

EVERETT-GREEN EVELYN

**FOR THE FAITH: A
STORY OF THE YOUNG
PIONEERS OF
REFORMATION IN
OXFORD**

Evelyn Everett-Green
For the Faith: A Story
of the Young Pioneers of
Reformation in Oxford

*http://www.litres.ru/pages/biblio_book/?art=25201687
For the Faith: A Story of the Young Pioneers of Reformation in Oxford:*

Содержание

Chapter I: The House by the Bridge	6
Chapter II: "Christian Brothers."	21
Chapter III: A Neophyte	36
Chapter IV: "Merrie May Day."	51
Chapter V: Sweet Summertime	67
Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.	73

Evelyn Everett-Green

For the Faith: A Story of the Young Pioneers of Reformation in Oxford

Note

The story of these young pioneers of reformation in Oxford has been told by many historians. But there are slight discrepancies in the various accounts, and it is not quite clear who were the small minority who refused the offered reconciliation, and stood firm to the last. But there is no doubt that John Clarke, Henry Sumner, and one other, whose name varies in the different accounts, died from the effects of harsh imprisonment, unabsolved, and unreconciled to the offended church, and that Clarke would probably have perished at the stake had death not taken him from the hands of his persecutors.

There is equally no doubt that Dalaber, Ferrar, Garret, and many others "recanted," as it was called, and took part in the burning of books at Carfax. But these men must not be too hastily condemned as cowards and renegades. Garret, Ferrar, and several others died for their faith in subsequent persecutions,

whilst others rose to eminence in the church, which was soon to be reformed and purified of many of the errors against which these young men had protested. It is probable, therefore, that they were persuaded by gentle arguments to this act of submission. They were not in revolt against their faith or the church, but only eager for greater liberty of thought and judgment. Kindly persuasion and skilful argument would have great effect, and the sense of isolation and loss incurred by sentence of excommunication was such as to cause acute suffering to the devout. There is no doubt that Wolsey won over Thomas Garret by kindness, and not by threats or penalties; and it is to his honour, and to that of the authorities of Oxford, that, after the first panic, they were wishful to treat the culprits with gentleness, save those few who remained obstinate. And even these were later on given back to their friends, although, as it turned out; it was only to die.

Chapter I: The House by the Bridge

"Holy Church has never forbidden it," said John Clarke, with a very intent look upon his thoughtful, scholar's face.

A young man who stood with his elbow on the mantelshelf, his eye fixed eagerly on the speaker's face, here broke in with a quick impetuosity of manner, which seemed in keeping with his restless, mobile features, his flashing dark eyes, and the nervous motion of his hands, which were never still long together.

"How do you mean? Never forbidden it! Why, then, is all this coil which has set London aflame and lighted the fires of Paul's Yard for the destruction of those very books?"

"I did not say that men had never forbidden the reading of the Scriptures in the vulgar tongue by the unlettered. I said that Holy Church herself had never issued such a mandate."

"Not by her Popes?" questioned the younger man hastily.

"A papal bull is not the voice of the Holy Catholic Church," spoke Clarke, slowly and earnestly. "A Pope is not an apostle; though, as a bishop, and a Bishop of Rome, he must be listened to with all reverence. Apostles are not of man or by man, but sent direct by God. Popes elected by cardinals (and too often amid flagrant abuses) cannot truly be said to hold apostolic office direct from the Lord. No, I cannot see that point as others do. But let that pass. What I do maintain, and will hold to with certainty, is that in this land the Catholic Church has never forbidden men

to read the Scriptures for themselves in any tongue that pleases them. I have searched statutes and records without end, and held disputations with many learned men, and never have I been proven to be in the wrong."

"I trow you are right there, John Clarke," spoke a deep voice from out the shadows of the room at the far end, away from the long, mullioned window. "I have ever maintained that our Mother the Holy Church is a far more merciful and gentle and tolerant mother than those who seek to uphold her authority, and who use her name as a cloak for much maliciousness and much ignorance."

Clarke turned swiftly upon the speaker, whose white head could be plainly distinguished in the shadows of the panelled room. The features, too, being finely cut, and of a clear, pallid tint, stood out against the dark leather of the chair in which the speaker sat. He was habited, although in his own house, in the academic gown to which his long residence in Oxford had accustomed him. But it was as a Doctor of the Faculty of Medicine that he had distinguished himself; and although of late years he had done little in practising amongst the sick, and spent his time mainly in the study of his beloved Greek authors, yet his skill as a physician was held in high repute, and there were many among the heads of colleges who, when illness threatened them, invariably besought the help of Dr. Langton in preference to that of any other leech in the place. Moreover, there were many poor scholars and students, as well as indigent townfolk,

who had good cause to bless his name; whilst the faces of his two beautiful daughters were well known in many a crowded lane and alley of the city, and they often went by the sobriquet of "The two saints of Oxford."

This was in part, perhaps, due to their names. They were twin girls, the only children of Dr. Langton, whose wife had died within a year of their birth. He had called the one Frideswyde, after the patron saint of Oxford, at whose shrine so many reputed miracles had been wrought; and the other he named Magdalen, possibly because he had been married in the church of St. Mary Magdalen, just without the North Gate.

To their friends the twin sisters were known as Freda and Magda, and they lived with their father in a quaint riverside house by Miltham Bridge, where it crossed the Cherwell. This house was a fragment of some ecclesiastical building now no longer in existence, and although not extensive, was ample enough for the needs of a small household, whilst the old garden and fish ponds, the nut walk and sunny green lawn with its ancient sundial, were a constant delight to the two girls, who were proud of the flowers they could grow through the summer months, and were wont to declare that their roses and lilies were the finest that could be seen in all the neighbourhood of Oxford.

The room in which the little company was gathered together this clear, bright April evening was the fragment of the old refectory, and its groined and vaulted roof was beautifully traced, whilst the long, mullioned window, on the wide cushioned seat

on which the sisters sat with arms entwined, listening breathlessly to the talk of their elders, looked southward and westward over green meadowlands and gleaming water channels to the low hills and woodlands beyond.

Oxford in the sixteenth century was a notoriously unhealthy place, swept by constant pestilences, which militated greatly against its growth as a university; but no one could deny the peculiar charm of its situation during the summer months, set in a zone of verdure, amid waterways fringed with alder and willow, and gemmed by water plants and masses of fritillary.

Besides the two sisters, their learned father, and the two young men in the garb of students who had already spoken, there was a third youth present, who looked slightly younger than the dark faced, impetuous Anthony Dalaber, and he sat on the window seat beside the daughters of the house, with the look of one who has the right to claim intimacy. As a matter of fact, Hugh Fitzjames was the cousin of these girls, and for many years had been a member of Dr. Langton's household. Now he was living at St. Alban Hall, and Dalaber was his most intimate friend and comrade, sharing the same double chamber with him. It was this intimacy which had first brought Anthony Dalaber to the Bridge House; and having once come, he came again and yet again, till he was regarded in the light of a friend and comrade.

There was a very strong tie asserting itself amongst certain men of varying ages and academic rank at Oxford at this time. Certain publications of Martin Luther had found their way into

the country, despite the efforts of those in authority to cheek their introduction and circulation. And with these books came also portions of the Scriptures translated into English, which were as eagerly bought and perused by vast numbers of persons.

Martin Luther was no timid writer. He denounced the corruptions he had noted in the existing ordinances of the church with no uncertain note. He exposed the abuses of pardons, pilgrimages, and indulgences in language so scathing that it set on fire the hearts of his readers. It seemed to show beyond dispute that in the prevailing corruption, which had gradually sapped so much of the true life and light from the Church Catholic, money was the ruling power. Money could purchase masses to win souls from purgatory; money could buy indulgences for sins committed; money could even place unfit men of loose life in high ecclesiastical places. Money was what the great ones of the church sought-money, not holiness, not righteousness, not purity.

This was the teaching of Martin Luther; and many of those who read had no means of knowing wherein he went too far, wherein he did injustice to the leaven of righteousness still at work in the midst of so much corruption, or to the holy lives of hundreds and thousands of those he unsparingly condemned, who deplored the corruption which prevailed only less earnestly than he did himself. It was small wonder, then, that those in authority in this and other lands sought by every means in their power to put down the circulation of books which might have such mischievous results. And as one of Martin Luther's main

arguments was that if men only read and studied the Scriptures for themselves in their own mother tongue, whatever that tongue might be, they would have power to judge for themselves how far the practice of the church differed from apostolic precept and from the teachings of Christ, it was thought equally advisable to keep out of the hands of the people the translated Scriptures, which might produce such heterodox changes in their minds; and all efforts were made in many quarters to stamp out the spreading flames of heresy in the land.

Above all things, it was hoped that the leaven of these new and dangerous opinions would not penetrate to the twin seats of learning, the sister universities of Oxford and Cambridge.

Cardinal Wolsey had of late years been busy and enthusiastic over his munificent gift of a new and larger college to Oxford than any it had possessed before. To be sure, he did not find all the funds for it out of his private purse. He swept away the small priory of St. Frideswyde, finding homes for the prior and few monks, and confiscating the revenues to his scheme; and other small religious communities were treated in like manner, in order to contribute to the expenses of the great undertaking. Now a fair building stood upon the ancient site of the priory; and two years before, the first canons of Cardinal College (as Christ Church used to be called) were brought thither, and established in their new and most commodious quarters. And amongst the first of these so-called Canons or Senior Fellows of the Foundation was Master John Clarke, a Master of Arts at Cambridge, who

was also a student of divinity, and qualifying for the priesthood. Wolsey had made a selection of eight Cambridge students, of good repute for both learning and good conduct, and had brought them to Oxford to number amongst his senior fellows or canons; and so it had come about that Clarke and several intimate associates of his had been translated from Cambridge to Oxford, and were receiving the allowance and benefits which accrued to all who were elected to the fellowships of Cardinal College.

But though Wolsey had made all due inquiries as to the scholarship and purity of life and conduct of those graduates selected for the honour done them, he had shown himself somewhat careless perhaps in the matter of their orthodoxy, or else he had taken it too much for granted. For so it was that of the eight Cambridge men thus removed to Oxford, six were distinctly "tainted" by the new opinions so fast gaining ground in the country, and though still deeply attached to the Holy Catholic Church, were beginning to revolt against many of the abuses of the Papacy which had grown up within that church, and were doing much to weaken her authority and bring her into disrepute with thinking laymen-if not, indeed, with her own more independent-minded priests.

John Clarke was a leading spirit amongst his fellows at Cardinal College, as he had been at Cambridge amongst the graduates there. It was not that he sought popularity, or made efforts to sway the minds of those about him, but there was something in the personality of the man which seemed magnetic

in its properties; and as a Regent Master in Arts, his lectures had attracted large numbers of students, and whenever he had disputed in the schools, even as quite a young man, there had always been an eager crowd to listen to him.

Last summer an unwonted outbreak of sickness in Oxford had driven many students away from the city to adjacent localities, where they had pursued their studies as best they might; and at Poghley, where some scholars had been staying, John Clarke had both preached and held lectures which attracted much attention, and aroused considerable excitement and speculation.

Dr. Langton had taken his two daughters to Poghley to be out of the area of infection, and there the family had bettered their previous slight acquaintance with Clarke and some of his friends. They had Anthony Dalaber and Hugh Fitzjames in the same house where they were lodging; and Clarke would come and go at will, therein growing in intimacy with the learned physician, who delighted in the deep scholarship and the original habit of thought which distinguished the young man.

"If he live," he once said to his daughters, after a long evening, in which the two had sat discoursing of men and books and the topics of the day-"if he live, John Clarke will make a mark in the university, if not in the world. I have seldom met a finer intellect, seldom a man of such singleness of mind and purity of spirit. Small wonder that students flock to his lectures and desire to be taught of him. Heaven protect him from the perils which too often threaten those who think too much for themselves, and who

overleap the barriers by which some would fence our souls about. There are dangers as well as prizes for those about whom the world speaks aloud."

Now the students had returned to Oxford, the sickness had abated, and Dr. Langton had brought his daughters back to their beloved home. But the visits of John Clarke still continued to be frequent. It was but a short walk through the meadows from Cardinal College to the Bridge House. On many a pleasant evening, his work being done, the young master would sally forth to see his friends; and one pair of soft eyes had learned to glow and sparkle at sight of him, as his tall, slight figure in its dark gown was to be seen approaching. Magdalen Langton, at least, never wearied of any discussion which might take place in her presence, if John Clarke were one of the disputants.

And, indeed, the beautiful sisters were themselves able to follow, if not to take part in, most of the learned disquisitions which took place at their home. Their father had educated them with the greatest care, consoling himself for the early loss of his wife and the lack of sons by superintending the education of his twin daughters, and instructing them not only in such elementary matters as reading and writing (often thought more than sufficient for a woman's whole stock in trade of learning), but in the higher branches of knowledge—in grammar, mathematics, and astronomy, as well as in the Latin and French languages, and in that favourite study of his, the Greek language, which had fallen so long into disrepute in Oxford, and had only

been revived with some difficulty and no small opposition a few years previously.

But just latterly the talk at the Bridge House had concerned itself less with learned matters of Greek and Roman lore, or the problems of the heavenly bodies, than with those more personal and burning questions of the day, which had set so many thinking men to work to inquire of their own consciences how far they could approve the action of church and state in refusing to allow men to think and read for themselves, where their own salvation (as many argued) was at stake.

It was not the first time that a little group of earnest thinkers had been gathered together at Dr. Langton's house. The physician was a person held in high esteem in Oxford. He took no open part now in her counsels, he gave no lectures; he lived the life of a recluse, highly esteemed and respected. He would have been a bold man who would have spoken ill of him or his household, and therefore it seemed to him that he could very well afford to take the risk of receiving young men here, who desired to speak freely amongst themselves and one another in places not so liable to be dominated by listening ears as the rooms of the colleges and halls whence they came.

Dr. Langton himself, being a man of liberal views and sound piety, would very gladly have welcomed some reforms within the church, which he, in common with all the early Reformers, loved and venerated far more than modern-day Protestants fully understand. They could not bear the thought that their Holy

Mother was to be despoiled, and the Body of Christ rent in pieces amongst them. No; their earnest and ardent wish was that this purging of abuses, this much-needed reformation, should come from within, should be carried out by her own priests, headed up, if possible, by the Pope himself. Such was the dream of many and many a devout and earnest man at this time; and John Clarke's voice always softened with a tender reverence as he spoke of the Holy Catholic Church.

So now his eyes lighted with a quick, responsive fire, as he turned them upon his host.

"That is just what I am ever striving to maintain-that it is not the church which is in fault, but those who use her name to enforce edicts which she knows nothing of. 'Search the scriptures, for in them ye have life,' spoke our Lord. 'Blessed is he that readeth the words of the prophecy of this book,' wrote St. John in the latter days. All men know that the Word of God is a lamp to the feet and a light to the path. How shall we walk without that light to guide us?"

"The church gives us the light," spoke Hugh Fitzjames softly. Clarke turned upon him with a brilliant smile.

"She does, she does. She provides in her services that we shall be enlightened by that light, that we shall be instructed and fed. We have little or nothing to complain of in that respect. But there are others-hundreds and thousands-who cannot share our privileges, who do not understand the words they hear when they are able to come to public worship. What is to be done for such?"

Are their needs sufficiently considered? Who feeds those sheep and lambs who have gone astray, or who are not able to approach to the shepherd daily to be fed?"

"Many of such could not read the Scriptures, even were they placed in their hands," remarked Fitzjames.

"True; and many might read them with blinded eyes, and interpret them in ignorant fashion, and so the truth might become perverted. Those are dangers which the church has seen, and has striven against. I will not say that the danger may not be great. Holy things are sometimes defiled by becoming too common. But has the peril become so great that men are forced to use such methods as those which London is shortly to witness?"

There was a glow in Clarke's eyes which the gathering gloom could not hide. Magdalen seemed about to speak, but Dalaber was before her.

"They say that the Tyndale translations are full of glaring errors, and errors which feed the heresies of the Lollards, and are directed against the Holy Church."

"That charge is not wholly without foundation," answered Clarke at once, who as a scholar of the Greek language was well qualified to give an opinion on that point. "And deeply do I grieve that such things should be, for the errors cannot all have been through accident or ignorance, but must have been inserted with a purpose; and I hold that no man is guiltless who dares to tamper with the Word of God, even though he think he may be doing God service thereby. The Holy Spirit who inspired the sacred

writers may be trusted so to direct men's hearts and spirits that they may read aright what He has written; and it is folly and presumption to think that man may improve upon the Word of God."

"But there are errors in all versions of the Scriptures, are there not-in all translations from the original tongue?"

Magdalen was now the speaker, and she looked earnestly at Clarke, as though his words were words of the deepest wisdom, from which there was no appeal.

"Errors in all-yes; but our Latin version is marvellously true to the original, and when Wycliffe translated into English he was far more correct than Tyndale has been. But it is the Tyndale Testaments which have had so wide a sale of late in this country, and which have set London in commotion-these and the writings of Martin Luther, which the men from the Stillyard have brought up the river in great quantities. But be the errors never so great, I call it a shameful and a sinful thing, one that the Holy Church of olden days would never have sanctioned-that the Word of God should be publicly burnt, as an unholy and polluted thing, in presence of the highest ecclesiastics of the land. In truth, I hold it a crime and a sin. I would that such a scene might even now be averted."

"I should well like to see it!" spoke Dalaber, with that eager impetuosity which characterized his movements. "I hate the thing myself, yet I would fain see it, too. It would be something to remember, something to speak of in future days, when,

perchance, the folly of it will be made manifest.

"Clarke, let us to London tomorrow! Easter is nigh at hand, and your lectures have ceased for the present. Come with me, and let us see this sight, and bring back word to our friends here how they regard this matter in London. What do you say?"

Clarke's face was grave and thoughtful.

"I have some thoughts of visiting London myself during the next week, but I had not thought to go to see the burning of books at Paul's Cross."

"But that is what I wish to see!" cried Dalaber. "So, whether you accompany me thither or not, at least let us travel to London together, and quickly. It will be a thing to remember in days to come; for verily I believe that the church will awaken soon, and like a giant refreshed with wine will show what is in her, and will gather her children about her as a hen gathers her chickens under her wings, and will feed them, and care for them, and be as she has been before to them, and that we shall see an end of the darkness and indifference which has fallen like a pall upon this land."

Clarke rose with a smile, for the twilight was falling, and he spoke his farewells to one after another of the doctor's family.

Magdalen's eyes looked longest into his, as his dwelt with a dreamy softness upon her face.

"Are you really going to London? Will it be safe?"

"As safe as Oxford, sweet mistress. I apprehend no peril either there or here. But at least I am a stranger there, whilst here any

man who asks may know the thing I believe. I am not afraid or ashamed to speak the truth I hold."

Clarke and Dalaber went out together, and Magdalen turned anxiously upon her father.

"What did he mean?"

Dr. Langton smiled, but he also sighed a little.

"Do not be fearful, my children; we know of no peril in the present. But we may not hide our faces from the fact that in past days this peril has threatened those who dare to speak and think the thing they hold to be truth, when that opinion is not shared by those in high places. Yet let us be thankful in that, for the present time, no peril threatens either John Clarke and his friends or Anthony Dalaber, their pupil."

Chapter II: "Christian Brothers."

"Freda, I am going to London with Master Clarke. We start at noon today. We travel by road and river, and hope to accomplish our journey in three days. You will wish me Godspeed ere I go?"

Freda, her hands full of golden king cups, the sunshine of the morning lighting her fair face and deep, dark eyes, turned at the sound of the voice beside her, and met the burning glance of Anthony Dalaber.

"You go to see the burning of the books!" she said, speaking under her breath. "O Anthony, how canst thou? – the Word of God!"

"Better they should burn the insentient books than the men who preach the living Word!" spoke Anthony, suddenly putting out his hands and clasping hers. "Freda, there have been men burnt alive before this for speaking such words as we in Oxford whisper amongst ourselves. If such a fate should befall some of us here—should befall me—wouldst thou grieve for me?"

Her eyes dilated as she gazed at him.

"What are you saying?" she asked slowly. "Is there peril in this journey? Is there peril menacing you here in Oxford?"

"There is ever peril where men dare to think for themselves and to read forbidden books."

"Master Clarke says they are not forbidden of God or of His Holy Church."

"That may be so; but they are forbidden by men who speak in the name and power of the church," answered Anthony, "and with them lies the issue of life and death for so many. Freda, what would you do in my place? Would you forsake these paths which lead to peril, or would you pursue them fearlessly to the end—even, if need be, unto death?"

A sudden, intense light leaped into her eyes. She put forth her hand, which she had withdrawn gently from his ardent clasp, and laid it lightly upon his shoulder.

"It is not what I would do, what I would say, Anthony. The charge is given by the Spirit of God: 'Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee the crown of life.'"

He took her hand and kissed it passionately.

"That crown will I win, my Freda," he cried, "for I will be faithful unto death!"

There was a curious mingling of tenderness and admiration in the glance she bent upon him. He was a goodly youth to look at, tall and strongly knit in figure, upright as a young spruce fir, with a keen, dark-skinned face, square in outline and with a peculiar mobility of expression. The eyes were black and sparkling, and the thick, short, curling hair was sombre as the raven's wing. There was no lack of intellect in the face, but the chief characteristic was its eager intensity of ever-changing expression.

The girl facing him was as straight and almost as tall as he, but slender and graceful as a young deer. Her hood had fallen

back from her chestnut locks, which glistened in the sunshine like burnished copper. Her eyes were of a curious tawny tint, not unlike the colour of her hair, and her complexion was delicately fair, just tinged with rose colour at the cheeks, but of a creamy pallor elsewhere. Her features were delicate and regular, and she, too, was remarkable for the look of intellect in the broad brow and deep, steadfast eyes.

Their expression at this moment, as they were fixed upon Dalaber, was one which thrilled him to his heart's core.

He had been filled with a passion of self renunciation inspired by her words. But as he gazed into her eyes, something more personal, more human, sprang up within him. He put his lips once more to the hand he held, and his voice shook as he said:

"Freda, I love thee! I love only thee!"

She did not answer. She did not withdraw her hand. Perhaps she had known this thing before Dalaber spoke the words. She stood before him, looking very earnestly and tenderly into his eyes. It was scarcely the look of a young maiden who is being wooed by the man she loves; and yet there was love in that unfaltering glance, and his heart leapt up as he saw it.

"I ask nothing yet, Freda!" he cried-"at least, I ask only the right to love thee! Let me continue to be thy friend, thy companion, as before. Let me see thee and speak with thee as of old. Be thou my star and my guardian angel. I ask no more. I am but a poor student yet, but I will be more one day. Others have said so beside myself. I will rise to fame and fortune. And thou-

if thou dost love me, even a little-thou wilt wait, and see what I can do and dare for thy sweet sake!"

She smiled her full, gracious smile at him, and again laid a hand upon his shoulder.

"Be ever true to thine own noblest self, Anthony Dalaber," she answered, in her rich, musical tones-"be true to thy conscience and to thy friends. Be steadfast and true; and that not for my sake, but for His in whose holy name we are called, and to whose service we are bound. Be faithful, be true; and whether for life or for death, thy reward will be assured."

He gazed at her with a glow of rapture in his eyes.

"The reward of thy love?" he whispered breathlessly.

"That may well be," she answered; "but I was not thinking of that. Fix thine eyes rather on that crown of life which shall be given unto those who overcome."

"I will think of both," he answered, in an access of enthusiasm, "for God is our Father; He loves us. I fear not to take all good at His hand. Love to Him-love to thee-faithfulness to both. What more can heart of man desire than such an object to strive after?"

His earnestness could not be mistaken. She caught the reflex of his passionate devotion, and thrilled a little beneath his touch. He felt it in a moment, and caught her hands again.

"Give me a word of hope!" he cried. "Ah, my beloved, wilt thou not say that some day thou wilt love me?"

Freda was not one who would dally and trifle with her heart.

"In sooth, methinks I love thee now, Anthony. Nay, hear me

a moment longer. I love thee with a strong and sisterly love; but I would know mine own heart better ere I promise more. We will be content with this knowledge for the nonce. I shall watch thee, Anthony; I shall hear of thee; I shall know what thou hast power to do and dare. But now let us say farewell, for I must carry my flowers within doors; and thou-it is time thou wert away. Thou hast a long journey to prepare for."

And so, with one kiss, gravely given and taken, the lovers parted, and Anthony went on his way as one who treads on air.

Some three days later, with eager eyes and bated breath, Anthony Dalaber was following his friend John Clarke up the landing stairs of a certain wharf in the city of London, and gazing earnestly about him at the narrow, dark street in which he found himself, where the shades of night seemed already to have fallen.

He knew whither they were bound-to the house of a priest, Thomas Garret by name, well known to Clarke, and known by name to Dalaber, too. He was one of the most active of the little band now engaged in the perilous task of receiving and distributing the translated Scriptures and the pamphlets issued by Martin Luther and other reformers. He was an ex-fellow of Magdalen College, now a curate of Allhallows, near Cheapside. Dalaber had often had a wish to see this man, having heard of him in many quarters.

And now they stood knocking at the door of his house, which opened only a few hundred paces from the riverside.

They had to wait some little time; but Clarke was not

impatience, though he gave a peculiar knock more than once upon the door. Presently it was opened a very little way, and a voice asked:

"Who are you, and what is your errand?"

"Crede et manducasti ¹," spoke Clarke, in a low voice; and at once the door was opened wider.

He stepped within, and Dalaber followed him. They found themselves in a very narrow entry hall, and could only see in the gloom that a serving man stood before them.

"Tell your master that John Clarke from Oxford has come to lodge with him for a few nights, if he can give him house room."

The man vanished, but almost immediately reappeared and beckoned to them to follow. He took them down some steps, lighting the way by a lantern; and after they had descended some score they reached a door, which he pushed open, revealing a roomy, cellar-like vault, in which some half-dozen men were busily employed; but so scanty was the illumination that Dalaber could not for the moment see upon what task they were bent.

One figure detached itself from the rest and came forward. Dalaber found himself gazing at a small, wiry-looking man in the frock of a priest, whose head was slightly bald in addition to the tonsure, and whose face was thin and lined, as though with vigils and fasting and prayer. It was the face of an ascetic—thin featured and thin lipped, pale almost to cadaverousness, but lighted as

¹ "Believe, and thou hast eaten." Words often used by the early "heretics," who were debarred from partaking of the feast of Holy Communion.

though with a fire from within.

The extraordinary power of the shining eyes riveted Dalaber's gaze from the first moment. Their glance was turned full upon him after the priest had given greeting to Clarke, and the thin, resonant voice asked quickly:

"Whom have you brought? Is he to be trusted?"

"To the death!" answered Dalaber, speaking for himself. "Try me, and you shall see."

"It is my young friend, Anthony Dalaber," said Clarke, his hand upon the youth's shoulder. "He is very earnest in the study of the Scriptures and in the desire for a better state of things within the church. Methinks he is stanch and true, else would I not have brought him. As we journeyed hither I told him of the work of the Association of Christian Brothers, and he would fain share their toil and peril."

"Is that so?" asked the priest, again shooting a fiery glance towards the young student. "Canst thou drink of the cup we may be called upon to drink, and share the fiery baptism with which we may be baptized withal?"

And Dalaber, his quick enthusiasm kindling to the spark which seemed to leap towards him from the other, answered without a moment's pause of hesitation, "I can."

Then Garret stretched forth his hand and took that of Dalaber in the clasp of brotherhood, and Anthony felt the magnetic thrill tingling through his whole frame.

"God be with you, my son, and keep you steadfast," said he;

and the other men, who had left their tasks and come forward to greet Clarke and his companion, murmured a deep "amen."

Then all turned to the work in hand; and Dalaber saw that they were engaged in hiding beneath the flagstones of the cellar, which had carefully been removed for the purpose, a number of bales and packets, whose contents could easily be guessed at. The earth from beneath the stones had been hollowed out so as to receive these packets in a number of deep cavities; and when the flags were carefully replaced, and a little dirt and dust carefully sifted over the floor, it would require a practised eye to discern the hiding place. And hitherto it had passed undetected.

"We are hiding a number of books belonging to various brethren and confederates," spoke Garret, as the task went on. "By a providential warning our brother, Dr. Barnes, received timely notice of visitation at his house, and the books were hurriedly carried hither in the dead of night. You have heard, perhaps, of his arrest?"

"No," answered Clarke; "we have but just arrived, and the last fifteen miles we came by water in a wherry. The man knew naught of the talk of the town, save that a great burning of books is to take place on the morrow at Paul's Cross."

"Ay," spoke Garret, with a grim compression of the lips, "a mighty burning of forbidden books will take place there. But mark, my friends; had those books yonder been found in Dr. Barnes's house, not books alone but the man himself would have been burnt upon the morrow. The cardinal plainly told him so;

and as it is, he has signed a paper which they call a recantation of heresy. Let us not judge him harshly. His friends pleaded, and his foes threatened, and the flesh shrinks from the fiery trial. He will read this confession or recantation tomorrow at St. Paul's, and help to fling the precious books upon the devouring flames.

"Ah me! Let us not judge him! Judge nothing before the time, till the Lord come. Oh, would that Ho would come Himself, to bring to an end this dark night of persecution and terror, and take the kingdom and the power and reign!"

And again the voices of the brethren answered, "Amen!"

"Are there any others who take part in this strange pageant on the morrow?" asked Clarke, after a brief pause.

"Yes; five honest fellows from the Stillyard, who have been detected in bringing books up the river and landing them. They are condemned to appear tomorrow, and to assist in the holocaust with their own hands. Being humbler men, they are dealt with more lightly; and men all agree in this, that the cardinal would rather persuade men to escape, and make the way easy for them to abjure what he calls their errors, than drag them to the stake. But he will not shrink from that last step, if he think the welfare of the church demands it; and there are others who bear a yet more cruel hatred towards all who would be free from the shackles of falsehood and superstition. And much power belongs to them. God alone knows what is coming upon this realm."

"But God does know; let that be enough!" spoke Clarke, with the quick lighting of his clear blue eyes which gave him such

power over his hearers.

He and Garret were men of markedly contrasted types—the one all fire, restlessness, energy; the other calm, contemplative, intensely spiritual. Both were alike filled with a deep faith, a deep zeal; one the man of action, the other the man of meditation and devotion—yet deeply attached one to the other, as could be seen by the way they looked and spoke.

"Ay, verily, let that be enough; let us remember that the day must come that He who will come shall come, and shall not tarry. Let Him judge; let Him make inquisition for blood. Let our care be that we who are called and vowed to His service are found not called alone, but chosen and found faithful."

The brethren, having finished their work, and replaced the flagstones, spoke farewell, and departed one by one; but Clarke and Dalaber remained with their host, and one man besides, whose face was known to Anthony, and who also came from Oxford.

He was another of the cardinal's canons who had come from Cambridge with Clarke, and his name was Henry Sumner. Evidently he too was of the band of Christian Brothers; and in the long and earnest talk which lasted far into the night, and to which Dalaber listened with the keenest interest, he bore a share, although the chief speaker was Garret, upon whose lips Dalaber hung with wrapt attention, whilst Clarke's words fell softly like distilled dew, calming the heart, and uplifting the spirit into heavenly regions of light and peace.

Anthony Dalaber was the only one in that house who desired to behold the spectacle upon the morrow. Garret's brow was dark, and he spoke of passing the hours in fasting and prayer. Clarke had friends he wished to visit in the city; but Dalaber's curiosity burnt within him, and none dissuaded him from his plan. Indeed, it was thought a pious act by the authorities to witness such a scene, and might have been in one way advantageous to the young Oxford graduate to be seen at such an exhibition, if any chanced to observe him there. Not that Dalaber thought of this himself, but the elder men did; and though they would not have sought to win favour by such an act themselves, they were not sorry for a young confederate to take advantage of the possibility of notice from those in authority. It was wonderful how Argus-eyed and how long of arm were the emissaries of the orthodox party in the church in those times.

It seemed to Anthony himself as though all London were astir, and moving towards old St. Paul's, as he threaded the narrow streets towards the stately edifice. Although it wanted half an hour or more to the time when the ceremony should commence—eight o'clock in the morning the open place around the cathedral was packed when Dalaber reached it, and only by the good nature of a citizen, who took him into his house and let him view the scene from a window, was he able to see what passed.

A high platform was erected by the great western doors of "Paul's Walk" (some authorities say just within, and some just without the building), where the cardinal's throne, draped with

purple, had been set, as well as seats for a great concourse of ecclesiastics beside. Opposite this platform was another and far humbler erection, evidently for the penitents; whilst over the north door, the Rood of the Northern, as it was called, a great gilt crucifix had been set up; and within the rails surrounding it burnt a fire, round which fagots were set, and great baskets containing the forbidden books, which were presently to be solemnly burnt.

As the great clock boomed out the hour of eight, two processions simultaneously approached the platform. One swept out through the cathedral doors in all the pomp of power and majesty, the cardinal in scarlet robes, blazing with gems and gold, attended by innumerable dignitaries—abbots and priors, bishops, deans, doctors, and lesser clergy, shining in damask and satin, a right goodly company. For a while all eyes were so fixed upon this glittering array that there was scarce time to note the humble six, in their penitential robes, bare-footed, and carrying tapers, who appeared, attended by their jailers from the Fleet Prison, and were set upon the opposite platform, full in view of all.

It was not Cardinal Wolsey, but Fisher, Bishop of Rochester, who delivered to them a fiery oration, descanting to them on the enormity of their offences, and calling upon them to abjure their hateful heresy. His ringing voice carried all over the open space, though Anthony Dalaber could only catch an occasional phrase here and there, which perhaps was as well. But the reply, if reply there were, from the penitents was quite inaudible, though Dr. Barnes was believed to have spoken a solemn recantation in the

name of the six, and to declare that they only met the due reward of their sins.

Then came the final ceremony, the pacing round and round the fire, the casting into the flames, first the fagots, and then the books put ready for the burning. The people held their breath whilst this was being done; but had observant eyes been fixed upon many of the faces of the crowd, they would have seen looks of fierce hatred directed towards the spot where the powerful cardinal sat aloft, whilst eager hands seemed oftentimes to be stretched out as though to clutch at the precious books, now being ruthlessly consigned to the flames.

At last Anthony Dalaber could stand it no longer. Hastily thanking the honest citizen for the "goodly show" he had permitted him to witness, he slipped down into the street, and pushed his way through the throng anywhere, out of sight of the odious pageant of intolerance and bigotry which he had been witnessing.

"Had it been Luther's books only, I could have stood it. He is a man, and though a champion for truth, he may err, he does err. And he speaks wild words which he contradicts himself. But the Word of God! Oh, that is too much! To take it out of the hands of the poor and needy, who hunger to be fed, and to cast it to be burnt like the dung of the earth! Surely God will look down! Surely He will punish! Oh, if I had wanted argument and reason for the step I will take in the future, yonder spectacle would have been enough!"

For many hours he wandered through the streets and lanes of the city, so intent on his own thoughts that he scarce noted the buildings and fine sights he passed by. But his feet brought him back to the spot of the morning's pageant, and towards evening he found himself looking upon the ashes of what had been the books brought with so much risk by the Hanse merchants and the Stillyard men, and so eagerly desired by the poorer people of the city.

All the platforms had been removed. The crucifix no longer glittered overhead, the doors of the cathedral were shut, and none of the pomp of the morning could be seen here now. But several humble persons were raking amid the ashes where the books had been burnt, as though to see whether some poor fragments might not have been left unconsumed; and when they failed to find even this-for others had been before them, and the task of burning had probably been well accomplished-they would put a handful of ashes into some small receptacle, and slip it cautiously into pocket or pouch.

One man, seeing Dalaber's gaze fixed upon him, went up to him almost defiantly and said:

"Are you spying upon us poor citizens, to whom is denied aught but the ashes of the bread of life?"

Dalaber looked him full in the face, and spoke the words he had heard from Clarke's lips the previous evening:

"Crede et manducasti."

Instantly the man's face changed. A light sprang into his eyes.

He looked round him cautiously, and said in a whisper:

"You are one of us!"

There was scarce a moment's pause before Dalaber replied:

"I am one of you-in heart and purpose, at least, if not in actual fact."

He paced home through the streets in a tempest of conflicting emotions. But his mind was made up. Come what might-peril, suffering, or death-he had put his hand to the plough. He would not look back.

"Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee the crown of life."

He seemed to walk to the accompaniment of these words; and when he reached Garret's house he went straight to the master, told his story, and knelt suddenly down before him.

"Bless me, even me also, O my father!" he exclaimed, in a burst of emotion to which his temperament made him subject, "for I would now be admitted as member of the Association of Christian Brothers."

Chapter III: A Neophyte

"And the soul of Jonathan was knit to the soul of David, and he loved him as his own soul."

These words often came into the mind of the priest, Thomas Garret, during the three days which Anthony Dalaber spent at his house, hard by the rushing river, in the city of London.

There were ten years in age between them. Dalaber was a youth who had seen little of life beyond what he had learned in Oxford, whereas Garret had already passed through strange and perilous experiences. The one had so far lived amongst books, and with youthful companions of his own standing; the other had been a pioneer in one of the most dangerous movements of the day, and had seen what such courses might well lead him to. Storm and stress had been the portion of the one, a pleasant life of study and pleasure that of the other. It was only during the past six months that association with Clarke and some others of his way of thinking had aroused in Dalaber's mind a sense of restless discontent with existing ordinances, and a longing after purer, clearer light, together with a distaste and oftentimes a disgust at what he saw of corruption and simony amongst those who should have been the salt of the earth.

Had it not been for the talks he had heard of late, in Dr. Langton's house, he might have passed through his divinity studies at Oxford as his brother had done before him, content to

drift with the stream, ignorant of the undercurrents which were already disturbing its apparently tranquil surface, and ready in due course to be consecrated to his office, and to take some benefice if he could get it, and live and die as the average priest of those times did, without troubling himself over the vexed questions of papal encroachment and traffic in pardons and indulgences which were setting Germany in a flame.

But he had been first aroused by seeing the light in Freda's eyes as these questions had been discussed in the hearing of her and her sister. From the first moment of his presentation to Dr. Langton's family Dalaber had been strongly attracted by the beautiful sisters, and especially by Freda, whose quick, responsive eagerness and keen insight and discrimination made a deep impression upon him. The soundness of her learning amazed him at the outset; for her father would turn to her to verify some reference from his costly manuscripts or learned tomes, and he soon saw that Latin and Greek were to her as her mother tongue.

When she did join in the conversation respecting the interpretation or translation of the Holy Scriptures, he had quickly noted that her scholarship was far deeper than his own. He had been moved to a vivid admiration at first, and then to something that was more than admiration. And the birth and growth of his spiritual life he traced directly to those impulses which had been aroused within him as he had heard Freda Langton speak and argue and ask questions.

That was how it had started; but it was Clarke's teaching and preaching which had completed the change in him from the careless to the earnest student of theology. Clarke's spirituality and purity of life, his singleness of aim, his earnest striving after a standard of holiness seldom to be found even amongst those who professed to practise the higher life, aroused the deep admiration of the impulsive and warm-hearted Dalaber. He sought his rooms, he loved to hear his discourses, he called himself his pupil and his son, and was the most regular and enthusiastic attender of his lectures and disputations.

And now he had taken a new and forward step. Suddenly he seemed to have been launched upon a tide with which hitherto he had only dallied and played. He was pushing out his bark into deeper waters, and already felt as though the cables binding him to the shores of safety and ease were completely parted.

It was in part due to the magnetic personality of Garret that this thing had come to pass. When Dalaber left Oxford it was with no idea that it would be a crisis in his life. He wished, out of curiosity, to be present at the strange ceremony to be enacted in St. Paul's Churchyard; and the knowledge that Clarke was going to London for a week on some private business gave the finishing touch to his resolution.

But it was not until he sat with Thomas Garret in his dark lodgings, hearing the rush of the river beneath him, looking into the fiery eyes of the priest, and hearing the fiery words which fell from his lips, that Dalaber thoroughly understood to what he

had pledged himself when first he had uttered the fateful words, "I will be a member of the Association of Christian Brothers."

True, Clarke had, on their way to town, spoken to him of a little community, pledged to seek to distribute the life-giving Word of God to those who were hungering for it, and to help each in his measure to let the light, now shrouded beneath a mass of observances which had lost their original meaning to the unlettered people, shine out in its primitive brilliance and purity; but Dalaber had only partially understood the significance of all this.

Clarke was the man of thought and devotion. His words uplifted the hearts of his hearers into heavenly places, and seemed to create a new and quickened spirituality within them. Garret was the man of action. He was the true son of Luther. He loved to attack, to upheave, to overthrow. Where Clarke spoke gently and lovingly of the church, as their holy mother, whom they must love and cherish, and seek to plead with as sons, that she might cleanse herself from the defilement into which she had fallen, Garret attacked her as the harlot, the false bride, the scarlet woman seated upon the scarlet beast, and called down upon her and it alike the vials of the wrath of Almighty God.

And the soul of Dalaber was stirred within him as he listened to story after story, all illustrative of the corruption which had crept within the fold of the church, and which was making even holy things abhorrent to the hearts of men. He listened, and his heart was hot as he heard; he caught the fire of Garret's

enthusiasm, and would then and there have cast adrift from his former life, thrown over Oxford and his studies there-and flung himself heart and soul into the movement now at work in the great, throbbing city, where, for the first time, he found himself.

But when he spoke words such as these Garret smiled and shook his head, though his eyes lighted with pleasure.

"Nay, my son; be not so hot and hasty. Seest thou not that in this place our work for the time being is well-nigh stopped?"

"Not for long," he added quickly, whilst the spark flew from his eyes-"not for long, mind you, ye proud prelates and cardinal. The fire you have lighted shall blaze in a fashion ye think not of. The Word of God is a consuming fire. The sword of the Spirit, the Word of God, pierces the heart and reins of man; and that sword hath been wrested from the scabbard in which it has rusted so long, and the shining of its fiery blade shall soon be seen of all men.

"No," added the priest, after a moment's pause to recover himself and take up the thread of his discourse; "what was done at Paul's Cross yesterday was but a check upon our work. The last convoy of books has been burnt-all, save the few which we were able to save and to bide beneath the cellar floor. The people have been cowed for a moment, but it will not last. As soon seek to quench a fire by pouring wax and oil upon it!"

"You will get more books, then? The work will not cease?"

"It will not cease. More books will come. Our brave Stillyard men will not long be daunted. But we must act with care. For a

time we must remain quiet. We may not be reckless with the holy books, which cost much in money and in blood-or may do, if we are rash or careless. But nothing now can stop their entrance into a land where men begin to desire earnestly to read them for themselves. Not all, mind you. It is strange how careless and apathetic are the gentry of the land-they that one would have thought to be most eager, most forward. They stand aloof; and the richer of the trades' guilds will have little to say to us. But amongst the poor and unlettered do we find the light working; and in them are our chiefest allies, our most earnest disciples."

"Yet we have many at Oxford, learned men and scholars, who would gladly welcome changes and reforms in the church; and there are many amongst the students eager after knowledge, and who long to peruse the writings of Luther and Melancthon, and see these new versions of the Scriptures."

"Ay, I know it. I was of Oxford myself. It is but a few years that I left my lodging in Magdalen College. I love the place yet. The leaven was working then. I know that it has worked more and more. Our good friends Clarke and Sumner have told as much. Is not your presence here a proof of it? Oh, there will be a work-a mighty work-to do in Oxford yet; and you shall be one of those who shall be foremost in it."

"I?" cried Dalaber, and his eyes glowed with the intensity of his enthusiasm. "Would that I could think it!"

"It shall be so," answered Garret. "I read it in your face, I hear it in your voice. The thought of peril and disgrace would not

daunt you. You would be faithful-even unto death. Is it not so?"

"I would! – I will!" cried Dalaber, stretching out his hand and grasping that of Garret. "Only tell me wherein I can serve, and I will not fail you."

"I cannot tell you yet, save in general terms; but the day will come when you shall know. Oxford must have books. There will soon be no doubt as to that. And when we have books to scatter and distribute there, we want trusty men to receive and hide them, and sell or give them with secrecy and dispatch. It is a task of no small peril. Thou must understand that well, my son. It may bring thee into sore straits-even to a fiery death. Thou must count the cost ere thou dost pass thy word."

"I care nothing for the cost!" cried Dalaber, throwing back his head. "What other men have done and dared I will do and dare. I will be faithful-faithful unto death."

"I shall remember," answered Garret, with a smile upon his thin ascetic face-"I shall remember; and the day will come-a day not far distant, as I hope-when I shall come to thee and remind thee of this promise."

"I shall not have forgotten," spoke Dalaber, holding out his hand; "whenever the Brotherhood calls upon me it will find me ready."

There was silence for a while, and then Dalaber looked up and asked:

"What of Clarke, and Sumner, and others there? Will they not help also in the good work?"

"Yes; but in a different fashion," answered Garret. "It is not given to all to serve alike. Those men who dwell within college walls, overlooked by dean and warden, waited on by servants in college livery, bound by certain oaths, and hemmed about by many restrictions, cannot act as those can do who, like yourself, are members of the university, but dwellers in small halls, and under no such restraints. Clarke has done great service, and will do more, by his teachings and preachings, which prepare the hearts of men to receive the good seed, and awaken yearnings after a deeper, purer, spiritual life than that which we see around us in those who should be the bright and shining lights of the day. That is their work, and right well do they perform their tasks. But to such as you belongs the other and arduous labour of receiving and distributing the forbidden books. When the time comes, wilt thou, Anthony Dalaber, be ready?"

"I will," spoke the youth in earnest tones; and it was plain that he spoke in all sincerity.

The position of students living in colleges and living in halls, as they were called, was, as Garret had said, altogether different. Graduates and undergraduates of the colleges which had sprung up were fenced about with rules and restrictions which have been modified rather than changed with the flight of time. But the hall of olden Oxford was merely a sort of lodging house, generally kept by a graduate or master, but not subject to any of the rules which were binding upon those students who entered upon one of the foundations. Indeed, the growth of colleges had been due

in great part to the desire on the part of far-seeing men and friends of order as well as learning to curb the absolute and undesirable freedom of the mass of students brought together at Oxford and Cambridge, and in the middle ages living almost without discipline or control, often indulging in open riots or acts of wholesale insubordination.

Anthony Dalaber was not at present a member of any college, nor even of one of the religious houses where students could lodge, and where they lived beneath a sort of lesser control. He and Hugh Fitzjames, both of them youths of limited means, shared a lodging in a house called St. Alban Hall, and were free to come and go as they pleased, none asking them wherefore or whither. He saw at once that what would not be possible to a canon of Cardinal College would be feasible enough to him and his friend, if Fitzjames should sympathize with him in the matter. And, so far, he believed his friend was with him, though without, perhaps, the same eager enthusiasm.

When the visit to Garret came to an end, and Anthony Dalaber said farewell to him at the water side, where a barge was to convey them some distance up the river, the priest held his hands long and earnestly, looking into his eyes with affectionate intensity, and at the last he kissed him upon both cheeks and said: "God be with thee, my young brother! May He keep thee firm and steadfast to the last, whatever may befall!"

"I am very sure He will," answered Dalaber fervently. "I am yours, and for the good cause, for life or death."

They parted then, and the voyage began; but little was spoken by the travellers so long as they remained in the barge. Clarke seemed to be thinking deeply, his eyes fixed earnestly upon Dalaber's face from time to time; whilst the latter sat gazing behind him at the city, sinking slowly away out of his sight, his eyes filled with the light of a great and zealous purpose.

They left the water side in the afternoon, and walked towards a certain village, and Clarke, turning towards his companion, said:

"I have promised to preach this evening in a certain house yonder. I trow there will be no peril to me or to those who hear me. But of that no man can be certain. What wilt thou do? Come with me, or walk onwards and let us meet on the morrow?"

Dalaber hesitated no single moment; Clarke's preaching was one of his keenest delights. And upon this evening he was moved beyond his wont as the young master spoke from his heart to his listeners, not striving to arouse their passions against tyranny or bigotry, but rather seeking to urge them to patience, to that brotherly love which endures all things and hopes all things, and turns to the Almighty Father in never-ceasing faith and joy, imploring His help to open the eyes of the blind, soften the hearts that are puffed up, and cleanse the church, which must be made pure and holy as the bride of Christ, for that heavenly marriage supper for which her spouse is waiting.

Nothing was spoken which the orthodox could well complain of; yet every listener knew that such a discourse would not have been preached by any man not "tainted" with what was then

called heresy. But the hearts of the hearers burnt within them as they listened; and when, after some further time spent in discussion and prayer, the preacher and his companion found themselves alone for the night in a comfortable bed chamber, Dalaber threw himself upon Clarke's neck in an outburst of fervid enthusiasm.

"Oh, let me be ever your son and scholar," he cried, "for with you are the words of life and light!"

Then the elder man looked at him with a great tenderness in his eyes, but his voice was full of gravity and warning.

"Dalaber," he said, "you desire you know not what. And I fear sometimes that you seek to take upon yourself more than you wot of—more than you are able. My preaching is sweet unto you now, for that no persecution is laid upon you. But the time will come of that I am well assured, and that period peradventure shortly—when, if ye continue to live godly therein, God will lay upon you the cross of persecution, to try whether you, as pure gold, can abide the fire."

"I know it! I am ready!" cried Dalaber, with the characteristic backward motion of his head. His face was like the face of a young eagle. He was quivering from head to foot.

Clarke looked at him again with his fatherly smile, but there was trouble also in his eyes.

"Be not over confident, my son; and seek not to take upon you more than you are able to bear."

Dalaber understood instantly to what Clarke was alluding.

"I trust I have not done so. But men will be wanted. I am a Christian Brother. I must not shrink. My word is passed. Not to you, my master, alone, but to Master Garret also."

"To whom I did make you known," spoke Clarke, with a very slight sigh. "My son, I would not speak one word to discourage your godly zeal; but bethink you what this may mean. You shall (it may be) be judged and called a heretic; you shall be abhorred of the world; your own friends and kinsfolk shall forsake you; you shall be cast into prison, and none shall dare to help you; you shall be accused before bishops, to your reproach and shame, to the great sorrow of all your friends and kindred. Then will ye wish ye had never known this doctrine; then (it may be) ye will curse Clarke, and wish you had never known him, because he hath brought you into all these troubles."

But Dalaber could bear that word no longer; he flung himself at the feet of his master, and the tears broke from his eyes.

"Nay, nay, speak not so, I beseech you; you cut me to the heart! I boast not of myself as being wiser or braver or more steadfast than other men; I only pray of you to try me. Send me not away. Let me be pupil, and scholar, and son. I cannot turn back, even if I would. My heart is in the good work. Let me follow in the path I have chosen. I have put my hand to the plough; how can I turn back?"

Clarke looked down upon the youth with a world of tender love in his eyes, and raising him up in his arms he kissed him, the tears standing on his own cheeks.

"The Lord God Almighty give you grace and steadfastness now and ever," he said in a deep voice, full of feeling, "and from henceforth and ever take me for your father in Christ, and I will take you for my son!"

So the compact was sealed between the two; and when on the morrow they took their way towards Oxford, the heart of Anthony Dalaber was joyful within him, for he felt as though he had set his foot upon the narrow path which leads to life everlasting, and he reeked little of the thorns and briars which might beset the way, confident that he would be given grace to overcome.

He was happier still when he was able to obtain the exclusive companionship of Freda Langton in the sunny garden of the Bridge House, and pour into her willing ears all the story of his visit and its wonderful consequences. To Anthony Dalaber some sympathetic confidante was almost a necessity of existence; and who so well able to understand him as the girl he loved with every fibre of his being, and who had almost promised him an answering love? There was no peril to her in knowing these things. The day for making rigorous inquisition in all directions had not yet come, and there was no danger to himself in entrusting his safety to one as true and stanch as this maiden.

Freda's sympathies from the outset had been with those independent thinkers, who were in increasing peril of being branded as heretics; and she listened with absorbing interest to the story of the hidden books, the little band of Christian

Brothers, the work going on beneath their auspices, and the check temporarily put upon it by the holocaust of books which Dalaber had witnessed at St. Paul's.

"And you saw it-you saw them burn the books! You saw the great cardinal sitting on his throne and watching! O Anthony, tell me, what was he like?"

"His face I could not well see, I was too far away; but he walked with stately mien, and his following was like that of royalty itself. Such kingly pomp I have never witnessed before."

"And our Lord came meek and lowly, riding upon an ass, and had not where to lay His head," breathed Freda softly. "Ah, oftentimes do I wonder what He must think of all this, looking down from heaven, where He sits expecting, till His enemies be made His footstool. I wonder what yonder pageant looked like to Him-a prelate coming in His place (as doubtless the cardinal would think) to judge those whose crime has been the spreading abroad of the living Word, and now watching the burning of countless books which contain that living Word, and which might have brought joy and gladness to so many. When I think of these things I could weep for these proud men, who never weep for themselves. I can better understand the words of Master Clarke when he says, 'Plead with your mother-plead with her.'"

"We will plead. We have pleaded already; we will plead again and yet again!" cried Dalaber, with a flash in his dark eyes. "But methinks a time will come when the day of pleading will be past, and the day of reckoning will come; and she will have to

learn that her children will not always suffer her impurities and abominations, but that they will rise up and cleanse the sanctuary from the filthiness wherewith it is defiled."

"Yet let them not cease to love her," spoke Freda gently, "for, as Master Clarke truly says, we are all one body-the Body of Christ; and if we have to war one with another, and rend that body for its own healing, we must yet remember that we are all members one of another even in our strife."

"It is a hard saying," spoke Dalaber, "yet I believe it is the truth. God send us more men like John Clarke, to show us the way through this tangle of perplexities!"

Chapter IV: "Merrie May Day."

"You will come and hear us sing our 'merrie katches' from the tower, sweet ladies. They should sound sweetly this year, more sweetly than ever, for we have improved in our methods, and our boys have been better taught since Master Radley of Cardinal College has given us his help; and he will come and sing with us, and he hath a voice like a silver bell."

The speaker was Arthur Cole, a student of Magdalen College, who was now a frequent visitor at the Bridge House. He was a young man of good family and prospects, nearly related to one of the proctors of the university. He had a good presence, an elegant figure, and was master of many favourite sports and pastimes. He kept horses and dogs and falcons, and had several servants lodging in the town to look after these creatures, and to attend him when he sallied forth in search of sport. Moreover, he had recently introduced into Oxford the Italian game of "calcio" (of which more anon), and was one of the most popular and important men of his college. He was always dressed with great care and elegance, although he was no fop; and he was so handsome and so merry withal that all who knew him regarded him with favour, and his friendship was regarded as a sort of passport to the best circle of university life.

Freda and Magdalen answered his appeal with smiling glances. They were holding one of their little mimic courts

in the garden by the river. Their father had been reading and discoursing with sundry students, who came to him for instruction more individual and particular than could be given in the schools in the earlier part of the day; and the young men before leaving always sought to gain speech with the two fair sisters, who were generally at this hour to be found in the garden.

Arthur Cole, Anthony Dalaber, and Hugh Fitzjames, their cousin, had lingered to the last, and now were talking of the joustings and merry makings of the approaching May Day, which was ushered in by the melodious concert from the summit of Magdalen College tower.

In olden days this was not a sacred selection of hymns, but madrigals, roundelays, and "merrie katches," as the old chroniclers term them, sung by the boys maintained for the musical part of the daily service, and by such singing men or musically inclined students as were willing and able to help. Anthony Dalaber, who possessed an excellent voice, which he often employed in the service of Cardinal College Chapel, had been invited to assist this year; and a new singing man from that college, Stephen Radley by name, was considered a great acquisition.

This man had not long been in Oxford, and had been sent by the cardinal himself on account of his remarkable voice. He did not live in the college itself, but in a lodging near at hand, and equally near to Magdalen College. Arthur Cole, foremost to discover talent and appreciate it, and attracted by the fine

presence and muscular development of the singer, had struck up a friendship with him, and Dalaber had followed his example in this.

"Radley will lead off the madrigal to springtide and love," he cried, "which erstwhile has been spoiled for lack of a voice that can be heard alone from such a height. I trow it will ring through the soft air like a silver trumpet. You will be there to hear?" and his eyes dwelt upon the face of Freda, whilst those of Arthur rested more particularly upon that of Magdalen.

"Ah, yes, we shall certainly be there," they both answered; and Freda added gaily, "Albeit ye begin the day somewhat early. But why should we not be up with the sun on Merrie May Day?"

"Why not, indeed?" questioned Arthur eagerly, "for the day will scarce be long enough for all there is to do. You will come to the sports in the meadows later, fair maidens? And I have a favour to ask of you twain. May I be bold enough to proffer it now?"

They looked at him with smiling, questioning eyes.

"A favour, fair sir?"

"Yes, truly; for I would ask of you to be witness to our contest of calcio in yonder green meadow, and to present to the victors the garlands of laurel and flowers which are to be their reward who shall come off triumphant in the strife. No contest is so keenly contested as that which is watched by the bright eyes of fair ladies, and I would ask that ye be the queens of the strife, and reward the victorious company with your own fair hands."

The girls assented gladly and gaily. They had heard much of this newly-introduced game, and were curious to witness it. The more ancient sports of quintain, on land and water, morris dancing, quarterstaff, archery, and such like, were all familiar enough. But calcio was something of a novelty; and to be chosen as the queens of the contest was no small pleasure, and their eyes beamed with gratification and delight.

Arthur Cole was equally pleased at having won their consent, and told them how that a fine pavilion would be erected in the meadow, where they and their friends could survey the scene at ease, protected alike from the heat of the sun, or from falling showers, should any betide. It was plain that this spectacle was to be on a decidedly magnificent scale. Arthur Cole was said to have expended much money upon the rich dresses of the players; now he spoke of a pavilion for the selected bystanders. It promised to be quite a fresh excitement for the university.

Dalaber and Cole went away together slightly later, and Hugh Fitzjames remained to supper with his kinsfolks.

"Anthony has taken a mighty liking for yonder fine gentleman of late," remarked the youth. "They are ever together now. Well, he might do worse for a friend. Master Cole is one of the richest students in Oxford."

"That is not what attracts Anthony, though," spoke Freda. "I think it has been this new game, into which Anthony has thrown himself with such zest. Perhaps it is good for him to have other things than his books to think of. A short while back he was ever

poring over the written page and burning the midnight oil. You said so yourself, Hugh."

"Yes, verily; and I have no quarrel with him for it. I think he is safer playing calcio with Cole than for ever studying the books he gets from Clarke and his friends, as he has been doing of late."

"Safer?" questioned Freda quickly; "how safer, Hugh?"

"Oh, well, you must know what Anthony is like by this time. He can never take aught quietly as other men. There are scores here in Oxford-I am one of them myself-who believe in liberty to think and read what we will, and to judge for ourselves between man and man, even when Holy Church herself is in the question. God can be ill served in the church as well as the monarch on his throne. We are not counted rebels and traitors because we condemn a minister of state; why, then, are we to be counted heretics and the scum of the earth because we see the evils and corruption in the lives of cardinals and clergy?"

"But to return to Dalaber. He is never content with just quiet thinking and study; he is all in a flame, and must cry aloud from the housetops, if it were not that he is restrained by others. He came from London in a perfect ferment. I trembled to think what he would do next. But as luck would have it, Cole got hold of him to take a vacant place in his own band for calcio, and since then he has been using his muscles rather than his brain, and an excellent good thing, too. He is just the man to get into trouble with the authorities, albeit he may not hold half the 'heresies' of others who escape."

"It is his way to throw himself heart and soul into everything he undertakes," spoke Freda, with a certain quiet satisfaction and approval. "I think he never stops to count the cost, but tries to see the right path, and to pursue it to the end."

"Yes, but he might sometimes show a little more discretion with his zeal," answered Hugh, with a half laugh. "I have a great liking for Anthony myself. No man could share his chamber and lack that. He is the best of comrades, and he has fine qualities and plenty of courage. But there are times when I fear he will be his own undoing. When he disputes in the schools he will often tread perilously near some 'pestilent heresy,' as the masters would deem it, or show by some of his arguments that he has a dangerous knowledge of forbidden books. Just now things are quiet in Oxford, and not much notice is taken. But who knows how long the calm may last? London has been set in a commotion of late, and is it likely that Oxford will escape, with the cardinal's eyes fixed upon his college here?"

"At least let us hope and pray that we may be spared persecution," spoke Magdalen gravely. "Yet truly I believe that were such misfortune to befall us, Anthony Dalaber would be one of those who would stand the test of his faith with constancy and courage."

"He would, up to a certain point, I doubt not," answered Hugh. "He would go to the stake, I believe, without flinching, were he taken and sent there straight. But if put in prison, and kept there long, separated from his friends and teachers, and subjected to

argument and persuasion and specious promises, well, I know not how he would stand that trial. Kindness and flattery might win him over, where threats and cruelty failed."

Freda's face was gravely intent. She was conscious of a growing interest in and affection for Anthony Dalaber since his own fervent declaration of love towards herself. She had given him no definite promise, but she felt that henceforth their lives must of necessity be more or less linked together. She could not be indifferent to aught that concerned him; the stability of his faith and of his character must mean very much to her in the future.

But for the moment it was difficult to think of these things. Joyous springtide was on the world; May Day, with all its gay doings, was close at hand; and graver thoughts or anxious fears alike seemed out of place.

The girls were up with the lark on May Day morning, donning their holiday robes of white taffeta and spotless lawn, cunningly embroidered by their own skilful fingers, Freda's in silver and Magdalen's in gold thread. They each had girdles of silver and gold cord respectively, and snowy headgear embroidered in like fashion. They looked as fresh and as lovely as the morning itself, and their father's eyes shone with loving pride as they presented themselves before him.

"We grow young again in our children," he said, as they sallied forth just as the east was growing rosy with the harbinger of dawn.

The dew lay thick upon the grass, whitening it with a glittering mantle; but the paths were dry and firm, and the girls held up their dainty draperies and tripped along so lightly that their white leather embroidered shoes gathered no soil by the way. Then, just as the clock of Cardinal College boomed out the hour, a chorus of sweet, clear voices up high in the air broke into merry song, just as the first early sunbeam struck across the sky, and lighted up the group of singers half hidden behind the low battlements.

The meadows below were thronged with gownsmen from the various colleges, as well as by crowds of townsfolk, all in holiday attire, who had streamed out of the gates to hear the singing. Later in the day there might probably be brawling and disputes betwixt the two parties—"town and gown," as they were later dubbed. But the early morning hour seemed to impose peace upon all spirits, and there was no hooting or brawling or rioting of any kind; but a decorous silence was observed, all faces being lifted upwards, as the sweet strains came floating from above, seeming to welcome the dawning day and the joyous season of sunshine and love.

"That must surely be Stephen Radley," spoke Freda in a whisper, as one voice, more rich and mellow than the others, seemed to detach itself and float upwards in a flood of melody. All eyes were fixed aloft, all ears strained to catch the sounds. The power and extraordinary sweetness of the voice held the multitude spellbound.

"The cardinal's new singing man!" was the whisper passed

from mouth to mouth; and when at length the singers emerged from the little door at the base of the tower, there were many who crowded round Radley to compliment him upon his wonderful performance.

It was quite a long time before the sisters caught sight of him, and then he was walking arm-in-arm with Master Clarke, who, catching sight of the little group, brought him straight up to them and presented him.

Radley was dressed in academic garb, like all the members of the university. He looked about five-and-twenty years old, was a tall and finely proportioned man, deep chested and muscular, with a gravely deferential manner that was pleasing and modest.

Arthur Cole and Anthony Dalaber came hastening up to join the group, and presently it broke up somewhat, and thus Magdalen found herself walking towards home with Clarke, whilst the others followed as they chose, having been asked by Dr. Langton to partake of a cold collation at his house, which had been carefully spread overnight by the hands of the girls themselves.

"He has a wonderful voice," said Magdalen, with a slight backward glance over her shoulder towards Radley; "who is he, and whence does he come?"

"He sang as a boy in one of those grammar schools which the cardinal is now interesting himself so much to promote. But when he lost his boy's voice he was not able to remain at the school, and has since been a servant in several great houses. He

obtained a position in the cardinal's house last year, and it was there that the great man heard him singing over his work, and had him brought before him. Finding that he had some learning, and was eager for more, he decided to appoint him as singing man at his own college here, and to let him continue his studies as well. I trow that he would have willingly made him one of the petty canons, but Radley declined that honour. He has no call to the priesthood, he says; and in truth he has heard much in London of the Association of Christian Brothers, and has read many of the forbidden books.

"Indeed, I think I may call him one of them. I am not afraid to tell you this, Mistress Magdalen, for I know your heart is full of sympathy for us, who are seekers after purer truth than we can always find amongst those who are set to dispense it to us."

The girl's eyes were full of sympathy and earnest interest.

"Indeed, I would fain see all men longing after light and truth. God is Light, and God is Truth; His Son came as the Light of the world. He must desire all men to seek the Light. And if His church does not shine with it as it should, men must needs try to add to her light, each in his own measure."

Magdalen looked with the greater interest at Radley after having heard what John Clarke spoke of him. He sat beside Dalaber at table, and the two seemed on intimate terms.

Arthur Cole was beside her, and took up much of her attention. His admiration was almost openly expressed, and the girl sometimes blushed at his gallant compliments. She liked

the gay-hearted young man, but she was not so much attracted towards him as towards Clarke and those more thoughtful spirits. Still, she was not proof against the fascination of his courtly address, and she listened with interest to his account of the game he had learned in Italy and had introduced to England, and which bears so close a resemblance to our modern game of football that it may well be regarded as its parent.

This was the first regular match that had been played at Oxford, and considerable excitement prevailed as to what it would be like, and how the players would distinguish themselves.

The forenoon hours, however, were mainly given up to the usual pastimes of May Day. Children decked with garlands and flowers chose their queen, and crowned her amid the plaudits of the people. Morris dancers footed it upon the green, and miracle plays were enacted by wandering troops of mummers. There were booths set up, where a sort of fair was held, and sweetmeats and drink dispensed. An ox was being roasted whole in one place, where dinners were served at midday, and trials of strength and skill went on uninterruptedly in the wide meadows round the city, some being the property of the town, and others of the university.

On the whole, however, the spirit of concord prevailed, and there was less fighting and brawling than usual between the two parties; and when, after the short pause for the midday repast, the students and masters and all interested in the spectacle hastened to the spot where the game of calcio was to be played, great numbers of the townsfolk flocked there also, and were neither

hustled nor jeered by the gowned concourse in the inner circle.

There was something distinctly sumptuous in the pavilion which had been raised for a certain number of spectators of the better class, and there was quite a buzz and acclamation as the two beautiful sisters were seen to ascend the few steps and take their places on the centre seats, which had something of the aspect of a throne. They were very well known in Oxford, not for their beauty alone, but for their gentleness and charity, being always ready to succour the sick and afflicted, and to visit with their own presence any stricken houses where trouble of any kind had entered. So that not only the gownsmen but the townsmen were ready to welcome them with cheers, and to acclaim them eagerly as the queens of the day.

And now the players came streaming out from another pavilion on the opposite side of the ground, and exclamations of wonder and admiration arose at the picturesque magnificence of their dress. Arthur Cole had had these garments fashioned in Italy and brought over, and very gorgeous did he and his companions look.

The lower limbs of the players were encased in woven silk tights, which were thick and strong and elastic. On their feet they wore soft tanned shoes, made all in one piece and fitting closely to the foot. They wore woven silk shirts of fine texture, and over these belted tunics of rich brocade or embroidered linen or any other costly and elastic material. Arthur Cole's own tunic (as captain of his side) was of cloth of gold; whilst that of Dalaber

was of white and silver brocade, with silver lacings. The colours of the two sides were displayed in the *calzone* or silk tights, these being blue and white for Arthur's side, and red and white for Dalaber's. They wore knitted silk caps upon their heads, white and blue or red and blue according to their company, and long gauntlet gloves of soft tanned skin, almost white in colour, and laced with the colour appropriate to the player.

A murmur of admiration ran through the spectators as these tall, lithe, muscular youths stepped forth into the bright sunshine of the playing field; and soon all eyes were intently watching the evolutions of the game, which was very much like that of our modern football, though played with more grace and less of brute force and violence.

Not a great many of the spectators understood the details of the contest, but they cheered lustily when any side seemed to score an advantage. The rainbow-hued living mass seemed to sway and melt and break up into coloured spray, and join again and roll from side to side like a living creature; and its evolutions were followed with keenest interest by all spectators, and by cheering and shouts of warning or encouragement from those who understood the game, and knew which way the tide was turning.

At last the contest ended. Arthur Cole's side had come out victorious in the struggle; but so gallant a stand had been made by the other, that Anthony Dalaber was called up to receive a laurel crown in token of his prowess and skill.

He looked very handsome as he stood before Freda, whilst she lightly set the chaplet on his head, whence after a few moments he removed it and laid it at her feet.

"That is the place where I would fain lay all my honours and all my gains," he said in a low, passionate whisper, and she felt a wave of hot blood rising in her cheek at his words and at the ardent look in his eyes.

She could not doubt this man's love for her, and she wondered whether it would compel her own love in return. A short while back she had regarded him rather in the light of a comrade or brother; but now she felt that a change had come over their relations, and that he would not be satisfied with the sisterly affection of the past. Had she more to give him? She scarcely knew herself as yet; and still, as she revolved the matter in her mind, she felt more and more convinced that without Anthony Dalaber her life would be colourless and cold.

His eagerness brought an element into it which she could not well spare. He was becoming a sort of necessity to her. She thought of him almost constantly, yearned over him, desired above all things to see him rise to the level of greatness in any trial which might come upon him. If that were love, then surely she loved him.

The thought was not without a mingling of sweetness and pain. She put it from her for the time being; but when the day was over, and the sisters were alone together in their bed chamber, taking off their finery and brushing out their long tresses of hair, it was

Magdalen's own words that brought the matter back, as she softly kissed her sister, whispering:

"How Anthony loves you, Freda!"

"I truly think he does, Magda," answered she, taking her sister's hands and leaning her brow against them. "In sooth he has told me so; but at the first I thought perhaps it was but a passing fancy—we have been so much together of late. Now I truly think that he does care. Magda, what shall I say to him? He will not be long in pressing for his answer."

"Does not your own heart tell you, Freda? Can we love and not know it? Tell me that, for I too would fain know. There are so many sorts of love. Can one always judge aright?"

"Dost thou feel that too, my Magda? Verily, I have thought that Master Cole—"

Magda put her hand upon her sister's lips; her face was all one great blush.

"Nay, nay; that is but fantasy. He has a kindly word for all who please his eye. It may be one today and another tomorrow. He is a pleasant comrade; but—"

"But not the man of thy choice, sweet sister?"

"How can I tell yet? We have not known him long time. And I love better those who talk of higher things than games and songs and pastimes. But the men of books and earnest thought are devoted so oft to the church. And those who are left—one cannot tell. They are brave and winsome and gay; but more than that is wanted in a husband, Freda. Ah, it is hard for us maidens

to know."

And sitting with arms entwined, the sisters spoke freely and fully to each other of all the things that were in their hearts, and prayed that they might be guided aright in matters which pertained to the life they must look forward to living in the world.

Chapter V: Sweet Summertime

The months of May and June flew by as if on golden wings. The youths of Oxford, engrossed in study and in merry pastimes, seemed for a while to have cast away those graver thoughts which had been stirring them of late; or at least, if the current still ran, it seemed for the time being to run in silence. Perhaps the knowledge that the cardinal had set himself to the task of nipping in the bud the dangerous growth of incipient heresy alarmed some of the more timid spirits; whilst others sought for truth and light as it was to be found amongst their recognized preachers and teachers, and were often surprised at the depth of spirituality and earnestness which they found in men who were staunch to the core to the traditions of the church, and held in abhorrence the very name and thought of heresy.

Dr Langton's daughters heard little of the doings of the "Christian Brethren" during these bright months. Anthony Dalaber was more engrossed in his own studies and in his prowess at calcio (which was the most fashionable game through that summer) than in the religious movement which had occupied his mind before.

It was not that he had changed his opinions, or in any way drawn back from his admiration for the men connected with this movement. When he spoke of it sometimes with Freda his eyes would glow with feeling, and all the old fervour and earnestness

would come back like a flood upon him; but there was nothing for the moment for him to do. The importation of forbidden books into the country had been temporarily checked by the vigilance of the cardinal and his servants. The king was breaking a lance in argument with Martin Luther, and men were watching the result with interest and curiosity. And there was a certain awakening of spiritual light within the church itself, and pure and enlightened spirits there were making their voices heard; so that many (like John Clarke himself) hoped and believed that the much-needed reformation and purification would come from within, by her own act, rather than by any warfare against her as from without.

So, as these happy summer days flew by, the clouds of anxiety and apprehension seemed to disperse and roll away. The sisters were living in a world that was something new to them. Womanhood was awakening within them. They were learning something of its sweetness, of its power, as also of its perplexities and pain. There was no doubt whatever as to the fervency of Anthony Dalaber's love for Freda; whilst Arthur Cole paid such marked attention to Magdalen that she could not but believe him in earnest, albeit no word of love had so far escaped his lips.

With July came a change in the situation. One of the many pestilences so frequent in the country and so damaging to Oxford broke out in the neighbourhood of Carfax. It had some of the sweating-sickness symptoms, but was distinct from it in other respects. For a while it did not penetrate into the colleges, and the university authorities made strict rules for the undergraduates

and students, hoping that the scourge would confine itself to the town and the families of the citizens. But it was impossible to keep the clerks from wandering through the streets or entering shops and taverns, and little by little cases of sickness appeared first in the halls and then in the colleges, till it was evident that the epidemic was to be a serious one.

From the first Clarke had busied himself in visiting and tending the sick. He quitted for the time being his rooms in Cardinal College, and lodged with Stephen Radley, who accompanied him on his errands of mercy. Clarke was one of those men to be found in great numbers in university communities who, whilst not yet in full priest's orders, was qualifying for the priesthood, wore the tonsure, and having passed his degree in arts, was preparing himself in the schools of theology for the career to which he was dedicated. All the canons of Cardinal College were supposed to follow this course of training.

But it was not only amongst the men that self sacrifice and devotion made itself manifest. Dr. Langton's two daughters were as forward as any in the desire to help and tend the sick, and perform such offices of pity and kindness as lay within their power. Their father did not oppose them, though he laid down certain rules, which they dutifully obeyed, by which he hoped to guard them from infection. For his part, he was always foremost in the fight with disease and contagion, and wherever the need was sorest, there was he to be found.

Thus it came about that John Clarke and Stephen Radley often found themselves face to face with the fair girls, who came and went like sisters of mercy amid the poor houses crowded together in the low-lying lands without the city walls; and Anthony Dalaber, flinging himself into the crusade with his accustomed energy, found himself in almost constant attendance upon them, carrying out their orders, assisting them in their labour of mercy, and growing more ardently in love with his chosen mistress every day of his life.

But devoted workers did not always come through such an ordeal unscathed; and Dr. Langton and John Clarke sickened of the distemper almost at the same time. Neither was grievously ill; but both were forced to give up all work, and lie quietly in bed, suffering themselves to be tended by others.

Meantime there had been a very considerable exodus of students and masters from the city, and for the time being all lectures were suspended. There was small chance of any regular resumption of study till the cool crispness of autumn should check and stamp out the spread of this sickness.

It was at this juncture that Arthur Cole came forward with an offer which sounded very pleasantly in the ears of those to whom it was made. He came into the pleasant living room of the Bridge House upon the first evening when Dr. Langton had been suffered to leave his bed and lie for a while on the couch in this other and more cheerful apartment. Magdalen had her lute in her hands, and had been softly singing to him, when the sound of the

opening door brought her soft, sweet song to a close.

They welcomed their visitor cordially. He had been absent from Oxford for a while, and they had not expected to see him.

"I have been away at Poghley," he explained, "whither I sent for Dalaber to join me these last days. Did he tell you aught of it?"

"He came to bid us a farewell, though he said it would be a brief one," answered Freda; "but he told us no more than that."

"I have come to tell the rest," answered Cole, with a smile. "They tell me you were at Poghley last summer, so perchance you saw then the old moated house which lies a few miles from the village? That house is mine, though I have seldom visited it, and never dwelt there till now. But it came into my mind that it would be a pleasant place wherein to pass these next weeks, during which time Oxford will be empty of her scholars and masters. But I love not solitude, and I have gathered together a few congenial spirits. Dalaber and Fitzjames are already there, making all ready, and Radley will start tomorrow, taking Master Clarke in his charge, since it is of all things needful for him to have a change of air to restore him to health. He will be our chaplain, and edify us by his discourses when he has recovered his health and strength. But more than this: we want some man of learning and greater age and standing to direct us in our studies; and it is my great hope that you and your daughters will come and be my guests for a few weeks-you, dear sir, to recover health in the purer air, and then, when your strength permits it, be the

director of our studies; and these sweet ladies to enjoy the rest and ease which their recent devoted labours render necessary, and to escape from the noxious miasma now rising from these low lands round Oxford, which is likely to cause the sickness here to increase."

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

Текст предоставлен ООО «ЛитРес».

Прочитайте эту книгу целиком, [купив полную легальную версию](#) на ЛитРес.

Безопасно оплатить книгу можно банковской картой Visa, MasterCard, Maestro, со счета мобильного телефона, с платежного терминала, в салоне МТС или Связной, через PayPal, WebMoney, Яндекс.Деньги, QIWI Кошелек, бонусными картами или другим удобным Вам способом.