Lord Stanley, who, falling back before the enemy, had arrived with two thousand men and camped in a field by Stoke Golding. The River Tweed flowed between these two positions, in front of the town of Market Bosworth was Sir William Stanley, with another force of two thousand men.

King Richard rode round the encampments, examined the earthworks which were being hastily thrown up breast high, spoke to the two Stanleys and the Duke of Norfolk, reviewed the positions and the men, and awaited the enemy, who were, the scouts said,

advancing east and had crossed the bridge over the River Anker at Witherny, and were coming directly on the King's forces in camp at Bosworth.

The strength of Henry Tudor, including French mercenaries and Welsh reinforcements, came to no more than eight thousand men. The King's consolidated array, including the men of the Stanleys' and Norfolk's contingent, amounted to double this number. He therefore looked upon the task before him as easy and regarded the coming battle with a certain indifference.

Sir Francis Lovait, his dearest friend and Chamberlain, gently chided him on his melancholy spirits, since it was not possible to regard the coming conflict with any doubt.

'It is not the thought of tomorrow's battle that weigheth my heart,' said King Richard, 'for I have never feared to fight, but only dreaded the Devil's craft.'

There was no more the King could do but wait for the dawn.

He stood at the entrance to his pavilion in the middle of his army on the ridge of Sutton field, and watched the stars sparkling in the warm night above his resting men, who were sleeping on the grass.

'Lovell; he said to his Chamberlain, 'fetch me the boy, John, my son.'

Sir Francis Lovell was surprised at this request, for the King had taken no notice of the boy since the day he was taken from his arms as he knelt by young Edward's deathbed, though the boy had remained in the King's household and had accompanied him everywhere.

The King was still standing at the door of his pavilion when Lovell returned with John, who was blushing and nervous.

'Sir, leave me alone with him; said Richard, and drew the boy by the hand into the tent, which had been hastily arranged with camp furniture--a bed, a stool, a table.

One dim lamp gleamed on the King's armour lying piled on the ground, newly polished and adjusted with the embroidered surcoat on which were the arms of England; the battle-axe, the sword, the steel gauntlets, the helmet with the golden circle, hauberk, pauldrons, greaves.

Richard was in his undress of blue velvet, the gold laces loosened at the throat over the white shirt because of the August heat.

The King took the boy's hand and smiled at him.

'Thou art well-grown for thy years--nearly as tall as T,' he said, 'and like my brother Edward, John, as I remember him in his youth.'

The sewing girl's son had inherited all those kingly qualities which Elizabeth Woodville's children and the children of the Neville women lacked, and Richard's wry smile deepened to see this Plantagenet who might never bear that name.

The boy, overcome by this kindness, when he had believed himself out of favour, fell on his knee and pressed the King's right hand to his eager lips. His hair was golden as his mother's embroidery threads when she had sewn the White Boar on her lover's coat.

'Wilt thou fight for me tomorrow, John?' asked Richard. 'I am thy father.'

The boy did not answer; he was overwhelmed with embarrassment.

Richard thought of Anne and her son, lying cut off from him in their

tombs.

'Child,' said King Richard, 'I have been a sinful man, and perchance God hath been displeased with me, since I have lost my true wife and my heir, and no longer have a woman and child to comfort me. And between me and all I love is a great distance.'

The boy trembled at what he might not understand, and pressed his hands together and said:

'Fair, sweet Father, Jesu Christ, forget thee not!'

Richard crossed his brow.

'All my days I have been fighting, and I am always moving, hurrying, with no rest, no peace.'

He sighed, stroking the boy's head.

'Tomorrow I must fight another battle, and do thou be of my fellowship.'

The boy looked up at him with a great love, and in his eyes Richard saw the love of Alys and of Anne blended in one compassion, and he was very moved.

'There are many things I may not give thee, but something I may, for thy mother was no shame to any, and comforted me when we had nothing but kindness to give each other...and I remember in Middleham woods, when first we met, she shared her food with me.'

'Sir,' said the boy, timidly, 'there are many that love thee and will valiantly accompany thee tomorrow, and I do entreat Your Grace to keep me near thee.'



'Thou art too like my brother Edward,' replied the King. 'So did he look at Towton, a brave youth. I am encompassed by many ghosts, John--and should I see thee tomorrow and think thee my brother--then do not be afraid.'

He raised his son, kissed his brow, and blessed him.

'Remember thou art Plantagenet and the son of a chaste woman, and if thou beareth thyself well tomorrow, I will knight thee and put thee in the way of noble service to England.'

He took the boy to the door of his pavilion and sent him on his way, for he was with the company of Sir Francis Lovell, and the moon was bright.

He watched the boy go lightly through the sentinels; the sweet warm scent of pastures, woods and fields filled the summer night.

'Truly,' said Richard in his soft voice, to himself, 'I am weary of this kingship and this fighting, for now I see that nothing we do on earth can keep us from death.'

Then he lit a candle on his table beside the lamp and ate a bit of bread and meat as it had been left for him, and as he ate he became worried in case John, from lack of skill and exercise, might be killed tomorrow, and he thought of King Henry's son, who was the same age, pulled down at Tewkesbury, and put his hands over his face.

That night he did not sleep; his esquires came to arm him early bringing his sword, his helm and his great war horse. From some distant farms the cocks crew, and then he heard the trumpets of the rebels calling their ranks to battle. Richard put the circle that was like the crown of England on his helmet, above a coif of ermine; on his surcoat and on his sleeves were the arms of England; then he

mounted and dressed his shield and rode along his ranks.

He heard again the defiance of Henry Tudor, the rebel and his mercenaries; trumpets and drums coming through the clear morning air, promising a day of great heat.

## 12

Richard marched to join the Duke of Norfolk, halted two miles to the north-east, then formed his line along the ridge of Sutton field--in front were the bowmen and the artillery under the command of the Earl Marshal, in the rear the bill-men, the cavalry on either flank.

To the left was Lord Stanley, in command of the eight thousand men, who had come up with the King.

The rebels had gathered on Redmoor Plain and were rounding a bog on their right flank. These foreigners were under command of Philip de Shaundè and Jasper Tudor, who called himself Pembroke, while the Pretender to the throne of England, his nephew, Henry Tudor, who called himself Richmond, was in the rear--not being a man of action or battle, but one who would have others quarrel for him.

Richard slowly rode up a mound and looked about him at the brilliant landscape and his loyal knights and soldiers with their banners, glittering in the summer air. Never before had men seen such a show of chivalry as these who gathered round Richard Plantagenet.

Not many English were on the side of the invader, not one foreigner was in the ranks of the King. It was Englishmen against Welsh, French and some English traitors.

The splendid and erect knight in the gleaming, polished armour, with

the circlet of gold round his helmet, raised his visor. The great white horse gleamed on every movement in the sun, as did the precious metals of the royal crown, the mirror-like steel, the golden buckles of Richard's harness.

His closest friends were near him--Lovell, Radcliffe, Percy, Stafford, Clarendon, Stapleton, Clifton, the Knights of the Garter, the pride of England's chivalry. The great officials of the Crown were there--the Chancellor of the Exchequer, the Secretary of State, the Clerk of the Council, and the Constable of the Tower.

Turning, his steel gauntlets clasping the arse of the saddle, the defiant notes of the enemy's trumpets in his ears, King Richard addressed his men. He felt his own spirits rise with the excitement of a great battle to be fought.

He was not unaware of rumoured treachery: he could not wholly trust the Stanleys, placed with their great following between him and the rebels: on the Duke of Norfolk's pavilion during the night had been pinned a scroll which declared the King, 'bought and sold,' and Richard, before riding to this knoll, had clasped the mailed hands of Surrey, Percy, Radcliffe and Lovell, and said:

'Farewell, since it may be we shall be soon departed, not to meet again till the Judgement day: so, if we never see each other again, I pray God to preserve us all.'

Yet now he would not think of this, nor of the anguish of his watchful night, but only of the English fighting men he so trusted; he made a cross on his forehead, and spoke, holding up his sword for the men to see.

He saw around him many stern and faithful faces--Lovell, Sir Robert Percy, Surrey, Norfolk's son, Northumberland, his cousin, who had

brought men from the South, Ferrers and Zouch, knights from the mid counties. Though, in his reckless anger with Tudor, he had not waited for the arrival of the loyal Northern knights, it heartened him to know they and a mighty army were on the road to him, and in his heart he bore the names of these faithful Yorkist gentry, Scrope, Dacre, Ogle, Greystoke, Gascoigne, Conyers, Strickland and Constable, Mauleverer, Plumpton, Tempest, Padsey, Pilkington and Musgrave.

But the old Earl Marshal was deeply worried that the young King had not given these gentlemen time to reach his camp.

But King Richard not thinking of this, and raising his voice, spoke to his army.

'Sirs, today there shall be a great battle, on this plain called Redmoor, and it shall be red enough, I think. Our cause is just, for I am a King anointed, and this Henry Tudor is a rebel and traitor. This is no rising of my realm which defies me, but a gathering of rebels and dishonoured men, foreigners and mercenaries, sent against me by the false Regent of France, with whom I am at peace!'

He spoke loudly and fiercely, high above the gathered men-at-arms on a little knoll, and the hearts of his loyal soldiers went out to him, and they swore that Richard should keep the crown.

'If it be,' he said, 'that any of ye, my friends, knights and servants, have dealings with this Welshman, I pray ye ride over to him now and help him in his treason. And ye shall go freely, though despised by me. But if ye stay, be faithful to me, who am the King of England.'

Vows of loyalty broke from the army pressing close round the grass knoll.

'God bless ye all, for much hast thou done for me and this realm, fair

lords,' he cried. And though I be but a sinful man, yet confide in Almighty Peso to give us honour and the prize.'

Those who heard him were very much cheered by his words, knowing he was the best knight and leader of his times, while Henry Tudor skulked in the background and left his forces to be led by others.

King Richard gave his orders to advance on the slowly moving ranks of the rebels; each army was in formation, a double line, with archers in front, billmen behind, and at the side the horsemen.

There was no doubt in the undaunted heart of Richard, victor at Barnet, Tewkesbury and Berwick, as to the issue of this fray, but he came hurling at his enemies with all his forces holding his line unbroken against those, fighting, furiously, whom he pressed back.

There was no one who could match Richard Plantagenet for bravery and skill, so the battle went according to his designs, and he saw John Vere falling back before Norfolk, and called up Northumberland and the Stanleys to hold fast to him. But the hesitant Percy refused him, and stood saying his men had only marched up that morning and were exhausted. The Stanleys also remained immovable and they had with them eight thousand men, which was half the King's power.

'On, my fair lord!' cried Lovell. 'Wit ye well thou art betrayed!'

King Richard pulled up his horse beneath his own standard and looked round his friends, who stood staunchly about him, and thought how his father had been killed at Wakefield and the great treachery the House of York had endured, and his anger and heart nearly burst with despair.

'Seest thou,' said Sir Robert Percy. 'how the rebels advance not? John Vere, Jesu, mercy, hath had orders to spare his men and rely on treason!'

'That, too, is my reading of it,' said stout old Brackenbury grimly. 'And against such malice what may we do?' While they were conferring, this centre of the Royal forces, up came a knight to say that the Earl Marshal had been killed by an arrow and his son, Surrey, captured, and at the same moment Lord Stanley had swooped on the King's left flank and declared for Tudor.

The men surrounding Richard were shocked and furious: attacked in the rear by Stanley, with Northumberland holding back, they were surrounded and caught in a net of treachery. Stung to the soul, Richard shouted:

'Jesu! I had never thought to witness such baseness! Now I see how deep a device was conceived to wrong me!'

'Yet,' cried Lovell, eagerly, 'is Your Highness amid true men--there be some thousands loyal yet--'

'And we, sir, making a stand on this hill may hold our power,' swore Brackenbury, 'even against a multitude of traitors!'

But King Richard was never prudent in battle, and inflamed with the loss of his Earl Marshal and this act of treason, he wheeled away, spurred his great horse, and down the hill towards the Tudor ranks, leaving any shelter or defence.

His friends, therefore, had to follow him.

'Sir, what will ye do?' cried Clifton.

Richard shouted through his visor bars.

'I will find out this Tudor and meet him, man to man. Why should thousands perish when two may decide this question?' This plan was approved of, even by the veteran knights, bold and quick though it was, for if Tudor was killed the issue of the battle would be with Richard, despite the treason of the Stanleys.

The decision of the reckless King had been so swift, that the enemy had no inkling of it, but believed he was in the crowd on the knoll.

'See ye!' cried Richard, 'where the Red Dragon showeth?' Through the ranks of the rebels the ensign, the red dragon on a ground of green and white sarcenet, appeared, wavering behind Veré's men and De Shaundè's mercenaries.

The Welshman is no knight!' mocked Lovell, 'but stays at the rear and, Dickon, could ye but get him, with one buffet he would be unhorsed.'

In his passion Lovell had used the childhood's name, and Richard smiled to hear it--Dickon, the frightened child who had fled to Holland, the boy of Middleham, the lover of Alys and of Anne, the haunted, loyal young man--driven onwards and forwards, and now perhaps to his death.

Riding for the Red Dragon, they had come out of the battle to a grassy place with a thorn tree and a well under it. Richard pulled up his horse.

'Sirs,' said the King, 'I have a great thirst and longing for water.'

So he dismounted, as he was skilled from exercise and practice, in the harness of battle, while he gave Lovell his shield and spear.

He lifted his visor, stooped to the well, and drank the pure water,

which refreshed him.

Near at hand was all the rushing and riding, grim shouting, horns and trumpets and smoke of battle. But here it was peaceful by the little well and the thorn tree. And the water, clean as a mirror.

As he drank and bathed his sweating face, Richard's heart suddenly turned over, and he turned to Lovell.

'Where is my son John, who rideth in thy company?'

'Sir, when we left the knoll we were parted from him.'

'Now Jesu decide all things,' replied the King, and he mounted again, dressed his shield and spear, and galloped towards the enemy.

The rebels were suddenly aware of this charge of knights bearing towards them; and Pembroke saw the English standard, and shouted out:

'Who is this cometh at a great gallop as if he were mad!' For the sun, which was then high over Redmoor plain, shone and glittered on the riders so that the rebels could not see properly, and Richard Plantagenet was upon them before they saw his crown.

Before his vehement assault they fell back; he broke off the cruppers of some of them with his spear, and when that broke, he pulled out his sword and struck down those who pressed round Henry Tudor, and no one could get near him.

Above the awful noise of the battle, Richard shouted to his enemy:

'Henry Tudor! I challenge thee! Henry Tudor, an ye be no coward, meet me now!'



Tudor stood apart. He was crafty and sly and prudent, had no stomach for war, and had never seen how a Plantagenet could fight, but seeing the glittering crowned knight and the great horse of war crashing forward, he was terrified and withdrew behind his friends.

'By Almighty Jesu! have I ado with a coward?' cried Richard, hewing through the mail of those who opposed him, so that the steel tore at the naked flesh and the blood gushed on to the rearing horses.

'It seemeth thou hast overmuch on hand, Dickon!' panted Lovell, fighting at his side. 'And still the Welsh recreant hideth!'

Richard turned left and right lashing out with his sword, but still he could not get at Henry Tudor, and the more he shouted for him, the deeper rearward went the Welshman.

Though he had been fighting for quite a long time, the King, because of his skill and courage, had no wound, and with his company had come close to the Red Dragon; but of his knights, the Constable of the Tower, old Sir Hugh Bracken-bury, had been killed by Sir John Hungerford.

'Come forth!' shouted King Richard, 'ye who be a man and pretend to a crown. Think ye I be weary?'

Then Sir William Brandon, who was holding the Red Dragon, put himself in front of the King to cover the Tudor. He was a big man but Richard gave him such a buffet that he fell off his horse and the sword broke in his mail, so that it stuck in his body, and the Red Dragon went down into the mud. Lovell put another sword in the King's hands, and with this he struck Sir John Chaney, who had come to help the Red Dragon. He was a large, strong, famous knight, but he fell like a child beneath the blows of Richard.

Keep ye, Welshmen!' cried the King. 'Where is thy leader?' And his horse trampled on the banner of the rebel, while his English knights hacked and hewed with their swords around him, bloody and sweating.

Into this struggle rode Sir Richard Clarendon, with bad news. Sir William Stanley had seen the danger of Tudor, and fallen with his three thousand men on the flank of the royal army.

'These rebels, sir, do not want you to do single combat with the Tudor, for they know ye have no match!'

The King was now encircled by enemies. He beat his breast, mail ringing on mail, in the anguish of defeat by treachery. 'Jesu! How can it be that these govern themselves so shamefully!'

Then the men fighting beside him shouted:

'Sir, get ye away--we cannot hold them much longer.'

Of that whole field only these men remained faithful to King Richard, for when the archers and billmen saw what the Stanleys had done they fled towards Stoke Golding, were pursued and killed along the road.

Now outnumbered, the English were pressed back to the foot of a little slope named Ambien Leys, and the space between Richard Plantagenet and Henry Tudor now widened so that Richard knew he would never find him; yet without Stanley's treachery he would have won through to the pretender's side.

His horse was slashed badly and fell to its knees, then stiffened in agony.

Sir William Catesby galloped up, leading the horse of a knight he

had killed, and begged the King to mount, 'for Stanley approacheth with three thousand fresh men. Sir, I hold it time for thee to fly: yonder Stanley's strength is such no man can stand against it. Sir, here is thy horse. Another day may ye gain worship for feats of arms.'

King Richard leaped into the saddle.

'Sir,' he answered, 'I am glad to have a horse again, but not one foot will I fly--'

'Yet thou mightest gain York!' cried Lovell, 'where there be many loyal men!'

'As long as breath is in me,' cried Richard, 'here I stay. For, by God Almighty, this day will I end my battles or my life--'

'Ah, Dickon!' mourned Lovell, 'thou wilt be slain, there are too many traitors!'

'Yet I shall die King of England.'

Seeing the King was adamant, his remaining friends gathered close about him. Most of them were badly wounded, and in a short while, Percy, Radcliffe, Clifton and Ferrers were knocked off their horses and killed by Stanley's men, vigorous, fresh and numerous, who came charging up. When Richard saw these beloved friends dying he cried out in anguish:

'What shame be this to our nation that hath ever boasted to be free of treachery and ingratitude!'

Then Lovell, his dearest friend, was unhorsed, his harness hacked away, his naked flesh showing and his broken sword in his hand. He called up to Richard:

England, art thou living yet?'

'Yea, I live and am crowned.' replied the King.

Sir Brian Stapleton helped Lovell to a horse and led him out of the battle. So Richard was parted from his closest friend, who was pursued and killed at Stoke.

Richard looked about him and saw the hillside heaped with men who had died for him; and some still whispered and groaned, and behind him was Sir William Parker, bleeding terribly, but holding up the English standard, though without a horse and badly wounded.

Round him were his enemies, thronging, shouting. Trumpets sounded.

*'That blast is for me; I am the prize they seek, and yet I am not dead.'*

All who came within reach of his sword he killed--then he was unhorsed again.

'This is my end and that of my dynasty,' he cried to his standard-bearer. 'There are many dead to whom I would have said farewell--yet hold thou my standard up--'

'England, I hold it up,' gasped Sir William Parker.

'At last they have me down!' shouted Richard. 'By treason! treason!'

Still he defied them, a man alone. A knight caught him across the thigh with a battle axe; a spear pierced his hauberk; his blood ran out and weakness darkened the battle round him.

'Keep thee, Ion Fogge, hast thou found Dickon at the end? But now I

do not cower from thee!'

'England, I can no more,' whispered the standard-bearer, and fell at his master's side, his legs hacked from under him, the Lilies and the Leopards trailing on the heap of bodies.

Richard Plantagenet was down, his sword struck out of his hand, his wounds gushing, men closing in on him and striking at him. They fell on him with terrible force, hacked off his helmet and snatched away the gold circlet. Then, while he was still breathing, they tore away his chain of Esses, his jewels, his rich surcoat and dented armour, his gilt spurs and baudrick, so he lay naked but still warm on the heap of dead.

So they killed him, in battle and not in flight, and the great conflict ceased. The traitor Stanley found the crown of England among the King's baggage and took it to the Welshman, raising the shout of:

'King Henry!'

King Richard, naked, covered with blood, was set on a war horse, which in mockery his poursuivant Blanc Sanglier was forced to lead, and taken to Leicester, his head hanging one side, and his feet the other.

So the last Plantagenet left Redmoor Plain, which he had entered so gloriously. As the poursuivant entered the town with his guard, they passed the narrow Bow bridge over the Stour, and the King's dangling head was bruised and beaten against the stone. A young boy running after the horse shrieked out:

'Blanc Sanglier! Blanc Sanglier! What doest thou?'

The poursuivant glared; he was like a man frozen with fear and horror, but the Tudor's men cried:

'Blanc Sanglier taketh his master to the dung-heap!'

The boy flung himself forward and would have caught the bridle of the King's horse, but the guard thrust at him with their swords, seeing he was one of the fugitives from the battle and that he also bore the badge of the White Boar. Blanc Sanglier recognized John, the King's son, and would have ridden on to save the boy's life; but John would not leave the mutilated body of his father--all that dreadful day he had been seeking him.

'Art thou Plantagenet?' shouted the leader of the guard. 'Yea, I am a Plantagenet!' shrieked the boy; 'and I defy you, base traitors and foreigners!'

He still tried to cling to the bridle of the horse that carried his father's body, but the men struck at him again. He slipped, fell: Blanc Sanglier and the body of King Richard passed on.

The dying boy leant against the low parapet of the bridge. He still whispered defiance. Two of the billmen turned, took him by the shoulders and hurled him into the river below, whose waters were already darkened by the blood of many loyalists.

A lean knight sat on the far end of the bridge and watched this progress. He rubbed his hands together and laughed, and, peering forward, stared into the dead face of Richard Plantagenet, his naked body gaping with wounds smeared with mud, his rich hair matted with blood and dirt.

The man's scrutiny was so intent that the leader of the men-at-arms asked him roughly who he was.

'Sir, one of Sir William Stanley's men,' replied the knight, still smiling,

but with a look which made the Tudor followers draw away from him, 'and many deeds have I done against Richard Plantagenet, and now I have my reward.'

And he followed as the naked body was taken through the streets of Leicester to make a show to the people who had seen him ride out so splendidly. He was laid in a Tower called Newark, and when everyone had had enough of gazing at the last of the Plantagenet Kings, he was left.

Beside him watched the lean knight who had been sitting on Bow Bridge, who said:

'See how one who loved great buildings and raised fair churches and loved singing lieth in lack of a little earth!' There was no one to weep for Dickon, because those who loved him were either dead or prisoners or fled into foreign countries or sanctuaries. So he lay naked, unwashed, on the floor of a room in Newark Tower for two days, with no company except the strange knight.

But when Henry Tudor left for Coventry with his train, baggage and spoils, some nuns from Leicester came to the Tower and begged the King's body for charity.

This was given them, and the gentle women bathed and sheeted Richard Plantagenet, and buried him in their chapel, very humble, for they were poor, but with kindness and pity.

The strange knight followed the body, but at the chapel door he stopped knowing he could not enter.

And a nun, pausing at the wicket, asked him his name, and if he came in reverence or mockery?

'I am Sir Jon Fogge. Do ye marvel how this King might not hold his

day?'

'By the Good Lord, that I do,' said she, 'for all spoke well of him as the best knight and a good king, and it is true that his life and death have been marvellous.'

'And yet he be not out of the danger of his enemies, for weeds and nettles shall grow over his grave and his name be blackened with many slanders.'

The nun closed the wicket, afraid of this ugly man, and crossed herself.

'Jesu! How may these things be!'

'Some there be who have an evil genius, and who knows why? And the House of Plantagenet was in many ways accursed.'

Jon Fogge went his way in the August twilight, and the nun entered the chapel and knelt with the others by the grave of Dickon.

And she whispered to her companions what the frightening looking knight had said, and they were filled with sorrow. They placed a plain stone over Richard's grave and paid his Mass penny for him, and prayed that the soul of Richard Plantagenet might find peace at last.

## **APPENDIX 1**

### **LIST OF MAIN PROTAGONISTS IN THIS ROMANCE**

The intermarriages of the great English families in the fifteenth century and the various claims to the English throne tend to confuse even the careful reader of history, and the novelist may not, like the historian, explain his characters' pedigrees, nor go into learned



disquisitions; his business is to present a tale or chronicle, and much of what he knows is, of necessity, left out.

Therefore a list of the main protagonists in this romance is appended here, with a brief outline of the pretensions to the Crown and on what they were based.

The disputes which led to the Wars of the Roses arose among the descendants of the sons of Edward III. On the deposition and death, without heirs, of his grandson, Richard II, Henry of Lancaster (son of John of Gaunt and Duke of Lancaster, and fourth son of Edward III) usurped the throne, ignoring the claims of the descendants of Lionel, Duke of Clarence, the third son of Edward III, and Edmund of Langley, Duke of York, fifth son of Edward III.

Henry IV (of Lancaster), however, had his title confirmed by Parliament, and held the Crown, as did his popular son, Henry V, but his grandson, Henry VI, came to the throne as a child, was imbecile, and later married to a violent foreign princess (Margaret of Anjou), and misgovernment followed.

The first Prince of the blood, and by birth rightful King (by the union of the claims of Clarence and York), was then Richard, Duke of York, nephew of Edward, the second Duke of York (slain at Agincourt and dying without heirs), son of Richard, Earl of Cambridge, and grandson of Edmund Langley, the first Duke and the son of Edward III.

This prince had married Isabella of Leon and Castile. His son, Richard Plantagenet, Earl of Cambridge, married Anne Mortimer, and the third Duke (his grandson) married Cecily Neville. Anne Mortimer was descended from Lionel, Duke of Clarence, son of Edward III. Cecily Neville was descended from John of Lancaster, son of Edward III; therefore the children of this third Duke were thrice

descended from Plantagenet blood, of immense wealth and possessions, and of the noblest families in England. Their 'seize quarters' included Plantagenet, Mortimer, Holland FitzAlan, Neville, Percy, Clifford and Audley. Of these sixteen quarterings only three are foreign, Dutch, Spanish, Gascon.

The children who survived infancy were:

Anne Plantagenet, Duchess of Exeter, b. 1439. Edward Plantagenet, Earl of March, b. 1442. Edmund Plantagenet, Earl of Rutland, b. 1443. Margaret Plantagenet, Duchess of Burgundy, b. 1446. George Plantagenet, Duke of Clarence, b. 1449. Richard Plantagenet, Duke of Gloucester, 1452. Elizabeth, Duchess of Suffolk.

This powerful House of York, with its undoubted right to the throne,[\*] was opposed by the almost equally powerful House of Somerset, who were the Beauforts (the descendants of John of Gaunt and Lancaster and Katherine Swynford, his third wife) and who supported Henry VI. But the first Beauforts had been born while each of their parents was married to another; they were, therefore, illegitimate. The four children of John of Lancaster were:--

John Beaufort, Earl of Somerset. Henry Beaufort, Cardinal. Thomas Beaufort, Duke of Exeter. Joan Beaufort (married to Ralph Neville, Earl of Westmorland, and the mother of Cecily, Duchess of York).

[\* Parliament had declared the heir of Richard II to be Roger Mortimer, Earl of March, grandson of Lionel, Duke of Clarence; his daughter, Philippa, was the ancestress of the House of York.]

From the Earl of Somerset descended the Duke of Somerset (so powerful in the councils of Henry VI), Margaret Beaufort, Countess of Richmond (who in second marriage espoused Lord Stanley), and Henry, Duke of Buckingham [\*] (son of the Earl of Stafford and the

daughter of Edmund, Duke of Somerset). By her first marriage Margaret Beaufort was the mother of Henry Tudor, Earl of Richmond (attainted).

[\* Henry, Duke of Buckingham, was also descended from Thomas, seventh son of Edward III; this Thomas was Duke of Gloucester and Earl of Buckingham.]

The Tudors were of ancient Welsh blood, but had no connection with the royal family, save in the marriage of Katherine de Valois, widow of Henry V, with Owen Tudor, grandfather of Henry Tudor.

The Beauforts, fruit of a double adultery, were made legitimate by Act of Parliament, though specially excluded from the Crown (February 1407).

It is obvious that neither Henry Stafford, K.G., Duke of Buckingham, nor Henry Tudor, Earl of Richmond, had the least right to the crown; but the Beauforts had immense wealth, influence, ambition and energy, and had devoted all these to a deadly feud with the House of York.

The Beauforts of the main line were almost extinguished during the civil wars, but Margaret Beaufort continued to work for her son, Henry Tudor, Earl of Richmond, who has some distinction as a cousin of Henry VI, and he, after the death of the Prince of Wales at Tewkesbury, was regarded as the only possible pretender the Lancastrians could put forward against the just claims of the House of York.

Therefore he fled to the Court of Brittany, was attainted by Edward IV, and remained in exile until the intrigues of the Lancastrians, Tudors and Margaret Beaufort (his mother) induced him to undertake the expedition of 1485, which was so singularly successful.

Other famous names in this romance are:--

## THE WOODVILLES

This family rose to eminence solely through the marriage of Elizabeth Woodville with Edward IV. The principal members were:--

Elizabeth, daughter of Sir Richard Woodville, Earl Rivers and Jaquetta of Luxembourg. She was the widow of John Gray, Lord Ferrers of Groby, and wife of Edward IV.

Katherine Woodville, her sister, married to Henry, Duke of Buckingham.

Sir Anthony Woodville, Lord Scales (afterwards Earl Rivers), her brother.

Lionel Woodville, Bishop of Salisbury, her brother,

Thomas Gray, Marquess of Dorset and Sir Richard Gray--Elizabeth Woodville's children by her first marriage.

## THE NEVILLES

The greatest family after Plantagenet and Beaufort--the principal members being as follows:--

Lady Cecily Neville, daughter of first Earl of Westmorland and Joan Beaufort. Married Richard of York, and was the mother of Richard III.

Sir Richard Neville, Earl of Warwick and Salisbury, son of Sir Richard Neville, Earl of Salisbury (Lady Cecily's brother) and Alice de Montacute.

George Neville, Bishop of Exeter and Archbishop of York, brother of

Earl of Warwick.

Sir John Neville, Marquess Montacute, his brother.

Sir William Neville, Lord Fauconberg, Earl of Kent, brother of Lady Cecily Neville.

Thomas Neville (the Bastard of Fauconberg), son of Sir William Neville.

The Earl of Warwick had Beaufort blood through his descent from Joan Beaufort. Warwick's wife was Anne Beauchamp.

Isabel and Anne Neville, co-heiresses of the Earl of Warwick, were married respectively to the Duke of Clarence and his brother Richard of Gloucester.

Nine of Anne Neville's seize quarters were the same as those of her husband, Richard III.

The Earl of Warwick was a nephew of Cecily Neville (Richard's mother), his father, Sir Richard Neville, Earl of Salisbury, being her brother,

The Royal Children (male) in the House of Richard III

Edward, Prince of Wales, K.G., afterwards Edward V.

Richard, Duke of York.

Both these were sons of Edward IV by Elizabeth Woodville, declared illegitimate by Parliament.

Edward, Earl of Salisbury, Prince of Wales, son of Richard III by Anne Neville, K.G. Richard III may have had other children (who died

in infancy) by this same Queen.

Edward, Earl of Warwick, son of the Duke of Clarence and Isabel Neville.

John de la Pole, Earl of Lincoln, son of the Duchess of Suffolk (sister to Richard III), was also in the royal House- hold, but of age.

John Plantagenet, bastard son of Richard III.

(Richard III's other sister, the Duchess of Exeter, left one daughter, the ancestress of the Manners, Dukes of Rutland.)

## OTHER PERSONAGES MENTIONED

Queen Margaret of Anjou, wife of Henry VI, daughter of René, King of Anjou.

Edward Plantagenet, K.G., Prince of Wales, Earl of Chester, her son.

Philip the Good, Duke of Burgundy.

Charles the Bold, Duke of Burgundy. (Charles, Count of Charolais.)

Louis de Gruuthus, Lord of Bruges.

Thomas Bouchier, Cardinal Archbishop of Canterbury, cousin to Richard III.

William, Lord Hastings, Lord Chamberlain to Edward IV and Captain of Calais.

John Mowbray, K.G., Duke of Norfolk, Earl Marshal, Maréchal de France, descended from Lord Admiral, youngest son of Edward I.

Thomas Henry Percy IV, Earl of Northumberland, K.G.

John Talbot III, Earl of Shrewsbury.

Lord Thomas Stanley, K.G., husband of Margaret Beaufort. Sir William Stanley, his brother.

John Lord Wenlock.

John Courtenay, Earl of Devon.

Walter Blount, Lord Mountjoy, Captain of Calais.

Sir Thomas Parr (grandfather of Queen Katherine Parr).

Sir Francis Lovell, K.G., afterwards Lord Lovell.

Sir Richard Radcliffe, K.G.

Sir Robert Rebey of Scrotton.

The Veres were the attainted Earls of Oxford. Jasper Tudor's title of Earl of Pembroke was attainted, as was that of Richmond used by Henry Tudor. The names of all the gentry of England and Wales are to be found among the Captains of York or Lancaster. Contrary to what is usually stated, no peerage became extinct through the Wars of the Roses.

## APPENDIX 2

### SUMMARY OF BATTLES OF WARS OF THE ROSES

Rebellion of Richard, Duke of York, against government of Henry VI. York defeated, Ludlow, October 1459.

York's son, Edward, Earl of March and Warwick defeat the Lancastrians at Northampton, October 1459. Government passes to York. Declared Regent for Henry VI. November 9th, 1460.

Queen Margaret flees to Scotland, raises an army. The Lancastrians rise in Yorkshire. York sets out to meet them. Battle of Wakefield, December 1460. Defeat of York. Death of Richard, Duke of York, and his son, Edmund, Earl of Rutland.

Edward, Earl of March, York's elder son, defeats the Tudor partisans of the Lancastrians at Mortimer's Cross, December 1460.

Triumph of York. March proclaimed King as Edward IV. He immediately proceeds against Lancastrians, and secures crowning victory at Towton, Palm Sunday (March), 1461.

Flight of Margaret and her son to France. Reign of Edward IV till rebellion of Warwick and Clarence. Flight of the King to Flanders. Regency of Warwick. Return of the King and Battle of Barnet, Easter Sunday 1471. Death of Warwick and his brother Montacute. Landing of Margaret and her son. Battle of Tewkesbury, May 1471. Death of Margaret's son, the Prince of Wales. Total collapse of Lancastrian cause. Death of Edward IV, 1483.

Accession of Richard III, 1483.

Invasion by Henry Tudor, 1485. Battle of Bosworth. Defeat and death of Richard III. End of York and Lancaster. New dynasty of Tudor succeeds Plantagenet. Henry Tudor strengthens his pretensions by marriage with Elizabeth, daughter of Edward IV, calling this the union of York and Lancaster.

Margaret, Countess of Salisbury, the daughter of Clarence, murdered by Henry VIII, was the last Plantagenet of direct descent.



Her brother, Warwick, was murdered by Henry VII.

THE END

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