ЭДВАРД БУЛЬВЕР-ЛИТТОН

# THE LAST OF THE BARONS — VOLUME 01

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# Содержание

# Edward Bulwer-Lytton
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## DEDICATORY EPISTLE

I dedicate to you, my indulgent Critic and long-tried Friend, the work which owes its origin to your suggestion. Long since, you urged me to attempt a fiction which might borrow its characters from our own Records, and serve to illustrate some of those truths which History is too often compelled to leave to the Tale-teller, the Dramatist, and the Poet. Unquestionably, Fiction, when aspiring to something higher than mere romance, does not pervert, but elucidate Facts. He who employs it worthily must, like a biographer, study the time and the characters he selects, with a minute and earnest diligence which the general historian, whose range extends over centuries, can scarcely be expected to bestow upon the things and the men of a single epoch. His descriptions should fill up with colour and detail the cold outlines of the rapid chronicler; and in spite of all that has been argued by pseudo-critics, the very fancy which urged and animated his theme should necessarily tend to increase the reader's practical and familiar acquaintance with the habits, the motives, and the

modes of thought which constitute the true idiosyncrasy of an age. More than all, to Fiction is permitted that liberal use of Analogical Hypothesis which is denied to History, and which, if sobered by research, and enlightened by that knowledge of mankind (without which Fiction can neither harm nor profit, for it becomes unreadable), tends to clear up much that were otherwise obscure, and to solve the disputes and difficulties of contradictory evidence by the philosophy of the human heart.

My own impression of the greatness of the labour to which you invited me made me the more diffident of success, inasmuch as the field of English historical fiction had been so amply cultivated, not only by the most brilliant of our many glorious Novelists, but by later writers of high and merited reputation. But however the annals of our History have been exhausted by the industry of romance, the subject you finally pressed on my choice is unquestionably one which, whether in the delineation of character, the expression of passion, or the suggestion of historical truths, can hardly fail to direct the Novelist to paths wholly untrodden by his predecessors in the Land of Fiction.

Encouraged by you, I commenced my task; encouraged by you, I venture, on concluding it, to believe that, despite the partial adoption of that established compromise between the modern and the elder diction, which Sir Walter Scott so artistically improved from the more rugged phraseology employed by Strutt, and which later writers have perhaps somewhat overhackneyed, I may yet have avoided all material trespass upon ground which

others have already redeemed from the waste. Whatever the produce of the soil I have selected, I claim, at least, to have cleared it with my own labour, and ploughed it with my own heifer.

The reign of Edward IV. is in itself suggestive of new considerations and unexhausted interest to those who accurately regard it. Then commenced the policy consummated by Henry VII.; then were broken up the great elements of the old feudal order; a new Nobility was called into power, to aid the growing Middle Class in its struggles with the ancient; and in the fate of the hero of the age, Richard Nevile, Earl of Warwick, popularly called the King-maker, "the greatest as well as the last of those mighty Barons who formerly overawed the Crown," [Hume adds, "and rendered the people incapable of civil government,"— a sentence which, perhaps, judges too hastily the whole question at issue in our earlier history, between the jealousy of the barons and the authority of the king.] was involved the very principle of our existing civilization. It adds to the wide scope of Fiction, which ever loves to explore the twilight, that, as Hume has truly observed, "No part of English history since the Conquest is so obscure, so uncertain, so little authentic or consistent, as that of the Wars between the two Roses." It adds also to the importance of that conjectural research in which Fiction may be made so interesting and so useful, that "this profound darkness falls upon us just on the eve of the restoration of letters;" [Hume] while amidst the gloom, we perceive the

movement of those great and heroic passions in which Fiction finds delineations everlastingly new, and are brought in contact with characters sufficiently familiar for interest, sufficiently remote for adaptation to romance, and above all, so frequently obscured by contradictory evidence, that we lend ourselves willingly to any one who seeks to help our judgment of the individual by tests taken from the general knowledge of mankind.

Round the great image of the "Last of the Barons" group Edward the Fourth, at once frank and false; the brilliant but ominous boyhood of Richard the Third; the accomplished Hastings, "a good knight and gentle, but somewhat dissolute of living;" [Chronicle of Edward V., in Stowe] the vehement and fiery Margaret of Anjou; the meek image of her "holy Henry," and the pale shadow of their son. There may we see, also, the gorgeous Prelate, refining in policy and wile, as the enthusiasm and energy which had formerly upheld the Ancient Church pass into the stern and persecuted votaries of the New; we behold, in that social transition, the sober Trader—outgrowing the prejudices of the rude retainer or rustic franklin, from whom he is sprung— recognizing sagaciously, and supporting sturdily, the sectarian interests of his order, and preparing the way for the mighty Middle Class, in which our Modern Civilization, with its faults and its merits, has established its stronghold; while, in contrast to the measured and thoughtful notions of liberty which prudent Commerce entertains, we are reminded of the political fanaticism of the secret Lollard,—of the jacquerie of the

turbulent mob-leader; and perceive, amidst the various tyrannies of the time, and often partially allied with the warlike seignorie, [For it is noticeable that in nearly all the popular risings—that of Cade, of Robin of Redesdale, and afterwards of that which Perkin Warbeck made subservient to his extraordinary enterprise—the proclamations of the rebels always announced, among their popular grievances, the depression of the ancient nobles and the elevation of new men.]—ever jealous against all kingly despotism,—the restless and ignorant movement of a democratic principle, ultimately suppressed, though not destroyed, under the Tudors, by the strong union of a Middle Class, anxious for security and order, with an Executive Authority determined upon absolute sway.

Nor should we obtain a complete and comprehensive view of that most interesting Period of Transition, unless we saw something of the influence which the sombre and sinister wisdom of Italian policy began to exercise over the councils of the great,—a policy of refined stratagem, of complicated intrigue, of systematic falsehood, of ruthless, but secret violence; a policy which actuated the fell statecraft of Louis XI.; which darkened, whenever he paused to think and to scheme, the gaudy and jovial character of Edward IV.; which appeared in its fullest combination of profound guile and resolute will in Richard III.; and, softened down into more plausible and specious purpose by the unimpassioned sagacity of Henry VII., finally attained the object which justified all its villanies to the princes of its

native land,—namely, the tranquillity of a settled State, and the establishment of a civilized but imperious despotism.

Again, in that twilight time, upon which was dawning the great invention that gave to Letters and to Science the precision and durability of the printed page, it is interesting to conjecture what would have been the fate of any scientific achievement for which the world was less prepared. The reception of printing into England chanced just at the happy period when Scholarship and Literature were favoured by the great. The princes of York, with the exception of Edward IV. himself, who had, however, the grace to lament his own want of learning, and the taste to appreciate it in others, were highly educated. The Lords Rivers and Hastings [The erudite Lord Worcester had been one of Caxton's warmest patrons, but that nobleman was no more at the time in which printing is said to have been actually introduced into England.] were accomplished in all the "witte and lere" of their age. Princes and peers vied with each other in their patronage of Caxton, and Richard III., during his brief reign, spared no pains to circulate to the utmost the invention destined to transmit his own memory to the hatred and the horror of all succeeding time. But when we look around us, we see, in contrast to the gracious and fostering reception of the mere mechanism by which science is made manifest, the utmost intolerance to science itself. The mathematics in especial are deemed the very cabala of the black art. Accusations of witchcraft were never more abundant; and yet, strange to say, those who openly

professed to practise the unhallowed science, [Nigromancy, or Sorcery, even took its place amongst the regular callings. Thus, "Thomas Vandyke, late of Cambridge," is styled (Rolls Parl. 6, p. 273) Nigromancer as his profession.—Sharon Turner, "History of England," vol iv. p. 6. Burke, "History of Richard III."] and contrived to make their deceptions profitable to some unworthy political purpose, appear to have enjoyed safety, and sometimes even honour, while those who, occupied with some practical, useful, and noble pursuits uncomprehended by prince or people, denied their sorcery were despatched without mercy. The mathematician and astronomer Bolingbroke (the greatest clerk of his age) is hanged and quartered as a wizard, while not only impunity but reverence seems to have awaited a certain Friar Bungey, for having raised mists and vapours, which greatly befriended Edward IV. at the battle of Barnet.

Our knowledge of the intellectual spirit of the age, therefore, only becomes perfect when we contrast the success of the Impostor with the fate of the true Genius. And as the prejudices of the populace ran high against all mechanical contrivances for altering the settled conditions of labour, [Even in the article of bonnets and hats, it appears that certain wicked fulling mills were deemed worthy of a special anathema in the reign of Edward IV. These engines are accused of having sought, "by subtle imagination," the destruction of the original makers of hats and bonnets" by man's strength,—that is, with hands and feet; "and an act of parliament was passed (22d of Edward IV.) to put

down the fabrication of the said hats and bonnets by mechanical contrivance.] so probably, in the very instinct and destiny of Genius which ever drive it to a war with popular prejudice, it would be towards such contrivances that a man of great ingenuity and intellect, if studying the physical sciences, would direct his ambition.

Whether the author, in the invention he has assigned to his philosopher (Adam Warner), has too boldly assumed the possibility of a conception so much in advance of the time, they who have examined such of the works of Roger Bacon as are yet given to the world can best decide; but the assumption in itself belongs strictly to the most acknowledged prerogatives of Fiction; and the true and important question will obviously be, not whether Adam Warner could have constructed his model, but whether, having so constructed it, the fate that befell him was probable and natural.

Such characters as I have here alluded to seemed, then, to me, in meditating the treatment of the high and brilliant subject which your eloquence animated me to attempt, the proper Representatives of the multiform Truths which the time of Warwick the King-maker affords to our interests and suggests for our instruction; and I can only wish that the powers of the author were worthier of the theme.

It is necessary that I now state briefly the foundation of the Historical portions of this narrative. The charming and popular "History of Hume," which, however, in its treatment of the reign

of Edward IV. is more than ordinarily incorrect, has probably left upon the minds of many of my readers, who may not have directed their attention to more recent and accurate researches into that obscure period, an erroneous impression of the causes which led to the breach between Edward IV. and his great kinsman and subject, the Earl of Warwick. The general notion is probably still strong that it was the marriage of the young king to Elizabeth Gray, during Warwick's negotiations in France for the alliance of Bona of Savoy (sister-in- law to Louis XI.), which exasperated the fiery earl, and induced his union with the House of Lancaster. All our more recent historians have justly rejected this groundless fable, which even Hume (his extreme penetration supplying the defects of his superficial research) admits with reserve. ["There may even some doubt arise with regard to the proposal of marriage made to Bona of Savoy," etc.—HUME, note to p. 222, vol. iii. edit. 1825.] A short summary of the reasons for this rejection is given by Dr. Lingard, and annexed below. ["Many writers tell us that the enmity of Warwick arose from his disappointment caused by Edward's clandestine marriage with Elizabeth. If we may believe them, the earl was at the very time in France negotiating on the part of the king a marriage with Bona of Savoy, sister to the Queen of France; and having succeeded in his mission, brought back with him the Count of Dampmartin as ambassador from Louis. To me the whole story appears a fiction. 1. It is not to be found in the more ancient historians. 2. Warwick was not at the time in

France. On the 20th of April, ten days before the marriage, he was employed in negotiating a truce with the French envoys in London (Rym. xi. 521), and on the 26th of May, about three weeks after it, was appointed to treat of another truce with the King of Scots (Rym. xi. 424). 3. Nor could he bring Dampmartin with him to England; for that nobleman was committed a prisoner to the Bastile in September, 1463, and remained there till May, 1465 (Monstrel. iii. 97, 109). Three contemporary and well-informed writers, the two continuators of the History of Croyland and Wyrcester, attribute his discontent to the marriages and honours granted to the Wydeviles, and the marriage of the princess Margaret with the Duke of Burgundy."—LINGARD, vol. iii. c. 24, pp. 5, 19, 4to ed.] And, indeed, it is a matter of wonder that so many of our chroniclers could have gravely admitted a legend contradicted by all the subsequent conduct of Warwick himself; for we find the earl specially doing honour to the publication of Edward's marriage, standing godfather to his first-born (the Princess Elizabeth), employed as ambassador or acting as minister, and fighting for Edward, and against the Lancastrians, during the five years that elapsed between the coronation of Elizabeth and Warwick's rebellion.

The real causes of this memorable quarrel, in which Warwick acquired his title of King-maker, appear to have been these.

It is probable enough, as Sharon Turner suggests, [Sharon Turner: History of England, vol. iii. p. 269.] that Warwick was disappointed that, since Edward chose a subject for his wife, he

neglected the more suitable marriage he might have formed with the earl's eldest daughter; and it is impossible but that the earl should have been greatly chafed, in common with all his order, by the promotion of the queen's relations, [W. Wyr. 506, 7. Croyl. 542.] new men and apostate Lancastrians. But it is clear that these causes for discontent never weakened his zeal for Edward till the year 1467, when we chance upon the true origin of the romance concerning Bona of Savoy, and the first open dissension between Edward and the earl.

In that year Warwick went to France, to conclude an alliance with Louis XI., and to secure the hand of one of the French princes [Which of the princes this was does not appear, and can scarcely be conjectured. The "Pictorial History of England" (Book v. 102) in a tone of easy decision says "it was one of the sons of Louis XI." But Louis had no living sons at all at the time. The Dauphin was not born till three years afterwards. The most probable person was the Duke of Guienne, Louis's brother.] for Margaret, sister to Edward IV.; during this period, Edward received the bastard brother of Charles, Count of Charolois, afterwards Duke of Burgundy, and arranged a marriage between Margaret and the count.

Warwick's embassy was thus dishonoured, and the dishonour was aggravated by personal enmity to the bridegroom Edward had preferred. [The Croyland Historian, who, as far as his brief and meagre record extends, is the best authority for the time of Edward IV., very decidedly states the Burgundian

alliance to be the original cause of Warwick's displeasure, rather than the king's marriage with Elizabeth: "Upon which (the marriage of Margaret with Charolois) Richard Nevile, Earl of Warwick, who had for so many years taken party with the French against the Burgundians, conceived great indignation; and I hold this to be the truer cause of his resentment than the king's marriage with Elizabeth, for he had rather have procured a husband for the aforesaid princess Margaret in the kingdom of France." The Croyland Historian also speaks emphatically of the strong animosity existing between Charolois and Warwick. —Cont. Croyl. 551.] The earl retired in disgust to his castle. But Warwick's nature, which Hume has happily described as one of "undesigning frankness and openness," [Hume, "Henry VI.," vol. iii. p. 172, edit. 1825.] does not seem to have long harboured this resentment. By the intercession of the Archbishop of York and others, a reconciliation was effected, and the next year, 1468, we find Warwick again in favour, and even so far forgetting his own former cause of complaint as to accompany the procession in honour of Margaret's nuptials with his private foe. [Lingard.] In the following year, however, arose the second dissension between the king and his minister,—namely, in the king's refusal to sanction the marriage of his brother Clarence with the earl's daughter Isabel,—a refusal which was attended with a resolute opposition that must greatly have galled the pride of the earl, since Edward even went so far as to solicit the Pope to refuse his sanction, on the ground of relationship. [Carte. Wm.

Wyr.] The Pope, nevertheless, grants the dispensation, and the marriage takes place at Calais. A popular rebellion then breaks out in England. Some of Warwick's kinsmen— those, however, belonging to the branch of the Nevile family that had always been Lancastrians, and at variance with the earl's party—are found at its head. The king, who is in imminent danger, writes a supplicating letter to Warwick to come to his aid. ["Paston Letters," cxcviii. vol. ii., Knight's ed. See Lingard, c. 24, for the true date of Edward's letters to Warwick, Clarence, and the Archbishop of York.] The earl again forgets former causes for resentment, hastens from Calais, rescues the king, and quells the rebellion by the influence of his popular name.

We next find Edward at Warwick's castle of Middleham, where, according to some historians, he is forcibly detained,— an assertion treated by others as a contemptible invention. This question will be examined in the course of this work; [See Note II.] but whatever the true construction of the story, we find that Warwick and the king are still on such friendly terms, that the earl marches in person against a rebellion on the borders, obtains a signal victory, and that the rebel leader (the earl's own kinsman) is beheaded by Edward at York. We find that, immediately after this supposed detention, Edward speaks of Warwick and his brothers "as his best friends;" ["Paston Letters," cciv. vol. ii., Knight's ed. The date of this letter, which puzzled the worthy annotator, is clearly to be referred to Edward's return from York, after his visit to Middleham in 1469. No mention is therein made

by the gossiping contemporary of any rumour that Edward had suffered imprisonment. He enters the city in state, as having returned safe and victorious from a formidable rebellion. The letter goes on to say: "The king himself hath (that is, holds) good language of the Lords Clarence, of Warwick, etc., saying 'they be his best friends.'" Would he say this if just escaped from a prison? Sir John Paston, the writer of the letter, adds, it is true, "But his household men have (hold) other language." very probably, for the household men were the court creatures always at variance with Warwick, and held, no doubt, the same language they had been in the habit of holding before.] that he betroths his eldest daughter to Warwick's nephew, the male heir of the family. And then suddenly, only three months afterwards (in February, 1470), and without any clear and apparent cause, we find Warwick in open rebellion, animated by a deadly hatred to the king, refusing, from first to last, all overtures of conciliation; and so determined is his vengeance, that he bows a pride, hitherto morbidly susceptible, to the vehement insolence of Margaret of Anjou, and forms the closest alliance with the Lancastrian party, in the destruction of which his whole life had previously been employed.

Here, then, where History leaves us in the dark, where our curiosity is the most excited, Fiction gropes amidst the ancient chronicles, and seeks to detect and to guess the truth. And then Fiction, accustomed to deal with the human heart, seizes upon the paramount importance of a Fact which the modern historian

has been contented to place amongst dubious and collateral causes of dissension. We find it broadly and strongly stated by Hall and others, that Edward had coarsely attempted the virtue of one of the earl's female relations. "And farther it erreth not from the truth," says Hall, "that the king did attempt a thing once in the earl's house, which was much against the earl's honesty; but whether it was the daughter or the niece," adds the chronicler, "was not, for both their honours, openly known; but surely such a thing WAS attempted by King Edward," etc.

Any one at all familiar with Hall (and, indeed, with all our principal chroniclers, except Fabyan), will not expect any accurate precision as to the date he assigns for the outrage. He awards to it, therefore, the same date he erroneously gives to Warwick's other grudges (namely, a period brought some years lower by all judicious historians) a date at which Warwick was still Edward's fastest friend.

Once grant the probability of this insult to the earl (the probability is conceded at once by the more recent historians, and received without scruple as a fact by Rapia, Habington, and Carte), and the whole obscurity which involves this memorable quarrel vanishes at once. Here was, indeed, a wrong never to be forgiven, and yet never to be proclaimed. As Hall implies, the honour of the earl was implicated in hushing the scandal, and the honour of Edward in concealing the offence. That if ever the insult were attempted, it must have been just previous to the earl's declared hostility is clear. Offences of that kind

hurry men to immediate action at the first, or else, if they stoop to dissimulation the more effectually to avenge afterwards, the outbreak bides its seasonable time. But the time selected by the earl for his outbreak was the very worst he could have chosen, and attests the influence of a sudden passion,—a new and uncalculated cause of resentment. He had no forces collected; he had not even sounded his own brother-in-law, Lord Stanley (since he was uncertain of his intentions); while, but a few months before, had he felt any desire to dethrone the king, he could either have suffered him to be crushed by the popular rebellion the earl himself had quelled, or have disposed of his person as he pleased when a guest at his own castle of Middleham. His evident want of all preparation and forethought—a want which drove into rapid and compulsory flight from England the baron to whose banner, a few months afterwards, flocked sixty thousand men—proves that the cause of his alienation was fresh and recent.

If, then, the cause we have referred to, as mentioned by Hall and others, seems the most probable we can find (no other cause for such abrupt hostility being discernible), the date for it must be placed where it is in this work,—namely, just prior to the earl's revolt. The next question is, who could have been the lady thus offended, whether a niece or daughter. Scarcely a niece, for Warwick had one married brother, Lord Montagu, and several sisters; but the sisters were married to lords who remained friendly to Edward, [Except the sisters married to Lord Fitzhugh

and Lord Oxford. But though Fitzhugh, or rather his son, broke into rebellion, it was for some cause in which Warwick did not sympathize, for by Warwick himself was that rebellion put down; nor could the aggrieved lady have been a daughter of Lord Oxford, for he was a stanch, though not avowed, Lancastrian, and seems to have carefully kept aloof from the court.] and Montagu seems to have had no daughter out of childhood, [Montagu's wife could have been little more than thirty at the time of his death. She married again, and had a family by her second husband.] while that nobleman himself did not share Warwick's rebellion at the first, but continued to enjoy the confidence of Edward. We cannot reasonably, then, conceive the uncle to have been so much more revengeful than the parents,—the legitimate guardians of the honour of a daughter. It is, therefore, more probable that the insulted maiden should have been one of Lord Warwick's daughters; and this is the general belief. Carte plainly declares it was Isabel. But Isabel it could hardly have been. She was then married to Edward's brother, the Duke of Clarence, and within a month of her confinement. The earl had only one other daughter, Anne, then in the flower of her youth; and though Isabel appears to have possessed a more striking character of beauty, Anne must have had no inconsiderable charms to have won the love of the Lancastrian Prince Edward, and to have inspired a tender and human affection in Richard Duke of Gloucester. [Not only does Majerus, the Flemish annalist, speak of Richard's early affection to Anne, but Richard's pertinacity in marrying her, at a time

when her family was crushed and fallen, seems to sanction the assertion. True, that Richard received with her a considerable portion of the estates of her parents. But both Anne herself and her parents were attainted, and the whole property at the disposal of the Crown. Richard at that time had conferred the most important services on Edward. He had remained faithful to him during the rebellion of Clarence; he had been the hero of the day both at Barnet and Tewksbury. His reputation was then exceedingly high, and if he had demanded, as a legitimate reward, the lands of Middleham, without the bride, Edward could not well have refused them. He certainly had a much better claim than the only other competitor for the confiscated estates, —namely, the perjured and despicable Clarence. For Anne's reluctance to marry Richard, and the disguise she assumed, see Miss Strickland's "Life of Anne of Warwick." For the honour of Anne, rather than of Richard, to whose memory one crime more or less matters but little, it may here be observed that so far from there being any ground to suppose that Gloucester was an accomplice in the assassination of the young prince Edward of Lancaster, there is some ground to believe that that prince was not assassinated at all, but died (as we would fain hope the grandson of Henry V. did die) fighting manfully in the field. — "Harleian Manuscripts;" Stowe, "Chronicle of Tewksbury;" Sharon Turner, vol. iii. p. 335.] It is also noticeable, that when, not as Shakspeare represents, but after long solicitation, and apparently by positive coercion, Anne formed her second

marriage, she seems to have been kept carefully by Richard from his gay brother's court, and rarely, if ever, to have appeared in London till Edward was no more.

That considerable obscurity should always rest upon the facts connected with Edward's meditated crime,—that they should never be published amongst the grievances of the haughty rebel is natural from the very dignity of the parties, and the character of the offence; that in such obscurity sober History should not venture too far on the hypothesis suggested by the chronicler, is right and laudable. But probably it will be conceded by all, that here Fiction finds its lawful province, and that it may reasonably help, by no improbable nor groundless conjecture, to render connected and clear the most broken and the darkest fragments of our annals.

I have judged it better partially to forestall the interest of the reader in my narrative, by stating thus openly what he may expect, than to encounter the far less favourable impression (if he had been hitherto a believer in the old romance of Bona of Savoy), [I say the old romance of Bona of Savoy, so far as Edward's rejection of her hand for that of Elizabeth Gray is stated to have made the cause of his quarrel with Warwick. But I do not deny the possibility that such a marriage had been contemplated and advised by Warwick, though he neither sought to negotiate it, nor was wronged by Edward's preference of his fair subject.] that the author was taking an unwarrantable liberty with the real facts, when, in truth, it is upon the real facts, as far as they can

be ascertained, that the author has built his tale, and his boldest inventions are but deductions from the amplest evidence he could collect. Nay, he even ventures to believe, that whoever hereafter shall write the history of Edward IV. will not disdain to avail himself of some suggestions scattered throughout these volumes, and tending to throw new light upon the events of that intricate but important period.

It is probable that this work will prove more popular in its nature than my last fiction of "Zanoni," which could only be relished by those interested in the examinations of the various problems in human life which it attempts to solve. But both fictions, however different and distinct their treatment, are constructed on those principles of art to which, in all my later works, however imperfect my success, I have sought at least steadily to adhere.

To my mind, a writer should sit down to compose a fiction as a painter prepares to compose a picture. His first care should be the conception of a whole as lofty as his intellect can grasp, as harmonious and complete as his art can accomplish; his second care, the character of the interest which the details are intended to sustain.

It is when we compare works of imagination in writing with works of imagination on the canvas, that we can best form a critical idea of the different schools which exist in each; for common both to the author and the painter are those styles which we call the Familiar, the Picturesque, and the Intellectual. By

recurring to this comparison we can, without much difficulty, classify works of Fiction in their proper order, and estimate the rank they should severally hold. The Intellectual will probably never be the most widely popular for the moment. He who prefers to study in this school must be prepared for much depreciation, for its greatest excellences, even if he achieve them, are not the most obvious to the many. In discussing, for instance, a modern work, we hear it praised, perhaps, for some striking passage, some prominent character; but when do we ever hear any comment on its harmony of construction, on its fulness of design, on its ideal character,—on its essentials, in short, as a work of art? What we hear most valued in the picture, we often find the most neglected in the book,—namely, the composition; and this, simply because in England painting is recognized as an art, and estimated according to definite theories; but in literature we judge from a taste never formed, from a thousand prejudices and ignorant predilections. We do not yet comprehend that the author is an artist, and that the true rules of art by which he should be tested are precise and immutable. Hence the singular and fantastic caprices of the popular opinion,—its exaggerations of praise or censure, its passion and reaction. At one while, its solemn contempt for Wordsworth; at another, its absurd idolatry. At one while we are stunned by the noisy celebrity of Byron, at another we are calmly told that he can scarcely be called a poet. Each of these variations in the public is implicitly followed by the vulgar criticism; and as a few years back our journals vied

with each other in ridiculing Wordsworth for the faults which he did not possess, they vie now with each other in eulogiums upon the merits which he has never displayed.

These violent fluctuations betray both a public and a criticism utterly unschooled in the elementary principles of literary art, and entitle the humblest author to dispute the censure of the hour, while they ought to render the greatest suspicious of its praise.

It is, then, in conformity, not with any presumptuous conviction of his own superiority, but with his common experience and common-sense, that every author who addresses an English audience in serious earnest is permitted to feel that his final sentence rests not with the jury before which he is first heard. The literary history of the day consists of a series of judgments set aside.

But this uncertainty must more essentially betide every student, however lowly, in the school I have called the Intellectual, which must ever be more or less at variance with the popular canons. It is its hard necessity to vex and disturb the lazy quietude of vulgar taste; for unless it did so, it could neither elevate nor move. He who resigns the Dutch art for the Italian must continue through the dark to explore the principles upon which he founds his design, to which he adapts his execution; in hope or in despondence still faithful to the theory which cares less for the amount of interest created than for the sources from which the interest is to be drawn; seeking in action the movement of the grander passions or the subtler springs of conduct, seeking

in repose the colouring of intellectual beauty.

The Low and the High of Art are not very readily comprehended. They depend not upon the worldly degree or the physical condition of the characters delineated; they depend entirely upon the quality of the emotion which the characters are intended to excite,—namely, whether of sympathy for something low, or of admiration for something high. There is nothing high in a boor's head by Teniers, there is nothing low in a boor's head by Guido. What makes the difference between the two? The absence or presence of the Ideal! But every one can judge of the merit of the first, for it is of the Familiar school; it requires a connoisseur to see the merit of the last, for it is of the Intellectual.

I have the less scrupled to leave these remarks to cavil or to sarcasm, because this fiction is probably the last with which I shall trespass upon the Public, and I am desirous that it shall contain, at least, my avowal of the principles upon which it and its later predecessors have been composed. You know well, however others may dispute the fact, the earnestness with which those principles have been meditated and pursued,—with high desire, if but with poor results.

It is a pleasure to feel that the aim, which I value more than the success, is comprehended by one whose exquisite taste as a critic is only impaired by that far rarer quality,—the disposition to over- estimate the person you profess to esteem! Adieu, my sincere and valued friend; and accept, as a mute token of gratitude and regard, these flowers gathered in the Garden where

we have so often roved together. E. L. B.

*LONDON, January, 1843.*

# PREFACE TO THE LAST OF THE BARONS

This was the first attempt of the author in Historical Romance upon English ground. Nor would he have risked the disadvantage of comparison with the genius of Sir Walter Scott, had he not believed that that great writer and his numerous imitators had left altogether unoccupied the peculiar field in Historical Romance which the Author has here sought to bring into cultivation. In "The Last of the Barons," as in "Harold," the aim has been to illustrate the actual history of the period, and to bring into fuller display than general History itself has done the characters of the principal personages of the time, the motives by which they were probably actuated, the state of parties, the condition of the people, and the great social interests which were involved in what, regarded imperfectly, appear but the feuds of rival factions.

"The Last of the Barons" has been by many esteemed the best of the Author's romances; and perhaps in the portraiture of actual character, and the grouping of the various interests and agencies of the time, it may have produced effects which render it more vigorous and lifelike than any of the other attempts in romance by the same hand.

It will be observed that the purely imaginary characters introduced are very few; and, however prominent they may

appear, still, in order not to interfere with the genuine passions and events of history, they are represented as the passive sufferers, not the active agents, of the real events. Of these imaginary characters, the most successful is Adam Warner, the philosopher in advance of his age; indeed, as an ideal portrait, I look upon it as the most original in conception, and the most finished in execution, of any to be found in my numerous prose works, "Zanoni" alone excepted.

For the rest, I venture to think that the general reader will obtain from these pages a better notion of the important age, characterized by the decline of the feudal system, and immediately preceding that great change in society which we usually date from the accession of Henry VII., than he could otherwise gather, without wading through a vast mass of neglected chronicles and antiquarian dissertations.

# BOOK I.
# THE ADVENTURES OF MASTER MARMADUKE NEVILE

## CHAPTER I.
## THE PASTIME-GROUND OF OLD COCKAIGNE

Westward, beyond the still pleasant, but even then no longer solitary, hamlet of Charing, a broad space, broken here and there by scattered houses and venerable pollards, in the early spring of 1467, presented the rural scene for the sports and pastimes of the inhabitants of Westminster and London. Scarcely need we say that open spaces for the popular games and diversions were then numerous in the suburbs of the metropolis,—grateful to some the fresh pools of Islington; to others, the grass-bare fields of Finsbury; to all, the hedgeless plains of vast Mile-end. But the site to which we are now summoned was a new and maiden holiday-ground, lately bestowed upon the townsfolk of Westminster by the powerful Earl of Warwick.

Raised by a verdant slope above the low, marsh-grown soil of Westminster, the ground communicated to the left with the

Brook- fields, through which stole the peaceful Ty-bourne, and commanded prospects, on all sides fair, and on each side varied. Behind, rose the twin green hills of Hampstead and Highgate, with the upland park and chase of Marybone,—its stately manor-house half hid in woods. In front might be seen the Convent of the Lepers, dedicated to Saint James, now a palace; then to the left, York House, [The residence of the Archbishops of York] now Whitehall; farther on, the spires of Westminster Abbey and the gloomy tower of the Sanctuary; next, the Palace, with its bulwark and vawmure, soaring from the river; while eastward, and nearer to the scene, stretched the long, bush-grown passage of the Strand, picturesquely varied with bridges, and flanked to the right by the embattled halls of feudal nobles, or the inns of the no less powerful prelates; while sombre and huge amidst hall and inn, loomed the gigantic ruins of the Savoy, demolished in the insurrection of Wat Tyler. Farther on, and farther yet, the eye wandered over tower and gate, and arch and spire, with frequent glimpses of the broad sunlit river, and the opposite shore crowned by the palace of Lambeth, and the Church of St. Mary Overies, till the indistinct cluster of battlements around the Fortress-Palatine bounded the curious gaze. As whatever is new is for a while popular, so to this pastime-ground, on the day we treat of, flocked, not only the idlers of Westminster, but the lordly dwellers of Ludgate and the Flete, and the wealthy citizens of tumultuous Chepe.

The ground was well suited to the purpose to which it was

devoted. About the outskirts, indeed, there were swamps and fish-pools; but a considerable plot towards the centre presented a level sward, already worn bare and brown by the feet of the multitude. From this, towards the left, extended alleys, some recently planted, intended to afford, in summer, cool and shady places for the favourite game of bowls; while scattered clumps, chiefly of old pollards, to the right broke the space agreeably enough into detached portions, each of which afforded its separate pastime or diversion. Around were ranged many carts, or wagons; horses of all sorts and value were led to and fro, while their owners were at sport. Tents, awnings, hostelries, temporary buildings, stages for showmen and jugglers, abounded, and gave the scene the appearance of a fair; but what particularly now demands our attention was a broad plot in the ground, dedicated to the noble diversion of archery. The reigning House of York owed much of its military success to the superiority of the bowmen under its banners, and the Londoners themselves were jealous of their reputation in this martial accomplishment. For the last fifty years, notwithstanding the warlike nature of the times, the practice of the bow, in the intervals of peace, had been more neglected than seemed wise to the rulers. Both the king and his loyal city had of late taken much pains to enforce the due exercise of "Goddes instrumente," [So called emphatically by Bishop Latimer, in his celebrated Sixth Sermon.] upon which an edict had declared that "the liberties and honour of England principally rested!"

And numerous now was the attendance, not only of the citizens, the burghers, and the idle populace, but of the gallant nobles who surrounded the court of Edward IV., then in the prime of his youth,— the handsomest, the gayest, and the bravest prince in Christendom.

The royal tournaments (which were, however, waning from their ancient lustre to kindle afresh, and to expire in the reigns of the succeeding Tudors), restricted to the amusements of knight and noble, no doubt presented more of pomp and splendour than the motley and mixed assembly of all ranks that now grouped around the competitors for the silver arrow, or listened to the itinerant jongleur, dissour, or minstrel, or, seated under the stunted shade of the old trees, indulged, with eager looks and hands often wandering to their dagger- hilts, in the absorbing passion of the dice; but no later and earlier scenes of revelry ever, perhaps, exhibited that heartiness of enjoyment, that universal holiday, which attended this mixture of every class, that established a rude equality for the hour between the knight and the retainer, the burgess and the courtier.

The revolution that placed Edward IV. upon the throne had, in fact, been a popular one. Not only had the valour and moderation of his father, Richard, Duke of York, bequeathed a heritage of affection to his brave and accomplished son; not only were the most beloved of the great barons the leaders of his party; but the king himself, partly from inclination, partly from policy, spared no pains to win the good graces of that slowly rising, but

even then important part of the population,—the Middle Class. He was the first king who descended, without loss of dignity and respect, from the society of his peers and princes, to join familiarly in the feasts and diversions of the merchant and the trader. The lord mayor and council of London were admitted, on more than one solemn occasion, into the deliberations of the court; and Edward had not long since, on the coronation of his queen, much to the discontent of certain of his barons, conferred the Knighthood of the hath upon four of the citizens. On the other hand, though Edward's gallantries—the only vice which tended to diminish his popularity with the sober burgesses—were little worthy of his station, his frank, joyous familiarity with his inferiors was not debased by the buffooneries that had led to the reverses and the awful fate of two of his royal predecessors. There must have been a popular principle, indeed, as well as a popular fancy, involved in the steady and ardent adherence which the population of London in particular, and most of the great cities, exhibited to the person and the cause of Edward IV. There was a feeling that his reign was an advance in civilization upon the monastic virtues of Henry VI., and the stern ferocity which accompanied the great qualities of "The Foreign Woman," as the people styled and regarded Henry's consort, Margaret of Anjou. While thus the gifts, the courtesy, and the policy of the young sovereign made him popular with the middle classes, he owed the allegiance of the more powerful barons and the favour of the rural population to a man who stood colossal amidst the iron images of

the Age,—the greatest and the last of the old Norman chivalry, kinglier in pride, in state, in possessions, and in renown than the king himself, Richard Nevile, Earl of Salisbury and Warwick.

This princely personage, in the full vigour of his age, possessed all the attributes that endear the noble to the commons. His valour in the field was accompanied with a generosity rare in the captains of the time. He valued himself on sharing the perils and the hardships of his meanest soldier. His haughtiness to the great was not incompatible with frank affability to the lowly. His wealth was enormous, but it was equalled by his magnificence, and rendered popular by his lavish hospitality. No less than thirty thousand persons are said to have feasted daily at the open tables with which he allured to his countless castles the strong hands and grateful hearts of a martial and unsettled population. More haughty than ambitious, he was feared because he avenged all affront; and yet not envied, because he seemed above all favour.

The holiday on the archery-ground was more than usually gay, for the rumour had spread from the court to the city that Edward was about to increase his power abroad, and to repair what he had lost in the eyes of Europe through his marriage with Elizabeth Gray, by allying his sister Margaret with the brother of Louis XI., and that no less a person than the Earl of Warwick had been the day before selected as ambassador on the important occasion.

Various opinions were entertained upon the preference given to France in this alliance over the rival candidate for the hand of the princess,—namely, the Count de Charolois, afterwards

Charles the Bold, Duke of Burgundy.

"By 'r Lady," said a stout citizen about the age of fifty, "but I am not over pleased with this French marriage-making! I would liefer the stout earl were going to France with bows and bills than sarcenets and satins. What will become of our trade with Flanders,—answer me that, Master Stokton? The House of York is a good House, and the king is a good king, but trade is trade. Every man must draw water to his own mill."

"Hush, Master Heyford!" said a small lean man in a light-gray surcoat. "The king loves not talk about what the king does. 'T is ill jesting with lions. Remember William Walker, hanged for saying his son should be heir to the crown."

"Troth," answered Master Heyford, nothing daunted, for he belonged to one of the most powerful corporations of London,—it was but a scurvy Pepperer [old name for Grocer] who made that joke; but a joke from a worshipful goldsmith, who has moneys and influence, and a fair wife of his own, whom the king himself has been pleased to commend, is another guess sort of matter. But here is my grave-visaged headman, who always contrives to pick up the last gossip astir, and has a deep eye into millstones. Why, ho, there! Alwyn—I say, Nicholas Alwyn!—who would have thought to see thee with that bow, a good half-ell taller than thyself? Methought thou wert too sober and studious for such man-at-arms sort of devilry."

"An' it please you, Master Heyford," answered the person thus addressed,—a young man, pale and lean, though sinewy and

large-boned, with a countenance of great intelligence, but a slow and somewhat formal manner of speech, and a strong provincial accent,—"an' it please you, King Edward's edict ordains every Englishman to have a bow of his own height; and he who neglects the shaft on a holiday forfeiteth one halfpenny and some honour. For the rest, methinks that the citizens of London will become of more worth and potency every year; and it shall not be my fault if I do not, though but a humble headman to your worshipful mastership, help to make them so."

"Why, that's well said, lad; but if the Londoners prosper, it is because they have nobles in their gipsires, [a kind of pouch worn at the girdle] not bows in their hands."

"Thinkest thou then, Master Heyford, that any king at a pinch would leave them the gipsire, if they could not protect it with the bow? That Age may have gold, let not Youth despise iron."

"Body o' me!" cried Master Heyford, "but thou hadst better curb in thy tongue. Though I have my jest,—as a rich man and a corpulent,—a lad who has his way to make good should be silent and—But he's gone."

"Where hooked you up that young jack fish?" said Master Stokton, the thin mercer, who had reminded the goldsmith of the fate of the grocer.

"Why, he was meant for the cowl, but his mother, a widow, at his own wish, let him make choice of the flat cap. He was the best 'prentice ever I had. By the blood of Saint Thomas, he will push his way in good time; he has a head, Master Stokton,—a

head, and an ear; and a great big pair of eyes always looking out for something to his proper advantage."

In the mean while, the goldsmith's headman had walked leisurely up to the archery-ground; and even in his gait and walk, as he thus repaired to a pastime, there was something steady, staid, and business-like.

The youths of his class and calling were at that day very different from their equals in this. Many of them the sons of provincial retainers, some even of franklins and gentlemen, their childhood had made them familiar with the splendour and the sports of knighthood; they had learned to wrestle, to cudgel, to pitch the bar or the quoit, to draw the bow, and to practise the sword and buckler, before transplanted from the village green to the city stall. And even then, the constant broils and wars of the time, the example of their betters, the holiday spectacle of mimic strife, and, above all, the powerful and corporate association they formed amongst themselves, tended to make them as wild, as jovial, and as dissolute a set of young fellows as their posterity are now sober, careful, and discreet. And as Nicholas Alwyn, with a slight inclination of his head, passed by, two or three loud, swaggering, bold-looking groups of apprentices —their shaggy hair streaming over their shoulders, their caps on one side, their short cloaks of blue torn or patched, though still passably new, their bludgeons under their arms, and their whole appearance and manner not very dissimilar from the German collegians in the last century—notably contrasted Alwyn's prim dress, his precise

walk, and the feline care with which he stepped aside from any patches of mire that might sully the soles of his square-toed shoes.

# Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.