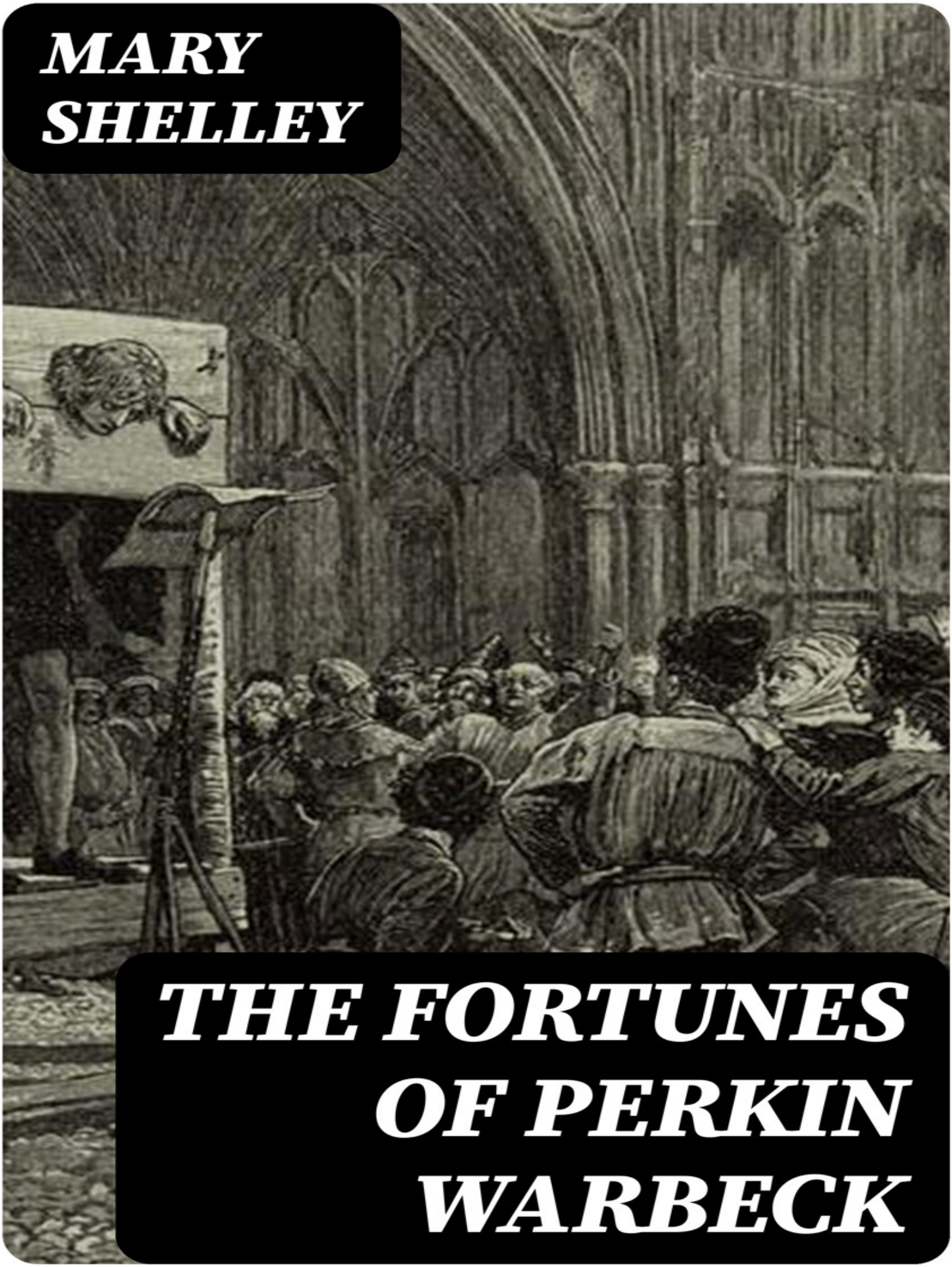
MARY SHELLEY



THE FORTUNES OF PERKIN WARBECK

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Preface

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The story of Perkin Warbeck was first suggested to me as a subject for historical detail. On studying it, I became aware of the romance which his story contains, while, at the same time, I felt that it would be impossible for any narration, that should be confined to the incorporation of facts related by our old Chronicle to do it justice.

It is not singular that I should entertain a belief that Perkin was, in reality, the lost Duke of York. For, in spite of Hume, and the later historians who have followed in his path, no person who has at all studied the subject but arrives at the same conclusion. Records exist in the Tower, some well known, others with which those who have access to those interesting papers are alone acquainted, which put the question almost beyond a doubt.

This is not the place for a discussion of the question. The principal thing that I should wish to be impressed on my reader's mind is, that whether my hero was or was not an impostor, he was believed to be the true man by his contemporaries. The partial pages of Bacon, of Hall, and Holinshed and others of that date, are replete with proofs of this fact. There are some curious letters, written by Sir John Ramsay, Laird of Balmayne, calling himself Lord Bothwell, addressed to Henry the Seventh himself, which, though written by a spy and hireling of that monarch, tend to confirm my belief, and even demonstrate that in his eagerness to get rid of a formidable competitor, Henry did not hesitate to urge midnight assassination. These letters are printed in the Appendix to Pinkerton's History of Scotland. The verses which form the motto to these volumes, are part of a rythmical Chronicle, written by two subjects of Burgundy, who lived in those days; it is entitled

"Recollection des Merveilles, advenues en nostre temps, commencée par très élégant orateur, Messire Georges Chastellan, et continuée par Maistre Jean Molinet."

In addition to the unwilling suffrage of his enemies, we may adduce the acts of his friends and allies. Human nature in its leading features is the same in all ages. James the Fourth of Scotland was a man of great talent and discernment: he was proud; attached, as a Scot, to the prejudices of birth; of punctilious honour. No one can believe that he would have bestowed his near kinswoman, nor have induced the Earl of Huntley to give his daughter in marriage, to one who did not bear evident signs of being of royal blood.

The various adventures of this unfortunate Prince in many countries, and his alliance with a beautiful and high-born woman, who proved a faithful, loving wife to him, take away the sting from the ignominy which might attach itself to his fate; and make him, we venture to believe, in spite of the contumely later historians have chosen, in the most arbitrary way, to heap upon him, a fitting object of interest —a hero to ennoble the pages of a humble tale.

Volume I.

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Chapter I.

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He seemed breathless, heartless, faint and wan.
And all his armour sprinkled was with blood.
And soiled with dirty gore, that no man can
Discern the hue thereof. He never stood.
But bent his hasty course towards the idle flood.
—Spenser.

After a long series of civil dissension—after many battles, whose issue involved the fate of thousands—after the destruction of nearly all the English nobility in the contest between the two Roses, the decisive battle of Bosworth Field was fought on the 22d of August, 1485, whose result was to entwine, as it was called, the white and red symbols of rivalship, and to restore peace to this unhappy country.

The day had been sunny and warm: as the evening closed in a west wind rose, bringing along troops of fleecy clouds, golden at sunset, and then dun and grey, veiling with pervious network the many stars. Three horsemen at this hour passed through the open country between Hinckley and Welford in Leicestershire. It was broad day when they descended from the elevation on which the former stands, and the villagers crowded to gaze upon the fugitives, and to guess, from the ensigns they bore, to which party they belonged, while the warders from the near castle hastened out to stop them, thus to curry favour with the conqueror; a design wholly baffled. The good steeds of the knights, for such their golden spurs attested them to be, bore them fast and far along the Roman road, which still exists in those parts to shame our modern builders. It was dusk when, turning from the direct route to avoid entering Welford, they reached a ford of the Avon. Hitherto silence

had prevailed with the party—for until now their anxiety to fly had solely occupied their thoughts. Their appearance spoke of war, nay, of slaughter. Their cloaks were stained and torn; their armour was disjointed, and parts of it were wanting; yet these losses were so arbitrary, that it was plain that the pieces had been hacked from their fastenings. The helm of the foremost was deprived of its crest; another wore the bonnet of a common soldier, which ill accorded with the rest of his accoutrements; while the third, bareheaded, his hair falling on his shoulders, lank and matted from heat and exercise, gave more visible tokens of the haste of flight. As the night grew darker, one of them, and then another, seemed willing to relax somewhat in their endeavours: one alone continued, with unmitigated energy, to keep his horse at the same pace they had all maintained during the broad light of day.

When they reached the ford, the silence was broken by the hindmost horseman; he spoke in a petulant voice, saying:—"Another half mile at this pace, and poor Floeur-de-Luce founders; if you will not slacken your speed, here we part, my friends. God save you till we meet again!"

"Evil betide the hour that separates us, brother!" said the second fugitive, reining in; "Our cause, our peril, our fate shall be the same. You, my good lord, will consult your own safety."

The third cavalier had already entered the stream: he made a dead halt while his friends spoke, and then replied:—"Let us name some rendezvous where, if we escape, we may again meet. I go on an errand of life and death; my success is doubtful, my danger certain. If I succeed in evading it, where shall I rejoin you?"

"Though the event of this day has been fatal to the king," answered the other, "our fortunes are not decided. I propose taking refuge in some sanctuary, till we perceive how far the Earl of Richmond is inclined to mercy."

"I knew the Earl when a mere youth, Sir Humphrey Stafford," said the foremost rider, "and heard more of him when I visited Brittanny, at the time of King Louis's death, two years ago. When mercy knocks at his heart, suspicion and avarice give her a rough reception. We must fly beyond sea, unless we can make further stand. More of this when we meet again. Where shall that be?"

"I have many friends near Colchester," replied the elder Stafford, "and St. Mary boasts an asylum there which a crowned head would not dare violate. Thence, if all else fail, we can pass with ease to the Low Countries."

"In sanctuary at Colchester—I will not fail you. God bless and preserve you the while!"

The noble, as he said these words, put spurs to his horse, and without looking back crossed the stream, and turning on the skirts of a copse was soon out of sight of his companions. He rode all night, cheering his steed with hand and voice; looking angrily at the early dawning east, which soon cast from her cloudless brow the dimness of night. Yet the morning air was grateful to his heated cheeks. It was a perfect summer's morn. The wheat, golden from ripeness, swayed gracefully to the light breeze; the slender oats shook their small bells in the air with ceaseless motion; the birds twittering, alighted from the full-leaved trees, scattering dew-drops from the branches. With the earliest dawn the Cavalier entered a forest, traversing its depths with the hesitation of one unacquainted with the country, and looked frequently at the sky, to be directed by the position of the glowing east. A path more worn than the one he had hitherto followed now presented itself, leading into the heart of the wood. He hesitated for a few seconds, and then, with a word of cheer to his horse, pursued his way into the embowering thicket. After a short space the path narrowed, the meeting branches of the trees impeded him, and the sudden angle it made from the course he wished to follow served to perplex him still further; but as he vented

his impatience by hearty Catholic exclamations, a little tinkling bell spoke of a chapel near, and of the early rising of the priest to perform the matin service at its altar. The horse of the fugitive, a noble war-steed, had long flagged; and hunger gnawed at the rider's own heart, for he had not tasted food since the morning of the previous day. These sounds, therefore, heard in so fearless a seclusion, bore with them pleasant tidings of refreshment and repose. He crossed himself in thankfulness; then throwing himself from his horse (and such change was soothing to his stiffened limbs), he led him through the opening glade to where a humble chapel and a near adjoining hut stood in the bosom of the thicket, emblems of peace and security.

The Cavalier tied his horse to a tree, and entered the chapel. A venerable priest was reading the matin service; one old woman composed his congregation, and she was diligently employed telling her beads. The bright rays of the newly risen sun streamed through the eastern window, casting the chequered shadow of its lattice work on the opposite wall. The chapel was small and rustic; but it was kept exquisitely clean: the sacred appurtenances of the altar also were richer than was usual, and each shrine was decked with clusters of flowers, chiefly composed of white roses. No high praise, indeed, was due to the rude picture of the Virgin of the Annunciation, or of the announcing Angel, a representation of whom formed the altar-piece; but in barbaric England, in those days, piety stood in place of taste, and that which represented. Our Lady received honour, however, unworthy it might be of the inspiress of Raphael or Correggio. The cavalier took his disornamented casque from his head, placed it on the ground, and knelt reverentially on the bare earth. He had lately escaped from battle and slaughter, and he surely thought that he had especial motive for thanks-giving; so that if his lips uttered a mere soldier's "Ave," still it had the merit of fervour and sincerity.

Had he been less occupied by his own feelings, he might have remarked the many glances the priest cast on him, who dishonoured his learning and piety by frequent mistakes of language, as his thoughts wandered from his breviary, to observe with deep attention his unexpected visitor. At length the service ended: the old dame rose from her knees, and satisfied her curiosity which she had excited by many a look askance, by a full and long gaze on the cavalier. His hewn armour, torn cloak, and, unseemly for the sacred spot, the dread stains on his garments and hands were all minutely scanned. Nor did his personal appearance escape remark. His stature was tall, his person well knit, shewing him to be a man of about thirty years of age. His features were finely moulded, his grey eyes full of fire, his step had the dignity of rank, and his look expressed chivalrous courage and frankness. The good woman had not been long engaged in surveying the stranger, when her pastor beckoned her to retire, and himself advanced, replying to the soldier's salute with a benedicite, and then hastily enquiring if he came from the field.

"Even so, Father," said the Cavalier; "I come from the field of the bloody harvest. Has any intelligence of it travelled hither so speedily? If so, I must have wandered from the right road, and am not so far on my journey as I hoped."

"I have only heard that a battle was expected," said the priest, "and your appearance tells me that it is over. The fortunes, nay, perhaps the life, of a dear friend are involved in its issue, and I fear that it is adverse—for you fly from pursuit, and methinks, though stained with dust and blood, that emblem on your breast is the White Rose."

The warrior looked on the old man, whose dignity and language were at variance with his lowly destination; he looked partly in wonder, and partly to assure himself of his questioner's sincerity. "You are weary, Sir Knight," added the Monk, whose experienced eyes had glanced to the golden

spurs of his visitant; "come to my hermitage, there to partake of such refreshment as I can bestow. When your repast is ended, I will, by confidence on my part, merit yours."

This invitation was that of worldy courtesy, rather than the rustic welcome of a recluse monk. The Cavalier thanked him cordially, adding, that he must first provide food and water for his horse, and that afterwards he would gratefully accept his host's invitation. The old man entered with the spirit of a soldier into his guest's anxiety for his steed, and assisted in purveying to its wants, ingratiating himself meanwhile with its master, by discovering and praising scientifically its points of beauty. The poor animal shewed tokens of over fatigue, yet still he did not refuse his food, and the Cavalier marked with joy that his eye grew brighter and his knees firmer after feeding.

They then entered the cottage, and the soldier's eye was attracted from more sacred emblems by a sword which was suspended over a picture of the Virgin:—"You belong to our Chivalry!" he exclaimed, while his countenance lighted up with joyful recognition.

"Now I belong to the holy order whose badge I wear," the Monk replied, pointing to his Benedictine dress. "In former days I followed a brave leader to the field, and, in his service, incurred such guilt, as I now try to expiate by fasting and prayer."

The Monk's features were convulsed by agitation as he spoke, then crossing his arms on his breast, he was absorbed in thought for a few moments, after which he raised his head and resumed the calm and even serene look that characterized him. "Sir Knight," said he, motioning to the table now spread for the repast, "I have but poor fare to offer, but a soldier will not disdain its meagreness. My wine I may praise, as being the produce of a generous vintage; I have kept it sealed, to open it on occasions like the present, and rejoice that your strength will be recruited by it."

Bread, fruits, cheese, and a flagon of the wine, which merited the giver's eulogium, composed the fugitive's breakfast, whose fatigue required cordial and repose. As he was occupied by his repast, his host eyed him with evident agitation, eager yet fearful to question him on the subject of the battle. At length he again asked, "You come from the field on which the forces of the King and of the Earl of Richmond met?"

"I do."

"You fought for the White Rose, and you fly?"

"I fought for the White Rose till it was struck to the ground. The king has fallen with his chief nobility around him. Few Yorkists remain to mourn the success of the Lancastrians."

Deep grief clouded the old man's countenance, but accustomed to subdue his feelings, as one on whom, being stricken by an overwhelming misery, all subsequent disasters fall blunted, he continued with greater calmness: "Pardon me, noble gentleman, if I appear to ask an indiscreet question. You are of lordly bearing, and probably filled a place near the royal person. Did you hear, on the night before last, aught of the arrival of a stranger youth at the King's tent?"

The knight eyed the old man with a quick glance, asking, in his turn, "Are you, then, the foster-father of King Richard's son?"

"Did you see my boy?" cried the priest, "Did his father acknowledge him?—Where is he now?—did he enter the ranks to sight and fall for his parent?"

"On the night of which you speak," said the stranger, evading the immediate question, "the King placed his son's hand in mine, as I vowed to protect and guard him if ill befell our party, as it has befallen."

"Surely some presentiment of evil haunted the King's mind."

"I do believe it; for his manner was solemn and affecting. He bade the youth remember that he was a Plantagenet, and spoke proudly of the lineage from which he sprung. The young esquire listened intently, looking at his father with such an ingenuous and thoughtful expression, that he won my heart to love him."

"Now bless thee, Sir Knight, whoever thou art, for this praise of my poor Edmund! I pray you, hasten to tell me what more passed."

The Cavalier continued his account; but his manner was serious, as if the conclusion of his tale would afflict his auditor. He related how, on quitting the royal tent, he had led Edmund Plantagenet to his own, there to converse with him awhile, the better to learn whether his bearing and speech shewed promise of future merit. King Richard had enjoined his son to return to his seclusion early on the following morning; but as soon as he entered his conductor's; tent, he knelt to him and asked a boon, while tears gathered in his eyes, and his voice was broken by the fervour of his desire. The noble was moved by his entreaties, and promised to grant his request, if it did not militate against his honour and allegiance. "It is for honour that I speak," said Plantagenet; "I am older in years than in seeming, for already I number twenty summers; and spite of my boyish look I am familiar with martial exercises, and the glorious promise of war. Let me draw my sword for my father to-morrow—let me, at your side, prove myself a worthy descendant of the conquerors of France! Who will sight for King Richard with greater courage, fidelity, and devotion, than his acknowledged and duteous son?" The Cavalier yielded to his noble yearnings. Clothed in armour he entered the ranks, and hovered a protecting angel near his parent during the bloody contest. And now, as his venerable guardian watched with trembling eagerness the countenance of his guest while he told his tale, and the stranger, with bitter regret, was about to relate that he had

seen Plantagenet felled to the ground by a battle-axe, quick steps, and then a knocking, was heard at the cottage door. The stranger started on his feet, and put his hand upon his sword; but a bright smile illuminated the Monk's face, as the very youth of whom they spoke, Edmund Plantagenet, rushed into the apartment. His soiled garments and heated brow spoke of travel and fatigue, while his countenance wore an expression of wildness and even of horror. He started when he saw the stranger, but quickly recognized him as his new friend. "Thank God!" he cried, "that you, my dear Lord, have not fallen into the hands of the sacrilegious usurper! It is my father's spirit that has saved you for his son's sake, that I may not be utterly abandoned and an orphan."

With milder accost he bent his knee to his holy guardian, and then turned to answer the Cavalier's questions of how he had escaped death from the blow he had received, and what new events had occurred since he had quitted the field early on the preceding day?—while the Monk chid him for his disobedience to his father's commands, in having mingled with the fray. The eyes of Plantagenet flashed fire at this reproach.—"Could I know that my father's crown and life," he exclaimed impetuously, "depended on the combat, and not bring to his aid my weak arm? God of Heaven! had there been five hundred true as I, we might all have fallen round him: but never, never, should I have seen the sight which last night I saw—nor heard the sounds I last night heard!"

The youth covered his face with his hands, and the boiling tears trickled between his fingers. "Tell me," cried the noble, "what has happened?—and swiftly tell me, for I loiter here too long."

Almost suffocated by emotion, Plantagenet related, that when he recovered from the trance into which the fearful blow he had received had thrown him, the Earl's camp-followers were busy among the slain; and that he had seen

the body of King Richard—of his father—thrown half naked across a mule, thus to be borne to be exposed to the public gaze and mockery in Leicester, where, but the day before, he had ridden with the royal crown on his head, the acknowledged sovereign of England. And that crown, base ill-bartered bauble, having been found in the tent by Lord Stanley, he had brought and placed on Richmond's head, while the soldiers, with one acclaim, hailed him Henry the Seventh, King of England.

The last words more than the others, for the death of his royal master was already known to him, moved the knight:—"Is this the end of our hopes?" he cried; "Am I then too late? Farewell, my friends! Plantagenet, I shall never forget my oath to the King; I shall become, I fear, an outcast and a soldier of fortune, even if I escape worse fate; but claim when you will, and it shall be your's, whatever protection I can afford you."

"Yield then, Lord Lovel," said the youth, "to my first request. You are in peril, let me share it: permit me to accompany you. If you refuse, my plan is already formed; I repair to the Earl of Lincoln, whom King Richard named his successor, and offer myself as a soldier in his attempt to discrown the usurping Henry, and to raise again the White Rose to its rightful supremacy."

"To the Earl of Lincoln—the successor of Richard—to him you would repair? It is well—come with me now, and I will present you to that nobleman. If your foster-father consents, bid adieu to this seclusion for a time, and accompany me to London, to new contests—to the combat of right against might—to success and honour, or to defeat and death!"

The sun had risen high when, having taking leave of the venerable Monk, who would not oppose his pupil's gallant spirit of enterprize, Lord Lovel and young. Plantagenet threaded the forest paths, which, by a safer and a shorter route than the highway, took them on their road to London. For a time they led their horses with difficulty through the

entangled thicket, when at last reaching the open road, they mounted, and Lord Lovel, who was desirous of estimating the abilities and disposition of his companion, entered into conversation with him, They first conversed on the sad changes which were the work of the eventful day of battle; afterwards the Cavalier and led Edmund to speak of himself, his early life, his acquirements, and his hopes.

When Plantagenet was but ten years old his mother died, and her last request to the father of her boy, founded on a deep knowledge of the world, was, that her son might be educated far from the court, nor be drawn from the occupations and happier scenes of private life, to become a hanger-on of princes and nobles. There was a man, a gentleman and a knight, who had been a partizan of the White Rose, and who had fought and bled for it in various battles between the Duke of York and Henry VI. In one of these, the misery of the times, and horible consequences of civil dissension, caused him unwittingly to lift his armed hand against his twin brother, nor did he discover the mistake till, with his dying voice, that brother called on him to assist him against his slayer. A life of seclusion, penance, and prayer, alone blunted his sense of remorse, and quitting the world, he retired to a monastery, where after due noviciate he took vows, and then shrinking from commerce with his kind, followed by visions that spoke for ever to him of his unnatural crime, he retreated to the forest of Leicester-shire, to dwell alone with his grief and his repentance.

His retreat was known to many of his friends, and chance had brought the Duke of Gloucester at one time to visit him; when the ancient warrier rejoiced with enthusiasm at the exaltation of the party to which he was attached. The death of the mother of Edmund had the effect of softening the Duke's heart, of making for a short interval worldly cares and objects distasteful to him, and of filling him with a desire of seclusion and peace. If he was unable to enjoy

these himself, he resolved that at least his child should not be drawn by him into the thorny path of rivalship and ambition. His mother's last injunction strengthened this feeling; and the Duke, visiting again the hermit of the wood, induced him to take charge of Edmund, and bringing him up in ignorance of his real parentage, to bestow such education on him as would enable him to fill with reputation an honourable, if not a distinguished station in society. This order of things was not changed by Richard's exaltation to the crown. On the contrary, the dangers he incurred from his usurpation, made him yet more anxious to secure a peaceful existence for his offspring. When, however, his legitimate son, whom he had created Prince of Wales, died, paternal affection awoke strong in his heart, and he could not resist his desire of seeing Edmund: a memorable visit for the priest-bred nursling of the forest! It gave him a link with society with which before he had felt no connexion: his imagination and curiosity were highly excited. His revered friend, yielding to his eager demands, was easily enticed to recur to the passed scenes of an eventful life. The commencement of the wars of the two Roses, and their dreadful results, furnished inexhaustible topics of discourse. Plantagenet listened with breathless interest, although it was not till the eve of the battle of Bosworth, that he knew how indissolubly his own fortunes were linked with those of the house of York.

The events of the few last days had given him a new existence. For the first time, feeling was the parent of action; and a foregoing event drove him on to the one subsequent. He was excited to meditate on a thousand schemes, while the unknown future inspired him with an awe that thrilled his young heart with mingled pain and pleasure. He uttered his sentiments with the ingenuousness of one who had never been accustomed to converse with any but a friend; and as he spoke, his dark and thoughtful eyes beamed with a tempered fire, that shewed him

capable of deep enthusiasm, though utter want of knowledge of the world must make him rather a follower than a leader.

They rode on meanwhile, the noble Cavalier and gentle Squire indulging in short repose. The intense fatigue Edmund at first endured, seemed to be subdued by the necessity of its continuance, nor did it prevent him from conversing with Lord Lovel. He was anxious thoroughly to understand the immediate grounds of the Earl of Richmond's invasion, and to ascertain the relative position of the remaining chiefs of the White Rose: "Where," he asked, "are Edward the Fourth's children?"

"The elder of these," Lord Lovel replied, "the Lady Elizabeth, is, by direction of her uncle, at Sheriff Hutton, in Yorkshire."

"And where the princes? Edward, who was proclaimed king, and his younger brother?"

"They were long imprisoned in the Tower. Young Edward died there more than a year ago."

"And the Duke of York?"

"He is supposed to have died also: they were both sickly boys."

Lord Lovel said these words in a grave voice, and suspicion would have been instilled into any but the unsuspecting Edmund, of some covert meaning. After a short pause, he continued:—"The question of the succession stands thus. Your father, the Duke of Gloucester threw the stigma of illegitimacy on King Edward's children, and thus took from them their right of inheriting the crown. The attainder of the Duke of Clarence was considered reason sufficient why his children should be excluded from the throne, and their uncle in consequence became, by right of birth, King of England: his son he created Prince of Wales. We submitted; for a child like Edward the Fifth could scarcely be supported against an experienced warrior, a man of talent, a sage and just king, but at the expense of much

blood. The wounds inflicted by the opposing houses of York and Lancaster were yet, as the late successful rebellion proves, unhealed; and had the Yorkists contended among themselves, they would yet sooner have lost the supremacy they so hardly acquired: Richard therefore received our oaths of allegiance. When his son died, the question of who was the heir to the crown became agitated; and the king at first declared the Earl of Warwick, the son of the Duke of Clarence, to be his successor. It was a dangerous step—and the impurdent friends of the young Earl made it more so—to name him to succeed, who, if he were permitted at any time to wear the crown, might claim precedence of him who possessed it. Poor Warwick paid the penalty of youth and presumption: he is now a prisoner at Sheriff Hutton; and John de la Poole, Earl of Lincoln, son of Richard's sister, and by the removal of the children of his elder brothers, his heir by law, was nominated to succeed his uncle. I am now proceeding to him. I am ignorant of the conduct he will pursue; whether he will make head against this Lancastrian King, or—Lincoln is a noble cavalier; a man whom bright honour clothes; he is brave, generous, and good. I shall guide myself by his counsels and resolves; and you, it appears, will follow my example."

After a pause, Lord Lovel continued: "After the death or disappearance of his princely nephews, the king, wishing to confirm his title, was ready to take the stigma thrown on their birth from his brother's daughters, and to marry his niece, the Lady Elizabeth. Her mother at first resisted, but the prospect of seeing her children restored to their rights, and herself to her lost dignity, overcame her objections, and the princess yielded a willing consent. Meanwhile the Yorkists, who joined the Earl of Richmond, extorted from him a vow that he would make King Edward's daughter his queen; and even the Lancastrians, thinking thus to secure a king of their own, are eager for this union: yet the Earl hates us all so cordially that he was hardly brought to consent.

Should he, now that he has declared himself king, evade his promise, the children of Elizabeth Woodville will suffer the stain of illegitimacy; but if the marriage has place, and this unhappy race is restored to their honours and rights, our self-named sovereign may find that his own hands have dug the pit into which he will fall."

A long silence succeeded to these explanations. The last expression used by Lovel inspired Edmund with wonder and curiosity; but the noble pressing his horse to a swifter pace, did not hear his observations, or hearing them, replied only by saying, "Three hours' good riding will bring us to London. Courage, Plantagenet! slacken not your speed, my good boy; soft ease will follow this hard labour."

The young moon in its first quarter was near its setting when they arrived at London. They approached from Edgware: without entering the town, they skirted its northern extremity, till Lord Lovel, checking his horse, remarked to his companion, that he judged it fitting to delay approaching the residence of the Earl of Lincoln, until the setting of the moon and subsequent darkness secured them from observation.

Chapter II.

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Yes, my good Lord.
It doth contain a king;
King Richard lies
Within the limits of you lime and stone.
—SHAKESPEARE.

The Earl of Lincoln, declared by Richard the Third, heir to the crown, did not join the royal forces, nor appear at the battle of Bosworth. This distinguished prince was a man of singular abilities and strength of mind, which chivalrous generosity adorned with a lustre superior even to that which he derived from his high rank. Lord Lovel was possessed of knightly courage, untarnished honour, and gentlemanly accomplishment. To these military and graceful qualities Lincoln added the wisdom of a statesman, and the moral energy resulting from inflexible principle. He felt himself responsible to mankind and to all posteriy for his actions. He was brave—that was a virtue of the times; but he was just, in a comprehensive sense of the word, and that exalted him above them. His manly features did not so much wear the stamp of beauty, though, like all the offspring of the House of York, he was handsome, as of the best quality of man, a perception of right, and resolution to achieve that right.

Lord Lincoln disapproved decidedly of the usurpation of his uncle, Richard the Third, over the children of Edward the Fourth. He allowed that the evidence was strong in favour of that king's former marriage, and their consequent illegitimacy; but he said, that Elizabeth Woodville had so long been held Queen of England, and her children heirs to the crown, that it was impossible to eradicate the belief of the English people, that their allegiance was due to him who

had been proclaimed even by his uncle, Edward the Fifth. Even if they were put aside, that attainder passed against the Duke of Clarence was an insufficient reason to deprive his son of his lawful inheritance. He saw England wasted, and her nobility extirpated by civil contest; and he perceived the seeds of future strife in the assumption of the crown by the Duke of Gloucester. When the son of Richard the Third died, and the Earl of Warwick was named his successor, the superior right of the nephew before the reigning uncle became so eminent a subject of discussion, that the king was obliged to recall his declaration, and to confine the young Prince in a castle in Yorkshire. The Earl of Lincoln, then seven and twenty years of age, was next named. He remonstrated with his uncle privately; but fear of dividing the House of York against itself, and a disdain to make common cause with the dowager Queen's relations, made him outwardly submit; but his plan was formed, and secretly all his efforts tended towards the restoring the children of Edward to their paternal rights.

The boys were sickly. Edward the Fifth, irritated by the extinction of the hopes which the intrigues of his mother had kept alive in his breast, wasted by imprisonment in the Tower, and brooking with untamed pride the change from a regal to a private station, pined and died. Richard, Duke of York, was between ten and eleven; a sprightly ingenuous boy, whose lively spirit wore out his frame, and this, added to confinement and attention to his dying brother, brought him also near the grave. It was on the death of Edward that the Earl of Lincoln visited the Tower, and saw young Richard. The accounts given by the attendants of his more than a child's devotion to his brother, his replies full of sportive fancy, his beauty, though his cheek was faded and his person grown thin, moved the generous noble to deep compassion. He ventured, under the strong influence of this feeling, to remonstrate warmly with his royal uncle, reproaching him with needless cruelty, and telling him how

in fact, though not in appearance, he was the murderer of his nephews, and would be so held by all mankind. Richard's ambition was satisfied by the success of his measures to obtain the crown; but his fears were awake. The Duke of Buckingham was in arms against him—the Queen and her surviving relatives were perpetually employed in exciting discontents in the kingdom. Richard feared, that if they obtained the person of his nephew, he would be turned into an engine for his overthrow; while to obtain possession of him, was the constant aim of their endeavours. He earnestly desired to reconcile himself to the Queen, and to draw her from the sanctuary in which she had immured herself—she refused all his offers, unless her son was first placed in her hands.

His head, ripe with state plots, now conceived a scheme. He consented that Lincoln should take the Duke of York under his charge, if he would first engage to keep his removal from the Tower, and even his existence, a secret from his enemies. Lincoln made the required promise; the young Prince was conveyed to a country seat belonging to the Earl, and Richard, in furtherance of his plan, caused a rumour to go abroad that he also was dead. No one knew with whom this report originated. When, to assure themselves, various nobles visited the Tower, the boy was no longer there. The Queen gave credit to the tale. At this moment, Richard set on foot a negociation of marriage with the eldest daughter of Edward the Fourth, the Lady Elizabeth. The partizans of the Earl of Richmond sought to ensure the success of his enterprize by the same means: and while little Richard grew in health and happiness in his country retreat, his own nearest and most attached relatives were giving away his inheritance—his uncle unwittingly laid the foundation stone of the reputation of cruelty and murder ever after affixed to him; and his mother, endeavouring to exalt her daughter, and to restore herself to her lost station

in the kingdom, sealed the fatal decree that first deprived her son of his rights, and afterwards of his life.

On the evening that Lord Lovel and Edmund Plantagenet entered London, the Earl of Lincoln remained waiting intelligence from the field, in a palace he inhabited not far from Tottenham Court, a secluded habitation, surrounded by a garden and a high wall. This was an irksome situation for a warrior; but though his uncle loved, he distrusted him: his projected marriage with the Lady Elizabeth, would probably cause him again to be father of an heir to the crown, and knowing that Lincoln possessed, in the young Duke of York, a dangerous rival, he refused to allow him to take up arms against Richmond. Lord Lincoln was alone, pacing his large and vaulted hall in deep and anxious meditation. He, who with conscience for his rule, takes, or endeavours to take, the reins of fate into his own hands, must experience frequent misgivings; and often feel, that he wheels near the edge of a giddy precipice, down which the tameless steeds he strives to govern, may, in an instant, hurl him and all dependent upon his guidance. The simple feeling of compassion, arising from the seeing childhood lose its buoyancy in undue confinement, had first led the princely noble to take charge of his young cousin. Afterwards, when he beheld the boy grow in health and years, developing the while extraordinary quickness of intellect, and a sweet ingenuous disposition, he began to reflect on the station he held, his rights and his injuries; and then the design was originated on which he was now called to act.

If Richard gained the day, all would stand as before. Should he be defeated—and that second sense, that feeling of coming events, which is one of the commonest, though the least acknowledged of the secret laws of our nature, whispered the yet unrevealed truth to him—who then would assume England's diadem, and how could he secure it for its rightful owner, the only surviving son of Edward the Fourth? All these reflexions coursed themselves through his brain,

while, with the zeal of a partizan, and the fervour of one wedded to the justice of his cause, he revolved every probable change of time and fortune.

At this moment a courier was announced: he brought tidings from the field. As is usual on the eve of a great event, they were dubious and contradictory. The armies faced each other, and the battle was impending. The doubts entertained on both sides, as to the part that Lord Stanley would take, gave still a greater uncertainty to the anticipations of each.

Soon after the arrival of this man, the loud ringing at the outer gate was renewed; and the trampling of horses, as they entered the court, announced a more numerous company. There was something in the movements of his domestics, that intimated to the Earl that his visitor was of superior rank. Could it be the king, who had fled; conquered, and fugitive? Could such terms be applied to the high-hearted Richard? The doors of the hall were thrown open, and the question answered by the entrance of his visitant: it was a woman; and her name, "Lady Brampton!" in a tone of wonder, burst from the noble's lips.

"Even I, my good Lord," said the lady; "allow me your private ear; I bring intelligence from Leicestershire. All is lost," she continued, when the closing of the door assured her of privacy; "all is lost, and all is gained—Richard is slain. My emissaries brought swift intelligence of this event to me at Northampton, and I have hastened with it bither, that without loss of time you may act."

There was a quickness and a decision in the lady's manner, that checked rather than encouraged her auditor. She continued: "Vesper hour has long passed—it matters not—London yet is ours. Command instantly that Richard the Fourth be proclaimed king of England."

Lord Lincoln started at these words. The death of his uncle and benefactor could not be received by him like the loss of a move at chess; a piece lost, that required the

bringing up of other pieces to support a weak place. "The king is slain," were words that rung in his ears; drowning every other that the lady uttered with rapidity and agitation. "We will speak of that anon," he replied; and going to the high window of his hall, he threw it open, as if the air oppressed him. The wind sighed in melancholy murmurs among the branches of the elms and limes in the garden: the stars were bright, and the setting moon was leaving the earth to their dim illumination. "Yesternight," thought Lincoln, "he was among us, a part of our conversation, our acts, our lives; now his glazed eyes behold not these stars. The past is his: with the present and the future he has no participation."

Lady Brampton's impatience did not permit the Earl long to indulge in that commune with nature, which we eagerly seek when grief and death throws us back on the weakness of our human state, and we feel that we ourselves, our best laid projects and loftiest hopes, are but the play things of destiny. "Wherefore," cried the lady, "does De la Poole linger? Does he hesitate to do his cousin justice? Does he desire to follow in the steps of his usurping predecessor? Wherefore this delay?"

"To strike the surer," replied Lincoln. "May not I ask, wherefore this impatience?"

Even as he spoke, steps were heard near the apartment; and while the eyes of both were turned with inquietude on the expected intruder, Lord Lovel entered: there was no triumph, no eager anticipation on his brow—he was languid from ill success and fatigue. Lincoln met him with the pleasure of one who sees his friend escaped from certain death. He was overjoyed to be assured of his existence; he was glad to have his assistance on the present emergency. "We know," he said, "all the evil tidings you bring us; we are now deliberating on the conduct we are to pursue: your presence will facilitate our measures. Tell me what other

friends survive to aid us. The Duke of Norfolk, the Staffords, Sir Robert Brakenbury, where are they?"

Lovel had seen the Duke fall, the Staffords had accompanied his flight; uncertainty still hung over the fate of many others. This detail of the death of many of their common friends, subdued the impetuosity of the lady, till an account of how Richard himself had fought and been slain, recalled her to their former topic of discussion; and, again, she said, "It is strange that you do not perceive the dangers of delay. Why is not the king proclaimed?"

"Do you not know," asked Lord Lovel, "that the king is proclaimed?"

Lady Brampton clasped her hands, exclaiming—"Then Richard the Fourth will wear his father's crown!"

"Henry the Seventh," said Lovel, "possesses and wears the English crown. Lord Stanley placed the diadem on the head of the Earl of Richmond, and his soldiers, with one acclaim, acknowledged him as their sovereign."

"This is mere trifling," said the lady; "the base-born offspring of Lancaster may dare aspire so high, but one act of our's dethrones him. The Yorkists are numerous, and will defend their king: London is yet ours."

"Yes," replied Lincoln, "it is in our power to deluge the streets of London with blood; to bring massacre among its citizens, and worse disaster on its wives and maidens. I would not buy an eternal crown for myself—I will not strive to place that of England on my kinsman's head—at this cost. We have had over-much of war: I have seen too many of the noble, young, and gallant, fall by the sword. Brute force has had its day; now let us try what policy can do."

The council these friends held together was long and anxious. The lady still insisted on sudden and resolute measures. Lord Lovel, a soldier in all his nature, looked forward to the calling together the Yorkists from every part of the kingdom. The Earl, with a statesman's experience, saw more of obstacle to their purpose in the elevation of