

ЭДВАРД БУЛЬВЕР-ЛИТТОН

**THE LAST OF THE
BARONS — VOLUME
11**

Эдвард Бульвер-Литтон

The Last of the Barons — Volume 11

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Edward Bulwer-Lytton

The Last of the Barons — Volume 11

BOOK XI.

THE NEW POSITION OF THE KING-MAKER

CHAPTER I.

WHEREIN MASTER ADAM WARNER IS NOTABLY COMMENDED AND ADVANCED—AND GREATNESS SAYS TO WISDOM, "THY DESTINY BE MINE, AMEN."

The Chronicles inform us, that two or three days after the entrance of Warwick and Clarence,—namely, on the 6th of October,—those two leaders, accompanied by the Lords Shrewsbury, Stanley, and a numerous and noble train, visited the Tower in formal state, and escorted the king, robed in blue velvet, the crown on his head, to public thanksgivings at St. Paul's, and thence to the Bishop's Palace, [not to the Palace at Westminster, as some historians, preferring the French to the English authorities, have asserted,—that palace was out of repair] where he continued chiefly to reside.

The proclamation that announced the change of dynasty was received with apparent acquiescence through the length and breadth of the kingdom, and the restoration of the Lancastrian line seemed yet the more firm and solid by the magnanimous forbearance of Warwick and his councils. Not one execution that could be termed the act of a private revenge stained with blood the second reign of the peaceful Henry. One only head fell on the scaffold,—that of the Earl of Worcester. [Lord Warwick himself did not sit in judgment on Worcester. He was tried and condemned by Lord Oxford. Though some old offences in his Irish government were alleged against him, the cruelties which rendered him so odious were of recent date. He had (as we before took occasion to relate) impaled twenty persons after Warwick's flight into France. The "Warkworth Chronicle" says, "He was ever afterwarde greatly behated among the people for this disordynate dethe that he used, contrary to the laws of the lande."] This solitary execution, which was regarded by all classes as a due concession to justice, only yet more illustrated the general mildness of the new rule.

It was in the earliest days of this sudden restoration that Alwyn found the occasion to serve his friends in the Tower. Warwick was eager to conciliate all the citizens, who, whether frankly or grudgingly, had supported his cause; and, amongst these, he was soon informed of the part taken in the Guildhall by the rising goldsmith. He sent for Alwyn to his house in Warwick-lane, and after complimenting him on his advance in life and repute, since Nicholas had waited on him with baubles for his embassy to France, he offered him the special rank of goldsmith to the king.

The wary, yet honest, trader paused a moment in some embarrassment before he answered,—

"My good lord, you are noble and gracious eno' to understand and forgive me when I say that I have had, in the upstart of my fortunes, the countenance of the late King Edward and his queen; and though the public weal made me advise my fellow-citizens not to resist your entry, I would not, at least, have it said that my desertion had benefited my private fortunes."

Warwick coloured, and his lip curled. "Tush, man, assume not virtues which do not exist amongst the sons of trade, nor, much I trow, amongst the sons of Adam. I read thy mind. Thou thinkest it unsafe openly to commit thyself to the new state. Fear not,—we are firm."

"Nay, my lord," returned Alwyn, "it is not so. But there are many better citizens than I, who remember that the Yorkists were ever friends to commerce. And you will find that only by great tenderness to our crafts you can win the heart of London, though you have passed its gates."

"I shall be just to all men," answered the earl, dryly; "but if the flat-caps are false, there are eno' of bonnets of steel to watch over the Red Rose!"

"You are said, my lord," returned Alwyn, bluntly, "to love the barons, the knights, the gentry, the yeomen, and the peasants, but to despise the traders,—I fear me that report in this is true."

"I love not the trader spirit, man,—the spirit that cheats, and cringes, and haggles, and splits straws for pence, and roasts eggs by other men's blazing rafters. Edward of York, forsooth, was a great trader! It was a sorry hour for England when such as ye, Nick Alwyn, left your green villages for loom and booth. But thus far have I spoken to you as a brave fellow, and of the north countree. I have no time to waste on words. Wilt thou accept mine offer, or name another boon in my power? The man who hath served me wrongs me,—till I have served him again!"

"My lord, yes; I will name such a boon,—safety, and, if you will, some grace and honour, to a learned scholar now in the Tower, one Adam Warner, whom—"

"Now in the Tower! Adam Warner! And wanting a friend, I no more an exile! That is my affair, not thine. Grace, honour,—ay, to his heart's content. And his noble daughter? Mort Dieu! she shall choose her bridegroom among the best of England. Is she, too, in the fortress?"

"Yes," said Alwyn, briefly, not liking the last part of the earl's speech.

The earl rang the bell on his table. "Send hither Sir Marmaduke Nevile."

Alwyn saw his former rival enter, and heard the earl commission him to accompany, with a fitting train, his own litter to the Tower. "And you, Alwyn, go with your foster-brother, and pray Master Warner and his daughter to be my guests for their own pleasure. Come hither, my rude Northman,—come. I see I shall have many secret foes in this city: wilt not thou at least be Warwick's open friend?"

Alwyn found it hard to resist the charm of the earl's manner and voice; but, convinced in his own mind that the age was against Warwick, and that commerce and London would be little advantaged by the earl's rule, the trading spirit prevailed in his breast.

"Gracious my lord," he said, bending his knee in no servile homage, "he who befriends my order, commands me."

The proud noble bit his lip, and with a silent wave of his hand dismissed the foster-brothers.

"Thou art but a churl at best, Nick," said Marmaduke, as the door closed on the young men. "Many a baron would have sold his father's hall for such words from the earl's lip."

"Let barons sell their free conduct for fair words. I keep myself unshackled to join that cause which best fills the market and reforms the law. But tell me, I pray thee, Sir Knight, what makes Warner and his daughter so dear to your lord?"

"What! know you not?—and has she not told you?—Ah, what was I about to say?"

"Can there be a secret between the earl and the scholar?" asked Alwyn, in wonder.

"If there be, it is our place to respect it," returned the Nevile, adjusting his manteline; "and now we must command the litter."

In spite of all the more urgent and harassing affairs that pressed upon him, the earl found an early time to attend to his guests. His welcome to Sibyll was more than courteous,—it was paternal. As she approached him, timidly and with a downcast eye, he advanced, placed his hand upon her head,—

"The Holy Mother ever have thee in her charge, child!—This is a father's kiss, young mistress," added the earl, pressing his lips to her forehead; "and in this kiss, remember that I pledge to thee care for thy fortunes, honour for thy name, my heart to do thee service, my arm to shield from wrong! Brave scholar, thy lot has become interwoven with my own. Prosperous is now my destiny,—my destiny be thine! Amen!"

He turned then to Warner, and without further reference to a past which so galled his proud spirit, he made the scholar explain to him the nature of his labours. In the mind of every man who has passed much of his life in successful action, there is a certain, if we may so say, untaught mathesis,—but especially among those who have been bred to the art of war. A great soldier is a great mechanic, a great mathematician, though he may know it not; and Warwick, therefore, better than many a scholar comprehended the principle upon which Adam founded his experiments. But though he caught also a glimpse of the vast results which such experiments in themselves were calculated to effect, his strong common-sense perceived yet more clearly that the time was not ripe for such startling inventions.

"My friend," he said, "I comprehend thee passably. It is clear to me, that if thou canst succeed in making the elements do the work of man with equal precision, but with far greater force and rapidity, thou must multiply eventually, and, by multiplying, cheapen, all the products of industry; that thou must give to this country the market of the world; and that thine would be the true alchemy that turneth all to gold."

"Mighty intellect, thou graspest the truth!" exclaimed Adam.

"But," pursued the earl, with a mixture of prejudice and judgment, "grant thee success to the full, and thou wouldst turn this bold land of yeomanry and manhood into one community of griping traders and sickly artisans. Mort Dieu! we are over-commerced as it is,—the bow is already deserted for the ell-measure. The town populations are ever the most worthless in war. England is begirt with mailed foes; and if by one process she were to accumulate treasure and lose soldiers, she would but tempt invasion and emasculate defenders. Verily, I advise and implore thee to turn thy wit and scholarship to a manlier occupation!"

"My life knows no other object; kill my labour and thou destroyest me," said Adam, in a voice of gloomy despair. Alas, it seemed that, whatever the changes of power, no change could better the hopes of science in an age of iron! Warwick was moved. "Well," he said, after a pause, "be happy in thine own way. I will do my best at least to protect thee. To-morrow resume thy labours; but this day, at least, thou must feast with me."

And at his banquet that day, among the knights and barons, and the abbots and the warriors, Adam sat on the dais near the earl, and Sibyll at "the mess" of the ladies of the Duchess of Clarence. And ere the feast broke up, Warwick thus addressed his company:—

"My friends, though I, and most of us reared in the lap of war, have little other clerkship than sufficed our bold fathers before us, yet in the free towns of Italy and the Rhine,—yea, and in France, under her politic king,—we may see that a day is dawning wherein new knowledge will teach many marvels to our wiser sons. Wherefore it is good that a State should foster men who devote laborious nights and weary days to the advancement of arts and letters, for the glory of our common land. A worthy gentleman, now at this board, hath deeply meditated contrivances which may make our English artisans excel the Flemish loons, who now fatten upon our industry to the impoverishment of the realm. And, above all, he also purposes to complete an invention which may render our ship-craft the most notable in Europe. Of this I say no more at present; but I commend our guest, Master Adam Warner, to your good service, and pray you especially, worshipful sirs of the Church now present, to shield his good name from that charge which most paineth and endangereth honest men. For ye wot well that the commons, from ignorance, would impute all to witchcraft that passeth their understanding. Not," added the earl, crossing himself, "that witchcraft does not horribly infect the land, and hath been largely practised by Jacquetta of Bedford, and her confederates, Bungey and others. But our cause needeth no such aid; and all that Master Warner purposes is in behalf of the people, and in conformity with Holy Church. So this wassail to his health and House."

This characteristic address being received with respect, though with less applause than usually greeted the speeches of the great earl, Warwick added, in a softer and more earnest tone, "And in the fair demoiselle, his daughter, I pray you to acknowledge the dear friend of my beloved lady and child, Anne, Princess of Wales; and for the sake of her highness and in her name, I arrogate to myself

a share with Master Warner in this young donzell's guardianship and charge. Know ye, my gallant gentles and fair squires, that he who can succeed in achieving, either by leal love or by bold deeds, as best befit a wooer, the grace of my young ward, shall claim from my hands a knight's fee, with as much of my best land as a bull's hide can cover; and when heaven shall grant safe passage to the Princess Anne and her noble spouse, we will hold at Smithfield a tourney in honor of Saint George and our ladies, wherein, pardie, I myself would be sorely tempted to provoke my jealous countess, and break a lance for the fame of the demoiselle whose fair face is married to a noble heart."

That evening, in the galliard, many an admiring eye turned to Sibyll, and many a young gallant, recalling the earl's words, sighed to win her grace. There had been a time when such honour and such homage would have, indeed, been welcome; but now ONE saw them not, and they were valueless. All that, in her earlier girlhood, Sibyll's ambition had coveted, when musing on the brilliant world, seemed now well-nigh fulfilled,—her father protected by the first noble of the land, and that not with the degrading condescension of the Duchess of Bedford, but as Power alone should protect Genius, honoured while it honours; her gentle birth recognized; her position elevated; fair fortunes smiling after such rude trials; and all won without servility or abasement. But her ambition having once exhausted itself in a diviner passion, all excitement seemed poor and spiritless compared to the lonely waiting at the humble farm for the voice and step of Hastings. Nay, but for her father's sake, she could almost have loathed the pleasure and the pomp, and the admiration and the homage, which seemed to insult the reverses of the wandering exile.

The earl had designed to place Sibyll among Isabel's ladies, but the haughty air of the duchess chilled the poor girl; and pleading the excuse that her father's health required her constant attendance, she prayed permission to rest with Warner wherever he might be lodged. Adam himself, now that the Duchess of Bedford and Friar Bungey were no longer in the Tower, entreated permission to return to the place where he had worked the most successfully upon the beloved Eureka; and, as the Tower seemed a safer residence than any private home could be, from popular prejudice and assault, Warwick kindly offered apartments, far more commodious than they had yet occupied, to be appropriated to the father and daughter. Several attendants were assigned to them, and never was man of letters or science more honoured now than the poor scholar who, till then, had been so persecuted and despised.

Who shall tell Adam's serene delight? Alchemy and astrology at rest, no imperious duchess, no hateful Bungey, his free mind left to its congenial labours! And Sibyll, when they met, strove to wear a cheerful brow, praying him only never to speak to her of Hastings. The good old man, relapsing into his wonted mechanical existence, hoped she had forgotten a girl's evanescent fancy.

But the peculiar distinction showed by the earl to Warner confirmed the reports circulated by Bungey,—"that he was, indeed, a fearful nigromancer, who had much helped the earl in his emprise." The earl's address to his guests in behalf both of Warner and Sibyll, the high state accorded to the student, reached even the Sanctuary; for the fugitives there easily contrived to learn all the gossip of the city. Judge of the effect the tale produced upon the envious Bungey! judge of the representations it enabled him to make to the credulous duchess! It was clear now to Jacquetta as the sun in noonday that Warwick rewarded the evil-predicting astrologer for much dark and secret service, which Bungey, had she listened to him, might have frustrated; and she promised the friar that, if ever again she had the power, Warner and the Eureka should be placed at his sole mercy and discretion.

The friar himself, however, growing very weary of the dulness of the Sanctuary, and covetous of the advantages enjoyed by Adam, began to meditate acquiescence in the fashion of the day, and a transfer of his allegiance to the party in power. Emboldened by the clemency of the victors, learning that no rewards for his own apprehension had been offered, hoping that the stout earl would forget or forgive the old offence of the waxen effigies, and aware of the comparative security his friar's gown and cowl afforded him, he resolved one day to venture forth from his retreat. He even flattered himself that he could cajole Adam—whom he really believed the possessor of some high and weird

secrets, but whom otherwise he despised as a very weak creature —into forgiving his past brutalities, and soliciting the earl to take him into favour.

At dusk, then, and by the aid of one of the subalterns of the Tower, whom he had formerly made his friend, the friar got admittance into Warner's chamber. Now it so chanced that Adam, having his own superstitions, had lately taken it into his head that all the various disasters which had befallen the Eureka, together with all the little blemishes and defects that yet marred its construction, were owing to the want of the diamond bathed in the mystic moonbeams, which his German authority had long so emphatically prescribed; and now that a monthly stipend far exceeding his wants was at his disposal, and that it became him to do all possible honour to the earl's patronage, he resolved that the diamond should be no longer absent from the operations it was to influence. He obtained one of passable size and sparkle, exposed it the due number of nights to the new moon, and had already prepared its place in the Eureka, and was contemplating it with solemn joy, when Bungey entered.

"Mighty brother," said the friar, bowing to the ground, "be merciful as thou art strong! Verily thou hast proved thyself the magician, and I but a poor wretch in comparison,—for lo! thou art rich and honoured, and I poor and proscribed. Deign to forgive thine enemy, and take him as thy slave by right of conquest. Oh, Cogsbones! oh, Gemini! what a jewel thou hast got!"

"Depart! thou disturbest me," said Adam, oblivious, in his absorption, of the exact reasons for his repugnance, but feeling indistinctly that something very loathsome and hateful was at his elbow; and, as he spoke, he fitted the diamond into its socket.

"What! a jewel, a diamond—in the—in the—in the—MECHANICAL!" faltered the friar, in profound astonishment, his mouth watering at the sight. If the Eureka were to be envied before, how much more enviable now. "If ever I get thee again, O ugly talisman," he muttered to himself, "I shall know where to look for something better than a pot to boil eggs."

"Depart, I say!" repeated Adam, turning round at last, and shuddering as he now clearly recognized the friar, and recalled his malignity. "Darest thou molest me still?"

The friar abjectly fell on his knees, and, after a long exordium of penitent excuses, entreated the scholar to intercede in his favour with the earl.

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