

ЭДВАРД БУЛЬВЕР-ЛИТТОН

**THE LAST OF THE
BARONS – VOLUME
03**

Эдвард Бульвер-Литтон

The Last of the Barons — Volume 03

«Public Domain»

Бульвер-Литтон Э. Д.

The Last of the Barons — Volume 03 / Э. Д. Бульвер-Литтон —
«Public Domain»,

© Бульвер-Литтон Э. Д.
© Public Domain

Содержание

BOOK III.	5
CHAPTER I.	5
CHAPTER II.	7
CHAPTER III.	11
Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.	15

Edward Bulwer-Lytton

The Last of the Barons — Volume 03

BOOK III.

IN WHICH THE HISTORY PASSES FROM THE KING'S COURT TO THE STUDENT'S CELL, AND RELATES THE PERILS THAT BEFELL A PHILOSOPHER FOR MEDDLING WITH THE AFFAIRS OF THE WORLD

CHAPTER I.

THE SOLITARY SAGE AND THE SOLITARY MAID

While such the entrance of Marmaduke Nevile into a court, that if far less intellectual and refined than those of later days, was yet more calculated to dazzle the fancy, to sharpen the wit, and to charm the senses,—for round the throne of Edward IV. chivalry was magnificent, intrigue restless, and pleasure ever on the wing,—Sibyll had ample leisure in her solitary home to muse over the incidents that had preceded the departure of the young guest. Though she had rejected Marmaduke's proffered love, his tone, so suddenly altered, his abrupt, broken words and confusion, his farewell, so soon succeeding his passionate declaration, could not fail to wound that pride of woman which never sleeps till modesty is gone. But this made the least cause of the profound humiliation which bowed down her spirit. The meaning taunt conveyed in the rhyme of the tymbesteres pierced her to the quick; the calm, indifferent smile of the stranger, as he regarded her, the beauty of the dame he attended, woke mingled and contrary feelings, but those of jealousy were perhaps the keenest: and in the midst of all she started to ask herself if indeed she had suffered her vain thoughts to dwell too tenderly upon one from whom the vast inequalities of human life must divide her evermore. What to her was his indifference? Nothing,—yet had she given worlds to banish that careless smile from her remembrance.

Shrinking at last from the tyranny of thoughts till of late unknown, her eye rested upon the gipsire which Alwyn had sent her by the old servant. The sight restored to her the holy recollection of her father, the sweet joy of having ministered to his wants. She put up the little treasure, intending to devote it all to Warner; and after bathing her heavy eyes, that no sorrow of hers might afflict the student, she passed with a listless step into her father's chamber.

There is, to the quick and mercurial spirits of the young, something of marvellous and preternatural in that life within life, which the strong passion of science and genius forms and feeds,—that passion so much stronger than love, and so much more self-dependent; which asks no sympathy, leans on no kindred heart; which lives alone in its works and fancies, like a god amidst his creations.

The philosopher, too, had experienced a great affliction since they met last. In the pride of his heart he had designed to show Marmaduke the mystic operations of his model, which had seemed that morning to open into life; and when the young man was gone, and he made the experiment alone, alas! he found that new progress but involved him in new difficulties. He had gained the first steps in the gigantic creation of modern days, and he was met by the obstacle that baffled so long the great modern sage. There was the cylinder, there the boiler; yet, work as he would, the steam failed to keep the cylinder at work. And now, patiently as the spider re-weaves the broken web, his untiring ardour

was bent upon constructing a new cylinder of other materials. "Strange," he said to himself, "that the heat of the mover aids not the movement;" and so, blundering near the truth, he laboured on.

Sibyll, meanwhile, seated herself abstractedly on a heap of fagots piled in the corner, and seemed busy in framing characters on the dusty floor with the point of her tiny slipper. So fresh and fair and young she seemed, in that murky atmosphere, that strange scene, and beside that worn man, that it might have seemed to a poet as if the youngest of the Graces were come to visit Mulciber at his forge.

The man pursued his work, the girl renewed her dreams, the dark evening hour gradually stealing over both. The silence was unbroken, for the forge and the model were now at rest, save by the grating of Adam's file upon the metal, or by some ejaculation of complacency now and then vented by the enthusiast. So, apart from the many-noised, gaudy, babbling world without, even in the midst of that bloody, turbulent, and semi-barbarous time, went on (the one neglected and unknown, the other loathed and hated) the two movers of the ALL that continues the airy life of the Beautiful from age to age,—the Woman's dreaming Fancy and the Man's active Genius.

CHAPTER II. MASTER ADAM WARNER GROWS A MISER, AND BEHAVES SHAMEFULLY

For two or three days nothing disturbed the outward monotony of the recluse's household. Apparently all had settled back as before the advent of the young cavalier. But Sibyll's voice was not heard singing, as of old, when she passed the stairs to her father's room. She sat with him in his work no less frequently and regularly than before; but her childish spirits no longer broke forth in idle talk or petulant movements, vexing the good man from his absorption and his toils. The little cares and anxieties, which had formerly made up so much of Sibyll's day by forethought of provision for the morrow, were suspended; for the money transmitted to her by Alwyn in return for the emblazoned manuscripts was sufficient to supply their modest wants for months to come. Adam, more and more engrossed in his labours, did not appear to perceive the daintier plenty of his board, nor the purchase of some small comforts unknown for years. He only said one morning, "It is strange, girl, that as that gathers in life (and he pointed to the model), it seems already to provide, to my fantasy, the luxuries it will one day give to us all in truth. Methought my very bed last night seemed wondrous easy, and the coverings were warmer, for I woke not with the cold."

"Ah," thought the sweet daughter, smiling through moist eyes, "while my cares can smooth thy barren path through life, why should I cark and pine?"

Their solitude was now occasionally broken in the evenings by the visits of Nicholas Alwyn. The young goldsmith was himself not ignorant of the simpler mathematics; he had some talent for invention, and took pleasure in the construction of horologes, though, properly speaking, not a part of his trade. His excuse for his visits was the wish to profit by Warner's mechanical knowledge; but the student was so rapt in his own pursuits, that he gave but little instruction to his visitor. Nevertheless Alwyn was satisfied, for he saw Sibyll. He saw her in the most attractive phase of her character,—the loving, patient, devoted daughter; and the view of her household virtues affected more and more his honest English heart. But, ever awkward and embarrassed, he gave no vent to his feelings. To Sibyll he spoke little, and with formal constraint; and the girl, unconscious of her conquest, was little less indifferent to his visits than her abstracted father.

But all at once Adam woke to a sense of the change that had taken place; all at once he caught scent of gold, for his works were brought to a pause for want of some finer and more costly materials than the coins in his own possession (the remnant of Marmaduke's gift) enabled him to purchase. He had stolen out at dusk, unknown to Sibyll, and lavished the whole upon the model; but in vain! The model in itself was, indeed, completed; his invention had mastered the difficulty that it had encountered. But Adam had complicated the contrivance by adding to it experimental proofs of the agency it was intended to exercise. It was necessary in that age, if he were to convince others, to show more than the principle of his engine,—he must show also something of its effects; turn a mill without wind or water, or set in motion some mimic vehicle without other force than that the contrivance itself supplied. And here, at every step, new obstacles arose. It was the misfortune to science in those days, not only that all books and mathematical instruments were enormously dear, but that the students, still struggling into light, through the glorious delusions of alchemy and mysticism, imagined that, even in simple practical operations, there were peculiar virtues in virgin gold and certain precious stones. A link in the process upon which Adam was engaged failed him; his ingenuity was baffled, his work stood still; and in poring again and again over the learned manuscripts—alas! now lost—in which certain German doctors had sought to explain the pregnant hints of Roger Bacon, he found it inculcated that the axle of a certain wheel must be composed of a diamond. Now, in truth, it so happened that Adam's contrivance, which (even without the appliances which were added in

illustration of the theory) was infinitely more complicated than modern research has found necessary, did not even require the wheel in question, much less the absent diamond; it happened, also, that his understanding, which, though so obtuse in common life, was in these matters astonishingly clear, could not trace any mathematical operations by which the diamond axle would in the least correct the difficulty that had suddenly started up; and yet the accursed diamond began to haunt him,—the German authority was so positive on the point, and that authority had in many respects been accurate. Nor was this all,—the diamond was to be no vulgar diamond; it was to be endowed, by talismanic skill, with certain properties and virtues; it was to be for a certain number of hours exposed to the rays of the full moon; it was to be washed in a primitive and wondrous elixir, the making of which consumed no little of the finest gold. This diamond was to be to the machine what the soul is to the body,—a glorious, all-pervading, mysterious principle of activity and life. Such were the dreams that obscured the cradle of infant science! And Adam, with all his reasoning powers, big lore in the hard truths of mathematics, was but one of the giant children of the dawn. The magnificent phrases and solemn promises of the mystic Germans got firm hold of his fancy. Night and day, waking or sleeping, the diamond, basking in the silence of the full moon, sparkled before his eyes. Meanwhile all was at a stand. In the very last steps of his discovery he was arrested. Then suddenly looking round for vulgar moneys to purchase the precious gem, and the materials for the soluble elixir, he saw that MONEY had been at work around him,—that he had been sleeping softly and faring sumptuously. He was seized with a divine rage. How had Sibyll dared to secrete from him this hoard; how presumed to waste upon the base body what might have so profited the eternal mind? In his relentless ardour, in his sublime devotion and loyalty to his abstract idea, there was a devouring cruelty, of which this meek and gentle scholar was wholly unconscious. The grim iron model, like a Moloch, ate up all things,—health, life, love; and its jaws now opened for his child. He rose from his bed,—it was daybreak,—he threw on his dressing-robe, he strode into his daughter's room; the gray twilight came through the comfortless, curtainless casement, deep sunk into the wall. Adam did not pause to notice that the poor child, though she had provoked his anger by refitting his dismal chamber, had spent nothing in giving a less rugged frown to her own.

The scanty worm-worn furniture, the wretched pallet, the poor attire folded decently beside,—nothing save that inexpressible purity and cleanliness which, in the lowliest hovel, a pure and maiden mind gathers round it; nothing to distinguish the room of her whose childhood had passed in courts from the but of the meanest daughter of drudgery and toil! No,—he who had lavished the fortunes of his father and big child into the grave of his idea—no—he saw nothing of this self-forgetful penury—the diamond danced before him! He approached the bed; and oh! the contrast of that dreary room and peasant pallet to the delicate, pure, enchanting loveliness of the sleeping inmate. The scanty covering left partially exposed the snow-white neck and rounded shoulder; the face was pillowed upon the arm, in an infantine grace; the face was slightly flushed, and the fresh red lips parted into a smile,—for in her sleep the virgin dreamed,—a happy dream! It was a sight to have touched a father's heart, to have stopped his footstep, and hushed his breath into prayer. And call not Adam hard—unnatural—that he was not then, as men far more harsh than he—for the father at that moment was not in his breast, the human man was gone—he himself, like his model, was a machine of iron!—his life was his one idea!

"Wake, child, wake!" he said, in a loud but hollow voice. "Where is the gold thou hast hidden from me? Wake! confess!"

Roused from her gracious dreams thus savagely, Sibyll started, and saw the eager, darkened face of her father. Its expression was peculiar and undefinable, for it was not threatening, angry, stern; there was a vacancy in the eyes, a strain in the features, and yet a wild, intense animation lighting and pervading all,—it was as the face of one walking in his sleep, and, at the first confusion of waking, Sibyll thought indeed that such was her father's state. But the impatience with which he shook the arm he grasped, and repeated, as he opened convulsively his other hand, "The gold, Sibyll, the gold! Why

didst thou hide it from me?" speedily convinced her that her father's mind was under the influence of the prevailing malady that made all its weakness and all its strength.

"My poor father!" she said pityingly, "wilt thou not leave thyself the means whereby to keep strength and health for thine high hopes? Ah, Father, thy Sibyll only hoarded her poor gains for thee!"

"The gold!" said Adam, mechanically, but in a softer voice,— "all—all thou hast! How didst thou get it,—how?"

"By the labours of these hands. Ah, do not frown on me!"

"Thou—the child of knightly fathers—thou labour!" said Adam, an instinct of his former state of gentle-born and high-hearted youth flashing from his eyes. "It was wrong in thee!"

"Dost thou not labour too?"

"Ay, but for the world. Well, the gold!"

Sibyll rose, and modestly throwing over her form the old mantle which lay on the pallet, passed to a corner of the room, and opening a chest, took from it the gipsire, and held it out to her father.

"If it please thee, dear and honoured sir, so be it; and Heaven prosper it in thy hands!"

Before Adam's clutch could close on the gipsire, a rude hand was laid on his shoulder, the gipsire was snatched from Sibyll, and the gaunt, half-clad form of old Madge interposed between the two.

"Eh, sir!" she said, in her shrill, cracked tone, "I thought when I heard your door open, and your step hurrying down, you were after no good deeds. Fie, master, fie! I have clung to you when all reviled, and when starvation within and foul words without made all my hire; for I ever thought you a good and mild man, though little better than stark wode. But, augh! to rob your child thus, to leave her to starve and pine! We old folks are used to it. Look round, look round! I remember this chamber, when ye first came to your father's hall. Saints of heaven! There stood the brave bed all rustling with damask of silk; on those stone walls once hung fine arras of the Flemings,—a marriage gift to my lady from Queen Margaret, and a mighty show to see, and good for the soul's comforts, with Bible stories wrought on it. Eh, sir! don't you call to mind your namesake, Master Adam, in his brave scarlet hosen, and Madam Eve, in her bonny blue kirtle and laced courtpie? and now—now look round, I say, and see what you have brought your child to!"

"Hush! hush! Madge, bush!" cried Sibyll, while Adam gazed in evident perturbation and awakening shame at the intruder, turning his eyes round the room as she spoke, and heaving from time to time short, deep sighs.

"But I will not hush," pursued the old woman; "I will say my say, for I love ye both, and I loved my poor mistress who is dead and gone. Ah, sir, groan! it does you good. And now when this sweet damsel is growing up, now when you should think of saving a marriage dower for her (for no marriage where no pot boils), do you rend from her the little that she has drudged to gain!—She! Oh, out on your heart! And for what,—for what, sir? For the neighbours to set fire to your father's house, and the little ones to—"

"Forbear, woman!" cried Adam, in a voice of thunder; "forbear! Heavens!" And he waved his hand as he spoke, with so unexpected a majesty that Madge was awed into sudden silence, and, darting a look of compassion at Sibyll, she hobbled from the room. Adam stood motionless an instant; but when he felt his child's soft arms round his neck, when he heard her voice struggling against tears, praying him not to heed the foolish words of the old servant,—to take—to take all, that it would be easy to gain more,—the ice of his philosophy melted at once; the man broke forth, and, clasping Sibyll to his heart, and kissing her cheek, her lips, her hands, he faltered out, "No! no! forgive me! Forgive thy cruel father! Much thought has maddened me, I think,—it has indeed! Poor child, poor Sibyll," and he stroked her cheek gently, and with a movement of pathetic pity— "poor child, thou art pale, and so slight and delicate! And this chamber—and thy loneliness—and—ah! my life hath been a curse to thee, yet I meant to bequeath it a boon to all!"

"Father, dear father, speak not thus. You break my heart. Here, here, take the gold—or rather, for thou must not venture out to insult again, let me purchase with it what thou needest. Tell me, trust me—"

"No!" exclaimed Adam, with that hollow energy by which a man resolves to impose restraint on himself; "I will not, for all that science ever achieved,—I will not lay this shame on my soul! Spend this gold on thyself, trim this room, buy thee raiment,—all that thou needest,—I order, I command it! And hark thee, if thou gettest more, hide it from me, hide it well; men's desires are foul tempters! I never knew, in following wisdom, that I had a vice. I wake and find myself a miser and a robber!"

And with these words he fled from the girl's chamber, gained his own, and locked the door.

CHAPTER III.

A STRANGE VISITOR.—ALL AGES OF THE WORLD BREED WORLD-BETTERS

Sibyll, whose soft heart bled for her father, and who now reproached herself for having concealed from him her little hoard, began hastily to dress that she might seek him out, and soothe the painful feelings which the honest rudeness of Madge had aroused. But before her task was concluded, there pealed a loud knock at the outer door. She heard the old housekeeper's quivering voice responding to a loud clear tone; and presently Madge herself ascended the stairs to Warner's room, followed by a man whom Sibyll instantly recognized—for he was not one easily to be forgotten—as their protector from the assault of the mob. She drew back hastily as he passed her door, and in some wonder and alarm awaited the descent of Madge. That venerable personage having with some difficulty induced her master to open his door and admit the stranger, came straight into her young lady's chamber. "Cheer up, cheer up, sweetheart," said the old woman; "I think better days will shine soon; for the honest man I have admitted says he is but come to tell Master Warner something that will redound much to his profit. Oh, he is a wonderful fellow, this same Robin! You saw how he turned the cullions from burning the old house!"

"What! you know this man, Madge! What is he, and who?"

Madge looked puzzled. "That is more than I can say, sweet mistress. But though he has been but some weeks in the neighbourhood, they all hold him in high count and esteem. For why—it is said he is a rich man and a kind one. He does a world of good to the poor."

While Sibyll listened to such explanations as Madge could give her, the stranger, who had carefully closed the door of the student's chamber, after regarding Adam for a moment with silent but keen scrutiny, thus began,—

"When last we met, Adam Warner, it was with satchells on our backs. Look well at me!"

"Troth," answered Adam, languidly, for he was still under the deep dejection that had followed the scene with Sibyll, "I cannot call you to mind, nor seems it veritable that our schooldays passed together, seeing that my hair is gray and men call me old; but thou art in all the lustihood of this human life."

"Nathless," returned the stranger, "there are but two years or so between thine age and mine. When thou wert poring over the crabbed text, and pattering Latin by the ell, dost thou not remember a lack- grace good-for-naught, Robert Hilyard, who was always setting the school in an uproar, and was finally outlawed from that boy-world, as he hath been since from the man's world, for inciting the weak to resist the strong?"

"Ah," exclaimed Adam, with a gleam of something like joy on his face, "art thou indeed that riotous, brawling, fighting, frank-hearted, bold fellow, Robert Hilyard? Ha! ha!—those were merry days! I have known none like them—" The old schoolfellows shook hands heartily.

"The world has not fared well with thee in person or pouch, I fear me, poor Adam," said Hilyard; "thou canst scarcely have passed thy fiftieth year, and yet thy learned studies have given thee the weight of sixty; while I, though ever in toil and bustle, often wanting a meal, and even fearing the halter, am strong and hearty as when I shot my first fallow buck in the king's forest, and kissed the forester's pretty daughter. Yet, methinks, Adam, if what I hear of thy tasks be true, thou and I have each been working for one end; thou to make the world other than it is, and I to—"

"What! hast thou, too, taken nourishment from the bitter milk of Philosophy,—thou, fighting Rob?"

"I know not whether it be called philosophy, but marry, Edward of York would call it rebellion; they are much the same, for both war against rules established!" returned Hilyard, with more depth

of thought than his careless manner seemed to promise. He paused, and laying his broad brown hand on Warner's shoulder, resumed, "Thou art poor, Adam!" "Very poor,—very, very!"

"Does thy philosophy disdain gold?"

"What can philosophy achieve without it? She is a hungry dragon, and her very food is gold!"

"Wilt thou brave some danger—thou wert ever a fearless boy when thy blood was up, though so meek and gentle—wilt thou brave some danger for large reward?"

"My life braves the scorn of men, the pinchings of famine, and, it may be, the stake and the fagot. Soldiers brave not the dangers that are braved by a wise man in an unwise age!"

"Gramercy! thou hast a hero's calm aspect while thou speakest, and thy words move me! Listen! Thou wert wont, when Henry of Windsor was King of England, to visit and confer with him on learned matters. He is now a captive in the Tower; but his jailers permit him still to receive the visits of pious monks and harmless scholars. I ask thee to pay him such a visit, and for this office I am empowered, by richer men than myself, to award thee the guerdon of twenty broad pieces of gold."

"Twenty!—A mine! a Tmolus!" exclaimed Adam, in uncontrollable glee. "Twenty! O true friend, then my work will be born at last!"

"But hear me further, Adam, for I will not deceive thee; the visit hath its peril! Thou must first see if the mind of King Henry, for king he is, though the usurper wear his holy crown, be clear and healthful. Thou knowest he is subject to dark moods,—suspension of man's reason; and if he be, as his friends hope, sane and right- judging, thou wilt give him certain papers, which, after his hand has signed them, thou wilt bring back to me. If in this thou succeedest, know that thou mayst restore the royalty of Lancaster to the purple and the throne; that thou wilt have princes and earls for favourers and protectors to thy learned life; that thy fortunes and fame are made! Fail, be discovered,—and Edward of York never spares!—thy guerdon will be the nearest tree and the strongest rope!"

"Robert," said Adam, who had listened to this address with unusual attention, "thou dealest with me plainly, and as man should deal with man. I know little of stratagem and polity, wars and kings; and save that King Henry, though passing ignorant in the mathematics, and more given to alchemists than to solid seekers after truth, was once or twice gracious to me, I could have no choice, in these four walls, between an Edward and a Henry on the throne. But I have a king whose throne is in mine own breast, and, alack, it taxeth me heavily, and with sore burdens."

"I comprehend," said the visitor, glancing round the room,— "I comprehend: thou wantest money for thy books and instruments, and thy melancholic passion is thy sovereign. Thou wilt incur the risk?"

"I will," said Adam. "I would rather seek in the lion's den for what I lack than do what I well-nigh did this day."

"What crime was that, poor scholar?" said Robin, smiling.

"My child worked for her bread and my luxuries—I would have robbed her, old schoolfellow. Ha, ha! what is cord and gibbet to one so tempted?"

A tear stood in the bright gray eyes of the bluff visitor. "Ah, Adam," he said sadly, "only by the candle held in the skeleton hand of Poverty can man read his own dark heart. But thou, Workman of Knowledge, hast the same interest as the poor who dig and delve. Though strange circumstance hath made me the servant and emissary of Margaret, think not that I am but the varlet of the great." Hilyard paused a moment, and resumed,—

"Thou knowest, peradventure, that my race dates from an elder date than these Norman nobles, who boast their robber-fathers. From the renowned Saxon Thane, who, free of hand and of cheer,

won the name of Hildegardis, [Hildegardis, namely, old German, a person of noble or generous disposition. Wotton's "Baronetage," art. Hilyard, or Hildyard, of Pattrington.] our family took its rise. But under these Norman barons we sank with the nation to which we belonged. Still were we called gentlemen, and still were dubbed knights. But as I grew up to man's estate, I felt myself more Saxon than gentleman, and, as one of a subject and vassal race, I was a son of the Saxon people. My father, like thee, was a man of thought and bookcraft. I dare own to thee that he was a Lollard; and with the religion of those bold foes to priest-vice, goes a spirit that asks why the people should be evermore the spoil and prey of lords and kings. Early in my youth, my father, fearing rack and fagot in England, sought refuge in the Hans town of Lubeck. There I learned grave truths,—how liberty can be won and guarded. Later in life I saw the republics of Italy, and I asked why they were so glorious in all the arts and craft of civil life, while the braver men of France and England seemed as savages by the side of the Florentine burgher, nay, of the Lombard vine-dresser. I saw that, even when those republics fell a victim to some tyrant or podesta, their men still preserved rights and uttered thoughts which left them more free and more great than the Commons of England after all their boasted wars. I came back to my native land and settled in the North, as my franklin ancestry before me. The broad lands of my forefathers had devolved on the elder line, and gave a knight's fee to Sir Robert Hilyard, who fell afterwards at Towton for the Lancastrians. But I had won gold in the far cuntry, and I took farm and homestead near Lord Warwick's tower of Middleham. The feud between Lancaster and York broke forth; Earl Warwick summoned his retainers, myself amongst them, since I lived upon his land; I sought the great earl, and I told him boldly—him whom the Commons deemed a friend, and a foe to all malfaisance and abuse—I told him that the war he asked me to join seemed to me but a war of ambitious lords, and that I saw not how the Commons were to be bettered, let who would be king. The earl listened and deigned to reason; and when he saw I was not convinced, he left me to my will; for he is a noble chief, and I admired even his angry pride, when he said, 'Let no man fight for Warwick whose heart beats not in his cause.' I lived afterwards to discharge my debt to the proud earl, and show him how even the lion may be meshed, and how even the mouse may gnaw the net. But to my own tragedy. So I quitted those parts, for I feared my own resolution near so great a man; I made a new home not far from the city of York. So, Adam, when all the land around bristled with pike and gisarme, and while my own cousin and namesake, the head of my House, was winning laurels and wasting blood—I, thy quarrelsome, fighting friend—lived at home in peace with my wife and child (for I was now married, and wife and child were dear to me), and tilled my lands. But in peace I was active and astir, for my words inflamed the bosoms of labourers and peasants, and many of them, benighted as they were, thought with me. One day—I was absent from home, selling my grain in the marts of York—one day there entered the village a young captain, a boy-chief, Edward Earl of March, beating for recruits. Dost thou heed me, Adam? Well, man—well, the peasants stood aloof from tromp and banner, and they answered, to all the talk of hire and fame, 'Robin Hilyard tells us we have nothing to gain but blows,—leave us to hew and to delve.' Oh, Adam, this boy, this chief, the Earl of March, now crowned King Edward, made but one reply, 'This Robin Hilyard must be a wise man,—show me his house.' They pointed out the ricks, the barns, the homestead, and in five minutes all—all were in flames. 'Tell the hilding, when he returns, that thus Edward of March, fair to friends and terrible to foes, rewards the coward who disaffects the men of Yorkshire to their chief.' And by the blazing rafters, and the pale faces of the silent crowd, he rode on his way to battle and the throne!"

Hilyard paused, and the anguish of his countenance was terrible to behold.

"I returned to find a heap of ashes; I returned to find my wife a maniac; I returned to find my child—my boy—great God!—he had run to hide himself, in terror at the torches and the grim men; they had failed to discover him, till, too late, his shrieks, amidst the crashing walls, burst on his mother's ear,—and the scorched, mangled, lifeless corpse lay on that mother's bosom!"

Adam rose; his figure was transformed. Not the stooping student, but the knight-descended man, seemed to tower in the murky chamber; his hand felt at his side, as for a sword; he stifled

a curse, and Hilyard, in that suppressed low voice which evinces a strong mind in deep emotion, continued his tale.

"Blessed be the Divine Intercessor, the mother of the dead died too! Behold me, a lonely, ruined, wifeless, childless wretch! I made all the world my foe! The old love of liberty (alone left me) became a crime; I plunged into the gloom of the forest, a robber-chief, sparing—no, never-never—never one York captain, one spurred knight, one belted lord! But the poor, my Saxon countrymen, they had suffered, and were safe!

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

Текст предоставлен ООО «ЛитРес».

Прочитайте эту книгу целиком, [купив полную легальную версию](#) на ЛитРес.

Безопасно оплатить книгу можно банковской картой Visa, MasterCard, Maestro, со счета мобильного телефона, с платежного терминала, в салоне МТС или Связной, через PayPal, WebMoney, Яндекс.Деньги, QIWI Кошелек, бонусными картами или другим удобным Вам способом.