

YONGE CHARLOTTE MARY

THE PRINCE AND THE
PAGE: A STORY OF THE
LAST CRUSADE

Charlotte Yonge

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Story of the Last Crusade**

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PREFACE

In these days of exactness even a child's historical romance must point to what the French term its pieces justificatives. We own that ours do not lie very deep. The picture of Simon de Montfort drawn by his wife's own household books, as quoted by Mrs. Everett Green in her *Lives of the Princesses*, and that of Edward I. in Carte's *History*, and more recently in the *Greatest of the Plantagenets*, furnished the two chief influences of the story. The household accounts show that Earl Simon and Eleanor of England had five sons. Henry fell with his father at Evesham. Simon and Guy deeply injured his cause by their violence, and after holding out Kenilworth against the Prince, retired to the Continent, where they sacrilegiously murdered Henry, son of the King of the Romans—a crime so much abhorred in Italy that Dante represents himself as meeting them in torments in the *Inferno*, not however before Guy had become the founder of the family of the Counts of Monforte in the Maremma. Richard, the fourth son, appears in the household books as possessing dogs, and having garments bought for him; but his history has not been traced after his mother left England. The youngest son, Amaury, obtained the hereditary French possessions of the family, and continued the line of Montfort as a French subject. Eleanor, the only daughter, called the *Demoiselle de Montfort*, married, as is well known, the last native prince of Wales, and died after a few years.

The adventure of Edward with the outlaw of Alton Wood is one of the stock anecdotes of history, and many years ago the romance of the encounter led the author to begin a tale upon it, in which the outlaw became the protector of one of the proscribed family of Montfort. The commencement was placed in one of the manuscript magazines which are so often the amusement of a circle of friends. It was not particularly correct in its details, and the hero bore the peculiarly improbable name of Wilfred (by which he has since appeared in the *Monthly Packet*). The story slept for many years in MS., until further reading and thought had brought stronger interest in the period, and for better or for worse it was taken in hand again. Joinville, together with the authorities quoted by Sismondi, assisted in picturing the arrival of the English after the death of St. Louis, and the murder of Henry of Almayne is related in all crusading histories; but for Simon's further career, and for his implication in the attempt on Edward's life at Acre, the author is alone responsible, taking refuge in the entire uncertainty that prevails as to the real originator of the crime, and perhaps an apology is likewise due to Dante for having reversed his doom.

For the latter part of the story, the old ballad of *The Blind Beggar of Bethnal Green*, gives the framework. That ballad is believed to be Elizabethan in date, and the manners therein certainly are scarcely accordant with the real thirteenth century, and still less with our notions of the days of chivalry. Some liberties therefore have been taken with it, the chief of them being that Bessee is not permitted to go forth to seek her fortune in the inn at Romford, and the readers are entreated to believe that the alteration was made by the traditions which repeated Henry de Montfort's song.

It was the late Hugh Millar who alleged that the huge stone under which Edward sleeps in Westminster Abbey agrees in structure with no rocks nearer than those whence the mighty stones of the Temple at Jerusalem were hewn, and there is no doubt that earth and stones were frequently brought by crusaders from the Holy Land with a view to the hallowing of their own tombs.

The author is well aware that this tale has all the incorrectnesses and inconsistencies that are sure to attend a historical tale; but the dream that has been pleasant to dream may be pleasant to listen

to; and there can be no doubt that, in spite of all inevitable faults, this style of composition does tend to fix young people's interest and attention on the scenes it treats of, and to vivify the characters it describes; and if this sketch at all tends to prepare young people's minds to look with sympathy and appreciation on any of the great characters of our early annals, it will have done at least one work.

December 12th, 1865.

CHAPTER I—THE STATELY HUNTER

*"Now who are thou of the darksome brow
Who wanderest here so free?"
"Oh, I'm one that will walk the green green woods,
Nor ever ask leave of thee."—S. M.*

A fine evening—six centuries ago—shed a bright parting light over Alton Wood, illuminating the gray lichens that clung to the rugged trunks of the old oak trees, and shining on the smoother bark of the graceful beech, with that sidelong light that, towards evening, gives an especial charm to woodland scenery. The long shadows lay across an open green glade, narrowing towards one end, where a path, nearly lost amid dwarf furze, crested heather, and soft bent-grass, led towards a hut, rudely constructed of sods of turf and branches of trees, whose gray crackling foliage contrasted with the fresh verdure around. There was no endeavour at a window, nor chimney; but the door of wattled boughs was carefully secured by a long twisted withe.

A halbert, a broken arrow, a deer-skin pegged out on the ground to dry, a bundle of faggots, a bare and blackened patch of grass, strewn with wood ashes, were tokens of recent habitation, though the reiterations of the nightingale, the deep tones of the blackbird and the hum of insects, were the only sounds that broke the stillness.

Suddenly the silence was interrupted by a clear, loud, ringing whistle, repeated at brief intervals and now and then exchanged for the call—"Leonillo! Leon!" A footstep approached, rapidly overtaken and passed by the rushing gallop of a large animal; and there broke on the scene a large tawny hound, prancing, bounding, and turning round joyfully, pawing the air, and wagging his tail, in welcome to the figure who followed him.

This was a youth thirteen years old, wearing such a dress as was usual with foresters—namely, a garment of home-spun undyed wool, reaching to the knee, and there met by buskins of deer-skin, with the dappled hair outside; but the belt which crossed one shoulder was clasped with gold, and sustained a dagger, whose hilt and sheath were of exquisite workmanship. The cap on his head was of gray rabbit-skin, but a heron's plume waved in it; the dark curling locks beneath were carefully arranged; and the port of his head and shoulders, the mould of his limbs, the cast of his features, and the fairness of his complexion, made his appearance ill accord with the homeliness of his garb. In one hand he carried a bow over his shoulder; in the other he held by the ears a couple of dead rabbits, with which he playfully tantalized the dog, holding them to his nose, and then lifting them high aloft, while the hound, perfectly entering into the sport, leapt high after them with open mouth, and pretended to seize them, then bounded and careered round his young master with gay short barks, till both were out of breath; and the boy, flinging the rabbits on the turf, threw himself down on it, with one arm upon the neck of the panting dog, whose great gasps, like a sobbing of laughter, heaved his whole frame.

"Ay, good Leonillo, take your rest!" said the boy: "we have done yeoman's service to-day, and shown ourselves fit to earn our own livelihood! We are outlaws now, my lion of the Pyrenees; and you at least lead a merrier life than in the castle halls, when we hunted for sport, and not for sustenance! Well-a-day, my Leon!"—as the creature closed his mouth, and looked wistfully up at him with almost human sympathy and intelligence—"would that we knew where are all that were once wont to go with us to the chase! But for them, I would be well content to be a bold forester all my days! Better so, than to be ever vexed and crossed in every design for the country's weal—distrusted above—betrayed beneath! Alack! alack! my noble father, why wert thou wrecked in every hope—in every aim!"

These murmurings were broken off as Leonillo suddenly crested his head, and changed his expression of repose for one of intense listening.

"Already!" exclaimed the boy, springing to his feet, as Leonillo bounded forward to meet a stout hardy forester, who was advancing from the opposite end of the glade. This was a man of the largest and most sinewy mould, his face tanned by sun and wind to a uniform hard ruddy brown, and his shaggy black hair untrimmed, as well as his dark bristly beard. His jerkin was of rough leather, crossed by a belt, sustaining sword and dagger; a bow and arrows were at his back; a huge quarter-staff in his hand; and his whole aspect was that of a ferocious outlaw, whose hand was against every man.

But the youth started towards him gleefully, as if the very sight of him had dispelled all melancholy musings, and shouted merrily, "Welcome—welcome, Adam! Why so early home? Have the Alton boors turned surly? or are the King's pricklers abroad, and the neighbourhood unwholesome for bold clerks of St. Nicholas?"

"Worse!" was the gruff mutter in reply. "Down, Leon: I am in no mood for thy freaks!"

"What is it, Adam? Have the keepers carried their complaints to the

King, of the venison we have consumed, with small thanks to him?"

"Prince Edward is at Alton! What think you of that, Sir? Come to seek through copse and brake for the arrant deer-stealer and outlaw, and all his gang!"

"Why, there's preferment for you!" said the boy, laughing. "High game for the heir of the throne! And his gang! Hold up your head, Leonillo: you and I come in for a share of the honour!"

"Hold up your head!" said the outlaw bitterly. "You may chance to hold it as high as your father's is, for all your gibes and jests, my young Lord, if the Longshanks gets a hold of you, which our Lady forefend."

"Nay, I think better of my Cousin Longshanks. I loved him well when I was his page at Hereford: he was tenderer to me than ever my brothers were; and I scarce think he would hang, draw, and quarter me now."

"You may try, if you are not the better guided."

"How did you hear these tidings?" inquired the boy, changing his mood to a graver one.

"From the monk to whom you confessed a fortnight back. Did you let him know your lineage?"

"How could I do otherwise?"

"He looked like a man who would keep a secret; and yet—"

"Shame—shame to doubt the good father!"

"Nay, I do not say that I do; but I would have the secret in as few men's power as may be. Nevertheless, I thank the good brother. He called out to me as he saw me about to enter the town, that if I had any tenderness for my own life, I had best not show myself there; and he went on to tell me how the Prince was come to his hunting-lodge, with hawk and hound indeed, but for the following of men rather than bird or beast."

"And what would you have me do?"

"Be instantly on the way to the coast, ere the search begins; and there, either for love of Sir Simon the righteous or for that gilt knife of yours, we may get ferried over to the Isle of Wight, whence—But what ails the dog! Whist, Leonillo! Hold your throat: I can hear naught but your clamour!"

The hound was in fact barking with a tremendous lion-like note; and when, on reiterated commands from his master and the outlaw, he changed it for a low continuous growling like distant thunder, a step and a rustling of the boughs became audible.

"They are upon us already!" cried the boy, snatching up and stringing his bow.

"Leave me to deal with him!" returned the outlaw. "Off to Alton: the good father will receive you to sanctuary!"

"Flee!—never!" cried the boy. "You teaching my father's son to flee!"

"Tush!—'tis but one!" said the outlaw. "He is easily dealt with; and he shall have no time to call his fellows."

So saying, the forester strode forward into the wood, where a tall figure was seen through the trees; and with uplifted quarter-staff, dealt a blow of sudden and deadly force as soon as the stranger came within its sweep, totally without warning. The power of the stroke might have felled an ox, and would have at once overthrown the new-comer, but that he was a man of unusual stature; and this being unperceived in the outlaw's haste, the blow lighted on his left shoulder instead of on his head.

"Ha, caitiff!" he exclaimed; and shortening the hunting-pole in his hand, he returned the stroke with interest, but the outlaw had already prepared himself to receive the blow on his staff. For some seconds there was a rapid exchange; and all that the boy could detect in the fierce flourish of weapons was, that his champion was at least equally matched. The height of the stranger was superior; and his movements, if less quick and violent, had an equableness that showed him a thorough master of his weapon. But ere the lad had time to cross the heather to the scene of action, the fight was over; the outlaw lay stunned and motionless on the ground, and the gigantic stranger was leaning on his hunting-pole, regarding him with a grave unmoved countenance, the fair skin of which was scarcely flushed by the exertion.

"Spare him! spare him!" cried the boy, leaping forwards. "I am the prey you seek!"

"Well met, my young Lord," was the stern reply. "You have found yourself a worthy way of life, and an honourable companion."

"Honourable indeed, if faithfulness be honour!" replied the boy. "Myself I yield, Sir; but spare him, if yet he lives!—O Adam, my only friend!" he sobbed, as kneeling over him, he raised his head, undid his collar, and parted the black locks, to seek for the mark of the blow, whence blood was fast oozing.

"He lives—he will do well enough," said the hunter. "Now, tell me, boy—what brought you here?"

"The loving fidelity of this man!" was the prompt reply:— "a Poitevin, a falconer at Kenilworth, who found me sore wounded on the field at Evesham, and ever since has tended me as never vassal tended lord; and now—now hath he indeed died for me!" and the boy, endeavouring to raise the inanimate form, dropped heavy tears on the senseless face.

"True," rigidly spoke the hunter, though there was somewhat of a quivering of the muscles of the cheek discernible amid the curls of his chestnut beard: "robbery is not the wonted service demanded of retainers."

"Poor Adam!" said the youth with a flash of spirit, "at least he never stripped the peaceful homestead and humble farmer, like the royal purveyors!"

"Ha—young rebel!" exclaimed the hunter. "Know you what you say?"

"I reckon not," replied the boy: "you have slain my father and my brothers, and now you have slain my last and only friend. Do as you will with me—only for my mother's sake, let it not be a shameful death; and let my sister Eleanor have my poor Leonillo. And let me, too, leave this gold with the priest of Alton, that my true-hearted loving Adam may have fit burial and masses."

"I tell thee, boy, he is in no more need of a burial than thou or I.

I touched him warily. Here—his face more to the air."

And the stranger bent down, and with his powerful strength lifted the heavy form of Adam, so that the boy could better support him. Then taking some wine from the hunting-flask slung to his own shoulder, he applied some drops to the bruise. The smart produced signs of life, and the hunter put his flask into the boy's hand, saying, "Give him a draught, and then—" he put his finger to his own lips, and stood somewhat apart.

Adam opened his eyes, and made some inarticulate murmurs; then, the liquor being held to his lips, he drank, and with fresh vigour raised himself.

"The boy!—where is he? What has chanced? Is it you, Sir? Where is the rogue? Fled, the villain? We shall have the Prince upon us next! I must after him, and cut his story short! Your hand, Sir!"

"Nay, Adam—your hurt!"

"A broken head! Tush, 'tis naught! Here, your hand! Canst not lend a hand to help a man up in your own service?" he added testily, as stiff and dizzy he sat up and tried to rise. "You might have sent an arrow to stop his traitorous tongue; but there is no help in you!" he added, provoked at seeing a certain embarrassment about the youth. "Desert me at this pinch! It is not like his father's son!" and he was sinking back, when at sight of the hunter he stumbled eagerly to his feet, but only to stagger against a tree.

"You are my prisoner!" said the calm deep voice.

"Well and good," said Adam surlily. "But let the lad go free: he is a yeoman's son, who came but to bear me company."

"And learn thy trade? Goodly lessons in falling unawares on the King's huntsmen, and sending arrows after them! Fair breeding, in sooth!" repeated the stranger, standing with his arms crossed upon his mighty breadth of chest, and looking at Adam with a still, grave, commanding blue eye, that seemed to pierce him and hold him down, as it were, and a countenance whose youthfulness and perfect regularity of feature did but enhance its exceeding severity of expression. "You know the meed of robbery and murder?"

"A halter and a bough," said Adam readily. "Well and good; but I tell thee that concerns not the boy—since," he added bitterly, "he is too meek and tender so much as to lift a hand in his own cause! He has never crossed the laws."

"I understand you, friend," said the hunter: "he is a valued charge—maybe the son of one of the traitor barons. Take my advice—yield him to the King's justice, and secure your own pardon."

"Out, miscreant!" shouted Adam; and was about to spring at him again, but the powerful arm collared him, and he recognized at once that he was like a child in that grasp. He ground his teeth with rage and muttered, "That a fellow with such thews should give such dastardly counsel, and HE yonder not lift a finger to aid!"

"Wilt follow me," composedly demanded the stranger, "with hands free? or must I bind them?"

"Follow?" replied Adam, ruefully looking at the boy with eyes full of reproach—"ay, follow to any gallows thou wilt—and the nearest tree were the best! Come on!"

"I have no warrant," returned the grave hunter.

"Tush! what warrant is needed for hanging a well-known outlaw—made so by the Prince's tender mercies? The Prince will thank thee, man, for ridding the realm of the robber who fell on the treasurer bearing the bags from Leicester!"

And meanwhile, with uncouth cunning, Adam was striving to telegraph by winks and gestures to the boy who had so grievously disappointed him, that the moment of his own summary execution would be an excellent one for his companion's escape.

But the eye, so steady yet so quick under its somewhat drooping eyelid, detected the simple stratagem.

"I trow the Prince might thank me more for bringing in this charge of thine."

"Small thanks, I trow, for laying hands on a poor orphan—the son of a Poitevin man-at-arms—that I kept with me for love of his father, though he is fitter for a convent than the green wood!" added Adam, with the same sound of keen reproach and disappointment in his voice.

"That shall we learn at Guildford," replied the stranger. "There are means of teaching a man to speak."

"None that will serve with me," stoutly responded Adam.

"That shall we see," was the brief answer.

And he signed to his prisoners to move on before him, taking care so to interpose his stately person between them, that there should be no communication by word, far less by look.

CHAPTER II—THE LADY OF THE FOREST

*"Behold how mercy softeneth still
The haughtiest heart that beats:
Pride with disdain may he answered again,
But pardon at once defeats!"—S. M.*

The so-called forest was in many parts mere open heath, thickly adorned by the beautiful purple ling, blending into a rich carpet with the dwarf furze, and backed by thickets of trees in the hollows of the ground.

Across this wild country the tall forester conducted his captives in silence—moving along with a pace that evidently cost him so little exertion, and was so steady and even, that his companions might have supposed it slow, had they only watched it, and not been obliged to keep up with it. Light of foot as the youth was, he was at times reduced to an almost breathless run; and Adam plodded along, with strides that worked his arms and shoulders in sympathy.

After about three miles, when the boy was beginning to feel as if he must soon be in danger of lagging, they came into a dip of the ground where stood a long, low, irregular building, partly wood and partly stone, roofed with shingle in some parts, in others with heather. The last addition, a deep porch, still retained the fresh tints of the bark on the timber sides, and the purple of the ling that roofed it.

Sheds and out-houses surrounded it; dogs in couples, horses, grooms, and foresters, were congregated in the background; but around this new porch were gathered a troop of peasant women, children, and aged men. The fine bald brow and profile of the old peasant, the eager face of the curly-haired child, the worn countenance of the hard-tasked mother, were all uplifted towards the doorway, in which stood, slightly above them, a lady, with two long plaited flaxen tresses descending on her shoulders, under a black silken veil, that disclosed a youthful countenance, full of pure calm loveliness, of a simple but dignified and devotional expression, that might have befitted an angel of charity. A priest and a lady were dispensing loaves and warm garments to the throng around; but each gift was accompanied by a gentle word from the lady, framed with difficulty to their homely English tongue, but listened to even by uncomprehending ears like a strain of Church music.

Adam had expected the forester to turn aside to the group of servants, but in blank amazement saw him lead the way through the poor at the gate; and advancing to the porch with a courteous bending of his head, he said in the soft Provencal—far more familiar than English to Adam's ears—"Hast room for another suppliant, mi Dona?"

The sweet fair face lighted up with a sudden sunbeam of joy; and a musical voice replied. "Welcome, my dearest Lord: much did I need thee to hear the complaints of some of these thy lieges, which my ears can scarce understand! But why art thou alone? or rather, why thus strangely accompanied?"

"These are the captives won by my single arm, whom, according to all laws of chivalry, thine own true knight thus lays at thy feet, fair lady mine, to be disposed of at thine own gracious will and pleasure."

And a smile of such sweetness lightened his features, that a murmur of "Blessings on his comely face!" ran through the assembly; and Adam indulged in a gruff startled murmur of "'Tis the Prince, or the devil himself!" while his young master, comprehending the gesture of the Prince, and overborne by the lovely winning graces of the Princess, stepped forward, doffing his cap and bending his knee, and signing to Adam to follow his example.

"Thou hast been daring peril again!" said the Princess, holding her husband's arm, and looking up into his face with lovingly reproachful yet exulting eyes. "Yet I will not be troubled! Naught is danger to thee! And yet alone and unarmed to encounter such a sturdy savage as I see yonder! But there is blood on his brow! Let his hurt be looked to ere we speak of his fate."

"He is at thy disposal, mi Dona," returned Edward: "thou art the judge of both, and shall decide their lot when thou hast heard their tale."

"It can scarce be a very dark one," replied Eleanor, "or thou wouldst never have led them to such a judge!" Then turning to the prisoners, she began to say in her foreign English, "Follow the good father, friends—" when she broke off at fuller sight of the boy's countenance, and exclaimed in Provencal, "I know the like of that face and mien!"

"Truly dost thou know it," her husband replied; "but peace till thou hast cleared thy present court, and we can be private.—Follow the priest," he added, "and await the Princess's pleasure."

They obeyed; and the priest led them through a side-door, through which they could still hear Eleanor's sweet Castilian voice laying before her husband her difficulties in comprehending her various petitioners. The priest being English, was hardly more easily understood than his flock; and her lady spoke little but *langue d'oui*, the Northern French, which was as little serviceable in dealing with her Spanish and Provencal as with the rude West-Saxon-English. Edward's deep manly tones were to be heard, however, now interrogating the peasants in their own tongue, now briefly interpreting to his wife in Provencal; and a listener could easily gather that his hand was as bounteous, his heart as merciful, as hers, save where attacks on the royal game had been requited by the trouble complained of; and that in such cases she pleaded in vain.

The captives, whom her husband had surrendered to her mercy, had been led into a great, long, low hall, with rudely-timbered sides, and rough beams to the roof, with a stone floor, and great open fire, over which a man-cook was chattering French to his bewildered English scullion. An oak table, and settles on either side of it, ran the whole length of the hall; and here the priest bade the two prisoners seat themselves. They obeyed—the boy slouching his cap over his face, averting it, and keeping as far as possible from the group of servants near the fire. The priest called for bread, meat, and beer, to be set before them; and after a moment's examination of Adam's bruise, applied the simple remedy that was all it required, and left them to their meal. Adam took this opportunity to growl in an undertone, "Does HE there know you?" The reply was a nod of assent. "And you knew him?" Another nod; and then the boy, looking heedfully round, added in a quick, undertone, "Not till you were down. Then he helped me to restore you. You forgive me, Adam, now?" and he held out his hand, and wrung the rugged one of the forester.

"What should I forgive! Poor lad! you could not have striven in the Longshanks' grasp! I was a fool not to guess how it was, when I saw you not knowing which way to look!"

"Hush!" broke in the youth with uplifted hand, as a page of about his own age came daintily into the hall, gathering his green robe about him as if he disdained the neighbourhood, and holding his head high under his jaunty tall feathered cap.

"Outlaws!" he said, speaking English, but with a strong foreign accent, and as if it were a great condescension, "the gracious Princess summons you to her presence. Follow me!"

The colour rushed to the boy's temples, and a retort was on his lips, but he struggled to withhold it; and likewise speaking English, said, "I would we could have some water, and make ourselves meet for her presence."

"Scarce worth the pains," returned the page. "As if thou couldst ever be meet for her presence! She had rather be rid of thee promptly, than wait to be regaled with thy May-day braveries—honest lad!"

Again the answer was only restrained with exceeding difficulty; and there was a scornful smile on the young prisoner's cheek, that caused the page to exclaim angrily, "What means that insolence, malapert boy?"

But there was no time for further strife; for the door was pushed open, and the Prince's voice called, "Hamlyn de Valence, why tarry the prisoners?"

"Only, Sir," returned Hamlyn, "that this young robber is offended that he hath not time to deck himself out in his last stolen gold chain, to gratify the Princess!"

"Peace, Hamlyn," returned the Prince: "thou speakest thou knowest not what.—Come hither, boy," he added, laying his hand on his young captive's shoulder, and putting him through the door with a familiarity that astonished Hamlyn—all the more, when he found that while both prisoners were admitted, he himself was excluded!

Princess Eleanor was alone in another chamber of the sylvan lodge, hung with tapestry representing hunting scenes, the floor laid with deer-skins, and deer's antlers projecting from the wall, to support the feminine properties that marked it as her special abode. She was standing when they entered; and was turning eagerly with outstretched hand and face of recognition, when Prince Edward checked her by saying, "Nay, the cause is not yet tried:" and placing her in a large carved oaken chair, where she sat with a lily-like grace and dignity, half wondering, but following his lead, he proceeded, "Sit thou there, fair dame, and exercise thy right, as judge of the two captives whom I place at thy feet."

"And you, my Lord?" she asked.

"I stand as their accuser," said Edward. "Advance, prisoners!—Now, most fair judge, what dost thou decree for the doom of Adam de Gourdon, rebel first, and since that the terror of our royal father's lieges, the robber of his treasurers, the rifler of our Cousin Pembroke's jewellery, the slayer of our deer?"

"Alas! my Lord, why put such questions to me," said Eleanor imploringly, "unless, as I would fain hope, thou dost but jest?"

"Do I speak jest, Gourdon?" said Edward, regarding Adam with a lion-like glance.

"'Tis all true," growled Adam.

"And," proceeded the Prince, "if thy gentle lips refuse to utter the doom merited by such deeds, what wilt thou say to hear that, not content with these traitorous deeds of his own, he fosters the treason of others? Here stands a young rebel, who would have perished at Evesham, but for the care and protection of this Gourdon—who healed his wounds, guarded him, robbed for him, for him spurned the offer of amnesty, and finally, set on thine own husband in Alton Wood—all to shelter yonder young traitor from the hands of justice! Speak the sentence he merits, most just of judges!"

"The sentence he merits?" said Eleanor, with swimming eyes. "Oh! would that I were indeed monarch, to dispense life or death! What he merits he shall have, from my whole heart—mine own poor esteem for his fidelity, and our joint entreaties to the King for his pardon! Brave man—thou shalt come with me to seek thy pardon from King Henry!"

"Thanks, Lady," said Adam with rude courtesy; "but it were better to seek my young lord's."

"My own dear young cousin!" exclaimed Eleanor, laying aside her assumed judicial power, and again holding out her hands to him, "we deemed you slain!"

"Yes, come hither," said Edward, "my jailer at Hereford—the rebel who drew his maiden sword against his King and uncle—the outlaw who would try whether Leicester fits as well as Huntingdon with a bandit life! What hast thou to say for thyself, Richard de Montfort?"

"That my fate, be it what it may, must not stand in the way of Adam's pardon!" said Richard, standing still, without response to the Princess's invitation. "My Lord, you have spoken much of his noble devotion to me for my father's sake; but you know not the half of what he has done and dared for me. Oh! plead for him, Lady!"

"Plead for him!" said Eleanor: "that will I do with all my heart; and well do I know that the good old King will weep with gratitude to him for having preserved the life of his young nephew. Yes, Richard, oft have we grieved for thee, my husband's kind young companion in his captivity, and mourned that no tidings could be gained of thee!"

It was not Richard who replied to this winning address. He stood flushed, irresolute, with eyes resolutely cast down, as if to avoid seeing the Princess's sweet face.

Adam, however, spoke: "Then, Lady, I am indeed beholden to you; provided that the boy is safe."

"He is safe," said Prince Edward. "His age is protection sufficient.—My young cousin, thou art no outlaw: thine uncle will welcome thee gladly; and a career is open to thee where thou mayst redeem the honour of thy name."

The colour came with deeper crimson to the boy's cheek, as he answered in a choked voice, "My father's name needs no redemption!"

Simultaneously a pleading interjection from the Princess, and a warning growl from De Gourdon, admonished Richard that he was on perilous ground; but the Prince responded in a tone of deep feeling, "Well said, Richard: the term does not befit that worthy name. I should have said that I would fain help thee to maintain its honour. My page once, wilt thou be so again? and one day my knight—my trusty baron?"

"How can I?" said Richard, still in the same undertone, subdued but determined: "it was you who slew him and my brothers!"

"Nay, nay!" exclaimed the Princess: "the poor boy thinks all his kindred are slain!"

"And they are not!" cried Richard, raising his face with sudden animation. "They are safe?"

"Thy brother Henry died with—with the Earl," said Eleanor; "but all the rest are safe, and in France."

"And my mother and sister?" asked Richard.

"They are likewise abroad," said the Prince. "And, Richard, thou art free to join them if thou wilt. But listen first to me. We tarry yet two days at this forest lodge: remain with us for that space—thy name and rank unknown if thou wilt—and if thou shalt still look on me as guilty of thy father's death, and not as a loving kinsman, who honoured him deeply, I will send thee safely to the coast, with letters to my uncle, the King of France."

Richard raised his head with a searching glance, to see whether this were invitation or command.

"Thou art my captive," said Eleanor softly, coming towards him with a young matron's caressing manner to a boy whom she would win and encourage.

"Not captive, but guest," said Edward; but Richard perceived in the tones that no choice was left him, as far as these two days were concerned.

CHAPTER III—ALTON LODGE

*"Ever were his sons hawtyn,
And bold for their vilanye;
Bothe to knight and sweyn
Did they vilanye."*

Old Ballad of Simon de Montforte.

For the first time for many a month, Richard de Montfort lay down to sleep in a pallet bed, instead of a couch of heather; but his heart was ill at ease. He was the fourth son of the great Earl of Leicester, Simon de Montfort; and for the earlier years of his life, he had been under the careful training of the excellent chaplain, Adam de Marisco, a pupil and disciple of the great Robert Grostete, Bishop of Lincoln. His elder brothers had early left this wholesome control; pushed forward by the sad circumstances that finally drove their father to take up arms against the King, and strangers to the noble temper that actuated him in his championship of the English people, they became mere lawless rebels—fiercely profiting by his elevation, not for the good of the people, but for their own gratification.

Richard had been still a mere boy under constant control, and being intelligent, spirited, and docile, had been an especial favourite with his father. To him the great Earl had been the model of all that was admirable, wise, and noble; deeply religious, just, and charitable, and perfect in all the arts of chivalry and accomplishments of peace—a tender and indulgent father, and a firm and wise head of a household—he had been ardently loved and looked up to by the young son, who had perhaps more in common with him by nature than any other of the family.

Wrongs and injuries had been heaped upon Montfort by the weak and fickle King, who would far better have understood him, if, like the selfish kinsmen who encircled the throne, he had struggled for his own advantage, and not for the maintenance of the Great Charter. Richard was too young to remember the early days when his elder brothers had been companions, almost on equal terms, to their first cousins, the King's sons; his whole impression of his parents' relations with the court was of injustice and perfidy from the King and his counsellors, vehemently blamed by his mother and brothers, but sometimes palliated by his father, who almost always, even at the worst, pleaded the King's helplessness, and Prince Edward's honourable intentions. Understanding little of the rights of the case, Richard only saw his father as the maintainer of the laws, and defender of the oppressed against covenant breakers; and when the appeal to arms was at length made, he saw the white cross assumed by his father and brothers, in full belief that the war in defence of Magna Carta was indeed as sacred as a crusade, and he had earnestly entreated to be allowed to bear arms; but he had been deemed as yet too young, and thus had had no share in the victory of Lewes, save the full triumph in it that was felt by all at Kenilworth. Afterwards, when sent to be Prince Edward's page at Hereford, he was prepared to regard his royal cousin as a ferocious enemy, and was much taken by surprise to find him a graceful courtly knight, peculiarly gentle in manner, loving music, romances, and all chivalrous accomplishments; and far from the pride and haughtiness that had been the theme of all the vassals who assembled at Kenilworth, he was gracious to all, and distinguished his young page by treating him as a kinsman and favourite companion; showing him indeed far more consideration than ever he had received from his unruly turbulent brothers.

When Edward had effected his escape, and had joined the Mortimers and Clares, Richard had gone home, where his expressions of affection for the Prince were listened to by his father, indeed, with a well-pleased though melancholy smile, and an augury that one day his brave godson

would shake off the old King's evil counsellors, and show himself in his true and noble colouring. His brothers, however, laughed and chid any word about the Prince's kindness. Edward's flattery and seduction, they declared, had won the young De Clare from their cause. And in vain did their father assure them that they had lost the alliance of the house of Gloucester solely by their own over-bearing injustice—a tyranny worse than had been exercised under the name of the King.

With Henry of Winchester in their hands, however, theirs seemed the loyal cause; and Richard had, by the influence of his elders, been made ashamed of his regard for the Prince, and looked upon it as a treacherous rebellion, when Edward mustered his forces, and fell upon Leicester and his followers. His father had mournfully yielded to the boy's entreaty to remain with him, instead of being sent away with his mother and the younger ones for security: an honourable death, said the Earl, might be better for him than an outlawed and proscribed life. And thus Richard had heard his father's exclamation on marking the well-ordered advance of the Royalists: "They have learnt this style from me. Now, God have mercy on our souls, for our bodies are the Prince's!"

And when Henry, his eldest son, spoke words of confidence, entreating him not to despair, he had answered, "I do not, my son; but your presumption, and the pride of thy brothers, have brought me to this pass. I firmly believe I shall die for the cause of God and justice."

Richard had shared his father's last Communion, received his last blessing, and had stood beside him in the desperate ring, which in true English fashion died on the field of battle, but never was driven from it. Since that time, the boy's life had been a wandering amid outlaws and peasants—all in one mind of bitter hatred to the court for its cruel vexations and oppressions, and of intense love and regret for their champion, Sir Simon the Righteous, of whose beneficence tales were everywhere told, rising at every step into greater wonder, until at length they were enhanced into miracles, wrought by his severed head and hands. Each day had made the boy prouder of his father's memory, more deeply incensed against the Court party that had brought about his fall; and keen and bitter were his feelings at finding himself in the hands of the Prince himself. He chafed all the more at feeling the ascendancy which Edward's lofty demeanour and personal kindness had formerly exerted over him, reviving again by force of habit; he hated himself for not having at once challenged his father's murderer; so as, if he could not do more, to have died by his hand; and he despised himself the more, for knowing that all he could have said would have been good-naturedly put down by the Prince; all he could have done would have been but like a gnat's efforts against that mighty strength. Then how despicable it was to be sensible, in spite of himself, that this atmosphere of courtly refinement was far more natural to him—the son of a Provencal noble, and of a princess mother—than the rude forest life he had lately led. The greenwood liberty had its charms; and he had truly loved Adam de Gourdon; but the soft tones and refined accents were like a note of home to him; and though he had never seen the Princess before—she having been sent to the Court of St. Louis during the troubles—yet the whole of the interview gave him an inexplicable sense of being again among kindred and friends. He told himself that it was base, resolved that he would show himself determined to cast in his lot with his exiled brethren, and made up his mind to maintain a dignified silence during these two days, and at the end of them to leave with the Prince a challenge, to be fought out when he should have attained manly strength and skill in arms.

In pursuance of this resolution, he appeared at the morning mass and meal still grave and silent, and especially avoiding young Hamlyn de Valence, who, as the son of one of the half brothers of Henry III., stood in the same relationship to Prince Edward and to Richard, whose mother was the sister of King Henry. Probably Hamlyn had had a hint from the Prince, for though he regarded young Montfort with no friendly eyes, he yielded him an equality of precedence, which hardly consorted with Richard's rude forest garments.

The chase was the order of the day. The Prince rode forth with a boar spear to hunt one of these monsters of the wood, of which vague reports had reached him, unconfirmed, till Adam de Gourdon had undertaken to show him the creature's lair. He had proposed to Richard to join the

hunt; but the boy, firm to his resolution of accepting no favour from him, that could be helped, had refused as curtly as he could; and then, not without a feeling of disappointment, had stood holding Leonillo in, as the gallant train of hunters rode down the woodland glade, and he figured to himself the brave sport in which they would soon be engaged.

The most part of the day was spent by him in lying under a tree, with his dog by his side, thinking over the scenes of his earlier life, which had passed by his childish mind like those of a drama, in which he had no part nor comprehension, but which now, with clearer perceptions, he strove to recall and explain to himself. Ever his father's stately figure was the centre of his recollections, whether receiving tidings of infractions of engagements, taking prompt measures for action, or striving to repress the violence of his sons and partizans, or it might be gazing on his younger boys with sad anxiety. Richard well remembered his saying, when he heard that his sons, Simon and Guy, had been plundering the merchant ships in the Channel: "Alas! alas! when I was more loyal to the law than to the Crown, I little deemed that I was rearing a brood who would scorn all law and loyalty!"

And well too did Richard recollect that when the proposal had been made that he should become the attendant of the Prince at Hereford, his father had told him that here he would see the mirror of all that was knightly and virtuous; and had added, on the loud outcry of the more prejudiced brothers: "It is only the truth. Were it not that the King's folly and his perjured counsellors had come between my nephew Edward and his better self, we should have in him a sovereign who might fitly be reckoned as a tenth worthy. It is his very duty to a misruled father that has ranged him against us."

"Yet," thought Richard, "on the man who thus thought and spoke of him the Prince could make savage warfare; nay, offer his senseless corpse foul despite. How can I tarry these two days in such keeping? I had rather—if he will still keep me—be a captive in his lowest dungeon, than eat of his bread as a guest! By our Lady, I will tell him so to his face! I will none of his favours! Alone I will go to the coast—alone make my way to Simon and Guy, with no letters to the French king! All kings, however saintly they may be called, are in league, and make common cause; as said my poor brother Henry, when the Mise of Lewes was to be laid before this Frenchman! I will none of them! Pshaw! is this the Princess coming? I trust she will not see me. I want none of her fair words."

He had prepared himself to be ungracious; but his courtly breeding was too much of an instinct with him for him not to rise, doff his cap, and stand aside, as Eleanor of Castille slowly moved towards the woodland path, with her graceful Spanish step, followed, but at some distance, by two of her women. She turned as she was passing him, and smiled with a sweet radiance that would have won him instantly, had he not heard his elder brothers sneer at the cheap coin of royal smiles. He only bowed; but Leonillo was more accessible, and started forward to pay his homage of dignified blandishments to the queenly sweetness that pleased his canine appreciation. Richard was forced to step forth, call him in, and make his excuses; but the Princess responded by praises of the noble animal, and caresses, to which Leonillo replied with a grand gratitude, that showed him as nobly bred as his young master.

"Thou art a gallant creature," said Eleanor, her hand upon the proud head; "and no doubt as faithful as beautiful!"

"Faithful to the death, Lady," replied Richard warmly.

"He is thine own, I trow," said the Princess,—"not thy groom's? I remember, that when thy brave father brought my lord and me back from our bridal at Burgos, he procured two hounds in the Pyrenees, of meseems, such a breed."

"True, Lady; they were the parents of my Leonillo," said Richard, gratified, in spite of himself.

"How well I remember," continued Eleanor, "that first sight of the great Earl. My brothers had teased me for going so far north, and told me the English were mere rude islanders—boorish, and unlettered; but, child as I was, scarce eleven years old, I could perceive the nobleness of the Earl. 'If all thy new subjects be like him,' said my brother to me, 'thou wilt reign over a race of kings.' And how good he was to me when I wept at leaving my home and friends! How he framed his tongue to

speak my own Castillian to me; how he comforted me, when the Queen, my mother-in-law, required more dignity of me than I yet knew how to assume; and how he chid my boy bridegroom for showing scant regard for his girl bride!" said Eleanor, smiling at the recollection, as the beloved wife of eleven years could well afford to do. "I mind me well that he found me weeping, because my Edward had tied the scarf I gave him on the neck of one of those very dogs, and the fatherly counsel he gave me. Ah, Leonillo, thy wise wistful face brings back many thoughts to my mind! I am glad I may honour thee for fidelity!"

"Indeed you may, Lady," said Richard. "It was he that above all saved my life."

"Prithee let me hear," said the Princess, who had already so moved on, while herself speaking, as to draw Richard into walking with her along the path that had been cleared under the beech trees. "We have so much longed to know thy fate."

"I cannot tell you much, Lady," returned Richard. "The last thing I recollect on that dreadful day was, that my father asked for quarter- -for us—for my brother Henry and me. We heard the reply: 'No quarter for traitors!' and Henry fell before us a dead man. My father shouted, 'By the arm of St. James, it is time for me to die!' I saw him, with his sword in both hands, cut down a wild Welshman who was rushing on me. Then I saw no more, till in the moonlight I was awakened by this dog's cool tongue licking the blood from my face, and heard his low whining over me."

"Good dog, good dog!" murmured Eleanor, caressing the animal. "And thou, Richard, thou wert sorely wounded?"

"Sorely," said Richard; "my side had been pierced with a lance, a Welsh two-handed sword had broken through my helmet, and well-nigh cleft my skull; and the men-at-arms, riding over me I suppose, must have broken my leg, for I could not move: and oh! I felt it hard that I had yet to die. Then, Lady, came lights and murmuring voices. They were Mortimer's plundering Welsh robbers. I heard their wild gibbering tongue; and I knew how it would be with me, should they see the white cross on my breast. But, Lady, Leonillo stood over me. His lion bark chased them aside; and when one bolder than the rest came near the mound where we lay, good Leonillo flew at his savage throat. I heard the struggle as I lay—the growls of the dog, the howls of the man; and then they were cut short. And next I heard de Gourdon's gruff voice commending the good hound, whose note had led him to the spot, from the woods, where he was hiding after the battle. The faithful beast sprang from him, and in a moment more had led him to me. Then—ah, then, Lady! when Adam had freed me from my broken helm, and lifted me in his arms, what a sight had I! Oh, what a field that harvest moon shone upon! how thickly heaped was that little mound! And there was my father's face upturned in the white moonlight! O Lady, never in hall or bower could it have been so peaceful, or so majestic! I bade Adam lay me down by his side, and keep guard through the night with Leonillo; but he said that the plunderers would come in numbers too great for him, and that he must care for the living rather than the dead; and withstand him as I would, he bore me away. O Lady, Lady, foul wrong was done when we were gone!"

"Think not on that," said Eleanor; "it bitterly grieved my lord that so it should have been. Thou knowest, I hope, that he was the chief mourner when those honoured limbs were laid in the holy ground at Evesham Abbey. They told me, who saw him that day, that his weeping for his godfather and his Cousin Henry overcame all joy in his victory. And I can assure thee, dear Richard, that when, three months after, I came to him at Canterbury, just after he had been with thy mother at Dover, even then he was sad and mournful. He said that the wisest and best baron in England had been made a rebel of, and then slain; and he was full of sorrow for thee, only then understanding from thy mother that thou hadst been in the battle at all, and that nothing had been heard of thee. He said thou wert the most like to thy father of all his sons; and truly I knew thee at once by thine eyes, Richard. Where wast thou all these months?"

"At first," said Richard, "I was in an anchoret's cell, in the wall of a church. So please you, Madame, I must not name names; but when Adam, bearing me faint and well-nigh dying on his back,

saw the twinkling light in the churchyard, he knocked, and entreated aid. The good anchoret pitied my need at first, and when he learnt my name, he gave me shelter for my father's sake, the friend of all religious men. I lay on his little bed, in the chamber in the wall, till I could again walk. Meanwhile, Adam watched in the woods at hand, and from time to time came at night to see how I fared, and bring me tidings. Simon was still holding out Kenilworth, and we hoped to join him there; but when we set forth I was still lame, and too feeble to go far in a day; and we fell in with—within short, with a band of robbers, who detained us, half as guests, half as captives. They needed Adam's stout arm; and there was a shrewd, gray, tough old fellow, who had been in Robin Hood's band, and was looked up to as a sort of prince among them, who was bent on making us one with them. Lady, you would smile to hear how the old man used to sit by me as I lay on the rushes, and talk of outlawry, as Father Adam de Marisco used to talk of learning—as a good and noble science, decaying for want of spirit and valour in these days. It was all laziness, he said; barons and princes must needs have their wars, and use up all the stout men that were fit to bend a bow in a thicket. If the Prince went on at this rate, he said, there would soon be not an honest outlaw to be found in England! But he was a kind old man, and very good to me; and he taught me how to shoot with the long bow better than ever our master at Odiham could. However, I could not brook the spoiler's life, and the band did not trust me; so, as we found that Kenilworth had fallen, as soon as my strength had returned to me, we stole away from the outlaws, and came southwards, hoping to find my mother at Odiham. Hearing that Odiham too was gone from us, we have lurked in Alton Wood till means should serve us for reaching the coast."

"Till thou hast found the friend who has longed for thee, and sought for thee," replied Eleanor. "What didst thou do, young Richard, to win my husband's heart so entirely in his captivity?"

"I know not, Lady, why he should take thought for me," bluntly said Richard, with a return of the sensation of being coaxed and talked over.

"Methinks I can tell thee one cause," returned the Princess. "Was there not a time when thou didst overhear him concerting with Thomas de Clare the plan of an escape, and thou didst warn them that thou wast at hand; ay, and yet didst send notice to thy father?"

"Yes," answered Richard with surprise; "I could do no other."

"Even so," said Eleanor. "And thus didst thou win the esteem of thy kinsman. 'The stripling is loyal and trustworthy,' he has said to me; 'pity that such a heart should be pierced in an inglorious field. Would that I could find him, and strive to return to him something of what his father's care hath wrought for me.' Richard, trust me, it would be a real joy and lightening of his grief to have thee with him."

"Grief, Madame!" repeated Richard. "I little thought he grieved for my father, who, but for him, would be—" and a sob checked him, as the contrast rose before him of the great Earl and beautiful Countess presiding over their large family and princely household, and the scattered ruined state of all at present.

"He shall answer that question himself," said Eleanor. "See, here he comes to meet us by the beechwood alley."

And in fact, a form, well suited to its setting within the stately aisles of the beech trees, was pacing towards them. The chase had ended, and hearing that his wife had walked forth into the wood, the Prince had come by another path to meet her, and his rare and beautiful smile shone out as he saw who was her companion. "Art making friends with my young cousin?" he said affectionately.

"I would fain do so," replied Eleanor; "but alas, my Lord! he feels that there is a long dark reckoning behind, that stands in the way of our friendship."

Richard looked down, and did not speak. The Princess had put his thought into words.

"Richard," said the Prince, "I feel the same. It is for that very cause that I seek to have thee with me. Hear me. Thou art grown older, and hast seen man's work and man's sorrows, since I left thee on the hill-side at Hereford. Thou canst see, perchance, that a question hath two sides—though it is not given to all men to do so. Harken then.—Thy father was the greatest man I have known—

may, but for the thought of my uncle of France, I should say the holiest. He was my teacher in all knightly doings, and in all kingly thoughts, such as I pray may be with me through life. It was from him I learnt that this royal, this noble power, is not given to exalt ourselves, but as a trust for the welfare of others. It was the spring of action that was with him through life."

"It was," murmured Richard, calling to mind many a saying of his father's.

"And fain would he have impressed it on all around," added Edward: "but there were others who deemed that kingly power was but a means of enjoyment, and that restraint was an outrage on the crown. They drew one way, the Earl drew the other, and, as his noble nature prompted him, made common cause with the injured. It skills not to go through the past. Those whom he joined had selfish aims, and pushed him on; and as the crown had been led to invade the rights of the vassals, so the vassals invaded my father's rights. Oaths were extorted, though both sides knew they could never be observed; and between violences, now on one side, now on the other, the right course could scarce be kept. The Earl imagined that, with my father in his hands, removed from all other influences, he could give England the happy days they talk of her having enjoyed under my patron St. Edward; but, as thou knowest, Richard, the authority he held, being unlawful, was unregarded, and its worst transgressors came out of his own bosom. He could not enforce the terms on which I had yielded myself—he could not even prevent my father from being a mere captive; and for the English folk, their miseries were but multiplied by the tyrants who had arisen."

"It was no doing of his," said Richard, with cheek hotly glowing.

"None know that better than I," said the Prince; "but if he had snatched the bridle from a feeble hand, it was only to find that the steed could not be ruled by him. What was left for me but to break my bonds, and deliver my father, in the hope that, being come to man's estate, I might set matters on a surer footing? I had hoped—I had greatly hoped, so to rule affairs, that the Earl might own that his training had not been lost on his nephew, and that the Crown might be trusted not to infringe the Charter. I had hoped that he might yet be my wisest counsellor. But, Richard, I too had supporters who outran my commands. Bitter hatred and malice had been awakened, and cruel resolves that none should be spared. When I returned from bearing my father, bleeding and dismayed, from the battle, whither he had been cruelly led, it was to find that my orders had been disobeyed—that there had been foul and cruel slaughter; and that all my hopes that my uncle of Leicester would forgive me and look friendly on me were ended!"

The Prince's lip trembled as he spoke, and tears glistened in his eyes; and the evident struggle to repress his feelings, brought home deeply and forcibly the conviction to Richard that his sorrow was genuine.

He could not speak for some seconds; then he added: "I marvel not that I am looked on among you as guilty of his blood. Simon and Guy regard me as one with whom they are at deadly feud, and cannot understand that it was their own excesses that armed those merciless hands against him. Even my aunt shrank from me, and implored my mercy as though I were a ruthless tyrant. But thou, Richard, thou hast inherited enough of thy father's mind to be able to understand how unwillingly was my share in his fall, and how great would be my comfort and joy in being good kinsman to one of his sons."

The strong man's generous pleading was most touching. Richard bowed his head; the Princess watched him eagerly. The boy spoke at last in perplexity. "My Lord, you know better than I. Would it be knightly, would it be honourable?"

The Princess started in some indignation at such a question to her husband; but Edward understood the boy better, and said, "That which is most Christian is most knightly." Then pausing: "Ask thine heart, Richard; which would thy father choose for thee—to live in such guidance as I hope will ever be found in my household, or to share the wandering, I fear me freebooting, life of thy brothers?"

Richard could not forget how his father had sternly withheld him from going with Simon to besiege Pevensey. He knew that these two brethren had long been a pain and grief to his father; and began to understand that the nephew, with whom the Earl's last battle had been fought, was nevertheless his truest pupil.

"Thou wilt remain," said Edward decisively; "and let us strive one day to bring to pass the state of things for which thy father and I fought alike, though, alas! in opposite ranks."

"If my mother consents," said Richard, his head bent down, and uttering the words with the more difficulty, because he felt so strongly drawn towards his cousin, who never seemed so mighty as in his condescension.

"Then, Richard de Montfort," said Edward gravely, "let us render to one another the kiss of peace, as kinsmen who have put away all thought of wrong between them."

Richard looked up; and the Prince bending his lofty head, there was exchanged between them that solemn embrace, which in the early middle ages was the deepest token of amity.

And with that kiss, it was as though the soul of Richard de Montfort were knit to the soul of Edward of England with the heart-whole devotion, composed of affection and loyal homage to a great character, which ever since the days of the bond between the son of the doomed King of Israel and the youthful slayer of the Philistine champion, has been one of the noblest passions of a young heart.

CHAPTER IV—THE TRANSLATION

*"Now in gems their relics lie,
And their names in blazonry,
And their forms in storied panes
Gleam athwart their own loved fanes."*

Lyra Innocentium.

If novelty has its charms, so has old age, and to us the great abbey church of Westminster has become doubly beloved by long generations of affection, and doubly beautiful by the softening handiwork of time and of smoke.

Yet what a glorious sight must it not have been when it was fresh from the hands of the builder, the creamy stone clear and sharp at every angle, and each moulding and flower true and perfect as the chisel had newly left it. The deep archway of the west front opened in stately magnificence, and yet with a light loftiness hitherto unknown in England, and somewhat approaching to the style in which the great French cathedrals were then rising. And its accompaniments were, on the one hand the palace and hall, on the other hand the monastery, with its high walled courts and deep-browed cloisters, its noble refectory and vaulted kitchen, the herbarium or garden, shady with trees, and enriched with curious plants of Palestine, sloping down to the broad and majestic Thames, pure and blue as he pursued his silver winding way through emerald meadows and softly rising hills clothed with copses and woods. To the east, seated upon her hills, stood the crowned and battlemented city, the massive White Tower rising above the fortifications.

The autumn brilliance of October, 1269, never enlightened a more gorgeous scene than when it shone upon the ceremony still noted in our Calendar as the Translation of King Edward. Buried at first in his own low-browed heavy-arched Norman structure, which he had built, as he believed, at the express bidding of St. Peter; the Confessor, whose tender-hearted and devout nature had, by force of contrast with those of his fierce foreign successors, come to assume a saintly halo in the eyes not merely of the English, but of their Angevin lords themselves, was, now to reign on almost equal terms with the great Apostle himself, as one of the hallowing patrons of the Abbey—nay, since at least his relics were entire and undoubted, as its chief attraction.

The new chapel in his especial honour, behind the exquisite bayed apsidal chancel, was at length complete; and on this day he was to take possession of it. An ark of pure gold, chased and ornamented with the surpassing grace of that period of perfect taste, had received the royally robed corpse, which Churchmen averred lay calm and beautiful, untainted by decay; and this was now uplifted by the arms of King Henry himself, of Richard King of the Romans his brother, and of the two princes, Edward and Edmund.

It was a striking sight to see those two pairs of brothers. The two kings, nearly of an age, and so fondly attached that they could hardly brook a separation, till the death of the one broke the wearied heart of the other, were both gray-haired prematurely-aged men, of features that time instead of hardening had rendered more feeble and uncertain. Their faces were much alike, but Henry might be known from Richard by a certain inequality in the outline of his eyebrows; and their dress, though both alike wore long flowing gowns, the side seams only coming down as far as the thigh so as to allow play for the limbs, so far differed that Henry's was of blue, with the English lions embroidered in red and gold on his breast, and Richard was in the imperial purple, or rather scarlet, and the eagle of the empire on his breast testified to the futile election which he had purchased with the wealth of his Cornish mines. Both the elders together, with all their best will and their simple faith in the availing

merit of the action they were performing, would have been physically incapable of proceeding many steps with their burden, but for the support it received from the two younger men who sustained the feet of the saint, using some dexterity in adapting their strength so that the coffin might be carried evenly.

One was the hunter we have already seen in Alton Wood. His features wore their characteristic stamp of deep awe and enthusiasm, and even as he slowly and calmly moved, sustaining the chief of the weight with scarcely an effort of his giant strength, his head towering high above all those around, his eyes might be observed to be seeing, though not marking, what was before them, but to be fixed as though the soul were in contemplation, far far away. He did not see in the present scene four princes rendering homage to a royal saint, who, from personal connection and by a brilliant display of devotion, might be propitiated into becoming a valuable patron amid intercessor; still less did it present itself to him as a pageant in which he was to bow his splendid powers, mental and bodily, to aid two feeble-minded old men to totter under the gold-cased corpse of a still more foolish and mischievous prince, dead two hundred years back. No, rather thought and eye were alike upon the great invisible world, the echo of whose chants might perchance be ringing on his ear; that world where holy kings cast their crowns before the Throne, and where the lamb-like spirit of the Confessor might be joining in the praise, and offering these tokens of honour to Him to whom all honour and praise and glory and blessing are due.

Of shorter stature, darker browed, of less regular feature and less clear complexion, so as to look as if he were the elder of the brothers, Prince Edmund moved by his side, using much exertion, and bending with the effort, so as to increase the slight sloop that had led to his historical nickname of the Crouchback, though some think this was merely taken from his crusading cross. He bore the arms of Sicily, to which he had not yet resigned his claim. His eye wandered, but not far away, like that of his brother. It was in search of his young betrothed, the Lady Aveline of Lancaster, the fair young heiress to whom he was to owe the great earldom that was a fair portion for a younger brother even of royalty.

All the four were bare-footed, and both princes were in robes much resembling that of their father, except that upon the left shoulder of each might be seen, in white cloth, the two lines of the Cross, that marked them as pilgrims and Crusaders, already on the eve of departure for the Holy Land.

The shrine where the golden coffin was to rest is substantially the same in our own day, with its triple-cusped arches below, the stage of six and stage of four above them, and the twisted columns in imitation of that which was supposed to have come from the Beautiful Gate of the Temple. But at that time it was a glittering fabric of mosaic work, in gold, lapis-lazuli, and precious stones, aided here and there by fragments of coloured glass, the only part of the costly workmanship that has come down to us. Around this shrine the preceding members of the procession had taken their places. Archbishop Boniface of Savoy was there, old age ennobling a countenance that once had been light and frivolous, and all his bishops in the splendour of their richest copes, solidly embroidered with absolute scenes and portraits in embroidery, with tall mitres worked with gold wire and jewels, and crosiers of beauteous workmanship in gold, ivory, and enamel. Mitred abbots, no less glorious in array, stood in another rank; the scarlet-mantled Grand Prior of the Hospital, and the white-cloaked Templar, made a link between the ecclesiastic and the warrior. Priests and monks, selected for their voices' sake, clustered in every available space; and, in full radiance, on a stage on the further side, were seated the ladies of the court, mostly with their hair uncovered, and surrounded by a garland of precious stones. Queen Eleanor of Provence, still bent on youthfulness, looked somewhat haggard in this garb; but it well became Beatrix von Falkmorite, the young German girl whom Richard King of the Romans had wedded in his old age for the sake of her fair face. Smiling, plump, and rosy, she sat opening her wide blue eyes, wearing her emerald and ruby wreath as though it had been a coronal of daisies, and gazing with childish whisperings as she watched the movements of her king, and clung for direction and help in her own part of the pageant to the Princess Eleanor, who sat beside

her, little the elder in years, less beautiful in colouring, but how far surpassing her in queenly pensive grace and dignity! Leaning on Eleanor's lap was a bright-eyed, bright-haired boy of four years old, watching with puzzled looks the brilliant ceremony, which he only half understood, and his glances wandering between his father and the blue and white robed little acolytes who stood nearest to the shrine, holding by chains the silver censers, which from time to time sent forth a fragrant vapour, curling round the heads of the nearest figures, and floating away in the lofty vaultings of the roof.

The actual ceremony could only be beheld by a favoured few; the official clergy, the many connections of royalty, and the chief nobility, filled the church to overflowing, but the rest of the world repaid itself by making a magnificent holiday. Good-natured King Henry had been permitted by his son, who had now, though behind the scenes, assumed the reins of government, to spend freely, and make a feast to his heart's content. Roasting and boiling were going on on a fast and furious scale, not only in the palace and abbey, but in booths erected in the fields; and tables were spreading and rushes strewing for the accommodation of all ranks. Near the entrance of the Abbey, the trains of the personages within awaited their coming forth in some sort of order, the more reverent listening to the sounds from within, and bending or crossing themselves as the familiar words of higher notes of praise rose loud enough to reach their ears; but for the most part, the tones and gestures were as various as the appearance of the attendants. Here were black Benedictines, there white Augustinians clustered round the sleek mules of their abbots; there scornful dark Templars, in their black and white, sowed the seeds of hatred against their order, and scarlet Hospitaliers looked bright and friendly even while repelling the jostling of the crowd. A hoary old squire, who had been with the King through all his troubles, kept together his immediate attendants; a party of boorish-looking Germans waited for Richard of Cornwall; and the slender, richly-caparisoned palfreys of the ladies were in charge of high-born pages, who sometimes, with means fair or foul, pushed back the throng, sometimes themselves became enamoured of its humours.

For not only had the neighbouring city of London poured forth her merchants and artisans, to gaze, wonder, and censure the extravagance—not only had beggars of every degree been attracted by the largesse that Henry delighted to dispense, and peasants had poured in from all the villages around, but no sort of entertainment was lacking. Here were minstrels and story-tellers gathering groups around them; here was the mountebank, clearing a stage in which to perform feats of jugglery, tossing from one hand to another a never-ending circle of balls, balancing a lance upon his nose, with a popinjay on its point; here were a bevy of girls with strange garments fastened to their ankles, who would dance on their hands instead of their feet, while their uplifted toes jangled little bells.

Peasant and beggar, citizen and performer, sightseer and professional, all alike strove to get into the space before the great entrance, where the procession must come forth to gratify the eyes of the gazers, and mayhap shower down such bounty as the elder mendicants averred had been given when Prince Edward (the saints defend him!) had been weighed at five years old, and, to avert ill luck, the counterbalance of pure gold had been thrown among the poor to purchase their prayers.

His weight in gold at his present stature could hardly be expected by the wildest imaginations, but hungry eyes had been estimating the weight of his little heir, and discontented lips had declared that the child was of too slender make to be ever worth so much to them as his father. Yet a whisper of the possibility had quickly been magnified to a certainty of such a largesse, and the multitude were thus stimulated to furious exertions to win the most favourable spot for gathering up such a golden rain as even little Prince Henry's counterpoise would afford; and ever as time waxed later, the throng grew denser and more unruly, and the struggle fiercer and more violent.

The screams and expostulations of the weak, elbowed and trampled down, mingled with more festive sounds; and the attendants who waited on the river in the large and beautifully-ornamented barges which were the usual conveyances of distinguished personages, began to agree with one another that if they saw less than if they were on the bank, they escaped a considerable amount of discomfort as well as danger.

"For," murmured one of the pages, "I suppose it would be a dire offence to the Prince to lay about among the churls as they deserve."

"Ay, truly, among Londoners above all," was the answer of his companion, whom the last four years had rendered considerably taller than when we saw him last.

"Not that there is much love lost between them. He hath never forgotten the day when they pelted the Queen with rotten eggs, and sang their ribald songs; nor they the day he rode them down at Lewes like corn before the reaper."

"And lost the day," muttered the other page; then added, "The less love, the more cause for caution."

"Oh yes, we know you are politic, Master Richard," was the sneering reply, "but you need not fear my quarrelling with your citizen friends. I would not be the man to face Prince Edward if I had made too free with any of the caitiffs."

"Hark! Master Hamlyn, the tumult is louder than ever," interposed an elderly man of lower rank, who was in charge of the stout rowers in the royal colours of red and gold. "Young gentlemen, the Mass must be ended; it were better to draw to the stairs, than to talk of you know not what," he muttered.

Hamlyn de Valence, who held the rudder, steered towards the wide stone steps that descended to the river, nearest to the apse in which "St. Peter's Abbey Church" terminated before Henry VII. had added his chapel. At that moment a louder burst of sound, half imprecation, half shriek, was heard; there was a heavy splash a little way above, and a small blue bundle was seen on the river, apparently totally unheeded by the frantic crowd on the bank. No sooner was it seen by Richard, however, than he threw back his mantle and sprang out of the barge. There was a loud cry from the third page, a little fellow of nine or ten years old; but Richard gallantly swam out, battled with the current, and succeeded in laying hold of a young child, with whom he made for the barge, partly aided by the stream; but he was breathless, and heartily glad to reach the boat and support himself against the gunwale.

"A pretty boat companion you!" said Hamlyn maliciously. "How are we to take you in, over the velvet cushions?"

The little page gave an expostulating cry.

"Hold the child an instant, John," gasped Richard, raising it towards his younger friend; "I will but recover breath, and then land and seek out her friends."

"How is this?" said a voice above them; and looking up, they found that while all had been absorbed in the rescue, the Prince, with his little son in his arms and his wife hanging on his arm, had come to the stone stairs, and was looking down. "Richard overboard!"

"A child fell over the bank, my Lord," eagerly shouted the little John, with cap in hand, "and he swam out to pick it up."

"Into the barge instantly, Richard," commanded the Prince. "'Tis as much as his life is worth to remain in this cold stream!"

And truly Richard was beginning to feel as much. He was assisted in by two of the oarsmen, and the barge then putting towards the steps, the Princess was handed into her place, and began instantly to ask after the poor child. It had not been long enough in the water to lose its consciousness, though it had hitherto been too much frightened to cry; but it no sooner opened a wide pair of dark eyes to find itself in strange hands, than it set up a lamentable wail, calling in broken accents for "Da-da."

"Let me take it ashore at once, gracious lady," said Richard, revived by a draught of wine from the stores provided for the long day; "I will find its friends."

"Nay," said the Princess, "it were frenzy to take it thus in its wet garments; and frenzy to remain in thine, Richard." As she spoke, the Prince and the other persons of the suite had embarked, and the barge was pushing away from the steps. "Give the child to me," she added, holding out her arms, and disregarding a remonstrance from one of her ladies, disregarding too the sobs and struggles of

the child, whom she strove to soothe, while hastily removing the little thing's soaked blue frock and hood, and wrapping it up in a warm woollen cloak. "It is a pretty little maiden," she said, "and not ill cared for. Some mother's heart must be bursting for her!— Hush thee! hush thee, little one; we will take thee home and clothe thee, and then thou shalt go to thy mother," she added, in better English than she had spoken four years earlier in Alton Wood. But the child still cried for her da-da, and the Princess asked again, "What is thy father's name, little maid?"

"Pere," she answered, with a peculiar accent that made the Prince say, "That is a Provençal tongue."

"They are Provençal eyes likewise," added Eleanor. "See how like their hue is to Richard's own;" and in Provençal she repeated the question what the father's name and the child's own might be. But "Pere" again, and "Bessee, pretty Bessee," was all the answer she obtained, the last in unmistakable English.

"I thought," said Eleanor, "that it was only my own children that scarce knew whether they spoke English, Languedoc, or Langued'oui."

"It was the same with us, Lady," said Richard. "Father Adam was wont to say we were a little Babel."

The child looked towards him on hearing his voice, and held out her hands to go to him, reiterating an entreaty to be taken to her father.

"She is probably the child of some minstrel or troubadour," said the Prince. "We will send in search of him as soon as we have reached the Savoy."

The Savoy Palace had been built for Queen Eleanor's obnoxious uncle, Prince Thomas of Savoy, and had recently been purchased by the Queen herself, as a wedding gift for her son Edmund; but in the meantime Edward and his family were occupying it during their stay near Westminster, and their barge was brought up to the wide stairs of its noble court. Richard was obliged to give up the child to the Princess and her ladies, though she shrieked after him so pertinaciously, that Eleanor called to him to return so soon as he should have changed his garments.

In a few minutes he again appeared, and found the little girl dressed in a little garment of one of the royal children, but totally insensible to the honour, turning away from all the dainties offered to her, and sobbing for her father, much to the indignation of the two little princes, Henry and John, who stood hand in hand staring at her. She flew to him directly, with a broken entreaty that she might be taken to her father. Again they tried questioning her, but Richard, whether speaking English or Provençal, always succeeded in obtaining readier and more comprehensible replies than did the Princess. Whether she recognized him as her preserver, or whether his language had a familiar tone, she seemed exclusively attracted by him; and he it was who learnt that she lived at home—far off—on the Green near the red monks, and that her father could not see—he would be lost without Bessee to lead him. And the little creature, hardly three years old if so much, was evidently in the greatest trouble at her father having lost her guidance and protection.

Richard, touched and flattered by the little maiden's exclusive preference, and owning in her Provençal eyes and speech something strangely like his own young sister Eleanor, entreated permission to be himself the person to take her in search of her friends. The Princess added her persuasions, declaring it would be cruel to send the poor little thing with another stranger, and that his Provençal tongue was needed in order to discovering her father among the troubadours.

Edward yielded to her persuasion, adding, however, that Richard must take two men-at-arms with him, and gravely bidding him be on his guard. Nor would he permit him to be accompanied by little John de Mohun, who, half page, half hostage, had lately been added to the Princess's train, and being often bullied and teased by Hamlyn and his fellows, had vehemently attached himself to Richard, and now entreated in vain to go with him on the adventure. In fact, Prince Edward was a stern disciplinarian, equally severe against either familiarity or insolence towards the external world, and especially towards any one connected with London. If Richard ever gave him any offence, it

was by a certain freedom of manner towards inferiors, such as the Earl of Leicester had diligently inculcated on his family, but which more than once had excited a shade of vexation on the Prince's part. Even after Richard had reached the door, he was called back and commanded on no pretext to loiter or enter on any dispute, and if his search should detain him late, to sleep at the Tower, rather than be questioned and stopped at any of the gates which were guarded at night by the citizens.

CHAPTER V—THE OLD KNIGHT OF THE HOSPITAL

*"The warriors of the sacred grave,
Who looked to Christ for laws."*

Lord Houghton.

Richard summoned a small boat, and with two stout men-at-arms, of whom Adam de Gourdon was one, prepared again to cross the river. Leonillo ran down the stone stairs with a wistful look of entreaty and it occurred to both Richard and Adam, that, could the child only lead them to the place where her father had sat, the dog's scent might prove their most efficient guide.

Little Bessee seemed quite comforted when on her way back to her father, and sat on Richard's knee, eating the comfits with which the Princess had provided her, and making him cut a figure that seemed somewhat to amaze the other boat-loads whom they encountered on the river.

When they landed, the throng was more dispersed, but revelry and sports of all kinds were going on fast and furiously; each door of the Abbey was besieged by hungry crowds receiving their dole, and Richard's inquiries for a blind man who had lost his child were little heeded, or met with no satisfactory answer. Bessee herself was bewildered, and incapable of finding her father's late station; and Richard was becoming perplexed, and doubtful whether he ought to take her back, as well as somewhat put out of countenance by the laughter of Thomas de Clare, and other young nobles, who rallied him on his strange charge.

At last the little girl's face lightened as at sight of something familiar. "Good red monks," she said. "They give Bessee soup—make father well."

With a ray of hope, Richard advanced to a party of Brethren of St. John, who were mounting at the Abbey gate to return to their house at Spitalfields, and doffing his bonnet, intimated a desire to address the tall old war-worn knight with a benevolent face, who was adjusting his scarlet cloak, before mounting a gray Arab steed looking as old and worthy as himself.

"Ha! a young Crusader, I perceive," was the greeting of the old knight, as his eye fell on the white cross on Richard's mantle. "Welcome, brother! Dost thou need counsel on thy goodly Eastern way?"

"Thanks, reverend Sir," returned Richard, "but my present purpose was to seek for the father of this little one, who fell into the river in the press. She pointed to you, saying she had received your bounty."

"It is Blind Hal's child, Sir Robert!" exclaimed a serving-brother in black, coming eagerly forward; "the villeins on the green told me the poor knave was distraught at having lost his child in the throng!"

"What brought he her there for?" exclaimed Sir Robert. "Poor fool! his wits must have forsaken him!"

"The child had a craving to see the show," replied the Brother, "so Hob the cobbler told me; and all went well till my Lord of Pembroke's retainers forced all right and left to make way in the crowd. Hal was thrown down, and the child thrust away till they feared she had fallen over the bank. Hob and his wife were fain to get the poor man away, for his moans and fierce words were awful: and he was not a little hurt in the scuffle, so I e'en gave them leave to lay him in the cart that brought up your reverence's vestments, and the gear we lent the Abbey for the show."

"Right, Brother Hilary," said Sir Robert; "and now the poor knave will have his best healing. —He must have been a good soldier once," he added to Richard; "but he is a mere fragment of a man, wasted in your Earl of Leicester's wars."

"Where dwells he?" asked Richard, keenly interested in all his father's old followers; "I would fain restore him his child."

"In a hut on Bednall Green," answered the serving-brother; "but twice or thrice a week he comes to the Spital to have his hurts looked to."

"Ay! we tell him his little witch must soon be shut out! She turns the heads of all our brethren," said Sir Robert, smiling. "Wild work she makes with our novices."

"Wilder with our Knights Commanders, maybe, Sir," retorted, laughing, a fair open-faced youth in his novitiate. "I shall some day warn Hal how our brethren, the Templars, are said to play at ball with tender babes on their lances."

"No scandal about our brethren of the Temple, Rayland," said Sir Robert, looking grave for a moment.—"Young Sir, it would be a favour if you would ride with us; we would gladly show you the way to Bednall Green."

"I should rejoice to go, Sir," returned Richard, "but I am of Prince Edward's household—Richard Fowen; and my horse is on the other side of the river."

"That is soon remedied," said Sir Robert, who seemed to have taken a great fancy to Richard, either for the sake of his crossed shoulder, or of his kindness to the little plaything of the Spital. "Our young brother, Engelbert von Fuchstein, has leave to tarry this night with his brother in the train of the King of the Romans, and his horse is at your service, if you will do our poor Spital the favour to tarry there this night, and ride it back in the morn to meet him at Westminster."

Richard knew that this invitation might be safely accepted without danger of giving umbrage to the Prince, who was on the best terms with the Knights of the Hospital. He therefore dismissed Gourdon and the other man-at-arms with a message explaining the matter; and warmly thanking the old Grand Prior, laid one hand on the saddle of the great ponderous beast that was led up to him, and vaulted on its back without touching the stirrup.

"Well done, my young master," said Sir Robert, "it is easy to see you are of the Prince's household."

"I cannot yet do as the Prince can," said Richard,—"take this leap in full armour."

"No; and let me give you a bit of counsel, fair Sir. Such pastimes are very well for the tiltyard, but they should be laid aside in the blessed Land, and strength reserved for the one cause and purpose." He crossed himself; and in the meantime, Bessee intimated her imperious purpose of not riding before Brother Hilary, but being perched before Richard on the enormous cream-coloured animal, whence he was looking down from a considerable elevation upon Sir Robert on his slender Arab.

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