

CELESTIA BLOSS

HEROINES OF
THE
CRUSADES

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C. A. Bloss

Heroines of the Crusades

PREFACE

To those whom it has been my privilege and pleasure to lead through the devious and darkened paths of the Past, to all who cordially receive the doctrine that *actions* and not faint desires for Excellence form the character, I address a few words by way of explanation and Preface.

Jerusalem, the capital of Palestine, whether glorious in the beauty of her first temple, and the excellent wisdom of her philosopher king, or veiled in the darkness of that fatal eclipse in which the solemn scenes of Calvary consummated her glory and shame, has occupied a position in the great drama of human events, more interesting and important than any other city on the globe.

But Jerusalem, in the gloom of that moral night which gathered over the nations after the fall of the Western Empire of the Romans, exerted a greater influence upon the minds of men than at any former period. The insulting Moslem felt a degree of veneration for the splendid ruins over which he walked with all a conqueror's pride – the African anchorite left his solitary hermitage to weep upon Mount Olivet – the European adventurer wreathed his staff with the branching palm from her holy hills – the despairing Jew sat in sackcloth at her fallen gates, and even the mingled barbarians of the East united with the Christian to revere the spot where art achieved its proudest monument, and poetry found the theme of its sublimest song.

This natural reverence, exalted into piety by the decrees of the church, resulted necessarily in the practice of pilgrimage. Anxious, restless guilt, fled from the scene of its enormities to the sweet valleys where the Saviour whispered peace to his disciples; poetry sought inspiring visions on the Mount of Transfiguration; penitence lingered in the garden of Passion, and remorse expiated its crimes in weary vigils at the Holy Sepulchre.

At the dawn of the eleventh century, one sublime idea pervaded Christendom. The thousand years of the Apocalypse were supposed to be accomplished, and a general belief prevailed that on the Mount of Olives, whence the Son of God ascended in his chariot of cloud to heaven, he would reappear in all the pomp of his Second Advent. From every quarter of the Latin world the affrighted Christians, deserting their homes and kindred, crowded to the Holy Land – terror quickened devotion, curiosity stimulated enthusiasm. But insult and outrage awaited the pilgrims in Palestine, and in Jerusalem itself they encountered the scoffing taunts of idolatry and infidelity.

To free those holy courts from the polluting tread of the sandalled Paynim, to prepare a pure resting-place for the Son of Man, Superstition roused the martial spirit of the age, and enlisted chivalry under the banners of the cross.

Thus began the Crusades, those romantic expeditions which, combining religious fervor with military ardor, united the various nations of Europe from the shores of the Baltic to the Straits of Gibraltar, and from the banks of the Danube to the Bay of Biscay, in one common cause, and poured the mingled tide of fanatics, warriors and adventurers, upon the plains of Asia. For nearly two centuries the mightiest efforts and best blood of Christendom were wasted in the useless struggle, and it is computed that not less than six millions of people devoted their lives and fortunes to this desperate undertaking.

But though the Crusades are so important to the historian as involving the politics of all nations; to the philosopher as fraught with consequences affecting the happiness of succeeding generations; and to the scholar as commencing the era when Genius, brooding over the ruins of the Past, rose Phœnix-like from the ashes of Arabian splendor, and soaring in the clearer light of Christianity, scattered from her wing the dew of refinement upon the barbarians of the North; yet the general

reader feels that his knowledge of them is so vague as to detract materially from his pleasure in allusions to them, and continually to force upon his mind a painful sense of ignorance upon points where he ought to be informed.

In some measure to supply a deficiency which common history cannot obviate, to make the period of the Crusades interesting, by giving to it the tangible thread of authentic narrative, these biographies of the “Heroines” who inspired the troubadour, animated the warrior, or in person “took the cross,” have, with much care and labor, been selected and compiled.

The era opens about the time of the Conquest, when William I., unquestionably the greatest ruler of his time, returns in triumph to Normandy. No two writers agreeing as to the age of his children, I have arranged them as best suited my purpose, making Cicely the eldest, the betrothed of Harold; and the second daughter, Agatha, the bride of Earl Edwin; and Adela, whose ambitious character is well authenticated, the Heroine of the First Crusade.

The character and superstitions of the Saxons, with their love of “legendary lore,” I have endeavored to embody in the early life of Maude, while I have endeavored to make her riper years illustrate the principles and piety of a teacher to whom you are all much attached.

The half-infidel Hardrager, who was necessary to show both the plan of Battle Abbey and the causes and character of pilgrimage, might really have been the leader of the Assassins, since they established themselves in Mount Lebanon, and incorporated in their belief some of the doctrines of the New Testament about that period.

Eleanor of Aquitaine was one of the few women whose mature years in some measure atoned for a youth of folly. Agnes Strickland cites authorities to show that Fair Rosamond passed nineteen years in a convent, and died with the reputation of a saint. You will excuse me that I permitted death to cut her off in “her young beauty’s bloom” to present a more affecting picture of the sad effects of guilt. The ballads are not mine; some I found in obsolete works, and one was versified from a legend of the Early Romancers.

For the Tournament, and contest with the lion in Berengaria, I am indebted to the same veracious authority, though I cannot account for Richard’s finding the Lion’s Heart so conveniently situated at the bottom of the throat, except from the fact that “Physiology and Hygiene” had not then assigned the true position to the internal organs.

I was very sorry not to make Joanna as interesting as Edith in the Talisman, but this was clearly impossible – first, from the fact that I had not the genius of Scott; and second, because I made it my study to adhere strictly to truth. It was Saphadin and not Saladin who sought to ally himself with the princely house of Plantagenet, and I found it convenient to console his disappointment by bestowing upon him the fictitious lady I had brought to seek her fortune in the East. Michelet confirms this decision by his statement that this was emphatically the era of women, and that for some years a female exercised the sovereign power over the territories of Islamism.

Blondell, upon whose very existence so many doubts have been cast, is, I think, a well-authenticated character, who “*plays his part*” with great fidelity and truth.

Had I not been limited as to space, the *ring* in the hand of Violante’s grandson would have projected the catastrophe of the Sicilian Vespers. For the same reason, I could only allude to the strife between the Guelphs and Ghibellines, to the civil wars of France and England, to the Crusade against the Albigenes, and the founding of the Inquisition by St. Dominic, when, in quest of heresy, he traversed the hills and vales of Languedoc, and doomed to death those brave spirits who dared to exercise the right of private judgment.

Eva is the only purely fictitious character of any importance in the work, and she was drawn from life, a portrait which some of you may recognize. Fuller, in his “Holy War,” contradicts the legend of Eleanora’s drawing the poison from Edward’s wound, but adds, “he who shall disprove this pretty fiction shall get to himself little credit,” and I confess I had not the courage thus warned to attempt it.

I would here gratefully acknowledge my obligations to the gentlemen of the Rochester University, through whose politeness I have been permitted to consult several works of early English authors not republished in this country, from which I have made liberal extracts both of facts and language.

In conclusion, I can only say I have endeavored to set before you a true history in a series of entertaining stories. In the former, I am confident I have succeeded both as regards events and chronology; of the latter I am somewhat doubtful; but if my “Heroines” have the effect to awaken curiosity and induce research, I shall feel that “they have their reward.”

Clover Street Sem., *Nov. 30th, 1852.*

ADELA

CHAPTER I. THE NIGHT OF THE 20TH OF MARCH, 1067

*“Wave high your torches on each crag and cliff
Let many lights blaze on our battlements,
Shout to them in the pauses of the storm
And tell them there is no hope.”*

Maturin’s Bertram.

All night long the Lady Matilda, with her becoming children, knelt before the holy shrine in the old Abbey of Feschamp.

Anxiously had they watched through the lingering twilight, for the whitening sails of the Conqueror’s fleet. No sails appeared, and the night fell dark and stormy upon the English channel. Meet was it that prayer should ascend to Him who rules the destiny of nations, for the hopes of all future times were rocked upon that midnight sea. The field of Hastings was won, Harold was slain, England was subdued, and the ships of William the Conqueror, filled with the flower of Norman chivalry, and followed by the sad remnant of Saxon nobles, were speeding to the Norman coast.

Was it Woden the storm-throned, that thus with relentless fury pursued the Viking’s progeny, – despoilers of the Saxon race? Was it Thor the thunder-voiced, warning the proud Conqueror that the great heart of England still throbbed with the pulse of Freedom, though the vale of Sanguelac was red with the blood of her bravest sons? Was it the spirit of a milder Faith that prevailed over that night of darkness, spread a calm morning on those troubled waters, and through that all-pervading sunlight scattered blessings countless as the liquid jewels that paved the track of the rescued ships?

The Mora with its splendid convoy was in sight, the bells rang out merrily their matin chimes, and while Matilda lingered to unite in the anthem of thanksgiving and praise, the little Adela, escaping from the care of the attendants, found her way through the dim aisles, to the door of the church, where she stood the radiant picture of delight, gazing with childish interest upon the scene before her.

The solemn service over, Matilda with her stately train emerged from the Abbey and encircled by a princely retinue of knights and ladies, watched the swelling canvass, which under the pressure of a steady breeze, bore the gallant vessels into port. Impatient of delay, the royal children ran eagerly down the green slope to the water’s edge. “Now brothers mine,” said the fiery William, “the fair and goodly land of England, to him who in three stones’ cast shall twice strike yon fisherman’s buoy.” Seizing a pebble as he spoke, he was about to hurl it towards the destined mark, when Adela thoughtlessly grasped his arm. The stone dropped idly into the wave, sprinkling the short cloaks, and embroidered tunics of the little group. A derisive laugh followed this exploit, and Adela, familiar with the effects of William’s anger, fled from his uplifted hand to the protecting care of Richard, who, sheltering her with his arm, exclaimed, “Robert, imagine yon buoy a Saxon Earl, and try your prowess upon him. I resign all claim to the conquered realm.”

“Book and bell, latin prayers, and a pilgrimage for my brother Richard,” replied Robert, selecting a smooth pebble and preparing to throw, but, ere the stone left his hand, a well directed missile from William struck the buoy, and sank it for a moment beneath the waves. With a look of proud disdain Robert hurled the stone. It fell dimpling the waters far beyond the mark. “England is mine,” shouted William, as again with unerring aim he dashed the buoy beneath the surface. “England

is mine,” he repeated, pointing exultingly to the Saxon banner grasped in the hand of his own effigy upon the prow of the Mora. Robert smiled contemptuously, and rejoined his mother.

All eyes were now directed towards the gallant bark which rode proudly into port, amid the joyous flutter of banners, gonfanons, pennons, and streamers which from every mast, spar, and standard, waved and flapped in the morning breeze.

A glad shout burst from the assembled multitude, and cries of “Long live the conqueror William! Long live our good Duke of Normandy!” echoed by the clangor of trumpet, and chiming of bells, welcomed the victor on shore. Fondly embracing his lovely wife and children, and graciously receiving the greeting of his rejoicing subjects, he turned to present the noble Saxons, that swelled the pomp of his train.

“My Matilda will welcome Edgar Atheling, in whose veins flows the blood of her sire Alfred the Great. The brave Earls Morcar and Edwin, the noble Waltheof, and his beautiful daughter Maude, are also guests at our court, and must lack no courtesy at our hands.”

While Matilda with high-born grace and dignity received her reluctant guests, the little Adela accustomed to the sight of mail-clad barons, and princely array, felt herself irresistibly attracted by the timid girl, who clung tremblingly to the arm of Earl Waltheof. Other eyes than hers were fascinated by the appearance of the lovely stranger. A yellow kirtle of the finest wool fell in graceful folds to her feet; over this was thrown a purple robe, which confined at the bodice by a girdle exquisitely wrought, draped without concealing the delicate proportions of a figure cast in nature’s finest mould. A crimson coverchief half hid the jewelled network, from which her fair brown hair, brightening to gold in the sunshine, escaped in rich abundance over a neck of snow. The steady light of her meek violet eyes fell lovingly on Adela, and the faint tinge upon her cheek deepened into a brilliant blush, as the sprightly child kindly taking her hand, led her forward to receive the kiss of welcome from the Queen Duchess Matilda.

CHAPTER II

“But doth the exile’s heart serenely dwell in sunshine there?”

A succession of brilliant pageants, and knightly entertainments awaited the Conqueror, his nobles and hostages, in their pompous progress through all the towns and cities of Normandy, from Feschamp to Bayeux.

Robert already wearing the spurs of knighthood, girt with silver baldric, and bearing high the lance with its pointed banderol, led the van; gallantly conducting the young Earls Morcar and Edwin, and the royal Atheling: while the aspiring Prince William, attaching himself to a band of his father’s best trained bowmen, practised on bright winged birds, those feats of archery in which he subsequently became so cruelly skilful.

Adela obtained a place near the gentle Maude, and strove by every childish art to charm back the smiles that transiently enlivened the sad countenance of the Saxon maiden. Not less assiduously, and not more successfully did the Duke King, and his haughty consort, employ the fascinations of easy grace, and polished wit, to beguile the gloomy musings of the captive Waltheof. So passed they on, the sad hearts with the gay. So sat they in the halls of mirth, the one keeping strict lenten fast, the other revelling in triumphal feasts; one sole thought embittering the fast, and sweetening the feast – and that thought *England*.

In a chamber in the palace of Bayeux were assembled the household of the Conqueror, busy in their daily occupations. Groups of girls, with nimble fingers, wrought silently under the eye of Matilda, the sad epic of England’s fall.

“Leave thy tangled skeins to these fair maids, and the skilful Tuold, and come thou apart with me,” said William, abruptly entering and drawing his Queen aside, within the deep embrasure of the window, “’tis of thy glory and mine that I would speak.”

The conference lasted long. The young princes summoned the maidens to the mimic tourney in the tiltyard, and waiting clouds prepared the gorgeous couch of sun, beyond the hills of Bretagne, ere the wily statesman had completed the unfoldings of all his schemes, for fixing the Norman line securely upon the throne of Edward the Confessor. He revealed his apprehensions from the stern character of Waltheof, and his hopes from the fascinations of his niece Judith d’Aumale. From Edgar Atheling he feared little. The boy reared in a foreign court, a stranger to Saxon language and manners, had neither desire nor capacity to contend for a dignity unsuited to his years. He was already hand and glove with Robert, and subject to the imperious will of the young knight.

But Morcar and Edwin were more dangerous foes. Kinsmen of the late king, at the least disaffection they might rouse the friends of the famous Earl Siward, vanquisher of Macbeth; the thegns of Norfolk, Ely, Huntingdon, and Northumbria, stretching far to the Scottish border; and the valiant man of Mercia allied to the terrible Welsh.

“The victory at Hastings, my Queen,” said William, with his blandest smile, “does not establish peaceful rule o’er all the hills and vales of merrie England. Let policy complete what valor has commenced. Methinks our pretty Cicely might bind the restive Edwin in the silken toils of love, more securely than unwilling homage or extorted oath.”

“Cicely, the betrothed of Harold!” exclaimed Matilda. “Could’st thou have seen her agony when tidings of Harold’s death came with news of thy victory, thou would’st scarcely speak to her of love.” “A childish fancy,” impatiently cried William, “the breath of praise soon dries the tears on a maiden’s cheeks. She must be the Saxon’s bride.”

“It is impossible,” replied the Queen. “In Notre-Dame de Bonnes Nouvelles, while my soul was filled with joy for thy safety, did I dedicate thy broken-hearted child to be the bride of Heaven. The holy Lanfranc has already sanctioned the vow.”

William strode hastily up and down the chamber, tying and untying the rich cordon of his cloak in uncontrollable anger and disappointment.

Matilda laid her hand soothingly upon his arm. "Agatha is fairer than Cicely – Adela hath wit beyond her years, and child as she is, will readily comprehend all thy schemes."

"Talk not of Adela, she hath a head for intrigue equal to my brother Odo. Wed her to one who might foster her ambition, and neither crown nor throne would be beyond her aspirations."

"Agatha hath a loving heart," pleaded Matilda.

"Thou sayest truth Bein Aimie, 'tis by the heart woman rules. Agatha shall be the affianced of Edwin before he leaves these shores."

Thus it was settled. The new Queen received the title of the manor of Gloucester, and condemned the owner, her former lover, to perpetual imprisonment. The fair Maude was to dwell in exile a hostage for the fidelity of her father, till a fitting opportunity might occur to make her hand the bond of amity between the Conqueror and some disaffected peer. Other hostages with their various possessions were disposed of in a similar manner, and thus the shades of evening stole into that darkened chamber, and brooded like palpable forms over the sacrifices which the new sovereigns covertly laid upon the altar of Avarice and Ambition.

The ceremony of betrothal took place on the following evening. There were guests in embroidered garments and costly jewels, there were lights and music, and more than wonted festivity: yet Maude saw only Edwin, and when taking the hand of the little princess, he pronounced with unhesitating voice, "Thine, and thine only," the color faded from her lip and cheek, as if a mortal woe had fastened on her heart.

There were gifts and congratulations, and as Edwin presented his bride a miniature shield of silver, saying gallantly, "This shall thy heart from other love defend," a gleam of triumph on the countenance of William assured Matilda that Edwin was won.

CHAPTER III

*“Oh! the joy
Of young ideas painted on the mind,
In the warm glowing colors fancy spreads
On objects not yet known, when all is new
And all is lovely.”*

Hannah More.

When the spring deepened into summer, Edwin, exulting in the pride of his youthful elegance and princely alliance, returned loaded with honors to his restored domains.

Agatha wept sore at his departure, but no tear trembled on the cheek of Maude. All external emotions were buried in the grave of hopeless love, and thenceforth in her pale, changeless beauty, she looked the ivory shrine, where the ashes of some holy thing were preserved, to work daily miracles upon the restless spirits by which she was surrounded.

In her society the turbulent, and self-willed children of the Conqueror became calm and docile. Often in the long still twilight would she hold them a charmed circle, listening with breathless awe to wild tales and ghostly legends of the terrible Vikings; who drove their daring keels into unknown seas, and immured their wailing captives in sunless dungeons of northern ice, or left them naked and shivering upon a barren coast, a prey to the wolfish winds, that lifted and tossed them ever on the red and bristling spears of Aurora's giant demons.

The story of the Babe of Bethlehem – cradled among the beasts of the stall – heralded by angels, and worshiped by the eastern sages, passing, a holy presence that diffused joy and comfort to every heart, through the green vales of Judea – walking unsandaled upon the glassy waves of Galilee, and standing in robes white as the light upon the top of Tabor, agonizing in Gethsemane, and suffering upon Calvary for the redemption of a ruined race, recited in the mellow tones of Maude, imparted an interest to the scenes of the Saviour's life and passion, which all the sacred relics and saintly effigies of the church had failed to awaken.

But especially did Robert and Adela delight in tales of the turbaned Paynim. The long caravan winding its spicy track through emerald oases, or glistening sands – the dark-browed Saracens with spear and cimeter careering in battle on Arab steeds, fleet as the desert wind – terrible Turks from the wilds of Khosser, swifter than leopards, and more fierce than the evening wolves – swarthy Nubians clustering like locusts in the holy places – toil-worn pilgrims scourged and massacred, and christian children slaughtered to furnish diabolical repasts for Moslem fiends, were themes that never failed to excite the most intense curiosity, and to rouse the direct imprecations of vengeance.

From one of these narrations, Robert rose with a determined air, and exclaimed – “My grandsire, Robert le Diable, say the monks, was carried to heaven on the backs of fiends; but if by the favor of St. Stephen, I ever visit the Holy Land, it shall be not with pilgrim's staff, but with sword and lance, to drive those cursed fiends back to their place of torture.”

“It were a holy work,” said Richard, “and one the saints would bless.”

“Were I a knight, or might a woman set lance in rest,” cried Adela, “those heathen dogs should no longer feed upon the flesh of christian babes. Shame to the peers of Normandy, that sit quietly in Rouen while the Holy Sepulchre is in the hands of infidels.”

“The peers of Normandy will sit quietly in Rouen only till my father returns from his conference with Lanfranc,” said William. “Last night a small vessel anchored off the coast, and a messenger came in breathless haste to the palace. I could not gain speech with him, but I know he brings tidings from Fitz Osborne, and our Uncle Odo. Hugh de Glaville conjectures there is treason in England.”

“My mother dismissed her maidens at an earlier hour than is her wont, and sent away Tuold with a frown, when he brought her his pattern of the wooden fort,” said Cicely, with a sigh, “my heart misgave me then that some peril was impending.”

“Pray God it may not reach Edwin,” said Agatha, with white lips.

“Pray God the troubles may continue till my father moves his court to London,” said William, as rising from the mossy bank upon which they had been sitting, the anxious party returned through the pleasance, to the great hall where the evening meal was prepared.

When the silent repast was finished, Maude led the weeping Agatha to her own chamber, and lifting the curtain of the oratory, stood with her before an altar covered with a richly embroidered velvet pall. Upon the altar was placed a golden crucifix, before which burned a silver lamp, and in a niche above, an alabaster image of the Madonna.

“Daughter of the Norman William,” said she, taking Agatha’s hands and kneeling before the altar, “with the holy cross before thee, and the eyes of our blessed lady looking down upon thee, tell me truly, lovest thou the Saxon Edwin?” and Agatha whispered low but firmly, “I love the Saxon Edwin.”

“Turn thy eyes to the stars, emblems of unchanging faith, and tell me truly, wilt thou be to Edwin a guardian Fylgia in weal or woe?” and Agatha answered, “I will guard Edwin in weal or woe.”

“Lay thy hand upon this holy shrine,” again said Maude, lifting the purple pall, and revealing a jewelled casket, “and tell me truly, though father, mother, brother, friend, or priest, compel, wilt thou with Edwin keep thy plighted troth?” and Agatha answered, “I will with Edwin keep my plighted troth.” “The pure Mary, the sleepless stars, and this holy relic of St. John the divine aid thee to keep thy vow, Amen.” And Agatha responded solemnly – “Amen.”

All that night the patient Maude wrought with a magic bodkin upon the trothgift of Edwin, inscribing thereon a Saxon charm, that worn upon the breast of his mistress should shield him from danger, defeat, and death! the trusting Agatha keeping silent vigils by her side, while from the court-yard below echoed the tramp of steeds, and the heavy tread of mail-clad warriors hastening preparations for departure.

CHAPTER IV

*“That cruel word her tender heart so thrilled
That sudden cold did run through every vein,
And stony horror all her senses filled,
With dying fit, that down she fell for pain.”*

Spenser’s Fairy Queen.

*“When sorrows come, they come not single spies,
But in battalions.”*

Shakspeare’s Hamlet.

The conjectures of Prince William were well founded. The peers of Normandy were again summoned from their castles to attend the Conqueror, and the following spring the royal family removed to Winchester.

The coronation of Matilda was the most imposing pageant that had ever been seen in England. Foreign princes and peers graced the brilliant ceremonial – a numerous and lordly company of Normans attended her to the church, and a body-guard of Anglo-Saxons, among whom Agatha distinguished Edwin, conspicuous alike for the beauty of his person, and the almost oriental magnificence of his apparel, reconducted the new Queen and her beautiful children to the palace, where a splendid banquet closed the festivities.

This season of rejoicing was followed by events of a sad and gloomy character. The peculiar miseries which fell upon England during the disastrous years of 1069-70 compelled the Queen with the ladies of her court, again to seek safety in Normandy. The revolt of Earl Waltheof – the invasion of the Danes – the flight of Edgar Atheling – the hostility of Malcolm, King of Scotland – the destruction of the city of York – the death of Aldred, its beneficent, and much loved bishop – the desolation of Northumberland – the laying waste the county of Hampshire – the confiscation of private property – and the cry of houseless wanderers, perishing of want, furnished a scene of unexampled calamities, while the odious revival of the Danegelt, and the still more odious imposition of the *couvre feu*, goaded the exasperated inhabitants to desperation, and excited constant rebellions and insurrections.

The heart of the king, grieved and irritated, became entirely alienated from his Saxon subjects; and when Earl Edwin demanded the hand of Agatha, his claim was rejected with reproach and scorn.

Meanwhile the ladies of the Norman court, no less than Matilda, deplored the absence of their lords, and murmurings and complaints succeeded to sadness and discontent, as month after month, and year after year rolled on, and still the troubles in England required the constant exercise of the Norman arms.

The unheralded arrival of the Conqueror, with a military escort at Caen, excited a brief sensation of pleasure, but small cause had his family to rejoice in his coming.

The princesses were listening with rapt attention while Maude related the romance of a northern Jarl, who each night when the moon hung her silver lamp on high, moored his ocean palace beneath the shadow of a castle, beetling the sea, to woo fair Ulnah the Pearl of the Orkneys. The maiden, leaning spell-bound from the lattice, had yielded to the enchanter’s song, and dropped a pale pearl upon the deck of the war-ship; the wizard-bird that nestled in its shroudings had spread its broad wings and hovered broodingly above the casement, when flaming torches – splashing oars – and wild shouts, announced the coming of her father’s fleet.

At this point of the story a messenger hastily entered and summoned Agatha to the presence of her dread father.

With sad presentiments the princess rose and silently obeyed the mandate. None were present with the Conqueror in the audience chamber save Matilda, Lanfranc, and the Saxon secretary, Ingulfus.

“Seat thyself beside me, daughter, and listen to my words,” said the haughty monarch, with unwonted tenderness. “That I bade thee pledge thy hand to Earl Edwin to secure the peace of England, instead of trusting that event to my good sword, hath long grieved me sore; and often have I prayed the holy saints to absolve me of the sin. Heaven has heard my prayer and averted thy doom.”

An involuntary shudder shook the slight frame of Agatha, but no sound escaped her lips.

“The brave Alphonso, King of Gallicia,” continued the king, “has sent to woo thee for his bride; ambassadors wait in the antechamber, and the good Lanfranc has consented to release thee from thy extorted vow. With this costly ring the prince of Spain plights thee his faith.”

Agatha instinctively drew back her hand.

“Nay, shrink not, my daughter. The Saxon was unworthy of thy love. Knowest thou not he is leagued with thy father’s foes? Resign thou his troth-gift, I will restore it to the proud Rebel. Bid thy maidens robe thee in apparel befitting thy rank, (certes, the Spanish diadem will well become thy jetty locks.) Even now a splendid convoy of vessels ride at anchor in the harbor to convey thee to thy future lord, and the pious Ingulfus, who hath long desired to visit the Holy Sepulchre, shall attend thee to the coast of Spain.”

Agatha neither spoke nor moved.

“Give me thy troth-gift, silly girl,” cried her father angrily, bending his brow upon her, with the terrible frown, at which bold hearts were wont to quail.

Mechanically the trembling victim, drew from her bosom the talismanic shield. Lanfranc took it from her hand, placed the ring upon her finger, repeated the words of absolution, and the ceremony of betrothal, and when he ceased, Agatha lay at her father’s feet, pale and cold in a death-like swoon. But bitterly as Matilda wept over her suffering daughter, her heart was torn with still keener anguish, at the maledictions pronounced upon her first-born and favorite son. Robert had been betrothed in infancy to the heiress of Maine; and had cherished the most romantic attachment for his affianced bride. On the death of the princess the people demanded him for their lord, and the young regent, generous and rash, had proceeded to take possession of the duchy, and administer justice in his own name.

William now required him to resign the fief, not only, but to give his hand to Maude, the beautiful captive, who had so long been the companion of his sisters. With the true spirit of chivalry, Robert indignantly replied;

“The lovely Maude hath already bestowed her affections on Earl Edwin, and Robert’s bride shall never bear to the altar a reluctant heart. Thou hast sacrificed the meek Agatha to the lust of dominion, but the gentle Maude shall never suffer from thy tyranny, while the sword of a belted knight can defend her. If ever I am king of England, the lands of Huntingdon shall be hers, with free right to choose her own lord.”

“Boast not thyself of to-morrow, England shalt thou never have. I have won it by mine own good sword, the vicars of Christ have set its crown upon my head, and placed its sceptre in my hand, and all the world combined shall not take it from me,” cried the monarch in a paroxysm of rage.

“I only demand the suzerainship of Normandy and Maine, which all men say is my just inheritance,” replied Robert.

“Thou would’st do well to remember the fate of Absalom, and the misfortunes of Rehoboam, and beware of evil counsellors,” retorted William.

Robert insolently rejoined, “I did not come hither to listen to sermons, but to claim the investiture which has been promised me. Answer me positively, are not these things my right?”

“It is not my custom to strip before I go to bed,” replied the Conqueror; “and as long as I live, I will not divide my native realm, Normandy, with another, for it is written in the holy evangelists, ‘Every kingdom divided against itself shall become desolate.’”

“If it is inconvenient for thee to keep thy word, I will depart from Normandy, and seek justice from strangers, here I will not remain a subject,” retorted Robert, with equal pride and scorn.

“Par le splendeur de Dé,” shouted William, half unsheathing his sword. “It is not to be borne, that he who owes his existence to me, should aspire to be my rival in mine own dominions. May the curse of Cain light upon thy undutiful head.”

Thus they parted, Robert to take refuge with his mother’s brother, in Flanders, and William to return to his distracted kingdom, where the fires of civil war still smouldered in the ashes of freedom.

In such scenes was Adela nurtured, and thus in an atmosphere of intrigue and superstition, was a character naturally penetrating and impetuous, prepared to devise and carry forward the wildest schemes.

Public calamities, and domestic vexations, impaired the peace and irritated the temper of the English monarch. Bodesmen from the north, brought news of leagues and plots against his power, while messengers from Normandy, conveyed tidings of the disaffections of his peers, and the hostilities of the French king.

Richard, his most dutiful and affectionate son, had accompanied him to England. The young prince was exceedingly fond of the chase, and often spent whole days hunting in the New Forest of Hampshire.

The malaria of the depopulated district, and the painful emotions awakened in his sensitive nature, by the sight of famishing wretches, vainly seeking food and shelter, brought on a delirious fever, which soon terminated his life. He was interred in Winchester Cathedral.

The last tone of the curfew bell was reverberating through the silent halls of the palace, when the distracted father, haunted by the piteous lamentations, and reproachful ravings of his departed son, threw himself despairingly upon his couch.

“News from beyond seas,” said the chamberlain, entering, and presenting him a letter. William cut the silk and read.

“In the name of the blessed Mary, ever virgin, St. Michael, and St. Valery, doth thy poor scribe Ingulfus pray, that strength may be given thee, duke William, by grace of God, king of England, to bear the dreadful tidings, which much it grieves me to convey. When this comes to thee thou wilt know that thy sweet daughter, Agatha, liveth no more. From the day of our departure she shed no tears, but a tender wailing sound, like the moan of a wounded dove, issued ever from her lips. Her heart, she said, was devoted to her first spouse, and she prayed that the Most High would rather take her to himself, than allow her ever to be wedded to another. Her prayer was granted.

“The faintness which we witnessed at her betrothal, returned upon her by night and by day, but she never murmured; and on the eve of the blessed St. Agnes, having received the rites of our holy Church, she died, with the crucifix in her hand, and the name of Edwin on her lips.”

The scroll dropped from the hand of the stricken father and a remorseful pang wrung his heart.

Again the chamberlain entered ushering in a dark figure wrapped in a long serge cloak, like those usually worn by monks. Kneeling at the monarch’s feet, the stranger spoke. “Knowing, oh king! thy munificence to thy faithful servants, and moved by the love I bear thy throne and realm, I have discovered to Fitz Osborne the secret haunts of thine enemies, and to obtain thy royal favor, have brought from the Isle of Ely, that which I hope will please thee well. Behold the head of the Saxon chief.”

The Conqueror shrank back in horror, as the well-known features of Edwin, pale and distorted with the death agony, and the long, fair locks all dabbled with gore, met his bewildered gaze.

“Cursed traitor!” shouted he, starting from his seat, “dost thou think to win my favor by bringing me the head of thy murdered lord? Ho! seneschal, convey this Judas to the lowest cell of the donjon.

There shall he learn how William rewards the betrayer of innocent blood.” The prisoner was borne from his presence.

The monarch buried his face in his hands, and burst into tears of uncontrollable anguish.

“Woe is me, my daughter, – Done to death by thy father’s unholy ambition – Thy Edwin hunted and slain on his own hearth-stone. What has this sceptre brought me? Toilsome days, and sleepless nights, – a divided household, – and children cut off in the flower of their youth. Truly, saith the Scripture; ‘Woe unto him that coveteth an evil covetousness unto his house.’”

As he bowed his head his eyes fell upon the fatal, silver shield. Lifting it reverently from the floor, and wiping the clotted blood from its polished surface, with some difficulty, he deciphered the Saxon inscription, which has been thus elegantly translated.

“Edwin his pledge has left in me,
Now to the battle prest:
His guardian angel may she be,
Who wears me on her breast.

To him true hearted may she prove,
Oh! God, to thee I pray;
Edwin shall well requite her love,
Returning from the fray.

But if, forgetful of her vows,
May Heaven avert the thought,
She sell this love-charm of her spouse,
Which never could be bought;

If of her own free will she cast
This talisman away;
May Edwin’s life no longer last,
To rue that fatal day.”

CHAPTER V

*“Still to the truth direct thy strong desire,
And flee the very air where dwells a liar.
Fail not the mass, there still with reverent feet,
Each morn be found, nor scant thy offering meet,
Haste thee, sir knight, where dames complain of wrong;
Maintain their right, and in their cause be strong.”*

The last act in the bloody tragedy of England’s subjection, was consummated in the year 1074, when Earl Waltheof, having been drawn into a plot against the crown, and betrayed by his Norman wife, Judith, to her uncle, the Conqueror, was beheaded on a rising ground, just without the gates of Winchester, the first Anglo-Saxon that perished by the hand of the executioner.

The perfidious Judith had fixed her affections on a French Count, but William had already secured a willing agent of his own purposes, in the person of Simon, a Norman noble, lame and deformed, on whom he designed to bestow her hand, with the rich earldoms of Northampton and Huntingdon.

The haughty Judith scorned the alliance, and stripped of rank and power, retired to the wilds of Yorkshire in obscurity and contempt.

The bitter tears occasioned by the melancholy fate of Agatha and Edwin, were fresh upon the cheek of Maude, when the heavy tidings of her father’s cruel death, overwhelmed her in a tide of deeper anguish. A lingering illness followed, yet sweet dreams stole ever upon her rest, and the watchful Adela comprehended, that transported to the home of her childhood, in the gaiety of life’s early morn, she trod again the breezy upland, and fragrant glade, wandered through wood and wold, with Edwin by her side, or sitting by the star-lit fountain, challenged the nightingale from out the leafy holt, with snatches of Runic rhyme, and Saxon melody. But young life combating disease, slowly led her back from the gates of the grave. One by one the bright visions faded, and sadly her eyes unclosed to a consciousness of the dark realities before her.

William had determined that the hand of the beautiful heiress of Huntingdon, should compensate the pliant Simon for the mortifying refusal of her stepmother. The betrothal was to take place directly on the Conqueror’s arrival in Normandy, but the happy oblivion of Maude, no less than the entreaties of Adela, and the menacing of Robert served to delay the doom they could not finally avert.

William had subdued the rebel province of Maine, and moved by the declining health, and incessant pleading of his beloved Queen, had accorded to his refractory son a full pardon for his late rebellion, “promising at the same time, to grant him everything that he could expect from the affection of a father consistently with the duty of a king.”

Thus peace was restored throughout the Conqueror’s dominions, and the royal family happy in their reunion, kept merry Christmas in the capital city of Rouen.

“Sweet sister mine,” said Robert to Adela, as she sat engaged upon the famous Bayeux tapestry, “pray leave the royal nose of our valiant sire, which thou hast punctured and cross-stitched, till verily it seems to bleed beneath thy fingers, and lend an ear to thy brother’s words.”

“Now, gramercy! Curthose,” said Adela, laughing, “thou must have a distinct impression of thy noble father’s visage, since thou canst not distinguish his nose from the ‘fiery train’ of the terrific comet.”

“Nay,” said Robert, taking up the simile, “the Conqueror’s fiery train in England, has wrought more terror than all the comets since the days of Julius Cæsar, as the inhabitants of York will testify; but come, lay aside that odious tapestry, I have other work for thy skilful fingers.”

“My duteous brother would, perhaps, employ them in puncturing his noble sire, at the field of Archembraye, but a maiden’s needle wounds less deeply than a warrior’s sword,” said Adela, archly.

“Certes, thy tongue is sharper than thy needle,” said Robert, reddening, “and thine eyes outdo thy tongue. On the field of Archembraye I did but wound my father’s arm, while one bright shaft from thine eyes has pierced Count Stephen’s heart.”

“Methinks a heart so vulnerable, should be clad in armor,” said Adela, reddening in her turn.

“Thy woman’s wit doth run before my speech and prophesy my errand,” said Robert. “The Count Stephen, of Blois, bids me entreat the fair Adela to bind him in *ring armor*, that the friend of Robert may be his brother in arms.”

“*He bids thee!*” said Adela, dropping the embroidery. “Is the count, then, in Rouen?”

“Even so, *bien amie*,” replied Robert. “Hast thou not marked a noble figure entering the church at twilight, and emerging at sunrise, his regards bent upon the ground except, perchance, when he steals a glance at my charming sister, accompanying her mother to matins or vespers.”

“In truth, I marked such a youth,” said Adela, blushing, “but wherefore frequents he not the court?”

“He holds his vigil of arms till twelfth day,” replied Robert, “and the Conqueror has promised, that ere the Yule-clog, as Atheling calls it, has ceased to burn, he will himself lay the accolade of knighthood upon the shoulder of the young count. ’Tis my father’s wish that his children assist at the ceremony.”

“My father’s wish!” said Adela, in a tone of deep surprise.

“Certes, sweet,” replied her brother, “thinkest thou the Conqueror sees not the white flocks that range the green pastures of Blois, that he hears not the sound of the busy looms of Chartres, and loves not the sparkling wine, that flows from the blushing vineyards of Champagne?”

“Robert, thou hast broken my needle,” said Adela, striving confusedly to hide from the penetrating eyes of her brother, the influence which these considerations exercised over her own ambitious heart.

“I have broken thy needle of wool, that thou mightst thread a finer with floss of silk to embroider the scarf for thy gallant knight,” said Robert, rising to withdraw. Adela followed him to the antechamber, and dismissing the attendants, concerted with him the arrangements for the pageant.

Scarcely confessing to herself the sweet hopes that for the first time agitated her bosom, she quitted the joustings and maskings of the holidays, and passed the festive season in the privacy of her own apartment, where assisted only by the faithful Maude, she wrought upon Tyrian purple the golden lions of Chartres, budded the shining damask with the fleur de lis of Champagne, and sewed the embroidered field azure with the pearly crescent of Blois. The deep tones of the turret clock tolling the midnight hour broke the stillness that reigned through the castle, just as Adela severed the last silken thread from the embroidery frame, and held up the gorgeous baldric in the light of the lamp before the admiring gaze of her friend.

“Hush!” said Maude, placing her finger on Adela’s lip to repress a joyous exclamation, “we have a proverb in the north that, ‘finished works bring prophetic dreams.’ – Hasten to seek thy pillow, but beware thy glance wander not from yon bright star that even now glimmers through the casement. Breathe not a word while I wreathe the silken scarf in the folds of thy canopy, and whisper the mystic charm of the morthwyrtha.” With an incredulous smile Adela obeyed, and dismissing the tire-women, Maude left her to her solitary slumbers. The sun had scarce risen when Maude again entered the apartment.

“The visions of the future have visited thy rest,” said she, glancing inquiringly at the thoughtful countenance of the princess.

“Question me not,” replied Adela, “a promise and a fear have bewildered me – coming years can alone explain the mystery.”

The great hall of the palace was fitted up for a brilliant ceremony. All the knights and nobles, bishops and clergy of Normandy, and the adjacent provinces, arrayed in the most gorgeous vestments of their several orders, with high-born dames and blushing maidens, sparkling in jewelry, lined the apartment, at the upper end of which stood the family of the Conqueror, beside an altar covered with cloth of gold.

The young princes Robert and William after attending Count Stephen to the bath clothed him in white garments, and covered him with a crimson cloak, the one symbolical of the purity of his soul, the other of his determination to shed his blood in the cause of heaven. Arrayed in this simple garb, after the celebration of the high mass, he entered the hall and approaching the altar, presented his sword to the bishop, who blessed and consecrated it to the service of religion and virtue.

Lanfranc then addressed him thus. “Thou seekest, Count of Blois, to become a knight – thou art of noble birth – of liberal gifts and high in courage. – Thou must be strong in danger – secret in councils – patient in difficulties – powerful against enemies – prudent in deeds. Lay thy hand upon this holy missal, and swear to observe the following rules.” And Stephen laid his hand upon the clasped volume, and repeated slowly, after the priest.

“I do solemnly promise and swear to spare neither my blood nor my life in defence of the Catholic faith, – to aid all widows and orphans – to protect the innocent and oppressed – to be humble in all things – to speak the truth from the heart – to seek the welfare of my vassals – to regard the rights of my sovereign – and to live righteously before God and man.”

Then rising from his knees and throwing off his cloak the neophyte stood with his head reverently inclined toward the priest, while Prince William buckled on the spurs of knighthood, and Edgar Atheling fastened the greaves, and Robert belted the corselet; gracefully he sank upon his knee, when Maude advancing adjusted the helmet upon his closely curling locks, and Constance presented the spear with its drooping pennon; but his head bowed in conscious devotion, and the warm blood glowed eloquently on his manly cheek, while Adela, the lady of his love, tremulous with agitation, passed the scarf about his neck – fitted the silken folds across his breast, and belted the jewelled knot upon the ivory sheath of his sword.

Appareled in his splendid armor the young count took the consecrated weapon from the altar, and presenting it to the king, knelt before the throne while the monarch rose and laid upon his shoulder three gentle blows, saying in a voice whose deep tones echoed to the farthest end of the hall, “In the name of St. Michael, and St. Stephen, I make thee knight. Be loyal, bold and true.”

Following the example of the Conqueror, each knight advanced a step, drew his sword from the sheath, and while the hall gleamed with the flash of burnished steel, the man of God again took up the word, blessing him who had newly undertaken, and those who had long been engaged in holy warfare, and praying that all the hosts of the enemies of heaven, might be destroyed by christian chivalry.

The trumpets sounded without, and the knights thronging around their brother in arms, conducted him to the court below, where vaulting upon their steeds, they rode through the admiring crowds, among whom Stephen scattered largesses with a liberal hand.

The banquet over, a gallant train of mounted knights and ladies emerged from the wooded park and wound along the banks of the Seine. There was rare sport that day, when the fox broke cover, and the hounds darted away upon his track, and the curveting steeds bounded over the crisp green sward, in the wild excitement of the chase; but the proud barb of Stephen obedient to the rein, curved his glossy neck and moved with lofty step, by the dappled palfrey of Adela, while the young knight whispered words that the princess loved to hear; and thus in sweet converse the day wore away, and when the solemn night came on, beneath the blue cope of heaven, while the stars gazed from their sapphire thrones and the river mingled its low music with the murmur of their voices, Adela plighted her troth to Stephen Count of Blois.

But a ceremonial more joyous than a betrothal – more solemn than a burial, occasioned the removal of the court to Feschamp.

From the day of Harold's death, Cicely his betrothed, devoted herself to the cloister. Her father had bestowed a princely dower upon the convent of her choice, and fixed the day of her profession upon the high festival of Easter. At the close of the lenten fast, she quitted the scene of her childish pleasures, gazed a last adieu on the hills, vales and streams, over which the early spring of that bright climate was casting its mellow sheen – distributed alms among the mendicant crowds that thronged her route, and bade a kind farewell to the multitudes, that flocked from every village and hamlet, to invoke the blessing of heaven upon her holy purpose.

Adela stood again in the old abbey of Feschamp, listening to the joyous sound of the matin chime, but neither the happy associations awakened by the place and hour, nor the warm breath of early love could charm the sadness from her heart.

She had entered the dark cloister, and conducted Cicely from her weary vigil beside the holy relics, to wreath her dark locks with jewels and gold, and array her fair form for the last time in the garb of a princess. With the selfishness of affection, she suffered none but Maude to share the pious task.

Fast fell her tears as the whispered sounds of her sister's devotions forced upon her an appalling sense of the final separation.

The convent bell had scarce ceased its summons, ere a splendid concourse filled the galleries, and thronged the aisles of the Abbey to witness the holy bridal.

Proudly and painfully beat the heart of the king, as his saintly daughter leaned upon his breast – twined her soft arms lovingly about his neck – and imprinted her last kiss upon his cheek; but sympathetic tenderness overmastered all other emotions, as with gentle force he drew her from the last fond embrace of her weeping mother, and the convulsive clasp of the almost frantic Adela, and resigned her in all her youthful beauty, to be immured in a living tomb. Her three young sisters less grieved at the parting, than pleased with the pageant, with hasty adieus prepared to take their place in the ceremony.

With a light step nicely modulated to the soft chanting of the nuns, the little Adeliza bearing a jewelled crucifix, led the procession, followed by Constance and Gundred, each carrying a lighted taper and bearing between them a lily-shaped basket of wrought silver, containing the vestal habit and veil which they laid upon the altar.

At the solemn call of the bishop, the fair Cicely entered, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband, and supported by the matron sisters passed up the long aisle, her white robes like a gathering mist floating about her fragile form, and her calm and serene countenance, beaming with such angelic sweetness from beneath the gossamer wreath which ornamented her head, that to Maude's fanciful vision she seemed already crowned with the radiant halo of the saints. A brilliant burst of jubilant melody, pealing from the organ, accompanied the nuns in their welcoming hymn, "O Gloriosa Virginium," and a breathless silence pervaded the holy courts as the soft voice of Cicely responded. "Receive me, oh Lord! according to thy holy word."

Kneeling before the bishop she begged his benediction and the name of Cecilia her patron-saint. The reverend Father gave her the consecrated name, signed her with the sign of the cross, and sprinkled holy-water upon her garments.

The high mass celebrated, and the Kyrie Eleison sung, a waxen taper was placed in her hand, and seated by the chancel, she listened with devout attention, while the archbishop portrayed the beatitude of that high vocation, which had called her from the pomps and vanities of earthly grandeur, to the durable riches of a heavenly kingdom; from the waning light of earthly affection to the ineffable love of the immortal bridegroom; – from the fading lustre of an earthly diadem, to the changeless glory of an eternal crown: and scarcely had he concluded with the gracious words, "Many daughters have done virtuously, but thou excellest them all," when the whole orchestra took up the note of commendation

and “Gloria in Excelsis” sounded through the cloistered aisles, echoed along the vaulted roof, and breathed to the heart of the waiting novice the full reality of joy. The sacred vestments were blessed and replaced in their silver shrine, and the children resuming their precious burden preceded their sister into an inner, apartment, where busy nuns disrobed her of her resplendent array, – despoiled her of her costly ornaments – and one by one shred away her long, bright locks, that never more might stir a thought of pride.

The solemn bandeau was bound about her brow, the black serge garment wrapped about her form, and when she again knelt before the bishop, saying, “I am the handmaid of Christ,” an ill-suppressed shriek from Adela, told how changed was her appearance, and how gloomy was the fate that awaited her – but the votaress saw nothing, heard nothing, save the sacred mysteries in which she was engaged. Prostrated as if in deep abasement she lay upon the marble floor, while the choir chanted the litany; gently she inclined to the abbess, to be bound by the girdle of humiliation; reverently she bowed her head to receive the veil that should forever shut the world from her sight; joyfully she accepted the ring that sealed the irrevocable vow; and while the choir chanted, “Come, oh spouse of Christ, receive the crown,” a coronal of mingled thorns and roses was placed upon her head – and Cicely was a nun.

Loud anthems pealed upward to the swelling dome, and every demonstration of joy welcomed the bride to her new home.

The royal guests sat down to a splendid repast in the great hall of the convent, and nuns and novices shared in the sumptuous entertainment; but between Cicely and her family was an impassable barrier of an iron grating, and four thick and cold stone walls separated her forever from the friends of her youth.

CHAPTER VI

*“What is't we live for? tell life's fairest tale —
To eat, to drink, to sleep, love, and enjoy,
And then to love no more!
To talk of things we know not, and to know
Nothing but things not worth the talking of.”*

Sir R. Fane, Jr.

“Methinks,” said Adela, as she sat with Maude in the loved twilight conference, “it were a weary thing, to fast and pray as doth my sister Cicely, and look forever on those dull, cold images of stone or pictured saints, whose holiness we can never hope to reach.”

“Thou thinkest so, dearest, because on the bright scroll of thy future is pictured a living form glowing with youth and beauty,” said Maude; “but when death shuts out the light of hope, the pencil of love illumines the canvass ever with the image of a saint.”

“I have never seen a Saxon saint but thee, best one,” said Adela, affectionately kissing her cheek. “Cicely worships the memory of him who would have wrested the broad realm of England from her father.”

“And Agatha died for one who loved that father,” said Maude, half reproachfully.

“I cannot read aright the riddle of life,” replied Adela, pensively, “less still the riddle of love. Doth not the heart seek happiness as the flower seeks the light? yet what men call the ‘ends life lives for,’ wealth and power and dominion, terminate in discontent, despair, and death. No duke of Normandy, since the days of Rou, hath been so successful as William the Conqueror, yet the meanest serf is happier than he: and this love that makes my heart flutter like a joyous bird, has consigned our Agatha to an early grave – immured Cicely in the abhorrent convent – and,” she added, with a deprecating glance, “has plucked the last pale rose from the cheek of my lovely Maude.”

“Thou speakest thus because thou knowest neither life nor love,” replied the maiden. “Thou deemest wisely that a lofty purpose must call the strong man to effort, else lying dormant would his faculties perish with the rust of inactivity. Our pious bishop, Aldred, used to say; that any purpose so holy as not to need evil means to work its ends, like the consecration of the wafer, brings to the human soul the *real presence* of Christ.”

“Thy riddle is too deep for my poor wit,” said Adela. “Tell me of the love I know not – thy love.”

“Thou fanciest thou lovest Count Stephen,” said Maude, with a sigh, “but should he plight his love to another, thou wouldst regard him with hate and scorn.”

“Aye, verily,” replied Adela, her cheeks glowing, and her dark eye flashing, at the thought.

“So loved not Maude Earl Edwin. Thy father bade him give his hand to Agatha, and when I marked the undivided current of their lives, flowing on in a stream of bliss, Ambition and Hope were quenched in my heart, but Love went forth to light their pathway, and gilds with heavenly radiance their early tomb.”

“Maude!” exclaimed Adela, enthusiastically, “thou wert not formed for this sinful world; thou shouldst dwell with the angels, for verily thou art one of them.”

“Commend me not,” said Maude, “thou little knowest the bitter repinings of my heart when I heard I might not enter the convent with Cicely, nor how my soul recoils from this unnatural alliance with Simon.”

“And thou wouldst rather kneel upon the cold stone floor, and scourge thy tender flesh with knotted cords, than live almost a princess in thy merrie England!” said Adela, with unaffected surprise.

“Nay, rather would I work a weary pilgrimage to Palestine, and dwell an eremite in the lonely caves of Engaddi, had choice been left with me,” answered Maude.

“A pilgrimage were not so sad a fate,” said Adela; “the marvellous tales with which thou didst beguile my childhood hours, so wrought upon my fancy, that even to this day the very name of Jerusalem calls up visions bright as the bowers of Eden. Never have I wondered that pilgrims flocked to the Holy Land when they deemed the thousand years of prophecy accomplished, and expected to witness the azure gates unfolding above the holy sepulchre, and the Saviour descending upon the Mount of Olives amid all the terrific splendor of the final judgment.”

“Scarce a century since,” sighed Maude, “men looked for this heavenly kingdom, and verily believed they found in prophecy the confirmation of their hopes. My grandsire died upon the banks of the Jordan earnestly expecting the coming of his Lord.”

“There is a flash of spears in the moonbeams,” interrupted Adela, gazing from the arrow-slit of the turret. “Seest thou not a troop of horse, winding along the brow of the hill? Eye and heart alike deceive me if that be not Count Stephen’s plume. Methought, ere this, he had reached the borders of Maine. And there is Robert by his side. Our lady grant their coming bode no ill.”

“They pass beneath the shadow of the castle,” said Maude. “They are not all mounted. Those men on foot, in the garb of friars, how wearily they follow, leaning upon their long staves.”

“They are pilgrims!” exclaimed the maidens with one voice. “Let us descend to welcome them.”

Prince Henry met them in the corridor. “Count Stephen has returned,” said he, “and awaits my sister in the tapestry chamber.”

“Come with me, Beauclerk,” said Maude, leading away the young prince. “Thou shalt conduct me to these holy pilgrims.”

“Adela,” said Stephen, kissing the hand of his affianced as she entered, “thou art surprised, but I hope not ill-pleased at this unlooked-for return.”

“I feared me some mischance had occasioned it,” said Adela, “but seeing thee well, I am happy – yet wherefore art thou come?”

“Thy brother, Robert,” replied Stephen, “vouchsafed to escort me with twenty lances to the town of mantes – but when we reached the banks of Eure, we found the bridges swept away, and the fords rendered impassable by the swollen waters. A band of pilgrims were encamped upon the other side, and at the sight of the Norman pennon, they sent forth a piteous cry for aid. We swam our steeds across the turgid stream, and each horseman mounting a palmer behind him, we brought them safely over. And what was my joy to find I had thus rendered some slight service to Ingulfus, the early tutor of my loved Adela.”

“Our lady be praised, the good Ingulfus has returned. His pupil then shall thank his benefactor as she ought.”

“He is wayworn and weary,” pursued Stephen, “much toil hath he had in his long pilgrimage, and precious are the relics he has brought from Palestine. I craved from his gratitude a portion of the holy dust, for thy oratory. Should danger threaten the unworthy Stephen, the prayers of Adela, at such a shrine, would doubtless avail for his protection.”

The princess started, and the color fluctuated on her cheek, as with a look of surprise and recognition she regarded the beautiful crystal urn, with its amethystine entablature, on which were engraven the names of Adela and Stephen.

“Dost reject my gift, or hath some sudden illness seized thee?” said her lover, anxiously, remarking her strange emotion.

“A silly dream – a passing faintness,” said Adela, convulsively grasping the urn, and pressing her pale lips upon the inscription. “The hour wears late, to-morrow we will meet again.”

The young count imprinted a kiss upon her cold brow, and supporting her trembling steps to the antechamber, consigned her to the care of her attendants.

When the lovers met the following morning in the chapel to which all the inhabitants of the city repaired, to see the high altar decked with the palms of the pilgrims, and join in the general thanksgiving for their return, all traces of agitation had disappeared from the countenance of Adela. Relieved from his jealous fears, Count Stephen basked in the sunshine of her smiles, and protracted his stay during the festivities consequent upon the affiancing of Constance with Alan, Count of Bretagne. The young bride was dowered with the lands of Chester, once the possession of the unfortunate Earl Edwin. And William, at the same time, accorded his approbation to the love of Stephen and Adela. Every heart seemed filled with gaiety. Entertainment succeeded entertainment. The days were occupied with joustings, hunting, hawking, feats of archery and tournaments; the evenings were spent in games of hazard, or whiled away in listening to the wondrous tales of Ingulfus.

CHAPTER VII

*“Some upon penance for their sins,
In person, or by attorney;
And some who were or had been sick;
And some who thought to cheat Old Nick;
And some who liked the journey;
And the staff was bored and drilled for those
Who on a flute could play;
And thus the merry Pilgrim had
His music on the way.”*

Southey.

“On my return to Caen with the remains of my dear lady Agatha,” said Ingulfus, “I abandoned all thoughts of pilgrimage, till learning that the clergy of Germany had determined upon a visit to the Holy Land, the desire to worship at the tomb of the Saviour, returned again so strong upon me, that I was induced to unite with a Norman troop, which joined the company of the archbishop at Mentz. We were a goodly band,” continued he, “out of every nation, kindred, tongue and people, of the Latin world – and heaven that moved us to this expiation of our sins, opened before us the way, and provided for our sustenance, both in the castles of princes, and in the cottages of peasants.

“The monasteries, of which many have been founded by pious men throughout all Germany, furnished resting-places for the weary, and hospitals for the sick. When we entered upon the kingdom of Hungary, which is ‘a well-watered and fruitful country,’ we found a strange people, whose nobles and warriors indeed live in walled towns, and castles strongly fortified among the rocks; but the common people, for the most part, dwell in tents like Abraham of old, and feed their flocks and herds upon the banks of the streams. These be the people, which the holy fathers thought were the Gog and Magog of sacred writ, and truly they came like a storm into Europe, and like a cloud they covered the land – both they and their bands. And because the time of their coming was near the end of the thousand years prophesied by St. John, many wise men did say, that they were the signs and forerunners of the end of the world. Howbeit since the end is not yet, there be not many at the present which hold this doctrine.”

“Are there not some who say, that Gog and Magog are the heresies which vex the church?” inquired Robert.

“Even so,” said Ingulfus; “but such are not led by the true and manifest words of Scripture, but following ‘cunningly devised fables’ have explained away even the promises of God. Now that these are the people is proved, in that they came from Persia and from the north quarters, and the name in which they most delight is Magyar, which plainly agreeth to Magog, and whosoever shall dwell in the latter days, will see ‘wars and rumors of wars’ in Hungary, according to my judgment. I have learned many things concerning them; for either for my sins, or the badness of the roads, the beast on which I rode fell lame, and therefore was I forced to leave the horsemen, and follow on foot, supporting the weariness of the way with pilgrim’s staff. Among us were those, who from fear and love of adventure, and not from devotion, had undertaken the pilgrimage. Their vain talk and godless manners troubled me sore. There was one who having inserted a shepherd’s reed in his staff, played thereon and sang with his voice, not the pious psalms of the church, but the unholy madrigals of the sinful and profane. And for that he saw it pleased me not, he delighted in it the more, and walked by my side, and when I could not rid myself of his company, I questioned him concerning his history.

“He was an Anglo-Dane of the north countrie, a born thrall of Earl Edwin, and had led a roving life from his youth. This man, whose name was Hardrager, was the false vassal who betrayed the young noble, and received from the justice of the Conqueror, the sentence of perpetual imprisonment. But the princes of this world are often compelled to use unworthy instruments in carrying forward their plans. When your royal father deemed it expedient for the peace of the realm to punish the treason of Earl Waltheof, and no man was willing to become his executioner, Hardrager purchased free pardon by beheading him.”

“It was well he sought to expiate his offences by a pilgrimage,” said Adela.

“Nay,” said Ingulfus, “no thought of true penitence had ever entered his mind. Instead of profiting by the clemency of his sovereign, he applied himself anew to wicked practices, pursuing the hare and slaughtering the deer in the New Forest; till finally having suffered the loss of an ear for his crimes, and still continuing to set at naught the game laws, he was condemned to death; but as if the Almighty had raised him up for a ‘thorn in the flesh’ to his servants, Hardrager again escaped his doom. It pleased your noble sire, when he founded Battle Abbey, on the field of Hastings, and appointed monks to pray for the souls of the slain, to grant to the Abbot the power of showing mercy to the guilty. It chanced accordingly when Hardrager was drawn from his dungeon, and carried toward the gibbet, that the worthy Abbot meeting the cart, caused the procession to stop, and moved with pity for the criminal revoked his sentence, and laid on him the penance of pilgrimage. Hardrager lost no time in quitting England, and found means to join our company, upon the banks of the Rhine. He seemed well provided with purse and scrip, and often on days of fasting, purchased an indulgence from the bishop for himself and other vain persons, to regale themselves with meat and wine; and yet he seemed not to be without a sense of sin, and a certain reverence for the commands of the church. He rose early, and performed his devotions with the most scrupulous regularity, and every night scourged his naked shoulders with a knotted lash; and when I looked for a reformation in his life from this wholesome discipline, he told me he did not that for his own sins, but for the sins of another, who furnished him money for the expedition; for, by reason of his poverty, he had engaged to work out a three years’ penance, that had been imposed on his benefactor; and he added, with a light laugh, ‘I can better endure the smarting of my flesh by voluntary flagellation, than the loss of it by Compulsory abstinence.’”

“By St. Stephen,” exclaimed Robert, laughing, “the cunning knave is the true scape-goat of Scripture. It were no bad thought thus to expiate our sins by the vicarious suffering of some poor wretch.”

“Heaven forefend,” said Stephen, “that we should be compelled to raise our own exchequer by such means.”

“The indulgences and requisitions of the church,” gravely continued Ingulfus, “are too often perverted. I thank our blessed lady, who rather than continue me in the society of this wicked one, laid me upon a bed of sickness. For many days, I had with difficulty continued my journey, but Hardrager, who seemed insensible to fatigue, supported me by his strong arm, till coming to the lands of a powerful Hungarian, whose flocks and herds covered the hill-side for many a league, we fell behind the other pilgrims, and my weariness increasing upon me, I sank exhausted and senseless upon the ground. What was my surprise when my consciousness returned, to feel myself upborne in the arms of Hardrager, who was attempting to place me upon the back of a horse which he had stolen from the adjoining pasture, and bridled with the scourge that he wore about his loins. ‘Cheer up, holy father,’ said he, ‘heaven has sent thee help in time of trouble. I will walk by thy side, and we will soon prove to yonder heartless drones that the last shall be first.’ In reply to my remonstrance, he added, with a misbelieving smile, ‘Nay, is it not written, “The wealth of the wicked is laid up for the just,” yon savage Magyar may rejoice in the happy chance which enables him to send a substitute to the holy city.’”

“Upon my positive refusal to mount, he stood for a moment irresolute, and then, with a smile, ’twixt jest and earnest, fell upon one knee before me, saying, ‘Gra’mercy, good monk, I would crave thy blessing and absolution for this sin ere we part, for since thou wilt not accept the bounty of heaven, I must e’en take it myself.’ Observing my hesitation, he rose hastily, saying, ‘It boots not, ’tis but a few lashes more, and my shoulders are well able to bear them. Adieu, holy father, I grieve that thy conscience stands in the way of thy advancement,’ and springing upon the restive beast, he was away with the swiftness of the wind.”

“Nay, methinks I should have been less scrupulous,” said William, laughing. “The fellow’s dexterity merited absolution.”

Ingulfus resumed, “Sick and alone, and much cast down in spirit, I stretched myself upon the grass, and looked only for death, but He who suffers not even a sparrow to fall without his notice, had compassion upon me, and sent a good Samaritan to my relief. Korshah, the noble Magyar, returning from the chase, came where I was, and seeing my low estate, gave his servants charge concerning me, to convey me to his own castle, where I tarried for above the space of a month, till my bruised feet were healed, and my broken health restored.”

“It was a deed of Christian charity. I would fain learn something of this strange people,” said Adela; “do they observe the rites of our church?”

“At the beginning of the present century,” replied Ingulfus, “St. Stephen, the Alfred of his nation, divided the country into seventy-two counties and twelve bishoprics, but though the people have submitted to baptism, and observe the sacred canons, yet there prevails among them a strange mixture of barbarian fables, with the truths of holy writ; and their language is for the most part colored with the extravagant, but beautiful expressions of the Orientals. And because my mind was intent upon the prophecies, and I would know concerning Gog and Magog and the chief princes of Mesech and Tubal, I questioned the noble Magyar of his country and the people of his ancient land. ‘My people,’ said he, ‘are numerous as the stars of night, and countless as the drops of falling showers. The smallest twig of yonder elm, that throws its shadow across the valley, is greater when compared with its trunk, than is the Hungarian branch, in comparison with the Scythian tree, whose roots strike deep into the soil of China, and whose boughs overshadow the Alps – extend beyond the sea of darkness on the north, and distil dews upon the broad and fruitful regions of Persia and Cathay. Beyond the possessions of our tribes to the eastward,’ he continued, ‘may no man go; for a desert and a land of darkness lasts from that coast, unto terrestrial Paradise. There are the mountains and hills which arose from Noah’s flood, when the soft and tender ground was worn away by the waters, and fell and became valleys. Paradise is the highest part of the world, so high that it touches the borders of the moon. And there by a radiant way through the gates of the morning the angels were wont to descend to commune with our first parents; but that way was closed that Lucifer might return no more to the regions of light after he had tempted them, and thus with them was he driven forth from the garden. And Eve carried in her hand the seeds of the apple which she had given unto her husband, and wherever she wandered she cast them into the earth, and shed her tears upon them, and they sprang up and bore fruit, some good and some evil, and from those seeds came every green tree and herb that grow upon the earth. And this garden is enclosed all about by a wall, which seems not to be of natural stone – and the gate is of carbuncle flashing, with an incredible splendor, and shooting on every side its beams like flaming swords. Wherefore some visionary ones said it was fire, and many became worshippers thereof. And in the highest place in Paradise, exactly in the midst, is a well that casts out four streams, which run by divers lands throughout all the earth, and above the fountain of the streams, the four princes of the stars weave the semblances of what shall be, and cast them upon the waters, and whithersoever these flow there entereth a spirit into the nation or the people that dwell upon the banks, and they go forth conquering and to conquer. And thus were the tribes of Asia inspired to go toward the west, and establish their domain in Europe. Therefore wise men do study the stars, and read in the scroll of heaven the will of the Invisible. And all the sweet

waters in the world above and beneath, take their rise from the well of Paradise. The drops of the morning-dew are gendered there, and thither the clouds return after the rain. There the light zephyrs gather rich odors under their wings, and from thence carry them abroad upon all the face of the earth, and give to every flower its perfume. And because of the abundance of precious things that are found therein, many have entered these rivers and essayed to pass by that land of chaos unto Paradise, but they might not speed in their voyage; for many died of weariness, by reason of rowing against the strong waves, and many were dashed in pieces against the dark rocks. And many vessels bound with iron were drawn aside by the shipman's stone, and held that they might never go thence.' I inquired concerning this stone," said Ingulfus, "and he told me there were in the eastern seas 'certain rocks of adamant which attract iron; and that men would break off pieces, and suspend them by a thread, and that one point thereof would turn to the north, and another to the south; and he said also that there are two stars fixed in the heavens, about which all the firmament turns as a wheel upon an axle. He said, moreover, that the earth and sea are of a round form, and that by this stone many mariners have passed the whole compass of the earth, and come again to the same point whence they set out. And these be not half the things that he told me, and there is none of them all but have some reason and understanding in them, and some good points of our belief. But though this man was both learned and devout, it grieved me to see in him the remains of his ancient superstition, for he was accustomed to worship before a hideous idol. And when he knew I was grieved concerning the thing, he said he worshipped not the image, but the virtue which was in it, even as we have images of our Lady and of the saints, which we set before us, to keep their holiness in mind. Howbeit the man showed me no little kindness; and when I was sufficiently recovered, he furnished me with a strong, well-appointed horse, replenished my purse, and accompanied me to the next town on my journey.

"I had hard riding to overtake my companions, which I should have failed in doing, had they not rested in Constantinople.

"This city was first called Byzantium, which name is still preserved in the imperial money called byzants. It was by divine suggestion that its appellation was changed. For when Constantine the Great was pursuing his victorious course to the east, he lodged in that place; and in his dream he saw, and behold there stood before him an old woman, whose brow was furrowed with age; but presently clad in an imperial robe, she was transformed into a beautiful girl, and fascinated his eyes by the elegance of her youthful charms – and he waked and slept again; and there came one unto him and said, 'The woman thou sawest is this city worn down by age, whose walls thou shalt restore, and whose beauty shall signalize thy name to the end of time. Mount thy horse and give him the rein, to go whithersoever he will. Take the royal spear in thy hand, and its point shall describe the circuit of the wall upon the ground.'

"The Emperor eagerly obeyed the vision, and employed the most skilful architects in building the city. By casting in masses of rock and sand, they straitened the ancient waters, and thus the sea wonders to see fields unknown before amid its glassy waves, and surrounds and supplies the city with all the conveniences of the earth. Constantine erected there the circus, statues of triumphal heroes, and tripods from Delphi. And all the saints whose bodies he was able to collect out of every country, were brought thither. In Constantinople is the fairest and noblest church in the world, called St. Sophia. It is of a circular form, domed in, and supported with pillars of gold and silver, hung about by lamps of the same precious metal. High mass is offered there on a different altar each day in the year. In its innermost part on the north side, is a large and beautiful apartment, wherein is a chest containing three pieces of our Lord's cross. Three times in a year this chest is brought out into the nave of the church, and placed upon a golden altar, where all the people are permitted to worship it. Howbeit I saw it not, which thing is a grief of mind to me. And they say concerning this cross, that when Adam was about to die, Seth went unto the angel that kept Paradise, to beg the oil of mercy for his father. But the angel gave him only three grains of the tree of life. And Seth buried them in the grave of Adam, and from these grains sprang up three trees, and from these were fashioned the cross

on which our Saviour was crucified, as is contained in these words, *'In cruce fit palma cypressus oliva.'* Thus from the death of Adam came life into the world. And when our Lord had risen from the dead, the Jews moved with envy, took the crosses from Mount Calvary, and hid them in the earth. And thus St. Helena, the mother of Constantine, who was descended from the ancient kings of Britain, found them; and when she could not distinguish the cross of the Saviour from those of the thieves, she caused a dead body to be laid upon them, and when it touched the true cross it arose. St. Helena caused these relics to be conveyed to Constantinople; but the cross of Dismas the good thief, was carried to Cyprus, and men worship it there. There also she found the Saviour's seamless coat, and the four nails that pierced his hands and feet; and of one of these the Emperor made a bridle for his horse to carry him in battle, and thereby he overcame all his enemies, and reigned from Persia to the British Sea. They showed me also a part of the crown of our Lord, made of the branches of Aubespine; and I had one of those precious thorns given to me as a great favor, and it hath this virtue; that whosoever beareth it about him, is secure from thunder and from tempest, and from the malevolence of evil spirits and demons. We tarried long at Constantinople, for there were many wonderful things to be seen. Every year the birthday of Jesus is celebrated with rejoicings; and on these occasions one may behold representatives of all the nations that inhabit different parts of the world; and the common people are amused with surprising feats of jugglery and dexterous motions of wild beasts, and birds of prey that have been trained to fight each other. And the Emperor entertained the bishops right royally in the palace of the Blaquernel, in feasts and games, and gave them gifts of gold and silver, rich apparel and costly jewels, so that they were in no haste to depart, and many of the mixed multitudes that followed with us, remained there, and entered the service of the Emperor."

Ingulfus was surprised the following day in the midst of his studies, by a secret visit from Adela. "I am come," said she, "to obtain of thee, the precious thorn from the crown of our Lord."

The countenance of Ingulfus indicated at once his reluctance to part with the inestimable relic, and his strong desire to gratify the princess.

"Nay," said she, observing his hesitation, "I know its value, and am prepared to reward thee at whatsoever cost."

"Though it may have been the practice of some unworthy palmers, to trade in relics," said Ingulfus, "I cannot make merchandise of that which pierced the brow of my blessed Lord. It is thine without money, and without price."

Tears of gratitude beamed in Adela's eyes. "Good father," she answered, "I know right well, that by reason of thy holiness thou art safe from sudden danger, and therefore thou canst not need this talisman as does thy unworthy pupil; yet it grieves me to take without recompense that which is so dear to thee. Is there no gift in the power of Adela which Ingulfus would accept?"

"Thy father hath sometime suggested," returned the friar, modestly, "that he would reward my poor services with a benefice. It would please me well, to spend the few short days that remain unto me, in England. Near the monastery of Croyland was I born, and within the shelter of its walls would I die."

"Trust me for the accomplishment of thy wish," said Adela, bowing her head for his benediction. Then wrapping the holy thorn in a piece of silver tissue, and placing it in her bosom, she departed.

CHAPTER VIII

*“When thou shalt see an old man bent beneath
The burden of his earthly punishment,
Forgive him, Thalaba!
Yea, send a prayer to God in his behalf!”*

– Southey.

INGULFUS' STORY, CONTINUED

From Constantinople we proceeded across the Bosphorus through Asia Minor. Our route was tedious in the extreme, and after we entered upon the territory of the Infidels, we were continually harassed by flying bands of Arabs; so that many were slain, and some being driven from the main body were lost among the mountains, and we saw them no more. At length with much toil, the pilgrims reached the village of Capernaum, where being hardly beset by the robbers, they were constrained to tarry, until they could obtain a safe escort from the Emir at Antioch. Howbeit I only relate these things as they were told me in Jerusalem; for a strange adventure separated me from my fellows. There are two fountains, Jor and Dan, which flowing down from the mountain, are collected into one, and form the Jordan. When we passed them in our route, I was constrained to linger among the shepherds, who fed their flocks in the green pastures which there abound, and several devout persons tarried with me; and on the morrow, when we had taken our leave, we journeyed on, and straightway we came to the conflux of these streams, – and when we saw the Jordan, each man hastened to divest himself of his garments, that he might bathe in that stream, in which our blessed Lord was baptized. So occupied were we with the holy ceremony, that we had not observed a band of Arabs, who assailed us with a shower of stones and javelins, and separated us one from another. What farther passed I know not, for a blow upon the temple felled me to the ground, and deprived me of sense.

When I unclosed my eyes, I thought myself among the fiends of hell; and feeling for my crucifix, I found myself wrapped in many folds of fine cloth, in which I was firmly but gently bound. As my senses gradually returned, I began to note the things about me. The apartment seemed a long, dark cavern, whose limits I could not distinguish, lighted by a fire at the farther extremity, round which half clothed, swarthy figures were engaged in roasting pieces of flesh. Others of the same appearance were seated upon mats, with a cloth spread before them upon the ground, cutting the meat with long, crooked knives, or tearing it with their white pointed teeth, with savage voracity. Apart from the rest, seated upon an elevated cushion with his legs crossed, was a tall, strong-built man, with hair and beard white as snow, hanging over his shoulders, and down to his breast. He took no part with the revellers, but seemed to control by his look their wild, gibbering talk, to the end that it might not disturb my slumbers; for through excessive faintness, I seemed only to exist between sleeping and waking. His regards were fixed upon me, and his appearance recalled a dim recollection which I was vainly striving to trace, when at a word from him, the whole band disappeared behind an angle in the wall. The old man then lighted a torch and approached me, carefully removed the bandage from my head, anointed my wound with sweet-smelling balm, and gave me to drink of a fiery liquid, which spread like an elixir through my veins, and seemed instantly to reanimate me. With a smile at my puzzled look, he plucked away the false beard and hair, and revealed to my astonished sight, the swarthy countenance of Hardrager.

“Well met, holy father,” said he, with his wonted laugh. “Hast come to bring a blessing to the habitation of Hardrager?”

“Is this thine habitation?” said I. “Then I was not so far wrong in thinking myself in purgatory!” (for I was ill-pleased with the strange place and bad company.) “But by what fatal mischance came I hither? Has the Saviour, for my sins, denied me at last the sight of his holy sepulchre?” and I sank back in despair.

“Nay,” said Hardrager, “but for the mischance which thou deplorest, thou mightest indeed have been in purgatory.”

“And where am I?” eagerly inquired I.

“Thou art in the strong-hold of the Old Man of the Mountain, and guarded by the assassin band of Mount Lebanon,” replied he.

“The saints preserve me!” said I, ejaculating a prayer.

“In truth thou showest little gratitude,” said Hardrager, “to one who hath saved thy life, (thanks to the good Hungarian steed that brought me to thy rescue). Knowest thou not the proverb? ‘Speak well of the bridge that carried thee safe over!’”

Finding from his words, but more especially from the seriousness of his manner, that this wild man had really undertaken to render me an essential service, I began to regard him with more complacency, and finally brought myself to listen with interest to his story. Stung with remorse for his agency in the death of the noble Saxons, Edwin and Waltheof, he had determined, as soon as his pilgrimage was accomplished, to join the Varangians of Constantinople, and make perpetual war upon the conquerors of England. On his route through Syria, he fell in with a band of Arabs, wild and reckless like himself, who, scorning allegiance to any leader, had established themselves among the ruined towers and rocky fortresses of Mount Lebanon, and thence carried on predatory warfare upon all who ventured to travel that way. They wore the Mohammedan garb, and observed some of the institutions of the Koran, but were followers of Ali, uncle of the prophet. The superior abilities and learning of Hardrager, enabled him soon to master their language and their tenets, and by the fortunate solution of some timely mysteries, he impressed them with the belief that he was the prophet of Allah, and soon brought them to take oath to obey all his requirements. But though he had thus apostatized from the faith of his fathers, he retained a copy of the New Testament, and religiously fulfilled his vows at the holy sepulchre, and with honesty worthy a better man continued his nightly flagellations. He had instilled into his wild followers his own hatred of the Norman race, and it was because of this that they fell upon us with such violence at the Jordan. I should have perished with my companions, for the Assassins were proceeding to rip open the bodies of the slain and wounded in search of coin, had not Hardrager recognized my Saxon countenance and interposed for my rescue. With the greatest care and tenderness, he had me conveyed in a litter to their nearest haunt, where, after protracted insensibility, I found myself stretched upon the couch of skins in the cavern. As soon as I was sufficiently restored, he mounted me upon the good steed of the Magyar, which, being unable to walk, I was fain to ride, and accompanied me till we came in sight of the pilgrims encamped upon the Mount of Olives, for by his messengers, Hardrager had intelligence of their movements, and conducted me by the shortest route to join them.

“Benedicite, holy father,” said he, as he lifted me gently from the horse, and reverently inclined before me, “a blessing in the Saxon tongue would be health to my guilty soul.”

A tear glittered in his eye, and if it were a sin Heaven assailed me, for I yielded to his importunity and granted him the blessing. “Adieu, good friar,” said he, “thou hast taken a load from my heart. Accept from the gratitude of Hardrager that which may stand thee instead, when thy fancied relics are of little avail.” So saying, he gave me a small slip of parchment inscribed with Arabic characters, and rode slowly away. I thrust the scroll into my purse, little knowing its value, for my sight and sense were filled with Jerusalem, which I now saw for the first time. As I walked along the brow of Olivet, like my Saviour, I beheld the city and wept over it, for the glory of Solomon’s temple had departed; the holy

prophets and apostles had passed away, and bands of Infidels whose bright scimeters gleamed in the light of the setting sun dashed through her sacred streets, and encountered each other with barbarian clamor in her holy courts. The sound of the vesper-bell from the church of the Ascension invited us to prayer. With divine rapture we pressed our lips upon the stone imprinted with the last footsteps of our Saviour, and with pious theft we gathered some of the sacred dust from before the altar.

Descending from the mountain, we spent the night in fasting and prayer in the garden of Gethsemane, and at the first cock-crowing, arose to pass over the Brook Cedron. In the valley of Jehoshaphat we were met by the venerable patriarch, with the Latin and Syrian Christians of Jerusalem, who conducted us in solemn procession through the midst of the city to the church of the Holy Sepulchre.

There, amid the clangor of cymbals, and the sweet sounds of psaltery and harp, we bowed in worship and adoration, while through the cloud of ascending incense streamed the effulgence of innumerable lights, like the Shechinah of the ancient temple, and Jesus Christ the inhabitant of the place, alone knew the sighs we breathed, the tears we shed, the prayers we offered, and the thanksgivings we uttered.

Our vows were accomplished, and with the benediction of the patriarch upon us, we went forth, to climb the hill of Calvary, to visit the pool of Bethesda, and to mourn over all the pleasant places which the followers of Mohammed have laid waste. There was one among us, who, for the sins he had committed, and the compunctions of conscience that he suffered, was desirous to yield up his soul at the tomb of the Saviour.

This celebrated man, Fulk Earl of Anjou, had compelled two of his servants by an oath, to do whatsoever he commanded, and when we had completed our procession, and obtained absolution, he was by them dragged naked through the streets towards the Holy Sepulchre, one of them holding him by a twisted withe about his neck, the other, with a rod scourging his bare back, while the penitent cried out, "Lord, receive thy wretched Fulk, thy perfidious, thy runagate – regard my repentant soul, oh Lord Jesus Christ."

Howbeit he obtained not his request at that time. We were desirous to go down from Jerusalem to Jericho, to worship at Gilgal, and view that sea, whose black waters roll over the cities of the plain; but the wealth of the archbishops had been noised abroad, and the thieves that abound in those parts, fell upon all those who ventured that way, stripped and wounded them, and departed, leaving them to perish by the wayside. But our Norman bands accompanied by a party of Germans, arming themselves with swords determined to visit the Church of the Nativity, at Bethlehem. We accomplished our purpose in safety, and were returning through the fields of the wood, when a band of mounted Saracens, with wild cries, dashed among us. Reluctantly, each man drew his sword and stood for his life. The attack fell heaviest upon the Normans, and despite our vigorous resistance, we should, doubtless, all have perished beneath their javelins, had not the frantic gestures, and more especially the green turbans of our assailants, reminded me of the cave of Hardrager, and recalled his parting words. Hastily opening my purse, I held up the Arabic scroll, before the eyes of a barbarian, whose drawn scimeter was flashing above my head.

At sight of it his demeanor instantly changed. He alighted, assisted me to rise, laid his hand upon his heart to express his concern for what had happened, and shouting, Allah ackbar, to his companions, drew them from their work of blood, and forthwith the flying band disappeared. Nearly half our number were slain, and the rest of us wounded and disheartened, slowly retraced our steps to Jerusalem, and relinquished all attempts to visit the other holy places with which the vicinity abounds. Though the patriarch, and the monks of the various monasteries gave us hospitable entertainments, yet, such had been the length, the weariness and discouragements of the way, and such the thinning of our ranks by famine, fatigue, disease, and hostility, that we were fain to choose the readiest means of return.

Learning that a fleet of Genoese merchantmen were anchored in the harbor of Joppa, we determined to purchase a passage over seas with them. The archbishops, therefore, gathered the pilgrims together, and numbered them, and of the seven thousand that had set out from Mentz, scarce three thousand remained; and on our way from Jerusalem to the place of embarkation through the rocky defiles which are the favorite haunts of the barbarians, we estimated that another thousand perished.

Our voyage to Brundisium was the most prosperous part of our journey. Thence we came to Rome; where I showed my life to our holy father the pope, and was absolved of all that lay on my conscience, concerning many grievous points, as men must needs have that travel in company with so many people of divers sects and beliefs. We then proceeded through Italy, and the archbishops took the route to Germany; and of our band that left Normandy, thirty well-appointed horsemen, twenty miserable palmers, only, repassed the Alps, and entered France on foot, ill, weary, and penniless; and had not a kind Providence sent the noble Earls Robert and Stephen to our relief, we might at last have perished on the banks of the Eure.

CHAPTER IX

*Can piety the discord heal,
Or stanch the death-feud's enmity?
Can Christian lore, can patriot's zeal,
Can love of blessed charity?*

The year 1077 opened with great rejoicing in Normandy. The royal family were reunited for the last time, to celebrate the marriage of Adela and Constance, with the wealthy and powerful husbands of the Conqueror's choice. The young Count and Countess of Blois, whose castles were numerous as the days in the year, determined to make a festive progress through their dominions, and the Earl of Bretagne, with his bride, with their young sister, Gundred, and her undeclared lover, the Earl of Warrenne, joined the happy party.

In the midst of her happiness Adela did not forget her promise to Ingulfus. The evening before her departure, she visited the cloister of the palmer, and acquainted him with his preferment to the Abbey of Croyland. The good friar's gratitude and pleasure were unbounded.

"Holy father," said the countess, "I have yet one boon to crave."

"Name it," said the priest. "If it lieth in my poor ability it shall not fail thee."

"Because it lieth in thy power do I intrust it to thee," continued she. "The body of Earl Waltheof, the father of our much-injured Maude, is interred at the four cross-roads, without the gates of Winchester; when thou takest possession of thy benefice, as soon as may be, thou wilt give him Christian burial, in the church-yard of Croyland, and cause daily masses to be said for his soul."

Ingulfus readily promised compliance.

Adela still lingered. "The lovely Maude goes with thee to England. Thou wilt be compelled to marry her to Simon. Soften, as much as possible, her hard fate, and watch over her interests, and comfort her with thy counsels."

"It shall be done," said Ingulfus, fervently.

"Father, I would confess."

And the young countess, in all her beauty and pride, knelt at the feet of the venerable man, and with the simplicity of a child, poured out her soul before him.

As Adela had predicted, the Conqueror, on his return to England, took with him Maude, as the bride of Simon. Robert sailed, also, in the same vessel, being commissioned by the king to establish Simon, now Earl of Huntingdon, in his new possessions.

William, too, accompanied his father, for he, more than any of the sons, comprehended the policy, and partook of the spirit of the Conqueror.

The remaining years of the Queen Duchess Matilda, were passed in splendid solitude, in the royal palace at Bayeux. The early death of the princess Adeliza, the failing health of Constance, together with fresh dissensions in her family, pressed heavily upon her mind, and occasioned the lingering illness that slowly conducted her to the tomb.

The loss of his beloved queen, and the undutiful conduct of his sons, aggravated the natural irritability and imperiousness of William, so that according to the English chroniclers, "He became, after her death, a thorough tyrant." He passed the four remaining years of his life in a constant succession of petty annoyances, and fruitless wars, with Philip of France.

In the stately castle of Chartres, sat the lovely Countess Adela apparently busy with embroidery, in that age almost the only home occupation of females. A shade of sadness was upon her brow, and an expression of anxious care indicated the mother's sympathy with the suffering child, that an attendant was vainly striving to soothe.

“Draw the couch of the little William to my side, Therese,” said the countess, observing the tears in the girl’s eyes. “Thou hast a tiresome task. Remove these frames,” continued she to the maidens, “and go ye all to disport awhile in the pleasance, I will watch my boy’s slumbers.”

The feeble child stretched his hands to his mother, and laying his head upon her breast sank quietly to sleep.

“Poor suffering one,” soliloquized Adela, “thou knowest naught but thy mother’s love. Already thy younger brothers despise thy imbecility – the courtiers regard thee with indifference – and the very menials flout thee. No ducal coronet, or kingly crown will grace the head of my first-born.”

The sound of heavy steps in the corridor disturbed the slumberer. He lifted his head, moaned heavily, and regarded with a vacant stare the warrior who entered.

“Robert, my beloved brother!” exclaimed the countess, the joy of former times flitting across her countenance.

With a moody and dissatisfied air the duke returned the frank greeting of his sister, and throwing himself upon a seat by her side, said in a tone of ill-concealed impatience,

“Adela, I have come to thee, for the prudent counsel of our mother dwells with thee. I am robbed of my rights and stripped of my heritage.”

“Art thou not Duke of Normandy,” inquired his sister with surprise.

“Aye, verily. Our father left me the duchy with a blessing that sounded marvellously like a curse. ‘The dukedom of Normandy,’ said he, ‘I granted unto my son Robert, and having received the homage of his baronage, that honor given cannot be revoked: yet he is a foolish, proud knave, and will be punished with cruel fortune.’”

“The saints preserve thee,” said the countess with a look of alarm, “and England” —

Robert interrupted. — “’Tis of that I would speak. The Conqueror bitterly bewailing the desolation and woe he had wrought in England, protested that he had so misused that fair and beautiful land, that he dare not appoint a successor to it, but left the disposal of that matter in the hands of God.”

“Thou shouldst then have been king,” said the Countess, “since God made thee his first-born.”

“So should I have been,” said the duke, “but for the craft of William; but while I tarried in Germany, little thinking that my father’s illness would terminate so suddenly, the red-haired usurper hastened over sea, and gaining Lanfranc to his interest secured the throne.”

“Always unready,” sighed Adela. “And while the elder sons were thus employed, the young Henry watched by the bed of his dying father. Is it not so?”

“Small watching had the Conqueror’s death-bed,” said Robert, with something between a smile and a sneer. “The filial Beauclerk set off to secure the treasures, and the attendants equally rapacious and inhuman, plundered the house of all the money, plate, and precious furniture, and even stripped the person of the monarch. And after Herlwin had succeeded in conveying the body to the abbey of St. Stephen’s, and they were about to place it in the grave, there stood forth an insolent noble, and forbade the interment. ‘This spot,’ said he, ‘was the site of my father’s house, which this dead duke took violently from him, and here upon part of my inheritance founded this church. This ground I therefore challenge, and charge ye all as ye shall answer it at the great and dreadful day of judgment, that ye lay not the bones of the destroyer on the hearth of my fathers.’ And there, exposed to the jeers of the assembled multitudes, was the body forced to wait, while Henry drove a sharp bargain with the owner of the soil, and purchased leave of burial for the paltry sum of sixty shillings. Oh Adela!” said Robert, rising and striding through the apartment in extreme perturbation, “I am weary of this greatness which makes enemies of brothers, and yields one scarce a grave at last.”

The head of the countess was bent low over her sleeping child: and the duke continued, “I sometimes wish I were an eremite, and unless thy clear wit can devise some expedient by which I can obtain my rightful inheritance, and chastise the vanity of this presumptuous Rufus, I am resolved upon a pilgrimage.”

“Thou saidst Lanfranc, assisted William: our uncle Odo hates Lanfranc,” said Adela.

Robert caught at the suggestion. "My sister, I thank thee," he exclaimed eagerly. "Thou hast made me king. I will to Normandy, and summon my trusty squires to council. Simon of Huntingdon, Hugh of Norfolk, and William of Durham, are already disaffected and ready for revolt. Odo shall head the conspiracy in England."

Full of his new project the duke hurried away, scarcely waiting for the pecuniary aid, with which the countess, who knew the impoverished state of his finances, hastened to furnish him.

The well-concerted scheme of the conspirators failed, through the characteristic indolence and procrastination of Robert. Odo effected an inglorious escape from England, and the rebel earls gladly made terms with the king. Many of the insurgents repaired to Normandy, and suffered the confiscation of their estates; and while the Countess of Blois daily expected a summons to attend Robert's coronation, she was surprised by intelligence that William had crossed the sea with a numerous army, and by menaces, bribery or fraud, had obtained possession of almost every fortress, on the right bank of the Seine.

The barons who held lands under both brothers, labored to effect a reconciliation through the mediation of the French monarch.

Robert still reckoning upon the liberal aid of his sister and her wealthy lord, resisted all overtures of peace; but Adela comprehending the hopeless defect of a character, that not even a crown could stimulate to promptitude, persuaded him to accept the terms of the treaty.

As the splendid cortege attendant upon the Countess of Blois, and her young sons Thibaut, Stephen and Henry, swept along the great road from Chartres to Blois, the green arcades of a beautiful grove stretching down to the brink of a small stream that rolled its clear waters to the Loire, invited them to rest during the noontide hours. With loosened rein the steeds wandered at will cropping the tender herbage, or slaked their thirst in the rippling brook; while reposing upon the greensward, the party made a refreshing repast. The children, left to the unrestrained indulgence of their boyish glee, gathered wild flowers for their mother, hallooed to the echoes of the wood, or pursued each other along the banks of the stream.

Allured by the sound of their happy voices, the countess left the company and stole after them, catching occasional glimpses of their dancing plumes, as they bounded on before her, till coming to an opening in the glen, she stopped before an antique crucifix that some pious hand had reared upon the verge of a fountain. Occupied with the sweet thoughts suggested by the place, she scarcely noted the absence of her children, till the little Henry, pulling her by the robe exclaimed with a face all radiant with joy, "This way ma mère, Thibaut says we've found a hermit's cell, and Stephen is talking with the hermit." Yielding to his impetuosity the countess hastened forward and discovered sitting at the entrance of a sylvan lodge, just where the shadow of the cross fell longest at sunset, a youthful saint, if saint he was, reading his breviary, and telling his beads with affected sanctity.

"Beauclerk!" said the countess after a scrutinizing gaze at his half-concealed features.

"Thou knowest me then," said the pretended monk, in a tone of bitter reproach, rising and throwing off his gray friar's gown and cowl. "I thought myself forgotten by all my father's house."

"'Tis our uncle Henry," said Thibaut, amazed and chagrined at this transformation of his newly discovered hermit.

"And hast thou then doubted the affection of Adela?" said his sister.

"It were not strange that I should doubt the love of one leagued with my foes," replied the prince sorrowfully.

"How leagued with thy foes?" inquired the countess in great surprise.

"Thou surely dost not mock me," said Henry marking the tears trembling on her eyelids. "Thy countenance bespeaks thy sincerity. Have I then been the dupe, as well as the prey of my designing brothers?"

"If thou hast distrusted the love of Adela, yes," replied his sister, "but come thou with me. My lord awaits us at the castle of Blois. He shall investigate thy cause and redress thy wrongs."

“Come with us, dear uncle,” reiterated the children observing his hesitation.

“Yield thyself, rescue or no rescue,” said the young Stephen balancing a stick as a lance, and leading off the prince in triumph.

“And hast thou not heard of the siege of St. Michael’s Mount?” said Henry as he rode by the side of his sister, at the head of the cavalcade.

“A passing rumor, and much I fear me, purposely perverted to restrain my interference, was all that reached me,” replied Adela. “Tell me all.”

“Thou knowest,” continued Henry, “that by the will of our father, the duchy of Normandy fell to Robert, and the rich heritage of England was given to William. Henry had neither patrimony nor domains, some small treasure was all my share. This I gave to Robert in the hour of his need, for the lands of Cotentin, and then passed into England, to secure the dower of my mother. On my return, the prodigal having squandered the moneys received from me, seized and confined me in one of his fortresses. When Normandy was invaded, he released me from my imprisonment, and I did him good service in compelling William to raise the siege of Rouen. In the treaty to which thou didst persuade Robert, I was the principal sufferer, and therefore” – added he with warmth, “did I deem that the guileful duke, had stolen into the sanctuary of my sister’s affections, and robbed me of thy love, my choicest treasure.”

“My much-injured brother,” said the countess, affectionately, “I knew not that thy interest was involved, else I had given far different counsel. But proceed with the story of thy wrongs.”

“My traitor brothers united like Pilate and Herod of old,” proceeded Henry, with increasing asperity, “seized my castles in Cotentén, and dogged my steps like sleuth-hounds on the track, till I took refuge in Mt. St. Michael, where the friendly tides kept them at bay; and there I had perished with thirst, had not Robert’s tardy compassion ministered to my necessity, and finally effected my release. Since then, I have wandered a fugitive and an outcast, craving scant hospitality of my brother’s vassals, and solacing my weary hours with clerkly studies.”

“Courage, my good brother,” said Adela, with enthusiasm. “Thou shalt wander no more. Count Stephen will put thee in the way to mend thy fortunes; and, perchance, thou wilt one day inherit the proud fiefs of both thy brothers. See! yonder gleams the spires of Blois. But what knightly train proceeds up the broad avenue of the castle. Listen! The warder sounds his bugle blast, and the drawbridge is lowered. Put thy horse to his mettle; these laggards may follow at their leisure.” So saying the countess and her brother dashed forward, and entered the court-yard just as the retinue of the Duke of Normandy wound up the staircase, leading to the great hall.

At sight of Robert, Henry’s eye flashed, and with an indignant gesture he turned to depart, but Adela, with a determined air, laid her hand upon his arm. “Remain,” said she, “that portcullis bars all egress from the castle, and yon proud duke shall not escape till he has done thee ample justice.”

Earl Stephen gave a cordial welcome to Robert, and greeted his countess with much affection, but the entrance of Henry threw him into evident perturbation, nor did it relieve his embarrassment to see his wife, with characteristic heroism, advance between the rival brothers, and fix her flashing eyes upon Robert.

The noble conduct of the repentant duke happily averted the gathering storm.

“Spare thy reproaches, sweet sister,” said he, “and thou, my brother, forgive the grievous injuries thou hast suffered, and accept the only reparation that lieth in my power. I restore unto thee Cotentén, and would but for my poverty indemnify thee for thy losses. I have determined on a visit to the Holy Land; and I would dispose my worldly affairs, so that should I never return, man shall not accuse me before the throne of God.”

The frankness of his confession, and the seriousness of his manner, allayed the resentment of Henry, and effected an apparent reconciliation. Harmony being thus restored, Robert proceeded at proper intervals to unfold the desires and purposes that had brought him once again to counsel with Adela.

Since the treaty which confirmed William in the sovereignty of England, not only, but secured to him several strong fortresses in Normandy, the duke had resigned himself to listlessness and luxury. In his aimless expeditions his attention had been frequently attracted by the appearance of a monk, who embodied in himself the spirit of a hermit, a pilgrim, and a soldier. His head was bare, his feet naked. His diminutive figure, attenuated by frequent abstinence, was wrapped in a coarse garment. His prayers were long and fervent, and the enthusiasm that gleamed in his eyes kindled the fires of holy zeal, in every town, village, and hamlet through which he passed. As he rode along, every street and highway was thronged with people, who worshipped the weighty crucifix he bore aloft, and listened with sighs and tears, while he depicted the sufferings of the Christians of Palestine, and with loud and frequent appeals to Christ and the holy mother, challenged the warriors of the age to defend their brethren, and rescue the tomb of the Saviour from the dominion of Infidels.

Robert's curiosity was excited. He joined the eager crowds that followed the steps of the monk, and listened to the thrilling words till the latent desire of pilgrimage that had long slumbered in his mind awoke to life and activity, and he became a convert to the preachings of Peter the Hermit. But while he hesitated at the palmer's gown and staff, the united voices of chivalry and religion, bade him don his armor and draw his sword.

In the general council of the church, at Placentia, the ambassadors of the Greek Emperor Alexius Comnenus had portrayed the distress of their sovereign, and the danger of Constantinople, from the victorious Turks. The sad tales of the misery and perils of the eastern brethren, drew tears from the assembly, and several champions declared their readiness to march to the East.

The Greeks were dismissed with assurances of speedy and powerful succor. Pope Urban had given his sanction to the scheme, and summoned a second council to meet in Clermont the following November, to confer upon measures for sending armed forces into Asia.

It was to secure the concurrence of Adela, and the co-operation of Stephen, that Robert now came to Blois.

The representations of her brother, and the subject of his discourse renewed, in the memory of Adela, the fancy sketches of her childhood, and called up the half-formed purposes of her early youth. With the clear-sightedness peculiar to her character, she scanned the wide field thus opened to ambition, balanced the possible with the impracticable, determined for her brother the only course that would give free scope to his knightly abilities, and coveting for her husband a share in the glorious enterprise, persuaded him to embrace the scheme, and thus rendered herself really the "*Heroine of the First Crusade.*"

CHAPTER X

*“Onward they came, a dark continuous cloud
Of congregated myriads numberless.”*

“To dispose of his worldly affairs so that man might not accuse him before the throne of God,” was a more serious and protracted work than the Duke of Normandy had anticipated. The patience of Stephen was in consequence nearly exhausted, in waiting his preparations, and it was not till the council of Clermont had been several days in session, that the nobles entered the district of Auvergne. As they approached the place of meeting, the highways were thronged by the eager crowds that flocked towards the city; and all the plains as far as the eye could reach, were dotted with tents and booths, that afforded temporary shelter for the thousands that could not find accommodation in the town.

On the morning of the eighth day, at an early hour, the reverend clergy, with the pope at their head, ascended a wooden pulpit, erected in the midst of the concourse, and declared to them the decrees of the synod, concerning the various matters at that time agitating the church. But ecclesiastical decisions and local interests were lost in the absorbing theme that occupied every heart. The blessing of Heaven was invoked upon their deliberations; and a stillness fell upon the waiting multitudes, like the hush of winds before the mighty storm, while the Monk of Amiens in a voice of persuasive eloquence and power, told them how terrible were the sufferings of their brethren in the East, and how burdensome was the tribute exacted by the inhuman Mussulmans. He stated that lodging in the house of Simon, the patriarch of Jerusalem, he had become an eye-witness of these enormities, and had been commissioned to invite all the princes of the West, to contribute towards their remedy; that on a certain day filled with grief, he had entered the church of the Resurrection, and given himself to prayer, till at length sinking upon the cold stone pavement, there had breathed upon his senses, – first a soft strain like a shepherd’s flute, swelling into a heavenly harmony, such as the advent angels sung, and then, triumphant anthems deepening into the trumpet’s thunder tone, and the discordant clash of armor; that like Elijah of old he had afterwards heard a still small voice, saying, “Arise, Peter, make haste and fulfil without fear, what I have enjoined upon thee; for I will be with thee. It is time for the holy places to be purified, and for my servants to be succored in their distress;” that immediately after the seraphic vision had beamed upon his sight, the brightness of the light awoke him; when he beheld lying upon the altar a letter containing the words of the Saviour; and his own pilgrim’s staff transformed into a sword.

The Hermit ceased; and held up the miraculous scroll before the eyes of all the people. A wailing swept over the vast throng, and the whole multitude bowed, as the forest bends before the first rush of the tempest.

Seizing upon the favorable moment, the pontiff arose and addressed the assembly. “My brethren and dearest children, whether kings, princes, marquises, counts, barons, or knights, all you who have been redeemed by the bodily passion, and shedding of the blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, hear the complaints of God himself, which are addressed to you concerning the wrongs and unlooked-for injuries, which have been done to him in Asia, where sprang the first germs of our faith, where the Apostles suffered martyrdom, and where at the present day, the persecuted christians with stifled sighs, long for a participation in your liberties. Have compassion upon your brethren that dwell in Jerusalem, and in the coasts thereof, – check the insolence of the barbarians, and you will be extolled throughout all ages – let your zeal in the expedition atone for the rapine, theft, homicide, licentiousness, and deeds of incendiarism, by which you have provoked the Lord to anger, – turn

against the enemies of Christ those weapons, which you have hitherto stained with blood, in battles and tournaments against yourselves. To those present, I command this; to those absent, I enjoin it. For ourselves we will trust in the mercy of the Almighty God, and in virtue of the power He has given us, and by the authority of the blessed Apostles, Peter and Paul, we absolve all who engage in this holy war, from all the offences which they shall repent in their hearts, and with their lips confess, and in the retribution of the just we promise to the same an increased portion of eternal salvation. And this forgiveness shall extend also to those who contribute by their substance or counsel to its success. Go then, brave soldiers, and secure to yourselves fame throughout the world. God will accompany you on your march – the season of the year be propitious, both by the abundance of fruits, and by the serenity of the elements. Those who shall die, will sit down in the Heavenly guest-chamber, and those who survive will set their eyes on the Saviour's sepulchre. Happy are they who are called to this expedition, that they may see the holy places in which our Lord conversed with man, and where to save them he was born, crucified, died; – was buried and rose again. Take then the road before you in expiation of your sins, and go assured that after the honors of this world have passed away, imperishable glory shall await you, even in the kingdom of Heaven.”

Loud shouts of ‘God wills it,’ ‘God wills it,’ pronounced simultaneously in all the different dialects, and languages, spoken by the nations of which the multitude was composed, for a moment interrupted the prelate. Commanding silence by a motion of the hand, he resumed.

“Dear brethren, to-day is shown forth in you, that which the Lord has said by his evangelist, ‘When two or three shall be assembled in my name, there shall I be in the midst of them.’ For if the Lord God had not been in your souls you would not all have pronounced the same words, or rather God himself pronounced them by your lips, for it was He who put them in your hearts. Be they then your war-cry in the combat, for those words came forth from God. Let the army of the Lord when it rushes upon his enemies, shout but that one cry, ‘Deus vult,’ ‘Deus vult.’ Oh brave knights! remember the virtues of your ancestors; and if you feel held back from the course before you, by the soft ties of wives, of children, of parents, call to mind the words of our Lord himself, ‘Whosoever loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me. Whosoever shall abandon for my name's sake, his house, or his brethren, or his sisters, or his father, or his mother, or his wife, or his children, or his lands, shall receive an hundred fold, and shall inherit eternal life.’ Gird yourselves then, my brave warriors, for the battle, and let him who is ready to march, bear the holy cross of the Lord upon his shoulders, in memory of that precept of the Saviour, ‘He who does not take up his cross and follow me, is not worthy of me.’”

The agony of conflicting emotions that shook the assembled throngs, burst forth in a storm of sighs, groans, and tears, and as the trees of the forest fall prostrate in the blast, the agitated multitudes sank upon their knees, smote their breasts in sorrow, poured forth their confessions, and consecrated their persons and their property to the Holy Crusade.

CHAPTER IX

*“There the wild Crusaders form,
There assembled Europe stands,
Heaven they deem awakes the storm,
Hell the paynims’ blood demands.”*

Carlyle.

The results of the council of Clermont were speedily felt throughout Europe. No nation was so remote, no people so retired, but, gaining the intelligence by common rumor, or miraculous revelation, commenced preparations for the mighty enterprise.

The Welshman forsook his hunting, – the Scot his native mountains, – the Dane forgot his wassail-bowl, – the Norwegian left his fishing-tackle on the sand. Whatever was stored in granaries or hoarded in chambers, to answer the hopes of the avaricious husbandman, or the covetousness of the miser, all was deserted, or bartered for military equipments.

“Zeal and sympathy, and indignation and chivalrous feeling, and the thirst for glory, and the passion for enterprise, and a thousand vague, but great and noble aspirations, mingled in the complicated motive of the Crusade. It increased by contagion – it grew by communion – it spread from house to house – and from bosom to bosom – it became a universal desire – an enthusiasm – a passion – a madness.”

Princes labored like peasants at the forge or in the armory. High-born dames abandoned their embroidery, and employed their delicate fingers in fabricating garments for the retainers of their lords.

The Countess of Blois laid aside the famous Bayeux tapestry, which her mother had left for her completion, and accompanied her husband from castle to castle, through all their wide domains, presiding over the labors of her maidens, while with pious zeal they stitched the red cross upon the surcoats of the warriors.

Robert pledged his ducal domains to the grasping Rufus, for a sum of money scarcely sufficient to meet the expenses of the expedition; and Edgar Atheling bestowing his orphan nieces in the nunnery of Wilton, joined the train of his friend.

Godfrey, Duke of Lorraine, a prince of the royal house of France, assembled his followers, from the banks of the Rhine to the Elbe; Raimond of Toulouse, and Adhemar, bishop of Puy, called the Moses and Aaron of the host, collected the Goths and Gascons, and all the mingled people between the Pyrenees and the Alps; Bohemond of Apulia commanded the tribes from the Tuscan sea to the Adriatic, while volunteers from all parts of Europe flocked to the standards of these noble leaders, or joined the band of the Hermit himself.

The long-looked-for time was now at hand, when the hoary garb of winter being laid aside, the world clad in vernal bloom, invited the pilgrims to the confines of the East. And in the beginning of March, 1097, the masses of European population began to roll. The first band that swept on through Germany into Hungary consisted of twenty thousand footmen, marshalled under Walter the Penniless. Then followed Peter the Hermit, with forty thousand men, women and children. Next a German priest headed fifteen thousand enthusiasts, and another band of two hundred thousand unarmed and disorderly people hurried on by the same path; and ere these desperate adventurers had reached the borders of the Grecian Empire, Europe glittered with mustering hosts of warriors arrayed in all the pomp and splendor of chivalry, and led by the greatest warriors of the age.

Few chieftains brought so many soldiers to the standard of the cross as Stephen, Count of Blois and Chartres. But notwithstanding the precipitate zeal of Robert, and the prompt and politic measures of Adela, the summer was wasted in idle delays; and it was not till the autumnal equinox

that these distinguished nobles joined the forces of Hugh, Count of Vermandois, and crossed the Alps, intending to proceed by sea to the Holy Land. They found Pope Urban at Lucca, and received from him the standard of St. Peter. The autumn was passed in the gaiety and dissipation of Italy, where the earls disposed their troops for winter-quarters. Count Stephen returned once more to Blois, already dissatisfied with the prospects of the expedition. In the ensuing spring, one year after the time designated by the pope, with Robert and Hugh, and their united forces, the husband of Adela embarked for Palestine. In the meantime numbers, disaffected by the first encountering of difficulties, returned to claim subsistence from the bounty of the Countess of Blois.

“Methinks, my beneficent sister,” said Henry, observing her charity towards the miserable wretches, “if thou hadst seen yon beggars sell their flocks and herds for a few shillings, thou wouldst be better inclined to laugh at their folly than relieve their poverty.”

“Adela counts it not folly for a man to sell all he hath for the kingdom of Heaven’s sake.”

“I fancy,” said Henry, laughing, “that those self-sacrificers have an eye to the ‘manifold more in this life,’ rather than to the heavenly inheritance; and *some*, I trow, understand by the kingdom of heaven, a principality in Palestine.”

“And were not the establishment of Christian powers in Asia a worthy purpose?” returned Adela, little pleased at her brother’s insinuations.

“Certes, my beloved sister. But wherefore didst thou detain thy unworthy Beauclerk, is there not kingdom or duchy for him?”

“Nay! I scarcely claim the merit of detaining thee,” said Adela, “since I suspect that a stronger tie than compassion for my lone estate has withheld thee.”

“That a tender interest in the declining health of the Red King somewhat influenced my decision I cannot deny,” replied Henry, evasively.

“And had the superlative beauty of the Red King’s ward no influence?” said Adela, pressing her advantage.

“Nay, sister, since thou divinest my secret,” said Henry, frankly, “I will e’en tell thee all. Perceiving that thy crusades would draw from the Norman power its military strength, I deemed it wise, in case of my brother’s death, to entrench myself in the affections of the English people, by uniting my personal interest with the Saxon race. Accordingly, when Robert sent me to England to negotiate the mortgage of his duchy with Rufus, I visited the nunnery of Wilton, with Edgar Atheling.”

“And thou sawest there the fair novice, Matilda,” interrupted Adela.

“Call her not novice, she scorns the name, and hath a spirit like a queen. In presence of her uncle the Atheling, she tore the hateful veil from her head, and trampled it under her feet.”

“And did the spirited damsel smile upon thy suit?”

“I proffered no suit save to her uncle.”

“And what said the Atheling to thy visionary scheme?”

“He promised to give her to me with his blessing, on his return from the crusade.”

“But here comes another son of Cush, with tidings for the Countess of Blois. Judging from his tattered garments, and limping gait, his story must eclipse all that have gone before. My ‘*visionary schemes*’ shall not claim the attention that should be devoted to this magnificent eastern ambassador;” and with a smile of irony Henry took his departure.

The appearance of the individual who entered the presence of Adela, and the tidings he brought, fully justified the sarcastic conjectures of Henry. He was a refugee from the party of Walter the Penniless, a band whose only recommendation for the Holy war was their poverty. Before setting out, each one was searched, and the man upon whose person was found the sum of two sous, was hooted from the camp. Animated by a blind fanaticism, they expected that rivers would be opened for their passage; that flesh would be miraculously supplied; manna rained from heaven upon them, and the smitten rock send forth its cooling stream. The hospitality of the Hungarians confirmed their faith; but when they entered the kingdom of Bulgaria, the illusion vanished, and the famine-stricken

multitudes, abandoning their presumptuous trust in heaven, resorted to carnage and plunder. The exasperated inhabitants fell upon them without fear or mercy. Many were slain, numbers fled to the forests, and a remnant of the disappointed devotees attempted to retrace their steps to their own land.

After listening to the account of the miserable fugitive, Adela remarked, that the misfortunes of the company doubtless proceeded from their forgetfulness of the last directions of the Saviour: "He that hath a purse let him take it, and likewise his scrip, and he that hath no sword let him sell his garment and buy one."

"Ah, lady!" said the wretched fanatic, "think not that our misfortunes arose from our want of money or arms, but rather through our impatience to be gone, that led us to set out on Friday, instead of waiting for the holy rest of the Sabbath."

The countess was residing with her family in Troyes, when she gave audience to another of her "eastern ambassadors," as Henry jocosely called them.

This man arrived at nightfall, on a sorry mule, the self-same animal that a few months before, under Peter the Hermit, had led greater hosts to battle than Bucephalus under Alexander, and which had enjoyed such a reputation for sanctity that even his very hairs were devoutly treasured as relics. Now, jaded and dispirited, with drooping head and pendant ears, the poor beast slowly paced his heavy way up to the gates of the castle. His rider seemed no less bowed with grief and fatigue, and wearily dismounting, he meekly waited among the servants, till summoned to the presence of his mistress.

"You behold, noble lady," said he, "one of those individuals whose fate it is to bring ruin upon every expedition in which he embarks."

"Miserable man," exclaimed Adela, "hast thou betrayed the army of the Lord?"

"God forbid that I should have been guilty of so foul a deed," said the pilgrim, devoutly crossing himself; "but the curse of Jonah rests upon me. Evil was the day when, impoverished by the wars of Duke Robert, I plundered the sacred vessels of a church, and melted and sold them, to obtain food for my starving family. The crime lay heavy on my conscience, and to expiate its guilt I joined the band of the Hermit. But my sinful love for my children prevailed over my devotion, and Satan tempted me with the thought, that were they permitted to accompany me, they at least might win the crown of martyrdom, though their father should suffer the punishment of his sins. With much difficulty and labor, we scraped together means to purchase a yoke of oxen and a cart, and the charity of my noble countess (heaven reward thee) provided raiment for my poor old father and helpless infants. Heaven pardon me, but my wicked heart was inflated with pride, as seating my precious ones in the vehicle, I walked by their side; and pleased was I as we reached any town or city, to hear the little ones inquire, if that were Jerusalem. Fool that I was not to remember the Saviour's words, 'He that forsaketh not all that he hath, cannot be my disciple.' There were many who, falling into the same error, cumbered the train with useless baggage, and many feeble and sick, both men and women, caused that our route was tedious and slow. The heat of summer came on, and the weariness of the way seemed to increase. My children forgot their innocent prattle, and stretched their tender limbs upon the floor of the cart. The old man, my father, slept, and we could not wake him; and my wife gave me the infant from her breast – it was dead – and we buried them by the wayside. This was the beginning of sorrows. But the horrors of my crime flashed upon me, when certain sons of Belial among our company, set fire to the houses, and commenced to plunder the people through whose villages we passed. The inhabitants armed against us, and I shudder to describe the bloody scenes which followed. Enraged at the wanton attack, they rushed out upon us, fell upon the rear of the army, glutted their wrath with the blood of all that opposed them, and destroyed that part of the multitude whom weakness left without defence. My wife and sons fell victims to their fury, and Therese, my lovely daughter, was torn shrieking from my arms, and carried away by a brutal ruffian."

"Unhappy Therese," said Adela, dropping a tear. "My poor William has pined for his patient nurse."

“In the extremity of my desperation,” continued the pilgrim, “I rushed into the thickest of the fight, and sought for death; but in vain. My crimes were too great, and I was reserved to mourn the loss of those for whose dear sakes I had perilled my soul.

“Deploring the ruin that my sins, and the sins of such as me had brought upon the holy pilgrims, I determined to hide myself in a convent, and seek by a life of penance, the pardon I hoped to have found at the Saviour’s tomb; and finding the deserted mule of our leader, wandering upon the border of a marsh, I mounted upon his back, and begged my way hither.”

The countess gave him money for the remainder of his journey, to the monastery of Caen, and with a heavy heart dismissed him.

A German monk of great sanctity resided in a solitary cell in the forest of Troyes. The fame of cures, effected by him, through the medium of invisible agents, led the countess to consult him with regard to her invalid son. Thibaut and Stephen, with a small train, accompanied her to the hermitage.

On their return their way was obstructed by a crowd, collected about a grotesque-looking figure clothed partly in armor, and partly in priestly robes. His head was ornamented with a cap like that of a merry-Andrew, at the top of which flourished a feather cut in the form of a cross. From his shoulders hung numerous thongs, to which were attached boxes and bags of various colors and dimensions, and a rosary of small human bones was suspended about his neck. This he occasionally shook with demoniac glee, as an accompaniment to songs, whose sentiment strangely alternated between piety and profanity.

“News from the wars,” shouted he approaching the cavalcade.

“Holy relics for sinners all,
The thumb of St. Peter, the tooth of St Paul.”

“Yea more – Babylon has fallen – the Jews, the Jews – Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, are consumed in the burning fiery furnace – Ha! ha! How the flames crackled and sparkled – How the Long-beards winced and writhed – Ashes! Ashes!” said he, throwing the contents of one of the boxes into the faces of the spectators – “Yea more —

“The crusaders followed the spirit divine,
And water and blood it turned into wine;
That made us strong for the slaughter.

Drink – heal – wassail,” – and he poured from a bottle a noisome liquid, from which the crowd shrank back in disgust.

“The demons shrieked in the forest – and the little fiends winked in the marshes – they showed us the way to the holy sepulchre – bridges of corpses – rusty armor – glaring eyeballs. How the wolves howled on our track – and the black ravens croaked over the dying – ’Twas rare sport to hear them groan.

“The goat led his followers up the steep rock,
The goose flapped her wings, and headed the flock;
List to the sound of the martyrs’ bones;”

and the lunatic broke into a wild fantastic dance, rattling his boxes and shaking his horrid rosary with demoniac frenzy.

The countess was here relieved from her involuntary attendance upon the frightful exhibition, by the approach of Prince Henry, who having consigned the madman to proper care, dispersed the crowd, and permitted the train proceed.

In reply to Adela's anxious inquiries, he informed her that the miserable creature whom she had seen, had belonged to a mad-rabble, that set off for the Holy Land without leader or guide, held together only by the strange infatuation of adoring a goat and a goose, which they believed to be filled with the divine spirit.

Their malignant zeal was directed principally against the Jews, whom they exterminated wherever they came. The Hungarians denied them a passage through the country. The fanatics attempted to force their way across the Danube. The nation rose to arms, and for several days smote them with such slaughter, that the fields were strewed with the slain, and the very waters of the river were hidden by the multitude of the corpses.

"Heaven punished their impiety with a loss of reason," said Adela, with a sigh.

"Their impiety began with a loss of reason," said Henry, drily. "Thy pardon, sweet sister, but the heralds of thy grand expedition and the tidings they bear, remind one of the evil messengers of Job, each man having escaped alone to tell thee."

"We have as yet gained intelligence only from the ill-appointed and barbarous hordes that encumbered rather than aided the expedition. When we shall receive news from warriors, whose heroic courage executes the plans of temperate wisdom, I trust that the disasters of our foes will form the theme of conversation," said Adela, with much spirit.

"Nay, I meant not to vex thee," returned Henry, soothingly, "and to prove my desire of peace, I have brought with me a flag of truce," and he handed her a letter from her husband.

Adela's letter from Stephen contained the most gratifying intelligence. Completely duped by the artful policy of Alexius, the count gave a glowing description of his reception at Constantinople, and the splendid ceremony by which the Latin chiefs did homage to the Greek Emperor, for the cities they hoped to win in Palestine.

He described the magnificence of the city, and enlarged upon the advantages which the holy legions would derive from this allegiance, both in supplies of money and provisions. He stated that Alexius had already furnished ships to convey them across the Bosphorus, that a part of the army were already in Asia Minor, and expatiated upon the munificence of their Imperial host, who each week presented the leader of the expedition with as much gold as two slaves could bear upon their shoulders.

Delicately alluding to the favors bestowed upon himself, he closed the epistle by presenting the monarch's request to the mother, that her son Stephen should be sent to Constantinople, to receive princely nurture at the most refined and elegant court in the world.

Tears of affection and gratification filled the beautiful eyes of the countess, as gazing upon her blooming boy, she murmured, "My son may yet wear the diadem of the Cæsars. My father was styled The Conqueror, because he added a poor island to his duchy of Normandy, but what title shall he bear who restores a continent to the dominion of Christendom?"

For the three following months the countess received no certain intelligence concerning the fate of the crusade. There were rumors of famine in the christian camp, and stories of dreadful battles with the Infidels; but the statements were vague and unsatisfactory.

Prince Henry had been absent for some time quelling an insurrection in Normandy, and the loneliness of Adela's situation, together with the anxiety of her mind, filled her thoughts with melancholy forebodings, and subdued the natural vivacity of her manners.

The prince upon his return, was alarmed by the pallor of her countenance, and the sadness of her tones.

"Cheer thee, my sister," said he, "thou wert, indeed, a prophet, to declare that the victories of the warriors would compensate for the disasters of the rabble crowds."

"Art thou the bearer of good tidings?" said Adela, a flush of hope irradiating her features.

“Aye, verity,” returned the prince, with exultation, “a well-authenticated account of the victories of the cross, embellished with as pretty a Passage of Arms in Cupid’s tilt-yard, as the Romancers could well desire.”

“Sport not with my impatience,” said Adela. “Tell me the name of thy messenger, and the news he brings.”

“The messenger is Gilbert of Becket, a Saxon esquire of Edgar Atheling, and, therefore, direct from Duke Robert and Count Stephen. He sailed with them across the Ionian Sea, and carried the shield of his master at the grand parade, in Constantinople.”

Adela interrupted him. “I know all to the time of their departure from that city. How have they sped in their encounters with the Infidels?”

“The first place of importance which they attacked,” replied Henry, “was Nice, the chief city of Rhoum, occupied by the Seljoukian Turks, who exacted tribute from all the inhabitants of Asia Minor. The Sultan Soliman hearing of the coming of the crusaders, left his capital defended by a strong garrison, and hastened to the mountains levying troops in all directions. The first body of croises that reached the city, was led by Godfrey of Boulogne, and Hugh of Vermandois, who took up their position on the eastern side. Raimond of Toulouse, and the Bishop of Puy, encamped on the south, while Robert of Flanders, and Bohemond of Tarentum pitched their camp upon the north. And of this Bohemond, the noble chief of Otranto, I must tell thee. Forty Norman gentlemen who had distinguished themselves in the wars of our father, returning from a pilgrimage to the Holy Land, disembarked in Italy. Learning that the Prince of Salerno was besieged by the Saracens, they threw themselves into that town, and being supplied with arms and horses, soon compelled the Infidels to retire. After their return home, deputies came to Normandy from the prince imploring their further assistance. In consequence of his promises and persuasions, several bodies of adventurers, at the head of whom was Robert Guiscard and his eleven brothers, emigrated together, cleared the south of Italy from the locust-like invaders, and established themselves lords of Apulia and Calabria. Robert Guiscard spent most of his life in wars with the Greek Emperor, and was finally poisoned by Alexius. Bohemond, the son of this Guiscard, espoused the quarrel, and was preparing to avenge his father’s death, but when he heard the crusade proclaimed, his chivalric spirit at once caught the flame. Dashing his armor to pieces with his battle-axe, he caused them to be formed into small crosses, which he distributed among his followers, and abandoning his possessions in Italy, joined the pilgrims with his cousin, Tancred, a youth distinguished for beauty, valor, generosity, enthusiasm – ”

“I care not,” said Adela, “though he were as beautiful as Absalom and wise as Solomon. There are two less distinguished chiefs, who possess far more interest for me than all the warriors in Italy.”

“Of those thou shalt hear anon,” said Henry. “When this Bohemond was in Constantinople, the emperor sought to win his friendship.”

“Return not to Bohemond again,” interrupted the countess, “’tis of Stephen and Robert I would hear.”

“Now, sister,” said Henry, playfully, “thou knowest not what thou refuseth. Will it not please thy woman’s curiosity, to hear of the magnificent rooms of the Blaquernel, filled with stores of money and jewels, costly garments, and rich silks of unheard-of value, that Alexius gave Bohemond to secure his allegiance.”

“Nothing will please me,” said Adela, “but to know what is the fortune of my husband.”

“And that will please thee well,” said Henry, breaking into a playful laugh. “Stephen, triple Count of Blois, Chartres, and Champagne, the husband of my gifted sister,” bowing to the countess, “son-in-law of William the Conqueror, father of earls, and I doubt not of kings, the most beautiful, accomplished, eloquent, and *prudent* man of the times, was chosen president of the council of chiefs.”

“Heaven bless thee for thy news,” said Adela, in a transport of joy; “and Robert?”

“Justifies his youthful soubriquet of ‘unready.’ He came last to the siege of Nice. His troops, however, were fresh and vigorous, and when he approached the city by the west, which position

had been left for his encampment, he scanned, with a fearless eye, the double walls, defended by three hundred and fifty towers, filled with bowmen, and spearmen of the most determined valor. He drew up the warriors of Normandy, with those of Blois and Chartres, and a band from Boulogne, where a great part of the people led by Walter the Penniless and Peter the Hermit had been defeated and slain. The Infidels in mockery had formed here a great pile of their bones, and covered them with earth; so that when Robert arrived with his forces, he pitched his tent just beside the green sepulchre of those who had found martyrdom on that very spot. Peter the Hermit, with the remnant of his forces, soon after joined the besiegers, and the army, as they were then numbered, consisted of 600,000 infantry and 100,000 mailed cavalry. Each man confessed his sins, and the sacrifice of mass being offered, they commenced the erection of engines, and other preparations for the siege. Soliman himself was encamped upon the mountains, scarcely ten miles off, watching in what manner he might best free his city from the enemies that clustered around it. Two of his messengers were intercepted by Godfrey. They confessed that they were sent to concert with the besieged a double attack upon the christian camp. The crusaders immediately prepared for the conflict. By break of day the Moslems began to descend from the hills, and issue from the town. The Christians received them everywhere with determined valor, repulsed them on all points, became in turn the assailants, and all the plain around Nice grew one general scene of conflict. This attack was twice repeated with the same result, and the sultan was at last compelled to retire, astonished at the lion-like courage of the Franks, who with a thousand lances, could charge, and easily put to flight twenty thousand Turks. But amidst these splendid achievements, which the Saxon Gilbert described, with great vividness, he said it was mournful to see the pilgrims at nightfall collecting the dead bodies of their companions and bearing them in sad procession to the cypress groves adjacent, where by the melancholy glare of the torches they buried them without coffin or shroud.

“To intimidate the besieged, the croises cut off the heads of the fallen Moslems, and shot them from their engines into the city.

“The Turks invented a horrid method of retaliation. Long iron hooks were let down from the walls, by which the bodies of the slaughtered Christians were seized and drawn up through the air, and after being stripped and maimed were again cast forth upon the ground.

“Young Gilbert being wounded and lying insensible, was grappled and drawn into the city in this manner, but finding that life was not extinct, they delivered him over to the care of Soliman’s physicians, who tended him as a prisoner of note. The siege had been protracted to some length and the Christians had succeeded in undermining a huge tower at the north-eastern angle of the wall. The Sultana, alarmed at the loss of this important defence, determined upon flight. Several boats were prepared, and the Queen, with her train, among whom was young Gilbert, attended by a dark-eyed daughter of an Emir, beautiful as an houri, attempted to make her escape at night by way of the lake. As the little fleet moved stealthily in the shadow of the overhanging cliff, Becket seized a bow, and dexterously discharged an arrow towards the nearest outpost of the christian camp.

“The twang of the bow-string attracted the attention of the Moslems, but Zaida perceiving the danger of her favorite smote the strings of her harp, and thus, ingeniously reproducing the sound, made the whole appear the result of accident.

“Becket afterwards learned, that the dart fell at the very feet of the sentinel dozing by the watch-fire, who started up, aroused his comrades, and soon the knights of Duke Robert swarmed along the shore.

“The Paynims plied their oars in vain, the Normans intercepted their flight. The Sultana was taken prisoner, and only the boat of the Emir with the disappointed Gilbert escaped capture.

“The Christians having thus discovered the means, by which the city was supplied with provisions, procured boats from Constantinople and converted the siege into a blockade. All hope now abandoned the Turks, and about the time of the summer solstice they offered terms of capitulation.

“The necessary negotiations were in progress, when Tattius, the lieutenant of the subtle Alexius, entered into a private treaty with the besieged, and while waiting for the gates to be opened, with indignation and astonishment the Christians discovered the imperial ensign floating upon the walls of Nice. Alexius endeavored to appease their wrath by distributing rich bribes among the chiefs, and largesses among the private soldiers, but dissatisfied and exasperated they struck their tents, and departed without setting foot within the city they had conquered.

“Meanwhile, the captive Becket, was conveyed to the army of the Sultan, and though his ardent spirit chafed at restraint, and panted for the fight, his impatience was soothed by the tender attentions, and sweet songs, of the Emir’s daughter.

“Soliman, with the whole of his force, amounting to 200,000 men, hung upon the rear of the crusading army, concealing his own evolutions, by his perfect knowledge of the country, and watching those of the croises with the keen anxiety of a falcon hovering over its prey. By some mischance, Robert and Bohemond were separated from the main body of the army. They encamped nevertheless on the banks of a beautiful stream, in the valley of the Gorgon, and passed the night in repose. Scarcely had they commenced their march, on the following morning, when the immense army of the Sultan appeared upon the hills. From his station upon a lofty eminence, Becket had opportunity to watch the progress of the contest, and from christian captives that were brought to the camp, he learned many particulars concerning his companions.

“Our brother Robert, with a vigor and promptitude foreign to his character, drew up his forces, formed a rampart of wagons and baggage, and exhorted his men to meet with bravery the overwhelming shock. The terrific cries of the Turks, as they bore down upon the little band, the tramp of cavalry – the ringing of armor – the clash of shields – the trumpets of the christian hosts – the shouts of the chiefs and heralds, raised so fearful a din that none could distinguish the war-cry of friend from foe. Becket perceived, however, that the Christians dropped the points of their long lances, and prepared to receive the heavy charge upon their swords, when suddenly each Moslem raised his bow, as he galloped forward, a thick cloud seemed to hide all objects from his sight, and two hundred thousand arrows dropped death among the followers of the cross.”

An involuntary shudder shook the frame of the countess, and she pressed her hands upon her eyes, as if to shut out the dreadful vision.

Her brother continued, “The European chivalry spurred up the hill against their assailants. The Turks, as was their habit, yielded ground on every side, avoiding by the fleetness of their horses, the lances of the knights, and like the Parthians of old, continuing their fearful archery, even as they fled. Again they wheeled, and with fiendish yells, fell upon the diminished band, encompassing them within the valley; and fast as the Infidels fell beneath the tremendous blows of the Norman battle-axes, new foes stepped into their places. Borne back by the growing multitude that pressed upon them, the knights gave way before the Saracens, and were driven struggling against the very pikes of the foot-soldiers, that were advancing to their support. The Christians wavered. At this critical moment, Robert revived all the courage of his heart, and baring his head in the midst of the fray, seized his banner, and clear and far above all the roar of the conflict, Becket distinguished his cry of, Normandy! Normandy to the rescue! The crusaders rallied, and stood again to their arms, and the Turks were driven back. Again the Saracens bore down upon them, giving them not a moment of repose. Thick and fast was mown the flower of christian chivalry, soldier beside soldier, and knight beside knight. In the glimpses granted by the rapid evolutions of the Arab cavalry, Becket could see the women of the camp bringing water from the river to the fainting troops, and bathing the wounded and dying. Thus the battle lasted for many hours, when the eye of the Saxon soldier perceived a cloud of dust rising behind the hills. Then came banner, and pennon, and lance, and glittering armor, and the Red Cross fluttering on the wind. In scattered bands spurring on their horses for life, on came the western division of the croises. None waited for the others, but each hastened to the fight, and rank after rank, troop after troop, shouting, ‘*Deus vult*,’ ‘*Deus vult*,’ rushed over the mountains to the valley

of the battle. The christian war-cry thrilled the heart of the heroic Gilbert, and he panted once more to join the standard that bore the emblem of our holy religion. Tearing off the white turban that Zaida had bound about his brow, he held it up aloft, vainly hoping to attract the attention of his countrymen, and regain his liberty. But all were too intent upon the rout of the Infidels, to notice the signal, and his heart sunk within him, as the emir, fearing total discomfiture, commanded the slaves to carry away the women and prisoners to a strong fastness in the mountains. As they led him along the brow of the hill, he still kept his longing eye fixed upon the scene of conflict, and distinctly discerned at the head of the division of Raimond and Godfrey, the forms of two canonized martyrs, in armor glittering above the brightness of the sun; and he could perceive that their presence struck terror into the heart of the enemy. But farther particulars concerning the battle he could not learn, except from the Saracens themselves, who seemed sadly discomfited, and hurried on in advance of the christian army, through Phrygia and Cilicia, laying waste the villages, and making a desert of the country through which they passed. At Tarsus he was separated from his faithful Zaida, and lodged alone in a Paynim tower, overlooking the Cydnus. Here he pined in loneliness day by day, gazing through the arrow-slit upon the never-varying hills, or watching wearily the waterfowl sporting upon the bosom of the stream. The christian host passed beneath the very walls of his tower. He distinguished the forms of Robert, and Stephen, and the Atheling, and the armorial bearings and ensigns of the various detachments of European chivalry, and he struggled like an imprisoned bird to be free. He shouted the honored names of the leaders, and the potent war-cry of the Christians; called on the Saviour, and Mary, and every saint in the calendar for release; but in vain. The walls of his prison alone echoed his cry; no ear heard his voice; no eye was lifted towards his lonely turret. He watched till the last cross disappeared in the distance, and overwhelmed with despair, sank in agony upon the floor.

“The moon was riding high in heaven when he was awakened by the light touch of a delicate hand, and the soft voice of Zaida whispered, ‘Gilbert! England!’ the only Saxon words he had taught her. He started up, and an exclamation of joy mounted to his lip. But Zaida, with a warning motion, imposed silence, and beckoned him to follow her. Silently he tracked his stealthy way through the mazes of the castle, guided by the vision that glided on before him, more like a spirit of the air, than a being of earthly mould, and the young Englishman had dizzy work to follow her down a rude stone stair, winding to the base of the cliff, where a little skiff was moored. She motioned him to embark. He obeyed, and turned to place her by his side. She was gone. Far up the steep he saw the last flutter of her white robe. He sprang to follow, but a strong arm dashed him to the bottom of the boat. The rowers bent to their oars, and the little bark glided noiselessly down the stream.”

“Did he rejoin the christian army?” said Adela.

“All along the banks of the river,” replied Henry, “he beheld, with torturing gaze, the watch-fires of the christian camp, and heard the pass-word repeated by familiar voices, but the pirates, for such they were, permitted him neither to speak nor move. Reaching the sea of Cyprus, they put him on board a vessel, and he was conveyed to Brundusium.”

“And were these pirates Infidels?” inquired Adela.

“Saracens they were not,” said her brother, “but to what extent they believed in our holy religion Becket was not prepared to state. They spoke several dialects of the Europeans, and at the commencement of the crusades, turned their course towards the Holy Land, in the pleasant hope of serving both God and mammon with the sword.”

“And what farther chanced to the Saxon?” inquired the countess.

“He returned through France, and when I saw him at Feschamp, had engaged his passage to England. And now, dear sister, I have come to take my leave of thee, in order to accompany him.”

“The news thou hast brought has removed a burden from my heart, and nerved me to my duties,” said his sister. “But wherefore wouldst thou to England?”

“I have learned that the Duke of Bretagne is pressing his suit with the fair Matilda, and I must away to see that the prize be not riven from my grasp.”

“Hast heard aught of the Countess of Huntingdon?” inquired Adela.

“Aye, and strange news concerning her have I for thine ear. Thou knowest ’tis scarce a twelvemonth since the death of her husband Simon; and she has again entered the holy estate of matrimony.”

“Impossible!” exclaimed Adela. “She who so longed for the quiet of conventual life!”

“She was forced to forego her own inclinations to escape the tyranny of Rufus,” returned Henry.

“Poor Maude!” said Adela, “her life has been a continual sacrifice to the selfish interests of others.”

“Her patient meekness disarms even her cruel fate,” said Henry. “Simon always regarded her with the most devoted affection, and made her sole heir to all her father’s former possessions. It is said that our brother Rufus had fixed his eye upon the charming widow, and that to avoid his addresses, she accepted the hand of David, prince of Scotland.”

“She will then be thy best advocate with David’s sister, Matilda.”

“Truth,” said Henry. “The future Queen of Scotland shall aid to place the crown on the head of the future Queen of England. Farewell. When I come again I hope to present thee my lovely bride.”

“Heaven speed thy purpose,” said the countess, fervently, and thus they parted.

CHAPTER XII

*"I rather tell thee what is to be feared,
Than what I fear."*

The administration of the affairs of her domains, rendered it difficult for the Countess of Blois, in the absence of the most vigorous part of the population, to provide for the numerous families, left dependent by the wars; and the increasing helplessness of her idiot son, added greatly to the burden of her cares. 'Twas Christmas morning, the anniversary of her betrothal. A crowd had assembled in the grand cathedral of Chartres, to unite in the sacred solemnities of the day, and to witness the christening of Lucy, the infant countess. So occupied was Adela with the impressive scene, that she did not observe the entrance of several knights, on whose noble forms and toil-worn habiliments, the eyes of the multitude were riveted with the most intense curiosity; nor did she notice, while the bishop sprinkled the babe with the holy-water, and consecrated it to God, that their leader had advanced to the altar and knelt beside her at the font: but when the warrior stretched out his arm to receive the white-robed cherub from the hands of the priest, she turned to see her *husband* gazing with unutterable tenderness upon his infant daughter, whom he now beheld for the first time.

The unexpected return of their lord gave an additional impulse to the festivities of the day among the numerous retainers of the count.

When the joyous greetings and congratulations were over, and Adela and Stephen were left to the free interchange of their own thoughts, the countess, who suspected that some misadventure had occasioned this unannounced arrival, led the way to an explanation. "And wherefore comes not Robert with thee?" she inquired.

"Methinks thou mightest spare thine asking," said Stephen, looking fondly upon her. "Robert has not those ties that draw me to my native land. Adventure and war are wife and children to him."

"Did wife and children draw my husband from the paths of glory and the cause of God?" replied the countess, apprehensively.

"Those paths which thy imagination invests with glory," said Stephen, "are but the tracks where reptiles and savage beasts have found their way, among craggy rocks and thorny bushes, bleeding deadly venom. We followed them through deplorable suffering, and were conducted to disaster and defeat. And as for the cause of God, if thou hadst seen the vices of these *holy* croises, and the hardships they endured, thou wouldst have deemed either that they were not the people of God, or that the Almighty took little note of the sufferings of his faithful servants."

"'Tis the faint heart that feels the toils of the way, and distrusts the care of Providence," said Adela, reproachfully. "Did not the vows of knighthood alone forbid thee to abandon the holy cause?"

"To abandon a cause forsaken by God and man, were the dictate of prudence," retorted Stephen, stung by the censure of his beloved countess.

"Prudence is born of cowardice," replied she, with unabated warmth. "I have hitherto heard of deeds of valor, not of desertion; of victory, not of defeat."

"Thine ignorance then excuses thy violence," said Stephen; "but if thou wilt listen patiently to thy lord, thou mayest perchance become better informed."

"I will listen to nothing that brands my Stephen with cowardice!" exclaimed Adela. "My heart exulted in the thought that the president of the chiefs would counsel them to worthy deeds!" and the haughty woman burst into tears of mingled tenderness and mortified pride.

"By the crucifix at Lucca!" exclaimed Stephen, rising in wrath, "an thou wilt not listen to reason, 'twere vain to talk."

“And if reason determined thy return, wherefore comest thou alone?” said Adela, striving to conquer her emotion.

“Alone!” replied the count. “Of the multitudes that left Europe at the preaching of Peter, three fourths have returned already or fallen victims to their folly. The Hermit himself has fled from the sight of miseries that he was impotent to relieve and unable to endure. Baldwin has joined a piratical band that ravage the coast of Cilicia. Raimond, of Toulouse, languishes the victim of a pestilential fever. Godfrey, the soul of the expedition, torn and lacerated, in an encounter with wild beasts, lies prostrate with his wounds; nay, the Count Melun, and Tatius the lieutenant of Alexius, have withdrawn their forces; and when sickness compelled me to retire for a season from the siege of Antioch, fifteen thousand Turks, from the heart of Asia, were on their way to join the myriads that surround the christian camp.”

“And what kind hand tended thy illness?” said the countess, her tenderness returning at the thought of his suffering.

“The bivouac of the soldier admits few of those attentions so grateful to an invalid,” replied her husband, much softened. “However, my indisposition was of short duration, and I should have rejoined my companions, had not intelligence reached me that caused me to abandon all hope for the success of the enterprise.

“I tell thee that the project of subduing Asia is utterly foolish and vain. The Greek empire, the barrier of Europe on the east, is little less infidel than the sons of Islam; and every conquest of the Christians is claimed by Alexius as feudal lord. He wrested from us the city of Nice in the very hour of victory. On my return, I met him at the head of his army on the way to take possession of Antioch, and by representing the power of the Turks turned him from his purpose.”

“But do not the people of God always triumph in the battles with the Infidels?” inquired Adela.

“In single encounter or in a fair field,” replied Stephen, “the croises are uniformly victorious: but valor wields no weapon against famine and disease. Our army, at such a distance from their own land, must be dependent for supplies upon the grace of Alexius, each victory, therefore, but lays the foundation for another contest, and were Palestine delivered from the Turk, it would require still greater exertion, to wrest it from the Greek.” The countess was silenced by reasoning which she could not answer, but against which all her feelings revolted. Yet though she apparently acquiesced in her husband’s decision, her heart was keenly alive to every rumor that might reflect upon his fame. Nor were her feelings soothed, by hearing that the pilgrims besieged in Antioch, enfeebled by disease and wasted by famine, reproached Count Stephen, as the cause of all their miseries; since he had withdrawn his own forces, not only, but turned back the armies that were hastening to their relief. Her pride and ambition were deeply wounded by these reports, and when she learned that the Christians, at the very point to die of starvation, had bound themselves never to abandon the cause, till they had pressed their lips upon the Holy Sepulchre; that visions of saints and apostles, had reawakened energy and activity in their wasted ranks, that the lance that pierced the side of the Saviour, had been discovered and that a “bright squadron of celestial allies,” had closed in with the battalions of the christian army and pursued the Saracen legions from the vale of the Orontes, she felt that her husband had not only tamely resigned an earthly crown, but had by the same cowardly act forfeited an heavenly inheritance. In the agony of her disappointment and chagrin, she vowed she would give him no rest till he returned to the Holy Land, to wipe out with his blood if need be, the foul stain upon his honor.

In this state of mind Stephen found it impossible to interest her in any of their accustomed occupations and amusements. News from the Crusade alone restored her wonted animation, and as these tidings, generally, reflected little honor upon himself, he suppressed as much as possible all intelligence from the East, and contrived to pass his time in distant parts of his domains. The torturing suspense of the countess at length induced her secretly to dispatch a messenger to Italy. He returned bearing a transcript of an official letter, which the chiefs of the Crusade had sent to Pope Urban. After giving the details of the march from Antioch along the sea-coast past Tripoli,

through the country of Sidon to Ramula, the letter went on. “Thence our troops continued their route to the village formerly called Emmaus, and like the disciples of old ‘our hearts burned within us,’ when there came to us certain brethren from Bethlehem to comfort us, after all our fatigues, and to welcome us to this holy and beautiful land. Sleep was banished from every eye, and ere midnight was well passed, every man animated by the fervor of hope and the intensity of desire, had girded on his armor and come forth from his tent, prepared for the last conflict. We wandered along the highways and fields, in darkness; but at length the heavens blushed with the glorious suddenness of eastern dawn, and as the sun shot his level rays across the sacred brow of Olivet, the holy city lay before our eyes. ‘Jerusalem! Jerusalem!’ was repeated with tumultuous wonder, by a thousand tongues. Every fatigue, every danger, every hardship, was forgotten, and the warrior became at once a simple pilgrim; his lance and sword were thrown aside, and the passion which stirred every heart, was clothed with divers gestures. Some shouted to the sky – some wept in silence – some knelt and prayed – some cast themselves down and kissed the blessed earth – ‘all had much to do to manage so great a gladness.’ Taking off our shoes, we trod the sacred ground with naked feet, and thus proceeding, came in front of the city and pitched our camp upon the north, between the gate of St. Stephen and the tower of David. It was early summer, the harvest was upon the ground, the grapes were ripe upon the vines, and before the waters of the autumnal equinox, dropped upon us out of heaven, the ensign of the cross was floating upon the walls of Jerusalem. For having long assailed the bulwarks in vain, we prepared movable towers of great strength, which we rolled to the walls, commenced the assault, not as in former times at the sound of drums and trumpets, but with the inspiring melody of hymns and psalms, while the priests bowed on Mt. Zion and prayed for the aid of heaven on the ensuing conflict. The Infidels, to manifest their rage, erected the symbol of our holy religion, and cast dust upon it, but the Lord was with us, and the sacrilegious insult was well atoned by their blood, for while Godfrey and Baldwin leaped from a tower and planted a banner upon the battlements, Tancred and Robert burst open one of the gates, Raimond and his followers scaled the walls, and thus we have freed the city from the dominion of the Infidels, and avenged the cause of heaven. We laid down our arms, washed our hands from the bloody stains, put on the habiliments of repentance, and in the spirit of humility, with uncovered heads and reverent feet, walked over all those places which the Saviour had consecrated by his presence. The ghost of the departed Adhemar came and rejoiced with us, and the spirits of the martyrs who perished on the road from Europe to Jerusalem, appeared and shared in the felicity of their brethren. The whole city was influenced by one spirit, and the clamor of thanksgiving was loud enough to have reached the stars. Thus in the year of our Lord 1099, was the city of Jerusalem added again to the dominion of Christendom, on the very day and hour of the crucifixion of the Saviour. At this auspicious time, Pope Urban second sits in the Roman see; Henry is emperor of the German, and Alexius of the Grecian empire. Philip reigns in France and William Rufus in England, whilst over all men and all things, reigns our Lord Jesus Christ forever and ever, to whom be honor and glory for endless ages.”

CHAPTER XIII

*"I have deeply felt
The mockery of the shrine at which my spirit knelt.
Mine is the requiem of years in reckless folly passed,
The wail above departed hopes on a frail venture cast."*

Whittier.

Acting upon the hint of Adela, Prince Henry repaired immediately to Huntingdon and secured the good offices of Maude and her husband, in effecting a communication with the beautiful novice Matilda. He was thus enabled to counteract the efforts of his powerful rival Warrenne, Earl of Surrey, to whom Rufus had promised her hand. Deeming it unsafe however to quit England, he tarried at court and passed his time in hunting and hawking, according to the manners of the age. The New Forest was the constant scene of dissolute pleasures. The sweet solemnity of the deep woods was daily disturbed by the Bacchanal revel, and the pure echoes of the dell were forced to answer the loose laugh and thoughtless imprecation. Godly men lifted up their voice against the corruptions of the age, and saintly priests warned by omens and dreams, admonished the Red King on a certain day, to avoid the glen in which Prince Richard was supposed to have contracted his fatal disease. But the impious Rufus, with studied contempt led the chase that way, diverting his attendants with ribald jests upon the warnings he had received. "Come, Deer's foot," said Warrenne, tauntingly to Prince Henry, "yonder bounds the stag. The fair hand of Matilda to him who brings the antlered monarch down." "I have broken the string of my arblast, and must repair to the hut of this forrester to replace it," replied Henry coldly. "Come on, ye laggards. Ho! Tyrrel, thou and I alone will be in at the death," cried Rufus, putting spurs to his horse. As Henry entered the cottage, a weird wife rose up as if from the ground before him, chanting in Norman French,

"Hasty news to thee I bring —
Henry, thou art now a king.
Mark the words and heed them well,
Which to thee in sooth I tell."

The closing words were interrupted by hurried cries of alarm and distress. The prince turned, and the horror-stricken Tyrrel, whose erring shaft had slain the king, dashed past the door. Comprehending the whole affair at once, Henry remounted his horse and rode full speed to Winchester, forced the keys from the keeper, and took possession of the regalia and royal treasure. The people thronged round him in the streets, and while the nobles and prelates were debating on the claims of Robert, the populace, whose allegiance he secured by the promise of English laws and an English Queen, made the city resound with loud shouts of "Long live King Henry." Within three days he was crowned at Winchester, by the bishop of London.

Scarce a month after the Countess of Blois was apprized of these events, the tardy Robert arrived at Chartres. He had lingered in Apulia to woo Sybilla, the fair cousin of Bohemond, and now returned to claim his inheritance, after his younger brother was securely seated on the throne. The countess received him with the greatest joy, and honored his peerless bride with the most distinguishing attentions; but when she learned that he depended upon her good offices with Stephen to secure assistance in a meditated invasion of England, her love for her favorite brother Henry, and her apprehension of the unsteady rule of Robert, moved her to dissuade him from the scheme, and she secretly hoped that he might be made instrumental in inducing her husband to return again to the

Holy Land. She learned from Robert the various success of the leaders of the crusade. While some were still carving their way with the sword, Bohemond was Prince of Antioch, Baldwin of Edessa, and Godfrey enjoyed the enviable distinction of being King of Jerusalem.

“The voice of fame has spoken oft to me of the prowess of my brother Robert,” said she. “Did not his peers deem him worthy a principality in Palestine?”

“Nay, it needed not the suffrages of the chiefs, since heaven itself preferred my poor claims above all others,” replied Robert. “When a king was to be chosen, the bishops gave to each leader a waxen candle, and directed us to walk in procession to the Holy Sepulchre. As we advanced within the sacred place, a sudden flame kindled upon the taper I held in my hand, but at that moment a whisper of Rufus’ death swept across my spirit, and remembering the throne of England I dashed out the light.” —

“Unhappy man!” exclaimed the countess. “Thou hast refused the call of heaven. Look not for success in any future enterprise. Hope not that divine sanction will back thine endeavor, and expect not aid or succor by thy sister’s intervention.”

“By the Holy Rood,” shouted Robert in wrath, “thou Queen’st it well for a woman whose craven husband was the first to desert his standard. It were indeed the part of a madman to expect assistance from the dastard earl.” Before the anger of the countess gave her voice to reply, he strode from her presence.

Meantime, Henry hearing that Robert had arrived in Normandy, strengthened his power by conciliating the English nation, and took prompt measures to redeem his promise of giving them an English Queen. But for some unaccountable reason the Saxon princess seemed averse to quitting her gloomy convent, nor would she consent to bestow her hand upon the handsomest and most accomplished sovereign of his time, till he had promised to confirm to the nation all the ancient laws and privileges established by her great ancestor Alfred, and ratified by Edward the Confessor. When a digest of these rights and immunities had been made, and a hundred copies committed to the care of the principal bishoprics and monasteries of England, she consented to become “the bond of peace to a divided nation – the dove of the newly sealed covenant between the Norman sovereign and her own people.”

The efforts of Robert, delayed till Henry’s power was thus consolidated, of course proved ineffectual. He wasted the munificent dower of his beautiful Sybilla, in idle feasting, and having buried his lovely wife the third year after their marriage, he gave up Normandy to Henry, for an annual pension, and was finally taken in a revolt, conveyed to Cardiff Castle, where in a sort of honorable captivity he passed the remainder of his useless life.

The spirit of crusade was still active in Europe, and combined with this spirit, was the hope of gain, springing from vague and exaggerated accounts of the wealth and principalities which the leaders of the first expedition had acquired. The devastated lands of Palestine were soon settled by families who immigrated from pecuniary or pious motives, and not long after the death of Godfrey, and the election of Baldwin I. to the throne of Jerusalem, several bodies of armed men set out to join their brethren in Asia. Count Stephen, wearied with the incessant importunities of his ambitious wife, shamed by the example of Hugh, Count of Vermandois, and stimulated, perhaps, by the hope of obtaining easier conquest, and less dangerous honors, consented to return to the Holy Land. At Constantinople they met with Raimond of Toulouse, who was returning for assistance, and proceeded under his guidance. On their way through Asia Minor, they encountered the Turks, lost one hundred thousand men, together with Hugh of Vermandois, who died of his wounds, at Tarsus. Raimond of Toulouse was slain at Tripoli, but Stephen, Count of Blois, with the rest of the leaders proceeded straight to Jerusalem; and having by the completion of his pilgrimage, wiped out the disgrace of his first desertion, embarked on board a vessel to return to Europe. The heart of the countess dilated with pride and joy, as from time to time she heard of his noble deeds, and with feelings akin to the romance of her youthful admiration, she hourly expected his return. One evening, sitting thus alone,

a servant announced, that a monk in the anteroom craved permission to speak with her. The countess ordered him to be instantly admitted, and her heart sickened with a sad foreboding, as a diminutive figure veiled in palmer's weeds stood before her.

"Speak thine errand quickly," said she, pale and breathless with agitation. "What of my lord?" He replied only by an upward motion of the hand, and Adela knew that her husband was dead. She sank back in her seat and clasped her hands, but kept her eyes fixed with the intensity of the keenest emotion upon the face of the monk. "Tell me all, good father," said she, in a voice nervously firm.

"I know little, noble lady," replied the palmer, "and though I have come all the way from Palestine to bring thee tidings, my story will be brief. Thou hast, doubtless, heard of the poor services of Peter the Hermit, in awakening the attention of Europe to the low estate of Jerusalem. When by Divine favor I had been so blest as to conduct the greatest warriors of the age to the conquest of the Holy Sepulchre, and had seen the Christians thus relieved from Turkish oppression, fall at my unworthy feet, and call down blessings upon my head, I felt to exclaim like Simeon of old, 'Lord, lettest now thy servant depart in peace, since mine eyes have seen thy salvation.' With the deepest humiliation, for having in a moment of temptation, wavered in faith, I thought to found a monastery upon the shores of Lake Gennesareth, where I might have the example of the sinking Peter ever before mine eyes. One evening, as I walked upon the shores of the sea, revolving these things in my thoughts, I felt myself suddenly seized from behind. A bandage was thrown over my eyes, I was forcibly lifted from the ground, placed upon a mule and hurried forward. I attempted to cry out, but a hand was laid upon my mouth, and a voice whispered in Anglo-Norman, 'Fear not, old man, thou art among friends, and bidden only to labor in thine holy calling.' Thus assured, I ceased my struggles. How far I was conveyed, I know not, but when the bandage was taken from my eyes, I found myself in a wild cave of the mountain, by the side of a dying crusader, and recognized in the pale countenance before me, the lineaments of Stephen Earl of Blois. 'Take courage, noble count,' said the voice that had before spoken in mine ear, 'I have caught a priest whose ghostly counsels will speedily prepare thee for the long journey, which all must sooner or later take.' With a tenderness which one would scarcely look for in such a savage, the chief raised the dying earl, and gently supported him while I received his directions concerning certain affairs, and ministered the last rites of our holy faith. The count pressed me to promise that I would, myself, bring to thee the epistle, which he had with much pain and difficulty indited. And when I hesitated, by reason of the monastery which I had resolved to found, he summoned all his remaining strength, and while I guided his trembling hand, drew for me a deed of the vale of Montier, and bade me bring it to thee for thou wouldst ratify it, and endow the abbey by thy bounty. Scarcely had he finished it, when his wounds bleeding afresh, a deadly faintness seized him. The chief laid him back upon the cushions. I held up the crucifix before his eyes, and murmuring a prayer in which were mingled the names of wife and children, he expired. That night I gave him christian burial beneath one of the cedar-trees of Mount Lebanon, the swarthy barbarians holding torches, and looking with reverent awe upon the solemn scene. Before morning I was again blindfolded, and conducted to the sea-coast, and put on board a vessel bound for Italy." So intent had the Hermit been on his narration, that he had not observed the countess, pale and rigid as though turned to stone; and when she clutched with convulsive eagerness the parcel he extended, he bowed and withdrew.

She tore off the envelope, and the scarf which her girlish hand had wrought in the hours of her first sweet love, soiled and blood-stained, fell across her lap, and crept accusingly to her feet. She opened the letter and read —

"To Adela, my best and only beloved, thy Stephen sends this last token of affection. In this my dying hour it is my sweetest consolation to feel that with my sword I have pierced the cloud that has so long been between us, and that could I see my Adela, she would smile upon me as the loved and honored husband of her youth. I have bathed in the Jordan, and worshipped at the sepulchre; but it was the *human love* and not the *Divine*, that baptized my soul with joy, and whispered pardon to my

wounded spirit. I have sought for glory in the land of patriarchs and prophets, and I have found it; but in the accents of fame my ear has heard only the voice of Adela. The Eternal saw mine idolatry and punished it. Adverse winds drove back the vessel that was to bear me to my native land. The King of Jerusalem called upon us again for aid. We fought in the plains of Ramula, seven hundred knights against the whole force of the Turkish army. Hemmed in on every side, we fell, bravely defending the standard of the cross. Fainting from loss of blood, my dull ear heard the cry of 'Allah ackbar.' Like one dreaming I called upon the name of Hardrager. Immediately the *old man* came to me and stanching my mortal wound, bound it tightly with the scarf which I had thrown across my breast to animate me, for the conflict. I was conveyed away, and awoke as did Ingulfus, in the cave of the Assassins. I know that I shall die. I cannot long sustain the pressure of the ligament, and when once 'tis loosened my last blood will flow. Hardrager has promised me christian burial, and sent for a priest to shrive my parting soul. Think of me kindly, proudly, my best beloved. Teach my sons to honor their father's name, for he died fighting in the Holy Land. Kiss my darling Lucy, the sweet babe who unconsciously smiled upon my return. Darkness gathers upon my sight. The forms that gladdened my youthful days pass before me, and the fairest among them all is my bride, my Adela." A few more words were indistinctly traced, the page seemed blotted with tears, and the name of Stephen was scarcely legible.

Years passed over the spirit of the countess in the intense agony of that one night. Her heart-strings strained to their utmost tension by the power of this mighty woe, thenceforth gave no response to the light fingering of ordinary circumstance. The tender solicitude of friendship, the sweet prattle of childhood, the hilarity of mirth, the consolations of religion, and the schemes of ambition, were endured and accepted with the same passionless apathy. She made a journey to Normandy, and arranged a reconciliation between her brother Henry and the primate Anselm with her accustomed wisdom. She visited Boulogne, and presided at the nuptials of her son Stephen with her wonted grace. She gave her Lucy to the Earl of Chester, with a mother's blessing, and saw her depart in the fatal White Ship without emotion. But when she again stood at the door of the abbey of Feschamp to welcome Maude once more to Normandy, the curtain of retrospection was lifted, and the whole drama of her life passed before her. Adela and Maude! The disparity between the happy child and the sad captive was less striking than the contrast between the elegant and stately Countess of Blois, and the serene and gracious princess of Scotland, who now met after life had gathered the bloom of their youthful beauty, and left the indefinable shades which character traces upon the human countenance. Fixed and calm were the features of Adela, once radiant with vivacity, but their repose was the death of emotion, and their calmness was not resignation, but submission to inexorable fate. The face of Maude, still fair and beautiful in the strength of its repose, beamed with the serene benignity of ineffable peace, and she seemed one, the joyousness of whose inner life found occasion for an overflow of beneficence in every outward occurrence.

Again they journeyed together through the scenes that witnessed the triumphal progress of William the Conqueror. But it was now the task of Maude to soothe the spirit of her friend, bound with the chain of remorseful regret. Cicely, celebrated for her piety, had become lady abbess of the convent of Caen, and it was the intention of the countess to enter the nunnery under her care. In fitting up her dormitory Adela had laid aside all her accustomed magnificence, and the only relic of her former state was a gorgeous curtain that divided her oratory from the cheerless apartment, chosen as the home of her future years.

"Maude," said she, as they sat together there, "rememberest thou the riddle of life and love that once formed our theme of converse in an hour like this? How thy heart pined for the convent, and mine shuddered at its gloom."

"Aye," said Maude, "well do I remember it, and often have I smiled at the presumption which made me attempt to solve the greatest mystery of human existence, and arrogate to myself the choice of the future; when the highest wisdom leads only to the faithful performance of daily duties."

“I mind me now,” replied the countess, “that thy gentle admonition pointed to that effect. – But I scorned control, and when I saw the cruel policy by which my father strengthened his dominion, I determined that my hand should never seal the bond of a political alliance, and it was not till after years that I learned that the meeting between Stephen and myself resulted from a preconcerted plan to bind me to one whose mild virtues would counteract my unholy aspirings. Thy instructions had taught me the power of a righteous purpose, and I sought its aid to compensate for what I considered a defect in my husband’s character, vainly hoping that ambition, sanctioned by religion, would secure its reward. With fatal skill I wrought upon his generous affections till he relinquished the dear delights of his family, to seek barren laurels, and find a lonely grave on a foreign shore.”

“Reproach not thyself,” said Maude, tenderly.

The countess heeded not her interruption. “Thou and I,” said she, “have wrought for different ends, and the results for which I toiled have come to thee unsought.”

Maude would have replied, but the passionate woman proceeded. “Nay, let me speak; for since my great grief has fallen upon me, I have unburdened my heart to no one. As a captive thou didst bring a blessing to the household of the Conqueror; thy sweet spirit moulded the rude Simon into a benefactor of his dependents, and I know well that it was thy benevolent wisdom which instructed Matilda to secure the liberty of England, and the stability of Henry’s throne. Thy silent sacrifices have made the rich current of thy life one stream of beneficence, while my erring spirit has converted the bounties of heaven into fountains of misery. My wicked pride found occasion in the imbecility of my first-born William for ceaseless repining, and sowed the seeds of sorrow in the hearts of my other noble beautiful children. Thibaut is in arms against his sovereign, Stephen a pensioner on the fickle humors of a king, Henry seeks preferment through the church, and my lovely Lucy, the darling of her father, lies entombed in the sea. Oh! Maude! Maude! my best and truest friend, pity her whose only occupation through long years has been ‘to write bitter things against herself!’ But I might have known it all,” continued she impetuously, “for heaven through thy intercession deigned to warn me of my fate, and I would not tell thee lest thy gentle love should win me from it.”

She drew aside the curtain of the oratory, and led the princess within the shadow. Through the oriel windows the mellow light of the autumnal sun fell softly upon the altar, where stood beside the crucifix the crystal urn containing the hallowed dust of Palestine. The scarf of Stephen, with its golden embroidery rusted, and its bright pearls dimmed with his blood, was wound round the precious love-gift, and fastened with the thorn obtained from Ingulfus.

“It seems but yesterday,” said she, tenderly detaching the baldric, “since I held this up before thee with pride and pleasure, and in careless wonder saw thee wreath it in the canopy of my couch. But that dream, now that my whole life looks a dream, seems the one reality of my existence. I shall tell it thee, for my spirit already feels the balm of thy gentle sympathy.

“My slumbers were at first broken and disturbed. I seemed with Stephen and Robert in an eastern land, hurrying over rocks and sands, a tiresome, weary way, in pursuit of a crown which constantly tempted, but eluded the grasp. First I missed Stephen from my side, then Robert disappeared, and at last I sank down among myriads of wretches perishing of thirst. I woke in terror, and it was long ere I could compose myself again to rest. Whether I slept again I know not, but as I lay gazing into the depths of the heavens, my vision seemed to pierce beyond the stars; and from the uttermost distance came one winging his way past the bright orbs, till he stood within the casement, the impersonation of my lover.

“My scarf lay upon his breast, and his right hand held out to me an urn, pure as though formed of consolidated light, upon whose amethystine entablature was engraven *Human Love*. As I extended my hand, and clasped the precious treasure, the shattered inscription fell to dust in the vase. I raised my eyes, – he threw a pitying smile upon me, and immediately there sprang up from the ashes a celestial flower, and as each living petal unfolded, there floated off a radiant line of light bearing the sacred words *Divine Love*, till the whole air was filled with redolence and beauty.

“The ringing of the matin chimes recalled me to consciousness, and my bright vision was absorbed by the flood of glory which the morning sun poured into the apartment.

“Thou saidst truth!” exclaimed Maude. “Thy dream is a reality; for in the ashes of *Human Love*, the *Divine* plants the sweetest hopes of existence.”

The long sealed fountain of Adela’s tears began to flow, and as the gracious drops distilled from her surcharged heart, and her paralyzed sensibilities felt once more the bliss of emotion, the strong, proud woman, became gentle and humble as a child.

“Maude,” said she, clasping her hands in gratitude, “there was ever a mystery about thee. I had thought to wear out my life in sad penance, and thou hast opened to me a source of happy contemplation: henceforth my desert future, fertilized by the sweet waters that have gushed from the rock at thy magic touch, shall blossom with the flowers of Paradise.”

The abbess Cicely here entered, and summoned them to the hall of general reception, where Maude embraced her son and received the ambassadors sent by her husband to conduct her to Stirling, the place appointed for her coronation, as Queen of Scotland.

“Go,” said Adela, with affectionate joy, as she saw her depart. “Go to thy bright destiny. Thou art a living illustration of the truth of scripture, ‘Be thou faithful over a few things, and I will make thee ruler over many things.’”

ELEANOR

CHAPTER I

*“In the midst was seen
A lady of a more majestic mien,
By stature and by beauty marked their sovereign Queen.”*

The southern provinces of France, Poitou, Saintogne, Auvergne, Perigord, Limousin, Angoumois and Guienne, received of the Romans the classic appellation of Aquitaine. This beautiful land, watered by the Garonne and Loire, whose clear and sparkling streams, flowing from vine-clad hills, stretched their silvery arms to irrigate the fairest fields and to enclose the finest harbors in the world, was in the twelfth century, inhabited by the most civilized and polished people on the face of the earth. The arts, and the idealities, and the refinements of life, like the native flowers of its sunny vales, seemed wakened and nourished by the genial airs of a climate, softened by the proximity of the sea, and rendered bracing by the mountain breeze. The numerous and independent sovereigns, whose feudal sway extended over this fair territory, imbibed the spirit of chivalry, and caught the enthusiasm that precipitated the armies of Europe upon Asia. Count Raimond of Toulouse, was one of the first who took the cross, at the council of Clermont. He was styled *par excellence* the Moses of the expedition. Before leaving for Palestine, on his returnless voyage, he ceded his dominions to his daughter, wife of William IX. of Poitou. The grand-children of William IX. were Eleanor and Petronilla. The father of these fair sisters, William X., left Aquitaine in 1132, with their uncle Raimond, who was chosen prince of Antioch.

The poetical taste of Eleanor was early cultivated and developed by the unrestrained freedom she enjoyed in the queenless court of her minstrel grandfather in Gay Guienne. The language that prevailed all over the south of France, was called Provençal. It was the mother-tongue of Duke William, the grandfather of Eleanor, who was one of the most liberal patrons and earliest professors of that style of composition in which the Troubadours celebrated the feats of love and arms. The matchless charms of Eleanor were enhanced by all the accomplishments of the south. Her fine genius found ample exercise in composing the sirvantes and chansons of Provençal poetry, and her delicate fingers wiled the spirit of music from the echoing harp to accompany her voice adown the tide of song. She inherited from her grandfather the political sovereignty of her native dominions not only, but the brilliant talents and ancestral superiority that made her Empress in the realm of Taste, and Queen of the courts of Love.

When the gay and licentious Duke William felt the infirmities of age coming upon him, he determined to seek the readiest means to rid himself of the burden of his sins. Accordingly, he resolved to resign the most potent sceptre in Europe to the unpractised hand of his youthful granddaughter, and devote the rest of his days to prayer and penitence in a hermitage of the rocky wilderness of St. James de Compostella. Eleanor had not attained her fifteenth year when her grandfather commenced his career of self-denial, by summoning the baronage of Aquitaine to transfer their allegiance to herself; and the child-sovereign exercised the royal functions of her new dignities while the duke visited the court of Louis le Gros and offered her hand to the young prince. The wise lawgiver of France readily accepted the proposal – for the rich provinces which constituted the dower of Eleanor, held allegiance to the crown, only by feudal tenure; and the son, equally impatient for the possession of his fair prize, set off with a noble train for Bordeaux. The light heart of Eleanor

was easily won by the unrivalled attractions of Louis le Jeune, whose courtly graces were illuminated by the prospect of the crown of Charlemagne; while the damsels that composed her court, exercised their blandishments with cruel skill upon the too susceptible hearts of the cavaliers that came in the train of the bridegroom. The parliament of Love deliberated day by day in mock solemnity upon the pretensions of the fair rivals, and the discreet decisions of Eleanor, the presiding genius of the conclave, inspired the songs of Trouveres and Troubadours, who vied with each other in celebrating her charms.

A succession of long, bright days, closed the month of July, and on the last evening the court of Love continued its session till the brilliant twilight had faded from the western sky, and the mellow harvest-moon poured a silver flood upon fountains that sprang as if instinct with life to catch and fling the shining radiance upon the gay company that still lingered in the Rose Pavilion. The Queen of the court, attired like Venus, sat upon a throne, canopied with Acaeia, through whose trembling leaves the light fell playfully contending with the envious shadows that seemed striving to hide her smiles. At her feet sat her favorite page, with wings framed of gauze attached to his shoulders, holding a lyre, fashioned to resemble the bow of Cupid, upon which he occasionally struck a few notes to announce a change in the evening's entertainment. Lovely maidens arrayed as Nymphs and Graces reclined upon verdant couches around the fair arbitress of these amorous debates. Groups of light-hearted girls, representing heathen goddesses, listened encouragingly to their favorite minstrels, and strove, by various subtle arts, to win the meed of praise to the verse that celebrated their charms. Sirventes and Chansons had been recited and sung, still the assembly listened with an air of impatience, as if anticipating matters of more general interest. With a smile that at once excited and baffled curiosity, the Queen touched the cheek of her page with her flowery sceptre, saying, "Why slumbers the harp of my pretty Peyrol? Has he no song for the ear of his lady?"

"Peyrol cannot sing in the Romance Walloon," said the youth, casting down his eyes with jealous pique.

"Proud one," replied the queen, "thou knowest that though the lord of *oui* and *non* delights our eye, his language charms not our ear. We would hear a pretty faibleaux of Grenada, or wilt thou give us a fitting apostrophe to the court, where Gaiety and Innocence preside."

"Nay, honored lady," said the page, "since Gaiety and Innocence parted company on the plains of Pleasure, harmony hath forsaken the lyre, and not even the goddess of Love can heal the discord."

"Thou pratest, pert boy," replied the queen, with a stolen glance at Petronilla.

Perceiving from her tone, that he had presumed too far, the page bent over his harp and rapidly swept his fingers across the strings, saying apologetically,

"If my lady will accept a lay of Bretagne, Peyrol is ready to do her bidding."

"The sweet tones of the langue d'oc little befit the rugged legends of the northern clime," said the queen, "but tune thy lyre without further parley." The page needed no second command, but sang: —

1. In a province fair of sunny France,
Beside a winding river,
Over whose waves in joyous dance,
The sunbeams gleam and quiver,
Stood a castle tall, a goodly sight,
With its broad and rich domain,
And therein dwelt a noble knight;
I ween he had a lady bright
And three sweet babes withouten stain.

2. A generous heart, an open hand,

To courtlie companie,
And eke as any in the land
For beggars of low degree.
So gentle his mien in lady's bower,
So full of courtesie,
Yet valiant was he in tournament,
And a good bow in the greenwood bent,
I wot right dextrously.

3. He had been blest in his earthly state
With such fair prosperity,
That his heart beat high with pride elate,
Forgot he the giver good and great
And christian humility.
Whereat to punish his arrogance,
Our Lady sent him sore mischance,
And dire adversity.

4. Sir Isumbras to the hunt has gone,
Riding so gallantly,
With hawk and hound in the dewy morn,
When a vision bright above him born,
Appeared in the clear blue sky.
He saw a maiden meek and fair,
An angel I wist was she,
A messenger sent to bid him prepare
For chill calamity.

5. A woful man was the knight that day,
He turned him home in sore dismay,
When his good steed fell and died,
And hawk and hound of life bereft,
Sir Isumbras in the forest left,
With no living thing beside.
When to him there came his little foot page,
As fast as he might hie.
My noble master, a sad message,
It is that I bear to thee.
"Thy proud castell lies in ruins low,
Thy lady and children escaped the blow,
But and with jeopardy."

6. The knight bowed meekly to heaven's decree;
A wiser and sadder man was he,
And with his lady and children, three,
Sir Isumbras boune him o'er the sea —
A penitent pilgrim he would be
To holy Palestine.
Through seven weary lands they went —

The strength of the babes was wellnigh spent,
For charity, cold was their nourishment.
They came to a wood, with flowers besprent —
To a rapid river of broad extent,
Where never the sunbeams shine.

7. His eldest born, Sir Isumbras bore
With tenderest care to the farther shore;
But ere he returned again,
A lion fierce from the thicket sprang —
The little one tore from that cruel strand,
Nor him might they regain.

8. He found his lady weeping, full lorn,
For in his absence a leopard strong,
With a fell and bloody unicorn,
The others from her arms had torn.

9. The lady wished that she might die,
Or ever this sore calamity,
She should have been preserved to see;
But the knight with meek humility,
To Mary mother a prayer 'gan say,
That his penance might soon have end —
When wandering through the weary land,
The Sultan's captives they were ta'en
Before his face to bend.

10. I trow the Sultan had rarely seen
A lady so lovely, in form or mien,
Or a knight so bold and true.
“Sir knight, I will give thee gold and fee,
As much as thou might wish to see,
If thou wilt renounce Christianity,
And fight for the banners of Paynimrie,
And sell thy lady bright to me;”
His form to its height he drew.

11. “Our Lady forefend that I should e'er
In infidel ranks a standard bear,
Or the holy cross betray;
And for weal or woe my lady fair,
I wed in the face of day;
A recreant knight I be when e'er
This right I shall gainsay.”

12. They have putten off his scarlet mantell
Within the goldis shred;
They drove him from that land of Baal,

And left him as he were dead.
The lady was sent to a far countrie,
The bride of the Sultan she should be,
When from the wars of Chrisendie
In triumph he returned.

13. Asleep in the forest the good knight lay
And when he awoke at dawn of day
He saw his treasure borne away,
By an eagle strong in search of prey —
No longer he there sojourned.
To the Virgin he made a fervent prayer
Invoking for aye her watchful care.
Then to Palestine he turned.

14. Through ten long years the knight pursued
His weary pilgrimage;
Then buckled he on his armor bright,
With heart beating free and light,
He hath boune him for the fight,
A gallant and unknown knight
Withouten heritage.

15. Much they marvelled then to see
A warrior, unknown as he,
Such deeds of valor do.
They wist he was no mortal wight,
But some weird magician sprite,
When in the thickest of the fight
The Sultan dread he slew.

16. They have broughten him to the christian king
With gladness and great welcoming,
And honor and praise had he;
But his object fell he did obtain,
For his mighty enemy he hath slain.
He donned his pilgrim weeds again,
And his wanderings pursued.

17. The scorching sun, with a feverish glare,
On the burning sands cast radiance clear;
When weary and faint the knight drew near,
Where stately and tall a castle fair
From a green oasis rose.
The cool palms waving in golden light,
With music of murmuring fountains bright,
Beckoning called the fainting knight
To bowers of repose.

18. He passed the portals of the hall,
And stood 'mong squires and good knights tall,
Holding it seemed high festival.

19. A lady beautiful to see,
Sat 'neath a gorgeous canopy.
She was queen of that countrie,
Lady of generous chivalry,
And eke of lowly charity.
The holy Palmers with reverence,
Welcomed she to her residence;
Gentle and kind was she.

20. But the knight would not be comforted,
For restless recollection shed
A sadness over all.
In silent mood he wandered
Through tower and lofty hall.

21. It fell on a day the Queen with her guest
Were seated at the mid-day feast,
When entered her favorite page in haste.
In the early morning he went in quest
Of eaglets' eyries, and on the crest
Of a lofty mountain he found a nest,
With golden treasure hid in its breast,
Wrapped in a scarlet mantel.

22. No sooner beheld she the page's prize,
Than the tears o'erflowed the ladie's eyes.
My true and loyal knight she cries,
(The palmer looked on with mute surprise.)
Hast thou Sir Isumbras seen?
One moment they gazed in silent survey,
The mists of memory rolled away;
And locked within his arms she lay —
The lost one found again.
And there was feast and festival;
Resounded then through bower and hall,
The lute and joyous madrigal;
And joustings there were in tournament,
And breaking of lances in compliment,
To the beauty of ladies bright;
Then over the Sultan's fair domain,
In peace the knight and lady reign;
Till the king in all sincerity,
Strove with pious zeal to free
From the bonds of Infidelity,
His Paynim lieges hight.

23. But no one there his cause upheld,
Save God and the Queen, I trow;
And were they e'er so valorous,
Never could they withstand
An armament so numerous,
As the unbelievers' band.

24. Then by a chance miraculous,
The tide of war was turned.
As they might be sent in our Lady's name,
Three knights came pricking o'er the plain,
As if the ground they spurned.
Came the first on a lion strong;
On a leopard the second was borne —
The third bestrode a unicorn.
Tall men and brave were they;
The hosts of the Saracens fled in dismay,
And repenting of their disloyalty,
Returned they then to their fealty;
And the knight and lady peacefully
Together with their children, three
Restored to them so happily,
Reigned in tranquillity,
Prosperously and long.

25. They lived and died in good intent;
Unto Heaven their souls went.
When that they dead were,
Jesus Christ, Heaven's king,
Give us aye his blessing,
And shield us aye from care.

Rousing herself from the abstraction that had prevented her hearing the song of her page, the queen remarked, "Thy story is somewhat long, and for ourself we would have preferred that the husband had won the holy estate of martyrdom 'neath the sword of the Soldan. But thou hast rhymed it right dextrously, and we opine that the moral of thy lay accords well with the ascetic manners of the north." She extended her wand. The herald then stood forth, and sounding a few notes on a chalumeaux, cried,

"Comes there no cause of Arrets d'amour,
Our gracious liege and sovereign before,
From lady, knight, or troubadour?"

The flute-like call was thrice repeated, and then a low response to the challenge issued from a mimic grotto, curiously roofed with overhanging vines.

"The minstrel of our sister Petronilla has leave to present her cause before our court," said the queen encouragingly, as the troop of the young princess advanced from the shadow into the clear light, and knelt at the footstool of justice.

“The lady Petronilla,” began the Troubadour, “arraigns before the court her recreant knight, Count Rudolph of Vermandois. Cold greeting gives he for her fair looks, scant courtesy for her warm smiles; his ungloved hand returns not the pressure of her slight fingers, and the banderol she sent him flutters not from his gleaming lance.” A slight pause followed this accusation, and the herald again stood forth and demanded if any minstrel or Troubadour could say aught in extenuation of the offence of the accused. Not a voice answered, not a harp string stirred. At the third call the page of Eleanor arose, and with a graceful obeisance begged to be heard.

“Rudolph of Vermandois,” said he, “witnesseth by me, that since he set lance in rest to do his devoir for the fair Adela of Champagne, his eye and smile, and heart and hand, as loyal husband and true knight, are due and devote to her alone.”

A general murmur attested the disapprobation of the assembly at this new and strange defence; for it had already become a proverb in Guienne, that “True love cannot exist between married persons.” The importance of the action, however, elicited a brilliant contest among the rival Troubadours, and never was a case more warmly argued, more skilfully enveloped with the subtleties of logic, or more thoroughly transpierced with the sallies of wit, than that which arose from the efforts of the wily granddaughter of Philippa of Toulouse, to fascinate the husband of the granddaughter of Adela, Countess of Blois. The fair jurors finally, like their successors in modern days, rendered their verdict in accordance with preconceived opinions, independent of justice or argument. The defence being thus found invalid, the culprit was put under ban of the court, and all true ladies were forbidden to smile upon him, except by the grace of his slighted lady-love. The fairy camp then adjourned its sitting to receive the royal guests, who were already on the way to meet them. As Eleanor accepted the assistance of her lover to climb the terraced pathway leading to the castle, she said with her most bewitching smile, “We consign our young sister, Petronilla, to the care of our noble cousin of Vermandois.” The count dissembling his reluctance bowed and offered his hand to the sprightly sorceress, and the queen whispered her sister, “The hawk is hooded, it must be thine to bind his jessies.”

CHAPTER II

*Where is the antique glory now become,
That while some wont in woman to appear?
Where be the bold achievements done by some?
Where be the battles, where the shield and spear?
And all the conquests which them high did rear
Be they all dead, or shall again appear?*

Spenser.

The first of August, 1137, rose upon a brilliant ceremonial. The princely capital of Bordeaux glittered with all the splendor that Guienne, and its dependent fiefs could supply; for on that day the native subjects of Eleanor assembled to accept the resignation of Duke William, and to give the hand of their liege lady in marriage to the heir of France. Though Eleanor was sufficiently dazzled by the prospect of ruling in the court of Paris, she had the sagacity to accept the proposal of her barons and refuse her consent to the arrangement, till by charter and deed she had secured inviolate the laws and customs of Aquitaine, and the administration of the government to herself alone. Upon the conclusion of the ceremony the duke laid down his robes and insignia of sovereignty, and in presence of his loving subjects and weeping grandchildren, took up the hermit's cowl and staff and departed on his lonely pilgrimage.

The royal cortege set out the following day for the north, resting only at the principal towns, where the young duke and duchess received the homage of the feudal lords.

At Blois, the Count of Vermandois, who had by circumstances that seemed to him wholly accidental been forced to give his constant attendance upon the artful Petronilla, embraced once more his beautiful Adalais, and pleading her ill health, obtained permission of the prince to absent himself for a time from court. The disappointed Petronilla could scarcely conceal her chagrin at this unlooked-for interruption in her proceedings, and from that moment conceived the most violent hatred of her innocent rival. On their entrance at Paris, instead of the enthusiastic greeting and splendid festivities which Eleanor had anticipated, the bridal party was escorted through silent streets by weeping attendants, who conducted them to the death-bed of Louis VI. The great legislator of France gazed with a look of solemn benignity upon the youthful pair that knelt to crave his parting blessing, and reminding them, that their recent union involved not only their individual happiness, but the peace and prosperity of both the north and the south, added with his expiring breath, "Remember, royalty is a public trust, for the exercise of which a rigorous account will be exacted by Him who has the sole disposal of crowns and of sceptres."

On the conscientious mind of Louis, the words of his dying father made a deep impression; but his thoughtless partner was no sooner crowned Queen of France, than she entered upon her career of folly, exerting all her talents, and exercising all her influence in the exciting games of court intrigue. The impassioned verse in which Abelard celebrated the beauty and love of the gifted but frail Heloise, furnished employment for Eleanor's Provençal minstrels, and formed the topic of general remark among the minions of the court. She assisted the persecuted monk in his defence before the Council of Sens, and after his death caused his body to be conveyed to the chapel of the Paraclete, and consigned to the care of the melancholy Heloise. She persuaded Louis that the services of his prime minister Vermandois, were indispensable at Paris, and thus, again, brought that nobleman within the charmed sphere of Petronilla's attractions. She contrived, at the same time, to secure for herself a devoted admirer in the Count of Ponthieu, who became the agent of her slightest wish. Through his gallantry she succeeded in involving the beautiful Adalais in some matters of court scandal, and thus by exciting

the jealousy of the Count of Vermandois, and exposing him to the bewitching spells of her sister, she finally persuaded him to divorce his lovely and amiable wife, and espouse the designing Petronilla.

Adelais sought to hide her sorrow and her wrongs in the seclusion of a convent; but her brother, the valiant Count Thibault of Champagne, was not inclined to suffer the indignity in silence. Such, however, was Eleanor's power over the plastic mind of her husband, that the count appealed in vain to the sympathy or justice of the king. Finding that his remonstrance could not reach the royal ear, he presented his cause before the pope, who compelled Vermandois to put away the guilty Petronilla, and take back the injured sister of Champagne. The repudiated wife enraged at her own dishonor, and incensed at the undissembled joy with which Vermandois exchanged her dazzling graces, for the long-regretted charms of the weeping recluse, again had recourse to Eleanor. The queen, not less vindictive than her sister, and more practised in diplomacy, succeeded in fanning an ancient feud between Louis and Count Thibault, into the flame of war. The king invaded Champagne at the head of a large army, and commenced a devastating progress through the province. The town of Vitry, strongly walled and fortified, for a long time resisted the royal forces; but the queen, whose apprehensions of the temperate counsels of Suger, prompted her to accompany her husband upon every occasion, privately commissioned a body of Gascons to set fire to the town at the very moment of its surrender. The flames spread from house to house, and finally extended to the cathedral, and thirteen hundred persons who had taken refuge there, were burned to death. The king stung by the cries of his perishing subjects, exerted himself for their rescue, but in vain; and the horrors of the scene made such a fearful impression on his mind, as seriously to affect his health. The vision of his lamented father, repeating in solemn tones, "Remember, my son, that royalty is a public trust, for the exercise of which a rigorous account will be exacted by Him who has the sole disposal of crowns and of sceptres," haunted his slumbers and destroyed his rest. Queen Eleanor journeyed with him from one holy place to another, to entreat the prayers of pious monks in his behalf, but the dejection of his mind increased to such an extent, that even her insinuating blandishments failed to recall him from his gloomy contemplations. Wearied with fruitless endeavors, she petulantly remarked to Petronilla, who now triumphed in the possession of a new lover, the young Count Maurienne, "Fate has given me the name of queen with the destiny of a nun. Would we were again in our native realm, for I tire of this dull life. Instead of the gay minstrelsy of the sweet southwest, I am jaded with perpetual psalmody, and my attempts to beguile the weary hours with the 'joyous science,' are mocked with the mummery of muttered prayers. I have married a monk rather than a monarch;" and the mortified queen burst into tears.

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