

ЭДВАРД БУЛЬВЕР-ЛИТТОН

**THE LAST OF THE  
BARONS — VOLUME  
07**

**Эдвард Джордж Бульвер-Литтон**  
**The Last of the**  
**Barons — Volume 07**

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*The Last of the Barons — Volume 07:*

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# **Edward Bulwer-Lytton**

## **The Last of the Barons — Volume 07**

### **BOOK VII.**

### **THE POPULAR REBELLION**

#### **CHAPTER I.**

#### **THE WHITE LION OF MARCH SHAKES HIS MANE**

"And what news?" asked Hastings, as he found himself amidst the king's squires; while yet was heard the laugh of the tymbesteres, and yet gliding through the trees might be seen the retreating form of Sibyll.

"My lord, the king needs you instantly. A courier has just arrived from the North. The Lords St. John, Rivers, De Fulke, and Scales are already with his highness."

"Where?"

"In the great council chamber."

To that memorable room [it was from this room that Hastings

was hurried to execution, June 13, 1483] in the White Tower, in which the visitor, on entrance, is first reminded of the name and fate of Hastings, strode the unprophetic lord.

He found Edward not reclining on cushions and carpets, not womanlike in loose robes, not with his lazy smile upon his sleek beauty. The king had doffed his gown, and stood erect in the tight tunic, which gave in full perfection the splendid proportions of a frame unsurpassed in activity and strength. Before him, on the long table, lay two or three open letters, beside the dagger with which Edward had cut the silk that bound them. Around him gravely sat Lord Rivers, Anthony Woodville, Lord St. John, Raoul de Fulke, the young and valiant D'Eyncourt, and many other of the principal lords. Hastings saw at once that something of pith and moment had occurred; and by the fire in the king's eye, the dilation of his nostril, the cheerful and almost joyous pride of his mien and brow, the experienced courtier read the signs of WAR.

"Welcome, brave Hastings," said Edward, in a voice wholly changed from its wonted soft affectation,—loud, clear, and thrilling as it went through the marrow and heart of all who heard its stirring and trumpet accent,—"welcome now to the field as ever to the banquet! We have news from the North that bids us brace on the burget and buckle-to the brand,—a revolt that requires a king's arm to quell. In Yorkshire fifteen thousand men are in arms, under a leader they call Robin of Redesdale,—the pretext, a thrave of corn demanded by the Hospital of St.

Leonard's, the true design that of treason to our realm. At the same time, we hear from our brother of Gloucester, now on the Border, that the Scotch have lifted the Lancaster Rose. There is peril if these two armies meet. No time to lose,—they are saddling our war-steeds; we hasten to the van of our royal force. We shall have warm work, my lords. But who is worthy of a throne that cannot guard it?"

"This is sad tidings indeed, sire," said Hastings, gravely.

"Sad! Say it not, Hastings! War is the chase of kings! Sir Raoul de Fulke, why lookest thou so brooding and sorrowful?"

"Sire, I but thought that had Earl Warwick been in England, this—"

"Ha!" interrupted Edward, haughtily and hastily, "and is Warwick the sun of heaven that no cloud can darken where his face may shine? The rebels shall need no foe, my realm no regent, while I, the heir of the Plantagenets, have the sword for one, the sceptre for the other. We depart this evening ere the sun be set."

"My liege," said the Lord St. John, gravely, "on what forces do you count to meet so formidable an array?"

"All England, Lord of St. John!"

"Alack! my liege, may you not deceive yourself! But in this crisis it is right that your leal and trusty subjects should speak out, and plainly. It seems that these insurgents clamour not against yourself, but against the queen's relations,—yes, my Lord Rivers, against you and your House,—and I fear me that the hearts of England are with them here."

"It is true, sire," put in Raoul de Fulke, boldly; "and if these—new men are to head your armies, the warriors of Towton will stand aloof, —Raoul de Fulke serves no Woodville's banner. Frown not, Lord de Scales! it is the griping avarice of you and yours that has brought this evil on the king. For you the commons have been pillaged; for you the daughters of peers have been forced into monstrous marriages, at war with birth and with nature herself; for you, the princely Warwick, near to the throne in blood, and front and pillar of our time-honoured order of seigneur and of knight, has been thrust from our suzerain's favour. And if now ye are to march at the van of war, —you to be avengers of the strife of which ye are the cause,—I say that the soldiers will lack heart, and the provinces ye pass through will be the country of a foe!"

"Vain man!" began Anthony Woodville, when Hastings laid his hand on his arm, while Edward, amazed at this outburst from two of the supporters on whom he principally counted, had the prudence to suppress his resentment, and remained silent,—but with the aspect of one resolved to command obedience, when he once deemed it right to interfere.

"Hold, Sir Anthony!" said Hastings, who, the moment he found himself with men, woke to all the manly spirit and profound wisdom that had rendered his name illustrious—"hold, and let me have the word; my Lords St. John and De Fulke, your charges are more against me than against these gentlemen, for I am a new man,—a squire by birth, and proud to derive mine

honours from the same origin as all true nobility,—I mean the grace of a noble liege and the happy fortune of a soldier's sword. It may be" (and here the artful favourite, the most beloved of the whole court, inclined himself meekly)—"it may be that I have not borne those honours so mildly as to disarm blame. In the war to be, let me atone. My liege, hear your servant: give me no command,—let me be a simple soldier, fighting by your side. My example who will not follow?—proud to ride but as a man of arms along the track which the sword of his sovereign shall cut through the ranks of battle! Not you, Lord de Scales, redoubtable and invincible with lance and axe; let us new men soothe envy by our deeds; and you, Lords St. John and De Fulke, you shall teach us how your fathers led warriors who did not fight more gallantly than we will. And when rebellion is at rest, when we meet again in our suzerain's hall, accuse us new men, if you can find us faulty, and we will answer you as we best may."

This address, which could have come from no man with such effect as from Hastings, touched all present. And though the Woodvilles, father and son, saw in it much to gall their pride, and half believed it a snare for their humiliation, they made no opposition. Raoul de Fulke, ever generous as fiery, stretched forth his hand, and said,—

"Lord Hastings, you have spoken well. Be it as the king wills."

"My lords," returned Edward, gayly, "my will is that ye be friends while a foe is in the field. Hasten, then, I beseech you, one and all, to raise your vassals, and join our standard at



Fotheringay. I will find ye posts that shall content the bravest."

The king made a sign to break up the conference, and dismissing even the Woodvilles, was left alone with Hastings.

"Thou hast served me at need, Will;" said the king. "But I shall remember" (and his eye flashed a tiger's fire) "the mouthing of those mock-pieces of the lords at Runnymede. I am no John, to be bearded by my vassals. Enough of them now. Think you Warwick can have abetted this revolt?"

"A revolt of peasants and yeomen! No, sire. If he did so, farewell forever to the love the barons bear him."

"Um! and yet Montagu, whom I dismissed ten days since to the Borders, hearing of disaffection, hath done nought to check it. But come what may, his must be a bold lance that shivers against a king's mail. And now one kiss of my lady Bessee, one cup of the bright canary, and then God and Saint George for the White Rose!"

## CHAPTER II.

### THE CAMP AT OLNEY

It was some weeks after the citizens of London had seen their gallant king, at the head of such forces as were collected in haste in the metropolis, depart from their walls to the encounter of the rebels. Surprising and disastrous had been the tidings in the interim. At first, indeed, there were hopes that the insurrection had been put down by Montagu, who had defeated the troops of Robin of Redesdale, near the city of York, and was said to have beheaded their leader. But the spirit of discontent was only fanned by an adverse wind. The popular hatred to the Woodvilles was so great, that in proportion as Edward advanced to the scene of action, the country rose in arms, as Raoul de Fulke had predicted. Leaders of lordly birth now headed the rebellion; the sons of the Lords Latimer and Fitzhugh (near kinsmen of the House of Nevile) lent their names to the cause and Sir John Coniers, an experienced soldier, whose claims had been disregarded by Edward, gave to the insurgents the aid of a formidable capacity for war. In every mouth was the story of the Duchess of Bedford's witchcraft; and the waxen figure of the earl did more to rouse the people than perhaps the earl himself could have done in person. [See "Parliamentary Rolls," vi. 232, for the accusation of witchcraft, and the fabrication of a necromantic image of Lord Warwick, circulated against the

Duchess of Bedford. She herself quotes and complains of them.] As yet, however, language of the insurgents was tempered with all personal respect to the king; they declared in their manifestoes that they desired only the banishment of the Woodvilles and the recall of Warwick, whose name they used unscrupulously, and whom they declared they were on their way to meet. As soon as it was known that the kinsmen of the beloved earl were in the revolt, and naturally supposed that the earl himself must countenance the enterprise, the tumultuous camp swelled every hour, while knight after knight, veteran after veteran, abandoned the royal standard. The Lord d'Eyncourt (one of the few lords of the highest birth and greatest following over whom the Nevilles had no influence, and who bore the Woodvilles no grudge) had, in his way to Lincolnshire,—where his personal aid was necessary to rouse his vassals, infected by the common sedition,—been attacked and wounded by a body of marauders, and thus Edward's camp lost one of its greatest leaders. Fierce dispute broke out in the king's councils; and when the witch Jacquetta's practices against the earl travelled from the hostile into the royal camp, Raoul de Fulke, St. John, and others, seized with pious horror, positively declared they would throw down their arms and retire to their castles, unless the Woodvilles were dismissed from the camp and the Earl of Warwick was recalled to England. To the first demand the king was constrained to yield; with the second he temporized. He marched from Fotheringay to Newark; but the signs of disaffection, though they could not dismay him

as a soldier, altered his plans as a captain of singular military acuteness; he fell back on Nottingham, and despatched, with his own hands, letters to Clarence, the Archbishop of York, and Warwick. To the last he wrote touchingly.

"We do not believe" (said the letter) "that ye should be of any such disposition towards us as the rumour here runneth, considering the trust and affection we bear you,—and cousin, we think ye shall be to us welcome." [Paston Letters, ccxcviii. (Knight's edition), vol. ii. p. 59. See also Lingard, vol. iii. p. 522 (4to edition), note 43, for the proper date to be assigned to Edward's letter to Warwick, etc.]

But ere these letters reached their destination, the crown seemed well-nigh lost. At Edgecote the Earl of Pembroke was defeated and slain, and five thousand royalists were left on the field. Earl Rivers and his son, Sir John Woodville, [This Sir John Woodville was the most obnoxious of the queen's brothers, and infamous for the avarice which had led him to marry the old Duchess of Norfolk, an act which according to the old laws of chivalry would have disabled him from entering the lists of knighthood, for the ancient code disqualified and degraded any knight who should marry any old woman for her money! Lord Rivers was the more odious to the people at the time of the insurrection because, in his capacity of treasurer, he had lately tampered with the coin and circulation.] who in obedience to the royal order had retired to the earl's country seat of Grafton, were taken prisoners, and beheaded by the vengeance of the

insurgents. The same lamentable fate befell the Lord Stafford, on whom Edward relied as one of his most puissant leaders; and London heard with dismay that the king, with but a handful of troops, and those lukewarm and disaffected, was begirt on all sides by hostile and marching thousands.

From Nottingham, however, Edward made good his retreat to a village called Olney, which chanced at that time to be partially fortified with a wall and a strong gate. Here the rebels pursued him; and Edward, hearing that Sir Anthony Woodville, who conceived that the fate of his father and brother cancelled all motive for longer absence from the contest, was busy in collecting a force in the neighbourhood of Coventry, while other assistance might be daily expected from London, strengthened the fortifications as well as the time would permit, and awaited the assault of the insurgents.

It was at this crisis, and while throughout all England reigned terror and commotion, that one day, towards the end of July, a small troop of horsemen were seen riding rapidly towards the neighbourhood of Olney. As the village came in view of the cavalcade, with the spire of its church and its gray stone gateway, so also they beheld, on the pastures that stretched around wide and far, a moving forest of pikes and plumes.

"Holy Mother!" said one of the foremost riders, "good the knight and strong man though Edward be, it were sharp work to cut his way from that hamlet through yonder fields! Brother, we were more welcome, had we brought more bills and bows at our

backs!"

"Archbishop," answered the stately personage thus addressed, "we bring what alone raises armies and disbands them,—a NAME that a People honours! From the moment the White Bear is seen on yonder archway side by side with the king's banner, that army will vanish as smoke before the wind."

"Heaven grant it, Warwick!" said the Duke of Clarence; for though Edward hath used us sorely, it chafes me as Plantagenet and as prince to see how peasants and varlets can hem round a king."

"Peasants and varlets are pawns in the chessboard, cousin George," said the prelate; "and knight and bishop find them mighty useful when pushing forward to an attack. Now knight and bishop appear themselves and take up the game. Warwick," added the prelate, in a whisper, unheard by Clarence, "forget not, while appeasing rebellion, that the king is in your power."

"For shame, George! I think not now of the unkind king; I think only of the brave boy I dandled on my knee, and whose sword I girded on at Towton. How his lion heart must chafe, condemned to see a foe whom his skill as captain tells him it were madness to confront!"

"Ay, Richard Nevile, ay," said the prelate, with a slight sneer, "play the Paladin, and become the dupe; release the prince, and betray the people!"

"No! I can be true to both. Tush! brother, your craft is slight to the plain wisdom of bold honesty. You slacken your steeds,

sirs; on! on! see the march of the rebels! On, for an Edward and a Warwick!" and, spurring to full speed, the little company arrived at the gates. The loud bugle of the new comers was answered by the cheerful note of the joyous warder, while dark, slow, and solemn over the meadows crept on the mighty crowd of the rebel army.

"We have forestalled the insurgents!" said the earl, throwing himself from his black steed. "Marmaduke Nevile, advance our banner; heralds, announce the Duke of Clarence, the Archbishop of York, and the Earl of Salisbury and Warwick."

Through the anxious town, along the crowded walls and housetops, into the hall of an old mansion (that then adjoined the church), where the king, in complete armour, stood at bay, with stubborn and disaffected officers, rolled the thunder cry, "A Warwick! a Warwick! all saved! a Warwick!"

Sharply, as he heard the clamour, the king turned upon his startled council. "Lords and captains!" said he, with that inexpressible majesty which he could command in his happier hours, "God and our Patron Saint have sent us at least one man who has the heart to fight fifty times the odds of yon miscreant rabble, by his king's side, and for the honour of loyalty and knighthood!"

"And who says, sire," answered Raoul de Fulke, "that we, your lords and captains, would not risk blood and life for our king and our knighthood in a just cause? But we will not butcher our countrymen for echoing our own complaint, and praying your

Grace that a grasping and ambitious family which you have raised to power may no longer degrade your nobles and oppress your commons. We shall see if the Earl of Warwick blame us or approve."

"And I answer," said Edward, loftily, "that whether Warwick approve or blame, come as friend or foe, I will sooner ride alone through yonder archway, and carve out a soldier's grave amongst the ranks of rebellious war, than be the puppet of my subjects, and serve their will by compulsion. Free am I—free ever will I be, while the crown of the Plantagenet is mine, to raise those whom I love, to defy the threats of those sworn to obey me. And were I but Earl of March, instead of king of England, this hall should have swum with the blood of those who have insulted the friends of my youth, the wife of my bosom. Off, Hastings!—I need no mediator with my servants. Nor here, nor anywhere in broad England, have I my equal, and the king forgives or scorns—construe it as ye will, my lords—what the simple gentleman would avenge."

It were in vain to describe the sensation that this speech produced. There is ever something in courage and in will that awes numbers, though brave themselves. And what with the unquestioned valour of Edward; what with the effect of his splendid person, towering above all present by the head, and moving lightly, with each impulse, through the mass of a mail that few there could have borne unsinking, this assertion of absolute power in the midst of mutiny—an army marching to



the gates—imposed an unwilling reverence and sullen silence mixed with anger, that, while it chafed, admired. They who in peace had despised the voluptuous monarch, feasting in his palace, and reclining on the lap of harlot-beauty, felt that in war all Mars seemed living in his person. Then, indeed, he was a king; and had the foe, now darkening the landscape, been the noblest chivalry of France, not a man there but had died for a smile from that haughty lip. But the barons were knit heart in heart with the popular outbreak, and to put down the revolt seemed to them but to raise the Woodvilles. The silence was still unbroken, save where the persuasive whisper of Lord Hastings might be faintly heard in remonstrance with the more powerful or the more stubborn of the chiefs, when the tread of steps resounded without, and, unarmed, bareheaded, the only form in Christendom grander and statelier than the king's strode into the hall.

Edward, as yet unaware what course Warwick would pursue, and half doubtful whether a revolt that had borrowed his name and was led by his kinsmen might not originate in his consent, surrounded by those to whom the earl was especially dear, and aware that if Warwick were against him all was lost, still relaxed not the dignity of his mien; and leaning on his large two-handed sword, with such inward resolves as brave kings and gallant gentlemen form, if the worst should befall, he watched the majestic strides of his great kinsman, and said, as the earl approached, and the mutinous captains louted low,—

"Cousin, you are welcome! for truly do I know that when you have aught whereof to complain, you take not the moment of danger and disaster. And whatever has chanced to alienate your heart from me, the sound of the rebel's trumpet chases all difference, and marries your faith to mine."

"Oh, Edward, my king, why did you so misjudge me in the prosperous hour!" said Warwick, simply, but with affecting earnestness: "since in the adverse hour you arede me well?"

As he spoke, he bowed his head, and, bending his knee, kissed the hand held out to him.

Edward's face grew radiant, and, raising the earl, he glanced proudly at the barons, who stood round, surprised and mute.

"Yes, my lords and sirs, see,—it is not the Earl of Warwick, next to our royal brethren the nearest subject to the throne, who would desert me in the day of peril!"

"Nor do we, sire," retorted Raoul de Fulke; "you wrong us before our mighty comrade if you so misthink us. We will fight for the king, but not for the queen's kindred; and this alone brings on us your anger."

"The gates shall be opened to ye. Go! Warwick and I are men enough for the rabble yonder."

The earl's quick eye and profound experience of his time saw at once the dissension and its causes. Nor, however generous, was he willing to forego the present occasion for permanently destroying an influence which he knew hostile to himself and hurtful to the realm. His was not the generosity of a boy, but of

a statesman. Accordingly, as Raoul de Fulke ceased, he took up the word.

"My liege, we have yet an hour good ere the foe can reach the gates. Your brother and mine accompany me. See, they enter! Please you, a few minutes to confer with them; and suffer me, meanwhile, to reason with these noble captains."

Edward paused; but before the open brow of the earl fled whatever suspicion might have crossed the king's mind.

"Be it so, cousin; but remember this,—to counsellors who can menace me with desertion at such an hour, I concede nothing."

Turning hastily away, he met Clarence and the prelate midway in the hall, threw his arm caressingly over his brother's shoulder, and, taking the archbishop by the hand, walked with them towards the battlements.

"Well, my friends," said Warwick, "and what would you of the king?"

"The dismissal of all the Woodvilles, except the queen; the revocation of the grants and land accorded to them, to the despoiling the ancient noble; and, but for your presence, we had demanded your recall."

"And, failing these, what your resolve?"

"To depart, and leave Edward to his fate. These granted, we doubt little but that the insurgents will disband. These not granted, we but waste our lives against a multitude whose cause we must approve."

"The cause! But ye know not the real cause," answered

Warwick. "I know it; for the sons of the North are familiar to me, and their rising hath deeper meaning than ye deem. What! have they not decoyed to their head my kinsmen, the heirs of Latimer and Fitzhugh, and bold Coniers, whose steel calque should have circled a wiser brain? Have they not taken my name as their battle-cry? And do ye think this falsehood veils nothing but the simple truth of just complaint?"

"Was their rising, then," asked St. John, in evident surprise, "wholly unauthorized by you?"

"So help me Heaven! if I would resort to arms to redress a wrong, think not that I myself would be absent from the field! No, my lords, friends, and captains, time presses; a few words must suffice to explain what as yet may be dark to you. I have letters from Montagu and others, which reached me the same day as the king's, and which clear up the purpose of our misguided countrymen. Ye know well that ever in England, but especially since the reign of Edward III., strange, wild notions of some kind of liberty other than that we enjoy have floated loose through the land. Among the commons, a half-conscious recollection that the nobles are a different race from themselves feeds a secret rancour and dislike, which, at any fair occasion for riot, shows itself bitter and ruthless,—as in the outbreak of Cade and others. And if the harvest fail, or a tax gall, there are never wanting men to turn the popular distress to the ends of private ambition or state design. Such a man has been the true head and front of this commotion."

"Speak you of Robin of Redesdale, now dead?" asked one of the captains.

"He is not dead. [The fate of Robin of Redesdale has been as obscure as most of the incidents in this most perplexed part of English history. While some of the chroniclers finish his career according to the report mentioned in the text, Fabyan not only more charitably prolongs his life, but rewards him with the king's pardon; and according to the annals of his ancient and distinguished family (who will pardon, we trust, a license with one of their ancestry equally allowed by history and romance), as referred to in Wotton's "English Baronetage" (Art. "Hilyard"), and which probably rests upon the authority of the life of Richard III., in Stowe's "Annals," he is represented as still living in the reign of that king. But the whole account of this famous demagogue in Wotton is, it must be owned, full of historical mistakes.] Montagu informs me that the report was false. He was defeated off York, and retired for some days into the woods; but it is he who has enticed the sons of Latimer and Fitzhugh into the revolt, and resigned his own command to the martial cunning of Sir John Coniers. This Robin of Redesdale is no common man. He hath had a clerkly education, he hath travelled among the Free Towns of Italy, he hath deep purpose in all he doth; and among his projects is the destruction of the nobles here, as it was whilome effected in Florence, the depriving us of all offices and posts, with other changes, wild to think of and long to name."

"And we would have suffered this man to triumph!" exclaimed

De Fulke: "we have been to blame."

"Under fair pretence he has gathered numbers, and now wields an army. I have reason to know that, had he succeeded in estranging ye from Edward, and had the king fallen, dead or alive, into his hands, his object would have been to restore Henry of Windsor, but on conditions that would have left king and baron little more than pageants in the state. I knew this man years ago. I have watched him since; and, strange though it may seem to you, he hath much in him that I admire as a subject and should fear were I a king. Brief, thus runs my counsel: For our sake and the realm's safety, we must see this armed multitude disbanded; that done, we must see the grievances they with truth complain of fairly redressed. Think not, my lords, I avenge my own wrongs alone, when I go with you in your resolve to banish from the king's councils the baleful influence of the queen's kin. Till that be compassed, no peace for England. As a leprosy, their avarice crawls over the nobler parts of the state, and devours while it sullies. Leave this to me; and, though we will redress ourselves, let us now assist our king!"

With one voice the unruly officers clamoured their assent to all the earl urged, and expressed their readiness to sally at once from the gates, and attack the rebels.

"But," observed an old veteran, "what are we amongst so many? Here a handful—there an army!"

"Fear not, reverend sir," answered Warwick, with an assured smile; "is not this army in part gathered from my own province of

Yorkshire? Is it not formed of men who have eaten of my bread and drunk of my cup? Let me see the man who will discharge one arrow at the walls which contain Richard Nevile of Warwick. Now each to your posts,—I to the king."

Like the pouring of new blood into a decrepit body seemed the arrival, at that feeble garrison, of the Earl of Warwick. From despair into the certainty of triumph leaped every heart. Already at the sight of his banner floating by the side of Edward's, the gunner had repaired to his bombard, the archer had taken up his bow; the village itself, before disaffected, poured all its scanty population—women, and age, and children—to the walls. And when the earl joined the king upon the ramparts, he found that able general sanguine and elated, and pointing out to Clarence the natural defences of the place. Meanwhile, the rebels, no doubt apprised by their scouts of the new aid, had already halted in their march, and the dark swarm might be seen indistinctly undulating, as bees ere they settle, amidst the verdure of the plain.

"Well, cousin," said the king, "have ye brought these Hotspurs to their allegiance?"

"Sire, yes," said Warwick, gravely; "but we have here no force to resist yon army."

"Bring you not succours?" said the king, astonished. "You must have passed through London. Have you left no troops upon the road?"

"I had no time, sire; and London is well-nigh palsied with dismay. Had I waited to collect troops, I might have found a

king's head blackening over those gates."

"Well," returned Edward, carelessly, "few or many, one gentleman is more worth than a hundred varlets. 'We are eno' for glory,' as Henry said at Agincourt."

"No, sire; you are too skilful and too wise to believe your boast.

These men we cannot conquer,—we must disperse them."

"By what spell?"



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