

ЭДВАРД БУЛЬВЕР-ЛИТТОН

**THE LAST OF THE
BARONS – VOLUME
12**

Эдвард Джордж Бульвер-Литтон
The Last of the
Barons — Volume 12

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Edward Bulwer-Lytton

The Last of the Barons — Volume 12

BOOK XII.

THE BATTLE OF BARNET

CHAPTER I.

A KING IN HIS CITY HOPES TO RECOVER HIS REALM— A WOMAN IN HER CHAMBER FEARS TO FORFEIT HER OWN

Edward and his army reached St. Alban's. Great commotion, great joy, were in the Sanctuary of Westminster! The Jerusalem Chamber, therein, was made the high council-hall of the friends of York. Great commotion, great terror, were in the city of London. Timid Master Stokton had been elected mayor; horribly frightened either to side with an Edward or a Henry, timid Master Stokton feigned or fell ill. Sir Thomas Cook, a wealthy and

influential citizen, and a member of the House of Commons, had been appointed deputy in his stead. Sir Thomas Cook took fright also, and ran away. [Fabyan.] The power of the city thus fell into the hands of Ureswick, the Recorder, a zealous Yorkist. Great commotion, great scorn, were in the breasts of the populace, as the Archbishop of York, hoping thereby to rekindle their loyalty, placed King Henry on horseback, and paraded him through the streets from Chepeside to Walbrook, from Walbrook to St. Paul's; for the news of Edward's arrival, and the sudden agitation and excitement it produced on his enfeebled frame, had brought upon the poor king one of the epileptic attacks to which he had been subject from childhood, and which made the cause of his frequent imbecility; and, just recovered from such a fit,—his eyes vacant, his face haggard, his head drooping,—the spectacle of such an antagonist to the vigorous Edward moved only pity in the few and ridicule in the many. Two thousand Yorkist gentlemen were in the various Sanctuaries; aided and headed by the Earl of Essex, they came forth armed and clamorous, scouring the streets, and shouting, "King Edward!" with impunity. Edward's popularity in London was heightened amongst the merchants by prudent reminiscences of the vast debts he had incurred, which his victory only could ever enable him to repay to his good citizens. [Comines.] The women, always, in such a movement, active partisans, and useful, deserted their hearths to canvass all strong arms and stout hearts for the handsome woman-lover. [Comines.] The Yorkist

Archbishop of Canterbury did his best with the ecclesiastics, the Yorkist Recorder his best with the flat-caps. Alwyn, true to his anti-feudal principles, animated all the young freemen to support the merchant-king, the favourer of commerce, the man of his age! The city authorities began to yield to their own and the general metropolitan predilections. But still the Archbishop of York had six thousand soldiers at his disposal, and London could be yet saved to Warwick, if the prelate acted with energy and zeal and good faith. That such was his first intention is clear, from his appeal to the public loyalty in King Henry's procession; but when he perceived how little effect that pageant had produced; when, on re-entering the Bishop of London's palace, he saw before him the guileless, helpless puppet of contending factions, gasping for breath, scarcely able to articulate, the heartless prelate turned away, with a muttered ejaculation of contempt.

"Clarence had not deserted," said he to himself, "unless he saw greater profit with King Edward!" And then he began to commune with himself, and to commune with his brother-prelate of Canterbury; and in the midst of all this commune arrived Catesby, charged with messages to the archbishop from Edward, —messages full of promise and affection on the one hand, of menace and revenge upon the other. Brief: Warwick's cup of bitterness had not yet been filled; that night the archbishop and the mayor of London met, and the Tower was surrendered to Edward's friends. The next day Edward and his army entered, amidst the shouts of the populace; rode to St. Paul's, where the

archbishop [Sharon Turner. It is a comfort to think that this archbishop was, two years afterwards, first robbed, and then imprisoned, by Edward IV.; nor did he recover his liberty till a few weeks before his death, in 1476 (five years subsequently to the battle of Barnet).] met him, leading Henry by the hand, again a captive; thence Edward proceeded to Westminster Abbey, and, fresh from his atrocious perjury at York, offered thanksgiving for its success. The Sanctuary yielded up its royal fugitives, and, in joy and in pomp, Edward led his wife and her new-born babe, with Jacquetta and his elder children, to Baynard's Castle.

The next morning (the third day), true to his promise, Warwick marched towards London with the mighty armament he had now collected. Treason had done its worst,—the metropolis was surrendered, and King Henry in the Tower.

"These things considered," says the Chronicler, "the earl saw that all calculations of necessity were brought to this end,—that they must now be committed to the hazard and chance of one battle." [Hall.] He halted, therefore, at St. Alban's, to rest his troops; and marching thence towards Barnet, pitched his tents on the upland ground, then called the Heath or Chase of Gladsmoor, and waited the coming foe.

Nor did Edward linger long from that stern meeting. Entering London on the 11th of April, he prepared to quit it on the 13th. Besides the force he had brought with him, he had now recruits in his partisans from the Sanctuaries and other hiding-places in the metropolis, while London furnished him, from her

high-spirited youths, a gallant troop of bow and bill men, whom Alwyn had enlisted, and to whom Edward willingly appointed, as captain, Alwyn himself,—who had atoned for his submission to Henry's restoration by such signal activity on behalf of the young king, whom he associated with the interests of his class, and the weal of the great commercial city, which some years afterwards rewarded his affection by electing him to her chief magistracy. [Nicholas Alwyn, the representative of that generation which aided the commercial and anti-feudal policy of Edward IV. and Richard III., and welcomed its consummation under their Tudor successor, rose to be Lord Mayor of London in the fifteenth year of the reign of Henry VII.—FABYAN.]

It was on that very day, the 13th of April, some hours before the departure of the York army, that Lord Hastings entered the Tower, to give orders relative to the removal of the unhappy Henry, whom Edward had resolved to take with him on his march.

And as he had so ordered and was about to return, Alwyn, emerging from one of the interior courts, approached him in much agitation, and said thus: "Pardon me, my lord, if in so grave an hour I recall your attention to one you may haply have forgotten."

"Ah, the poor maiden; but you told me, in the hurried words that we have already interchanged, that she was safe and well."

"Safe, my lord,—not well. Oh, hear me. I depart to battle for your cause and your king's. A gentleman in your train has advised

me that you are married to a noble dame in the foreign land. If so, this girl whom I have loved so long and truly may yet forget you, may yet be mine. Oh, give me that hope to make me a braver soldier."

"But," said Hastings, embarrassed, and with a changing countenance, "but time presses, and I know not where the demoiselle—"

"She is here," interrupted Alwyn; "here, within these walls, in yonder courtyard. I have just left her. You, whom she loves, forgot her! I, whom she disdains, remembered. I went to see to her safety, to counsel her to rest here for the present, whatever betides; and at every word I said, she broke in upon me with but one name,—that name was thine! And when stung, and in the impulse of the moment, I exclaimed, 'He deserves not this devotion. They tell me, Sibyll, that Lord Hastings has found a wife in exile.' Oh, that look! that cry! they haunt me still. 'Prove it, prove it, Alwyn,' she cried. 'And—' I interrupted, 'and thou couldst yet, for thy father's sake, be true wife to me?'"

"Her answer, Alwyn?"

"It was this, 'For my father's sake only, then, could I live on; and—' her sobs stopped her speech, till she cried again, 'I believe it not! thou hast deceived me. Only from his lips will I hear the sentence.' Go to her, manfully and frankly, as becomes you, high lord,—go! It is but a single sentence thou hast to say, and thy heart will be the lighter, and thine arm the stronger for those honest words."

Hastings pulled his cap over his brow, and stood a moment as if in reflection; he then said, "Show me the way; thou art right. It is due to her and to thee; and as by this hour to-morrow my soul may stand before the Judgment-seat, that poor child's pardon may take one sin from the large account."

CHAPTER II.

SHARP IS THE KISS OF THE FALCON'S BEAR

Hastings stood in the presence of the girl to whom he had pledged his truth. They were alone; but in the next chamber might be heard the peculiar sound made by the mechanism of the Eureka. Happy and lifeless mechanism, which moves, and toils, and strives on, to change the destiny of millions, but hath neither ear nor eye, nor sense nor heart,—the avenues of pain to man! She had—yes, literally—she had recognized her lover's step upon the stair, she had awakened at once from that dull and icy lethargy with which the words of Alwyn had chained life and soul. She sprang forward as Hastings entered; she threw herself in delirious joy upon his bosom. "Thou art come, thou art! It is not true, not true. Heaven bless thee! thou art come!" But sudden as the movement was the recoil. Drawing herself back, she gazed steadily on his face, and said, "Lord Hastings, they tell me thy hand is another's. Is it true?"

"Hear me!" answered the nobleman. "When first I—"

"O God! O God! he answers not, he falters! Speak! Is it true?"

"It is true. I am wedded to another."

Sibyll did not fall to the ground, nor faint, nor give vent to noisy passion. But the rich colour, which before had been varying

and fitful, deserted her cheek, and left it of an ashen whiteness; the lips, too, grew tightly compressed, and her small fingers, interlaced, were clasped with strained and convulsive energy, so that the quivering of the very arms was perceptible. In all else she seemed composed, as she said, "I thank you, my lord, for the simple truth; no more is needed. Heaven bless you and yours! Farewell!"

"Stay! you shall—you must hear me on. Thou knowest how dearly in youth I loved Katherine Nevile. In manhood the memory of that love haunted me, but beneath thy sweet smile I deemed it at last effaced; I left thee to seek the king, and demand his assent to our union. I speak not of obstacles that then arose; in the midst of them I learned Katherine was lone and widowed,—was free. At her own summons I sought her presence, and learned that she had loved me ever,—loved me still. The intoxication of my early dream returned; reverse and exile followed close; Katherine left her state, her fortunes, her native land, and followed the banished man; and so memory and gratitude and destiny concurred, and the mistress of my youth became my wife. None other could have replaced thy image; none other have made me forget the faith I pledged thee. The thought of thee has still pursued me,— will pursue me to the last. I dare not say now that I love thee still, but yet—" He paused, but rapidly resumed, "Enough, enough! dear art thou to me, and honoured,—dearer, more honoured than a sister. Thank Heaven, at least, and thine own virtue, my falsehood leaves thee pure and

stainless. Thy hand may yet bless a worthier man. If our cause triumphs, thy fortunes, thy father's fate, shall be my fondest care. Never, never will my sleep be sweet, and my conscience laid to rest, till I hear thee say, as honoured wife—perchance, as blessed and blessing mother—'False one, I am happy!'"

A cold smile, at these last words, flitted over the girl's face,—the smile of a broken heart; but it vanished, and with that strange mixture of sweetness and pride,—mild and forgiving, yet still spirited and firm,—which belonged to her character, she nerved herself to the last and saddest effort to preserve dignity and conceal despair. "Farther words, my lord, are idle; I am rightly punished for a proud folly. Let not woman love above her state. Think no more of my destiny."

"No, no," interrupted the remorseful lord, "thy destiny must haunt me till thou hast chosen one with a better right to protect thee."

At the repetition of that implied desire to transfer her also to another, a noble indignation came to mar the calm for which she had hitherto not vainly struggled. "Oh, man!" she exclaimed, with passion, "does thy deceit give me the right to deceive another? I—I wed!—I—I—vow at the altar—a love dead, dead forever—dead as my own heart! Why dost thou mock me with the hollow phrase, 'Thou art pure and stainless?' Is the virginity of the soul still left? Do the tears I have shed for thee; doth the thrill of my heart when I heard thy voice; doth the plighted kiss that burns, burns now into my brow, and on my lips,—do these,

these leave me free to carry to a new affection the cinders and ashes of a soul thou hast ravaged and deflowered? Oh, coarse and rude belief of men, that naught is lost if the mere form be pure! The freshness of the first feelings, the bloom of the sinless thought, the sigh, the blush of the devotion—never, never felt but once! these, these make the true dower a maiden should bring to the hearth to which she comes as wife. Oh, taunt! Oh, insult! to speak to me of happiness, of the altar! Thou never knewest, lord, how I really loved thee!" And for the first time, a violent gush of tears came to relieve her heart.

Hastings was almost equally overcome. Well experienced as he was in those partings when maids reproach and gallants pray for pardon, but still sigh, "Farewell,"—he had now no words to answer that burst of uncontrollable agony; and he felt at once humbled and relieved, when Sibyll again, with one of those struggles which exhaust years of life, and almost leave us callous to all after-trial, pressed back the scalding tears, and said, with unnatural sweetness: "Pardon me, my lord, I meant not to reproach; the words escaped me,—think of them no more. I would fain, at least, part from you now as I had once hoped to part from you at the last hour of life,—without one memory of bitterness and anger, so that my conscience, whatever its other griefs, might say, 'My lips never belied my heart, my words never pained him!' And now then, Lord Hastings, in all charity, we part. Farewell forever, and forever! Thou hast wedded one who loves thee, doubtless, as tenderly as I had done. Ah, cherish that

affection! There are times even in thy career when a little love is sweeter than much fame. If thou thinkest I have aught to pardon thee, now with my whole heart I pray, as while life is mine that prayer shall be murmured, 'Heaven forgive this man, as I do! Heaven make his home the home of peace, and breathe into those now near and dear to him, the love and the faith that I once—'" She stopped, for the words choked her, and, hiding her face, held out her hand, in sign of charity and of farewell.

"Ah, if I dared pray like thee," murmured Hastings, pressing his lips upon that burning hand, "how should I weary Heaven to repair, by countless blessings, the wrong which I have done thee! And Heaven will—oh, it surely will!" He pressed the hand to his heart, dropped it, and was gone.

In the courtyard he was accosted by Alwyn—

"Thou hast been frank, my lord?"

"I have."

"And she bears it, and—"

"See how she forgives, and how I suffer!" said Hastings, turning his face towards his rival; and Alwyn saw that the tears were rolling down his cheeks—"Question me no more." There was a long silence. They quitted the precincts of the Tower, and were at the river-side. Hastings, waving his hand to Alwyn, was about to enter the boat which was to bear him to the war council assembled at Baynard's Castle, when the trader stopped him, and said anxiously,—

"Think you not, for the present, the Tower is the safest asylum

for Sibyll and her father? If we fail and Warwick returns, they are protected by the earl; if we triumph, thou wilt insure their safety from all foes?"

"Surely; in either case, their present home is the most secure."

The two men then parted. And not long afterwards, Hastings, who led the on-guard, was on his way towards Barnet; with him also went the foot volunteers under Alwyn. The army of York was on its march. Gloucester, to whose vigilance and energy were left the final preparations, was necessarily the last of the generals to quit the city. And suddenly, while his steed was at the gate of Baynard's Castle, he entered, armed cap-a-pie, into the chamber where the Duchess of Bedford sat with her grandchildren.

"Madame," said he, "I have a grace to demand from you, which will, methinks, not be displeasing. My lieutenants report to me that an alarm has spread amongst my men,—a religious horror of some fearful bombards and guns which have been devised by a sorcerer in Lord Warwick's pay. Your famous Friar Bungey has been piously amongst them, promising, however, that the mists which now creep over the earth shall last through the night and the early morrow; and if he deceive us not, we may post our men so as to elude the hostile artillery. But, sith the friar is so noted and influential, and sith there is a strong fancy that the winds which have driven back Margaret obeyed his charm, the soldiers clamour out for him to attend us, and, on the very field itself, counteract the spells of the Lancastrian nigromancer. The good friar, more accustomed to fight with fiends than men,

is daunted, and resists. As much may depend on his showing us good will, and making our fellows suppose we have the best of the witchcraft, I pray you to command his attendance, and cheer up his courage. He waits without."

"A most notable, a most wise advice, beloved Richard!" cried the duchess. "Friar Bungey is, indeed, a potent man. I will win him at once to your will;" and the duchess hurried from the room.

The friar's bodily fears, quieted at last by assurances that he should be posted in a place of perfect safety during the battle, and his avarice excited by promises of the amplest rewards, he consented to accompany the troops, upon one stipulation,—namely, that the atrocious wizard, who had so often baffled his best spells,—the very wizard who had superintended the accursed bombards, and predicted Edward's previous defeat and flight (together with the diabolical invention, in which all the malice and strength of his sorcery were centred),—might, according to Jacquetta's former promise, be delivered forthwith to his mercy, and accompany him to the very spot where he was to dispel and counteract the Lancastrian nigromancer's enchantments. The duchess, too glad to purchase the friar's acquiescence on such cheap terms, and to whose superstitious horror for Adam's lore in the black art was now added a purely political motive for desiring him to be made away with,—inasmuch as in the Sanctuary she had at last extorted from Elizabeth the dark secret which might make him a very dangerous witness against the interests and honour of Edward,—

readily and joyfully consented to this proposition.

A strong guard was at once despatched to the Tower with the friar himself, followed by a covered wagon, which was to serve for conveyance to Bungey and his victim.

In the mean while, Sibyll, after remaining for some time in the chamber which Hastings had abandoned to her solitary woe, had passed to the room in which her father held mute commune with his Eureka.

The machine was now thoroughly completed,—improved and perfected, to the utmost art the inventor ever could attain. Thinking that the prejudice against it might have arisen from its uncouth appearance, the poor philosopher had sought now to give it a gracious and imposing appearance. He had painted and gilt it with his own hands; it looked bright and gaudy in its gay hues; its outward form was worthy of the precious and propitious jewel which lay hidden in its centre.

"See, child, see!" said Adam; "is it not beautiful and comely?"

"My dear father, yes!" answered the poor girl, as still she sought to smile; then, after a short silence, she continued, "Father, of late, methinks, I have too much forgotten thee; pardon me, if so. Henceforth, I have no care in life but thee; henceforth let me ever, when thou toilest, come and sit by thy side. I would not be alone,—I dare not! Father, Father! God shield thy harmless life! I have nothing to love under heaven but thee!"

The good man turned wistfully, and raised, with tremulous

hands, the sad face that had pressed itself on his bosom. Gazing thereon mournfully, he said, "Some new grief hath chanced to thee, my child. Methought I heard another voice besides thine in yonder room. Ah, has Lord Hastings—"

"Father, spare me! Thou wert too right; thou didst judge too wisely. Lord Hastings is wedded to another! But see, I can smile still, I am calm. My heart will not break so long as it hath thee to love and pray for!"

She wound her arms round him as she spoke, and he roused himself from his world out of earth again. Though he could bring no comfort, there was something, at least, to the forlorn one, in his words of love, in his tears of pity.

They sat down together, side by side, as the evening darkened,—the Eureka forgotten in the hour of its perfection! They noted not the torches which flashed below, reddened at intervals the walls of their chamber, and gave a glow to the gay gilding and bright hues of the gaudy model. Yet those torches flickered round the litter that was to convey Henry the Peaceful to the battlefield, which was to decide the dynasty of his realm! The torches vanished, and forth from the dark fortress went the captive king.

Night succeeded to eve, when again the red glare shot upward on the Eureka, playing with fantastic smile on its quaint aspect. Steps and voices, and the clatter of arms, sounded in the yard, on the stairs, in the adjoining chamber; and suddenly the door was flung open, and, followed by some half score soldiers, strode in the terrible friar.

"Aha, Master Adam! who is the greater nigromancer now? Seize him! Away! And help you, Master Sergeant, to bear this piece of the foul fiend's cunning devising. Ho, ho! see you how it is tricked out and furbished up,—all for the battle, I warrant ye!"

The soldiers had already seized upon Adam, who, stupefied by astonishment rather than fear, uttered no sound, and attempted no struggle. But it was in vain they sought to tear from him Sibyll's clinging and protecting arms. A supernatural strength, inspired by a kind of superstition that no harm could chance to him while she was by, animated her slight form; and fierce though the soldiers were, they shrunk from actual and brutal violence to one thus young and fair. Those small hands clung so firmly, that it seemed that nothing but the edge of the sword could sever the child's clasp from the father's neck.

"Harm him not, harm him at your peril, friar!" she cried, with flashing eyes. "Tear him from me, and if King Edward win the day, Lord Hastings shall have thy life; if Lord Warwick, thy days are numbered, too. Beware, and avaunt!"

The friar was startled. He had forgotten Lord Hastings in the zest of his revenge. He feared that, if Sibyll were left behind, the tale she might tell would indeed bring on him a powerful foe in the daughter's lover; on the other hand, should Lord Warwick get the better, what vengeance would await her appeal to the great protector of her father! He resolved, therefore, on the instant, to take Sibyll as well as her father; and if the fortune of the day allowed him to rid himself of Warner, a good occasion might

equally occur to dispose forever of the testimony of Sibyll. He had already formed a cunning calculation in desiring Warner's company; for while, should Edward triumph, the sacrifice of the hated Warner was resolved upon, yet, should the earl get the better, he could make a merit to Warner that he (the friar) had not only spared, but saved, his life, in making him his companion. It was in harmony with this double policy that the friar mildly answered to Sibyll,—

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